

The Blueberry News

Official Newsletter of the Florida Blueberry Growers' Association
Fall Issue, 2002

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Fall Blueberry Short Course

Polk County Ag. Center
Building 1710 Stuart Center
1710 Hwy 17 South, Bartow, Fla.

Thursday, October 24, 2002

5:00 p.m. On-site registration - ([preregistration](#) required for dinner).

5:30 p.m. Dinner - Compliments of Richard Fiorelli, Douglass fertilizer and Chemical, Inc. and Darrell Thorpe, Exacto, Inc.

6:15 p.m. FBGA Business Meeting - Mr. Jerry Mixon, FBGA president and grower, Haines City, Fla.

6:30 p.m. Welcome - Mr. Chris Oswalt, extension agent, Polk County Extension Service, University of Florida, Bartow, FL.

6:40 p.m. Update on leaf disease control - Dr. Jeff Williamson, extension horticulturist, Horticultural Sciences Dept., University of Florida, Gainesville.

7:00 p.m. Developing monitoring techniques for early detection of blueberry gall midge and thrips in southern highbush and rabbiteye blueberry plantings - Dr. Oscar Libard, extension entomologist, Dept. of Entomology and Nematology, IFAS, University of Florida, Gainesville, FL.

7:20 p.m. Improving water quality for blueberry growers in Florida - Mr. Mark Greeff, former blueberry grower, Douglas Fertilizer and chemical, Inc.

7:45 p.m. Blueberry varieties and the Florida blueberry breeding program - Dr. Paul Lyrene, blueberry breeder, Horticultural Sciences Dept., University of Florida, Gainesville.

8:05 p.m. Effective use of Dormex in Florida blueberries: What do we know and where do we go from here? - Dr. Jeff Williamson, extension horticulturist, Horticultural Sciences Dept., University of Florida, Gainesville.

8:30 p.m. Availability and distribution of Dormex in Florida - Mr. Rick Hill, Fresh Berries, Inc., Jacksonville, Fla.

8:45 p.m. Raffle prize drawings - Adjourn

[More Information About the Meeting](#)

Admission to the meeting is free. However, FBGA will be accepting new memberships and collecting membership dues from those who have not paid for 2002. We will also be accepting donations to the

blueberry research fund and selling raffle tickets for valuable door prizes.

Preregistration is required to receive a free dinner at the meeting. You may register at the door, but meals are not guaranteed to those who do not preregister. To receive a complimentary dinner, we must receive your preregistration form by Monday, October 21.

Directions to the Short Course

The program will be held at the W.H. Stuart Conference Center which is next door to the Polk County Agricultural Center. If you are traveling north on Hwy 17, the Conference Center will be on the right side of the road just as you enter Bartow city limits. If you are traveling south on Hwy 17, it will be on your left just before you leave the city limits. Look for the Polk County Agricultural Center sign.

A Message From the President

Fellow Growers,

Well, we have weathered through summer and fall is upon us. Buds are setting, final fertilizer applications are being made, as well as final fungicide sprays. I hope you have been blessed with just the right amount of rain that kept you from having to irrigate as much as we have during the past couple of summers.

Fall is also the time for our biennial blueberry growers meeting. This year the meeting will be held in Bartow at the Polk County Agricultural Center in the Stuart Center. We will be hearing a terrific line up of topics. There will be a silent auction as well as raffle tickets available for purchase to raise money for blueberry research. So come prepared to support "the cause" and maybe walk away with some really nice prizes.

See you there,
Jerry Mixon, Jr
Mixon Family Farm and FBGA President

Fire Ant Test

By Paul Lyrene, Horticultural Sciences, Dept., University of Florida, Gainesville, Fla.

This test is based on the book: *Fire Ants*, Stephen Welton Taber. 2000. Texas A&M University Press, College Station, TX. Order from: <http://www.tamu.edu/upress/BOOKS/2000/taber.htm>

This is a great book - accurate, complete, and fun to read, with numerous useful and interesting illustrations. The answers to the test can be found on pages 3 - 4. Any mistakes are probably mine and not that of Stephen Welton Taber. Test your fire ant IQ by marking the following true or false.

