

Weekly Berry Call – June 10, 2009

Participants:

Via e-mail this week: Dale Riggs (Stephentown/Northern Hudson Valley), Marvin Pritts (Finger Lakes region/Ithaca).

Phone participants: Molly Shaw, South Central NY, Colleen Cavagna (Allegheny/Cattaraugus region), Laura McDermott (Eastern NY/Upper Hudson/Lower Adirondack), Cathy Heidenreich (Western NY), Marianna Quartararo (Sullivan County), Kathy Demchak, (University Park, Pennsylvania)

GROWING CONDITIONS (courtesy NY NASS)

Week ending June 7th: A series of cold fronts moved across New York State but moisture was limited to southeast portions of the state where precipitation was above normal with weekly rainfall amounts of one quarter of an inch or less. Temperatures were below normal during the week as cool high pressure followed in the wake of passing cold fronts. Unseasonably chilly temperatures led to some frost across upstate New York on the morning of June 1st with freezing temperatures across portions of the Adirondacks and Lake George region.

Editor's note: Overall, most regions with exception of the Coastal area, St Lawrence Valley and Morrisville and Norwich on the Eastern plateau are down 0.5 - 3.4" precipitation compared to normal. (Weather data follows). Irrigation critical unless rains come through, especially on strawberries which are in harvest across the state.

REPORTS FROM THE FIELD

Alleghany/Cattaraugus region

Major downpour Monday PM; water running off, serious erosion.

Berkshire foothills/Stephentown, NY

Strawberries: picked and sold our first berries Sunday the 7th and will be officially opening for the season on the 12th. PYO will start around the 19th or 20th.

Eastern NY Region

Rain in southern areas where strawberry picking is in full swing. Concerns about gray mold coverage- fair amount of disease pressure already, more rain in the forecast. Grower in Peru, NY apparently experiencing similar problems to other reports - poor growth in first fruiting year strawberry planting- possible winter injury?

Strawberries: picking almost a week already (5 days)

Brambles: bloom to fruit set; tayberries in Saratoga area set fruit for first time in 5 years.

Blueberries: green fruit; heavy crop

Fingerlakes region/Ithaca area:

Strawberries starting to ripen; no major problems reported.

University Park, PA

On and off showers; not significant accumulations, just enough humidity/moisture to provide high gray mold pressure for strawberries.

Strawberries: Some areas already 3 weeks into harvest (SE PA), others just beginning. Root weevils in 2 fields previously without root weevil history until new Darselect plantings. Pests presumably came in on planting stock.

South Central/Southern Tier region

Much needed rain Monday PM, ¾". Blueberries: starting to size.

Sullivan County/South of Catskills/NY-NJ border

Weather has been cloudy, wet and cool. Frost damage now becoming evident.

Western NY

Weather has been dry with exception of showers Monday PM into Tuesday AM. Accumulation in Geneva, NY approx 0.33".

Strawberries: Day neutrals being harvested as of last Friday in the Fingerlakes; also being harvested this week in Oneida County. June-bearers not far behind. Most U-pick operations planning to open mid-June.

Brambles: full bloom.

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Blueberries: green fruit; very heavy crop loads.

DISCUSSION:

Comments on Weed Management: Two herbicides to be added to the blueberry weed management arsenal, one product inadvertently omitted from 2009 Production Guide (*Karmex DF*), and one new product labeled in January 2009 (*Rely 200*; this product may not be used in Nassau or Suffolk counties). For an excellent discussion of early summer blueberry weed management see: "[Blueberry Weed Management: Early Summer Options](#)" by Eric Hansen and Bernie Zandstra, MSU.

Comments on Diseases:

Botrytis on strawberries is caused by *Botrytis cinerea*, the gray mold fungus. It can attack fruit, leaves and shoots. Spores overwinter on decaying leaves or infected twigs. In the spring, windblown spores infect the blossoms. If spring weather conditions support 3-4 consecutive days of high moisture either from rain, fog or heavy dew, then the spores germinate and infect the susceptible tissue. What are options for gray mold management when conditions close to or during harvest are favorable to disease development? Suggestions from the discussion this week include:

- 1) Pristine: this product is somewhat absorbed by plant tissue, possibly making it longer lasting;
- 2) Captan, a less expensive material to use, especially if it may be washed off; and
- 3) Switch – a good product but expensive; not absorbed into tissue, hence probably washes off under heavy precipitation.



Angular leaf spot - one of the two known bacterial diseases of strawberry. This disease commonly occurs in more southerly growing regions but may be a problem in the NE. It may be introduced to fields on infected planting stock as farms without previous history of the disease report outbreaks in first year plantings. Cool, wet weather, over head irrigation and frost/freeze injury favor disease development.

