

The Blueberry News

Official Newsletter of the Florida Blueberry Growers' Association
Spring Issue, 2001

Editor: Jeff Williamson (Professor, Horticultural Science Department, IFAS, University of Florida)

Officers: Jerry Mixon, Jr. (president), Dean Deihl (vice president), Sheri Brothers (secretary and treasurer), Jeff Williamson (educational program director and newsletter editor).

Board of Directors: Jerry Mixon, Jr., Dean Deihl, Ken Patterson, Jimmy Miller, Gerald Mixon, Bob Payne, Steve Blount and Paul Lyrene.

Disclaimer: The information in this newsletter was selected with good intentions by the editor. It does not necessarily reflect the opinions of the editor, the Florida Blueberry Growers' Association or the Association Directors. The reader should not assume that the information presented in the newsletter is being recommended for his or her farm. Especially where pesticides or growth regulators are mentioned, be sure to follow their labels exactly. If you have comments, corrections, or suggestions regarding the newsletter, please write to the editor.



Spring Blueberry Short Course

Thursday, March 15, 2001
Ben Hill Griffin Auditorium
Lake Alfred Research and Education Center
Lake Alfred, Fla.

5:00 p.m. - Late Registration - late registration at the door is \$20 per person and does not guarantee a meal. See enclosed pre-registration form for early registration rate.

5:30 p.m. - FBGA Annual Business Meeting - Jerry Mixon, FBGA president, presiding.

6:00 p.m. - Catered dinner (pre-registration required). See pre-registration form enclosed in this newsletter.

6:50 p.m. - Welcome - Dr. Harold Browning, center director, Citrus Research and Education Center, Lake Alfred, Fla.

7:00 p.m. - Blueberries and GAPS: Marketing Issue or Safety Factor - Mr. Dan Botts, director, Environmental & Pest Management Division, Florida Fruit & Vegetable Association, Orlando, Fla.

7:30 p.m. - Blueberry leaf spot diseases and their control in Florida - Mr. Bill Cline, plant pathologist, North Carolina State University, Castle Hayne, NC.

8:00 p.m. - Factors affecting flower bud initiation and development in blueberry - Mr. Timothy Spann, graduate research assistant, Horticultural Sciences Dept, IFAS, University of Florida, Gainesville, Fla.

8:20 p.m. - Update on pesticide registration efforts and blueberry acreage in Florida - Dr. Jeff Williamson, horticulturist, Horticultural Sciences Dept., IFAS, University of Florida, Gainesville, Fla.

8:40 p.m. - Strategies for controlling birds in Florida blueberry fields - Mr. Gabe Diaz-Saavedra, territory manager, Becker-Underwood Co., Sarasota, Fla.

9:00 p.m. - Adjourn

Information about the short course -

Registration - Enclosed, please find a *pre-registration and membership renewal form* for the Spring Blueberry Short

course. **This form must be returned postmarked by March 8 to guarantee your meal and to receive the early registration rate of \$10.00 per person for FBGA members and \$20.00 per person for non-members.** Note that FBGA membership is on a per farm bases. Being a FBGA member allows you and any employee or family member associated with your blueberry operation to attend FBGA meetings at the discounted membership rate of \$10/person. Please note that the registration fee does not cover your FBGA dues. We encourage you to renew your membership while preregistering for the Spring Short Course.

Directions to get to the Citrus Research and Education Center, site of the Spring Short Course -

From I-4 (Tampa or Orlando areas) - Exit I-4 at exit 22 which is SR 557. Continue south on SR 557, for about 5 miles and you will see some transformers on your left. After passing them, take the next left (that will be Evenhouse Rd.). Continue on Evenhouse Rd. until you reach a stop sign. At the stop sign, turn right and go about ½ mile and you will see the buildings at the Research Center. The Ben Hill Griffin Hall is the newer building to your left, set behind some smaller buildings.