1. There is only one species of fire ant.
2. Fire ants can raise the pH of the soil while increasing phosphorous and decreasing organic matter.
3. Fire ants can kill citrus trees by girdling the bark.
4. Most of the damage done by fire ants to soybeans, corn, and okra is due to feeding on the roots.
5. Grits sprinkled on the ground will cause fire ants eating them to explode.
6. The Argentine fire ant which was introduced through the port of Mobile in 1918 has nearly been eradicated from the U.S.
7. Fire ants feed primarily on liquids.

8. Fire ant mating is extremely hard to observe in nature.
 9. Fire ant queens live less than one year.
 10. There are two forms of social organization in fire ants - a form with only one functional queen per colony and a form which sometimes has tens of thousands of egg-laying queens per colony functioning simultaneously.
 11. Multiple-queen colonies are more resistant to Amdro than monogyne colonies.
 12. A single polygyne colony can bud into eight in less than half a year.
 13. Amdro, a popular fire ant bait, contains a fluorinated hydrocarbon mixed with grits and soybean oil.
 14. A substance present in okra flowers is so attractive to fire ant foragers that it is being studied for possible use in fire ant baits.
 15. Amdro is more effective than Mirex, which was banned in the U.S. in 1978.
 16. Fenoxycarb (Logic) sterilizes fire ant queens.
 17. When using a drench against a fire ant nest, you should sneak up on the mound without causing the ground to vibrate with heavy footfalls.
 18. Phorid flies, introduced from Brazil to control fire ants, can decrease ant foraging by 80%, even if they kill only a few ants.
 19. In citrus, fire ants pack soil into the wounds they make on the stems where they feed, and can thereby introduce fungal pathogens into the plant.
 20. Fire ants are known to feed on blueberry roots.
 21. Fire ants can befriend the blueberry farmer by feeding on root weevils and other potentially serious insect pests.
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Meet Steve Blount: Our Featured Blueberry Grower

I began planning my blueberry farm in 1989. I went to various other farms to get ideas on the best planting practices to incorporate into the initial planting of my farm which would prevent high maintenance requirements down the road. I received valuable input in the initial planting concerning drainage and plant spacing as well as plant varieties from Dr. Paul Lyrene from the University of Florida, and Dick Kearley and Tim Logan from the blueberry farm known as Florida Blueberries, Inc.

I cleared the land which is a loamy type soil and bedded the various rows in order to get additional drainage. I then laid a plastic mat ground mulch for weed control which I had found to be one of the biggest problems in the various fields I had observed.

I had purchased some plants and maintained them under a sprinkler system in the first block of my field. A friend told me about a blueberry farm which had closed down and pulled all the plants up out of the pine bark mulch rows and stacked them under a makeshift sprinkler system. I made a deal with the farm owner and potted the approximately 11,000 plants and transported and planted them on my farm.

Although I have dealt with the same natural occurrences that other farmers have dealt with, my farm continued to be profitable with a minimum amount of maintenance. My advice to someone contemplating planting a blueberry farm is to start off with a small planting and try different varieties to see which performs best on your soil and in your area. Also, be prepared to weather the various natural occurrences which you will certainly have to deal with.

Comparison of Methods for Detecting Blueberry Gall Midge in 2002

By Dr. Oscar Liburd and Erin Finn, Entomology and Nematology, University of Florida

