



The Blueberry News

Official Newsletter of the Florida Blueberry Growers' Association

Spring Issue, 2005

A Message from the President

Dear Fellow Blueberry Growers:

Well, it is a new year. The hurricanes are behind us and we are all looking for another above average harvest. Chill hours seem to be adequate even here in Central Florida. Warmer than average early-mid January temperatures brought on an early flush and advanced flower buds to an early stage four. This weather has set us all up for an interesting early spring cold protection chore. I wish everybody a successful and profitable 2005 season. In other exciting news...our new website is about ready to hit the cyber world. Please help us find advertisers to help fund this website. Please ask your suppliers to advertise with us on our site. Contact Sherri Brothers regarding information on our new site. See you at the Spring Field Day.

Joe Keel
FBGA President

FBGA Membership Dues

The beginning of the new calendar year is also the beginning of the FBGA membership year. Many of our members are not up-to-date on their membership dues. Please look at the address label on this newsletter. If the year in parenthesis is 2004, or less, then you need to renew your membership. Those who have a 2002 on their mailing label will not receive any further correspondence from FBGA until their membership is renewed. For information on how to calculate your dues, please refer to the back of this newsletter. Your membership and participation in our activities is greatly appreciated! Please note that FBGA has a new mailing address:

Florida Blueberry Growers' Association
P.O. Box 163
Island Grove, FL 32654

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Time to Monitor for Thrips and Blueberry Gall Midge

Oscar E. Liburd, Entomology and Nematology Dept., UF/IFAS

This is the time for Florida blueberry growers to begin monitoring for flower thrips in their fields, although the recent cold weather may have slowed down the movement of thrips into blueberry fields. Using white sticky boards, as well as the conventional floral tapping method on a white surface are examples of strategies that can be used to monitor thrips population in the field. In terms of treatments, the insecticide spinosad (SpinTor 2SC) reduces thrips population and conserves the beneficial insects that will feed on other insect pests. If thrips population is high, repeated applications (every 7-10 days) will prove more effective because SpinTor does not last for a long time on the plant. SpinTor is not a highly toxic insecticide; however, it is advisable to apply SpinTor late in the afternoon when bees are less active.

Growers who have rabbiteye blueberries should also monitor for blueberry gall midge. This involves randomly collecting buds from different bushes (10 buds per acre) and examining later for emergence of the gall midge. Buds that are collected should be placed in zip-lock bags at room temperature for 10-14 days. If fields are infested with blueberry gall midge, small maggots and very small midge-like flies will emerge from the buds inside the bags. Preventative insecticide treatments are recommended for farms that have a history of blueberry gall midge. Insecticides should be applied when the buds are between first and second stage of development. Diazinon and Malathion works well as a pre-bloom spray to control gall midge. During bloom growers should switch from Diazinon/Malathion to SpinTor. Other cultural practices such as pruning and adequate fertilization may help to reduce the effects of blueberry gall midge injury. Before any insecticide is applied growers should follow the manufacturer recommended rates. For more information, email Oscar Liburd at oeliburd@ifas.ufl.edu.

Watch for Botrytis This Spring

Jeffrey G. Williamson, Horticultural Sciences Dept., UF/IFAS

If our early February weather is an indication of things to come, this could be a year for serious Botrytis outbreaks in Florida. This fungus develops rapidly during cool wet spring weather. Freeze damaged flowers and corollas that don't drop after flowering can exacerbate the incidence of this disease. Dr. Phil Harmon has published an excellent fact sheet entitled Botrytis Blossom Blight of Southern Highbush Blueberry which contains information on cultural and chemical control as well as excellent photographs of infected plants. The publication can be accessed at <http://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/PP119>.

There are also other blueberry publications online dealing with issues such as freeze protection, pest management, pruning, etc. at http://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/TOPIC_Blueberry.

Florida's Blueberry Production and Acreage Increases Rapidly

Jeffrey G. Williamson, Horticultural Sciences Dept., UF/IFAS

According to the USDA National Agricultural Statistics Service (NASS), Florida blueberry acreage increased by 21% between 2003 and 2004 while the overall US acreage increased by about 7% during that same period. Florida had an estimated 2300 acres of cultivated blueberries in 2004, up from about 1900 acres in 2003. NASS reported that Florida blueberry production in 2004 was about 6,000,000 pounds (other estimates I've heard are slightly lower) which represented a 58 % increase from their 2003 production

estimates. Even with slightly lower average fruit prices for the 2004 season (\$4.50/lb), the estimated value of our industry was \$25 million, up considerably from previous years and currently ranked 5th in the nation.

BLUEBERRY PRODUCTS AND SERVICES

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.

Far Reach Ranch. Blueberry plants for sale. 30 miles North of Orlando. Jewel, Emerald, Star liners. Call Jerry (352) 516-7428.

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 with us. We have all varieties including new releases from U of F. We grow specifically for your needs. Lic. no. 47217870. Sheri Brothers at (352) 481-5558 or berrygirl629@aol.com
Website islandgroveagproducts.com.

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

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.

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.

Advertisements and claims therein to do not constitute an endorsement by the Florida Blueberry Growers' Association or the University of Florida.

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 163
Island Grove, FL 32654

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)