From Hwy 27 (Haines City area) - Exit Hwy 27 onto Hwy 92. Travel west about 5 miles. On your way, you will pass Lang s Fruit Stand on the right and Captain Jack s Seafood Restaurant on your left. You will see an orange grove on the right side of the road and a University of Florida sign, also on the right. If you pass an Easy Food Store on your left, you have gone too far. At the UF sign, turn right onto Experiment Station Rd. This road goes straight to the Research Center. The Ben Hill Griffin Hall will be on your right, back behind some smaller buildings.

A MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT, *Jerry Mixon*

Isn't this a great time of year. The flowers are blooming, the bees are buzzing and busy doing there job and optimism reigns supreme. Let us as growers strive to be realistic in our harvest projections to our marketers. One of the worst things we can do is tell the market place we are going to have a "bumper" crop when in fact it is only mid February. We still need to get thru about March 15 to declare our crops free from cold snaps(and the date may be later depending on how far north you are). Be realistic in your projections. All of that said, we have had to this point a very blueberry friendly winter. Now if we can just get some rain!!

We will be having our Spring FBGA meeting this year at the Lake Alfred Research Center in the Ben Hill Griffin Auditorium from 5:30 p.m. to 9:00 p.m. Dinner will be served at 6:00 p.m. with the program staring around 6:45 p.m. We are scheduled to have some very timely topics including food safety and what we as growers can to do. Also, we will be hearing a talk on something very near and dear to all of us BIRD CONTROL--and what are our options. Other topics include leaf disease identification and management, flower bud initiation and development, and updates on chemical registrations and Florida s blueberry acreage. I wish you all the best in the coming harvest season and I look forward to seeing you at the Spring meeting in Lake Alfred.

SPRING BLUEBERRY CHECKLIST

Freezes - By the time you receive this newsletter, the main threat of freezes will be behind us. However, freezes have been known to occur in Florida throughout March. There are a couple of important considerations to keep in mind when monitoring temperatures in anticipation of a freeze. Blueberry fruit and flowers should not be damaged if, on a clear night with no wind, temperatures in a weather shelter, located beside the plants and at the same height, stay 32 F or above. If you don t have a weather shelter, you can hang thermometers on branches of blueberry plants at the same height as the fruiting zone. On a clear night with no wind, these thermometers should read about 2 F colder than the same thermometer in a weather shelter. Thus, little damage to flowers or fruit is likely to occur if the open thermometer stays about 30 F, or higher.

If you are growing plants on large, solid beds of pine bark, be aware that on clear nights with little wind, temperatures in the fruiting zone above pine bark beds can average 4 F colder than temperatures above bare soil. When anticipating a damaging freeze, overhead irrigation should be turned on before an open thermometer hanging in the coldest part of your field reaches 33 F. If there is wind, or the air is exceptionally dry, it is best to turn the system on sooner (35 F) because evaporative cooling can cause an initial drop in temperature. Be sure not to turn the system off before temperatures rise sufficiently. Practically speaking, if there is little wind and the sun is shining, it is safe to turn off the system when icicles are falling from the plants and the temperature on a thermometer sheltered from the sun is 35 F and rising.

Leaf diseases may become severe this year after the summer rainy season begins. Fungicide applications between flowering and fruit harvest can help control both leaf and fruit diseases. Additional fungicide sprays during the summer will probably be necessary to protect the summer growth flush where most of the flower buds for next year s crop will be formed. The number of sprays required will depend largely on weather conditions. Healthy leaves are needed well into the fall season for adequate flower bud development for next year s berry crop.

Irrigation. In the absence of rain, young, newly-planted, blueberry plants will need frequent irrigations. Be sure that water is applied directly to the root zone, especially with container-grown plants which may have concentrated root zones that dry out quickly. Established, bearing,

blueberry plants are most sensitive to drought during the final month of fruit development. Adequate irrigation will maximize berry size and minimize fruit splitting caused by sudden downpours. Be aware of the carbonate content of your irrigation water which can raise soil pH values over time, especially where water is taken from deep wells.

Pruning. Young plants should not be allowed to carry heavy fruit loads. The general recommendation is to remove all fruit from blueberry plants for the first two growing seasons after planting. In high-density plantings where plants are heavily mulched, vigorous, and well cared for, it is possible to produce a light crop the second year without negatively impacting plant establishment. Pruning of bearing plants is usually done in June following fruit harvest. Research has shown that waiting until mid to late July can reduce regrowth and yield of southern highbush blueberries the following year.