Blueberry gall midge, *Dasineura oxycoccana* Johnson, is an important insect pest that feeds on floral and vegetative buds of blueberry bushes. Female midges lay their eggs when bud scales start to separate during the spring. Eggs hatch into larvae (maggots) within a few days, and the emerging maggots feed on plant juices within the buds. Symptoms of infestation include premature floral bud abortion, leaf curl, stunted growth, and blackened leaf tips. In response to grower concerns, entomologists in the Small Fruit and Vegetable laboratory at the University of Florida focused their attention on ways to provide early detection of blueberry gall midge within blueberry plantings. During 2002, various colors of sticky monitoring boards were evaluated because of their wide use in similar agricultural programs for monitoring insect pests. Preliminary results indicate that sticky boards were ineffective in providing early detection of gall midge adults. Several reasons prevented sticky boards from being practical for use in blueberry plantings. First, gall midges were difficult to distinguish from other insects on the boards. Secondly, the sticky glue on the board surface often disturbs characteristic antennal segments and fine hairs on the wings of midges that are useful in making a positive identification. Two other methods for detecting blueberry gall midge as possible alternatives to using colored sticky boards including larval-adult emergence and bud dissection techniques were evaluated. Emergence and dissection methods performed equally well for detecting larvae (maggots) in the buds. However, the dissection method was the only technique capable of detecting blueberry gall midge eggs and it appears to be more reliable when gall midge populations were low.

Answers to Fire Ant Test

1. There are many. Our worst is the red imported fire ant, native in central and western Brazil. When it arrived at the port of Mobile sometime between 1933 and 1945, it began to rapidly out-compete and replace the black Argentine fire ant, which had been introduced into Mobile in 1918. There are also the wide-spread tropical fire ant, 3 fire ants native in the U.S., and at least 12 species still in South America that have not made it to the U.S.
2. Yes, at least in Louisiana pasture land.
3. True.
4. True.
5. False.
6. True, but not by us. The red Brazilian fire ant, introduced later, has driven the Argentine black fire ant to the extreme northern limits of where it can survive, near Memphis, Tennessee.
7. True. They suck the juices out of insects and plant material.
8. True. Just before mating, the sexual ants begin leaving the nest at rates up to 100 per minute. They mate on the wing, at altitudes of about 1,000 feet. Probably only 1 in a thousand mated queens survives to found a successful nest.
9. False, fire ant queens can live up to 7 years.
10. True.
11. True.
12. True.

13. True.

14. True.

15. False. Mirex was more effective. Widely used in the U.S. from 1965 to 1978, its registration was canceled because it was highly persistent in the environment and there was evidence that it could cause liver damage in mice. By contrast, Amdro is considered less toxic to mammals, it degrades rapidly, it is only slightly soluble in water, and it has a 95% kill rate.

16. True.

17. True. If the workers hear you coming, they will move the queen to safety deeper down in the nest.

18. True. The ants stop moving when phorids are in the area.

19. True.

20. True. This was reported in 1993 in J. Entomol. Sci. 28:236-39 for rabbiteye blueberries.

21. True. Fire ants consume large numbers of insects of many kinds. They do, however, make scale insects worse on blueberries by farming them.

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.

Bob's Blueberry Farm and Nursery. West Pasco County. (727)863-4214 or toll free (888) 654-4214 Year around plant sales, southern highbush blueberry plants, all sizes and varieties, over 40,000 on hand. Call for prices and availability. Plan ahead, have the plants you need when you need them. Lic. no. 47227344.

Call the Doc! Doc Applications, Inc. is booking orders for the fall 2002 and beyond. We grow the latest varieties including Gulfcoast, Sharpblue, Sapphire, and Emerald bare root and in containers. Call Dave Weber (863)325-8215 for price and availability. Lic. no. 47219637.

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

Honey Bees for Blueberry Pollination. We use the Buckfast strain, which pollinates at temperatures 20 cooler than other strains. Bees guaranteed for strength. \$20.00 per hive. Call Robbie Bell toll free (800) 822-1558; home (863) 285-7785; mobile (863) 698-9525.

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.

Jacto Sprayers. Save time and chemical cost with a Jacto Airblast Sprayer. Jacto is the number one sprayer in the blueberry and nursery industry and has proven itself in helping productivity. For more information or a demonstration, call Kenny Mitchem at Henry Mitchem Equipment, Leesburg, FL at (352) 787-4109.

Miller Blueberry Nursery. Rt. 3, Box 5700, Palatka, FL 32177, Telephone (386) 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.

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)

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