Below- (Left to right) square (angular) lesions between veins. Blackening of berry caps; view of lesions with back light, front light.



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For more on angular leaf spot: <http://www.omafra.gov.on.ca/IPM/english/strawberries/insects/root-weevil.html>.

For information on it's management: <http://www.fruit.cornell.edu/Berries/genipm.html>.

Comments on Insects and Other Pests:

Strawberry root weevils – Two reports of root weevils being introduced into fields on Darselect planting stock in PA, one in NY; fields planted had no previous history of problems with weevils. Three weevils commonly cause damage in NYS, the strawberry root weevil, and black vine weevil, Larvae feed on plant roots and crown areas. Adults will be emerging shortly - watch for leaf notching (feeding).



Root weevil feeding damage



Root weevil c-shaped larvae



Adult Black Vine Weevil

For more on root weevils: <http://www.omafra.gov.on.ca/IPM/english/strawberries/insects/root-weevil.html>.

For information on their management: <http://www.fruit.cornell.edu/Berries/genipm.html>.

Snails/slugs – numbers are definitely increasing. Baits are about our only alternative. There are 2 approved for use; one of these is OMRI approved.

For more on slugs/snails check out the fact sheets here: <http://www.fruit.cornell.edu/Berries/genipm.html>.

For information on their management: http://ipmguidelines.org/BerryCrops/content/CH05/CH05-3.asp#_Toc219869868.

Sowbugs have been reported as a new pest problem in PA in both high tunnel and field strawberries. [Sluggo Plus](#) is labeled in NYS for control of both slug/snails and sowbugs. Below is a short article by Kathy from the May issue of their newsletter:



THAT'S A BERRY GOOD QUESTION!!! *Sowbugs and Strawberries* [Kathy Demchak](#), Penn State Horticulture

Q. A local grower mentioned he was having trouble with sowbugs eating holes in his strawberries last year. However, the literature says that sowbugs eat dead and decaying organic matter, and that they typically aren't a problem for crops. Have you ever heard of this happening anywhere else? Are there any materials that can be used to help with this problem?

A. Yes, and yes. We had major problems with sowbugs eating holes in strawberry fruit in our high tunnels. I thought the problems we were having were isolated incidents, but since then, I've heard from a few strawberry growers with sowbug problems, and the problem has occurred in the field as well as in high tunnels. Maybe the problem wasn't as isolated as I thought.

In every case where sowbugs have been a problem, there has been organic matter involved, either as a mulch, a compost, an unharvested root crop, or wood for permanent raised beds that started to decompose, as in our tunnels. In these situations, the sowbug population starts building on an abundant organic (organic meaning carbon-

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containing, in this case) source of food, but once the population becomes high and the original food source decomposes further, the sowbugs will eat whatever they can find that is soft enough. Strawberries certainly fit the bill.

One of the growers had tried a product called Sluggo Plus (other trade names exist) that is labeled for control of both snails and sowbugs (and some other soil-dwelling pests), and apparently it worked quite well. Sluggo Plus contains iron phosphate for slug control (same as in the product Sluggo) and spinosad, which affects the sowbugs and other insect pests. One caution is that there is a 3-day PHI for Sluggo Plus, as opposed to Sluggo which can be used up to the day of harvest. So, if you're seeing sowbugs, you'll want to get this product on before harvest begins. *(Reprinted with permission from: The Vegetable & Small Fruit Gazette, May 2009, Volume 13, No. 5)*

Comments on Varieties:

In Pennsylvania the new strawberry variety 'Wendy' has been performing well on plastic. It has good flavor and nice size. So far growers are very happy with this cultivar.

Comments on Other Issues:

Slow Release Fertilizers – Are these effective for blueberries; growers report their use. G. Pavlov (Rutgers) reports weekly fertigation provides better nutrient uptake, more N availability. However, it's important that whatever fertilizer selected provide the ammonium form of nitrogen. Expense of slow-release fertilizers also makes this probably not a viable alternative on a commercial scale.

Frost Protection – Smaller growers may want to consider use of floating row cover as an alternative to overhead irrigation for frost protection. A double weight of 1.25 oz Typar or Dupont cover has been used successfully in PA for protection down to 21°F without damage. Older row cover may be used as the lower insulating layer (even with holes or tears) while newer cover is pulled over the top. This slippery material pulls on easily, even over an under layer and is very durable (longevity = approx. 5 years).

Food Safety – More discussion of water borne contaminants that might affect berry safety. One anecdotal report indicates a 24 hour period needed between irrigation and harvest. Another reports 48 hours. No published guidelines based on research findings found to date. Some work has been done in Ontario Canada. Checking to find reported results from this study.