An important note about propagation rights and licensing of propagators: Blueberry varieties developed at the University of Florida are patented by Florida Foundation Seed Producers, Inc. in order to obtain money to continue the breeding program, and a license is required for their propagation. Growers wishing to propagate plants for their own use, or for sale, are required to obtain a license. Information about obtaining a license to propagate Florida blueberry varieties is available from: Tom Stadskev, Florida Foundation Seed Producers, Inc., P.O. Box 309; Greenwood, FL 32443-0309. Phone: (850)-594-4721. E-mail: seed@digitalex.com

BLUEBERRY PRODUCTS AND SERVICES

Blueberry Hill Nursery. Come by and see our plants, potted rabbiteye and highbush. We re in Salt Springs. Call (352)685-2769. Lic. No. 47217069.

Call the Doc! Doc Applications, Inc. is booking orders for the fall 2000 and beyond. We grow the latest varieties including Gulfcoast, Sharpblue, Sapphire, and Emerald bare root and in containers. Call Dave Weber (863)325-8212 for price and availability. Lic. no. 47219637.

Elixson Wood Products, Inc. Pine bark - shredded, nuggets, or fines available. Ph (904) 964-6649.

Island Grove Ag. Products. Don t buy plants until you ve talked to us. We have all varieties including the new highbush releases from U of F. We will grow specifically for your needs. Contact Sheri Brothers or Ken Patterson at berrygirl629@aol.com or (352)481-5558. Lic. no. 47217870.

Miller Blueberry Nursery. Rt. 3, Box 5700, Palatka, FL 32177, Telephone (904) 325-7373. Let us supply your blueberry plants. All varieties. All sizes. Bare root and potted. Please call for prices. Lic. no. 04720531.

Mixon Family Farm, Inc. We have excellent quality blueberry plants for sale. We have Misty as well as all the newest releases from the University of Florida including Sapphire, Jewel, Star and Sante Fe. We will custom grow for your specific needs. Call Jerry Mixon (863)439-8335 for price and availability. License no. 472255191.

My Blue Heaven Blueberry Nursery. Southern highbush varieties. Centrally located in Dade City. Give us a call, we re happy to help. Debra Troyer (352) 567-4256, 18414 Lawrence Rd., Dade City, FL 33523. Lic. no. 47221916.

Southern Highbush Blueberry plants for-sale - Several varieties. Call for prices and availability. Bob Waldo, Hudson, FL, (727) 863-4214. Lic. no. 47227344.

Strickland Blueberry Farms and Nursery. 4956 Slaten Rd., Plant City, FL 33567 Phone (813) 754-3866. FAX: (813)754-8717. Gulfcoast and Sharpblue in 1, 15 and 25 gal. containers. Large quantities available. Come see an alternative planting method. Lic. no. 47220729.

ADVERTISING INFORMATION

We welcome advertising from blueberry nurseries and suppliers. The cost is 30 cents per word per issue of the newsletter in which your message appears. Send your blueberry-related message and a check payable to **FLORIDA BLUEBERRY GROWERS' ASSOCIATION** to our address given below under membership information.

MEMBERSHIP INFORMATION

To join or renew your membership to the Florida Blueberry Growers Association, mail a check payable to **FLORIDA BLUEBERRY**

GROWERS ASSOCIATION to our address: Florida Blueberry Growers Association, P.O. Box 141733, Gainesville, FL 32614.

The Association annual dues depend on which membership category you fit best.

1. Regular Florida Member - \$10.00 per acre of blueberries, except a minimum of \$50.00 and a maximum of \$200.00.
2. Out-of-state member - \$50.00.
3. Associate member - \$100.00 (Equipment and chemical companies, etc.).
4. Educational and Research - \$10.00 (University and USDA personnel who do not grow blueberries commercially).

Related Links:

[University of Florida](#)
[Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences](#)
[Horticultural Sciences Department](#)
[Florida Cooperative Extension Service](#)
[Jeff Williamson](#)

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