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Editor:

Eric T. Stafne

Contributors:

- Eric Stafne
- Stephen Stringer
- John Braswell

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Harvest Just Around the Corner

The warm temperatures this winter and early Spring initiated early bloom for our blueberries. The good news is that most escaped the February freeze without serious consequences. However, freeze is not the only thing that can have serious negative consequences. In this issue I discuss unintended spray effects on blueberry plants. John Braswell has gathered up numbers from the combined marketing groups Miss-Lou, Wayne County, Great Southern Farm and Blue River to give us an idea of the 2011 harvest year. Dr. Steve Stringer has done a great job of releasing valuable blueberry cultivars for the Mississippi industry. ‘Prince’ is one of his latest. It shows a lot of promise — the upsides are getting into the market earlier than other rabbiteye cultivars and the prodigious amount of fruit it can produce. Downsides? It’s new and it doesn’t have a long track record, but it sure looks like a winner right now. I give an update of my social media efforts (in hopes that you will follow me, of course) and again I keep the information on the field day available.

2011 Mississippi Blueberry Harvest Data

John Braswell, Gulf South Blueberry Growers Association

Fresh lbs	2,410,000
Frozen lbs	2,590,000
Total Volume lbs	5,000,000
Value—Fresh (\$1.60/lb)	\$3,856,000
Value — Frozen (\$0.85/lb)	\$2,201,500
Total Value	\$6,057,500

Information gathered from combined marketing groups Miss-Lou, Wayne County, Great Southern Farm & Blue River and should only be regarded as an estimate

Update on Social Media Information Sources

Eric T. Stafne

My blog (msfruitextension.wordpress.com) and Twitter account (@EStafne) are still going on. It is interesting because I can view the data in terms of visits for each one. These types of endeavors are slow to get going in my experience. Blogs tend to gain followers and momentum over period of time (unless you are really famous). Twitter followers come quicker, but one must be diligent at posting information to gain followers. I must admit — the question becomes “of what value is this to the reader”? I try to post things I believe folks will find of interest and perhaps even useful. My blog has been read 876 times by people from 29 different countries so far. I have 12 dedicated blog followers and 38 more who get the feed through Twitter. It’s a start. I view this as a great tool to get immediate information out if necessary. I try to post photos to the blog as well as this is a nice way to digest information. Blogs and Twitter may not be for everyone, but you might try it and see if it works for you. If not, no big deal, but you might find it a good learning tool. I know I did.

Spray Injury to Blueberries — Eric T. Stafne, MSU

Glyphosate (also commonly known as RoundUp and under other generic labels) is a great tool for controlling weeds where fruit crops are grown. It takes out both broadleaves and grasses which makes it a popular choice. However, it can come with downsides. Weed resistance is one downside. Another, potentially more devastating problem is misuse, specifically applicator misuse. I don’t know how many times I have been in an orchard or vineyard that I have seen self-inflicted glyphosate injury on plants. What makes glyphosate great is that it is non-selective, but that is also what makes it dangerous. It is indiscriminate when it comes to weed or the fruit plant. Glyphosate works by inhibiting protein production by stopping the shikimic enzyme pathway. It is also systemic, meaning that when it is sprayed on the leaves of the plant it is translocated back to meristematic tissues (growing points).

What are the results of plant exposure to glyphosate?

Several symptoms such as stunted growth, discoloration (yellowing) of leaves, leaf deformities, and tissue death. And, oh yeah, plant death.

Using glyphosate around plants that tend to send up suckers or canes can be tricky. In the case of brambles, a cane may be several feet away in a row walkway, but it is still coming from the mother plant. If sprayed it would translocate the glyphosate back through the root system and could harm the mother plant. I recently saw a case of what I believe to be glyphosate injury in a blueberry field.

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The 'Prince' of Mississippi

Eric T. Stafne, Mississippi State University and Stephen Stringer, USDA-ARS

'Prince' is a recently released rabbiteye blueberry from the USDA-ARS breeding program headed by Dr. Stephen Stringer. 'Prince' has a tall and spreading growth habit which is vigorous. It tends to produce numerous canes. The part growers like is its potential for high yields — it produces prodigious amounts of blooms early in the season. In fact, bloom is earlier than most other rabbiteye cultivars, so danger of frost injury is a concern, especially when grown in areas that are prone to frost. Berry ripening is early as well. Berries tend to be medium in size with a small picking scar, and has good color, firmness and flavor. Earlier this year I was at Jerry Hutto's and saw 'Prince'. It wasn't planted in the best location, kind of a low spot, but it has a tremendous number of blooms (see photo below). I visited after the freeze event in February, so I was expecting to see considerable damage, but what I saw surprised me — very few flowers were damaged. 'Prince' requires early training to achieve a desirable shape because canes tend to lay over from the base of the crown



when they are in their juvenile state. Another unknown is just how well it will mechanically harvest. Since it was released just recently we don't know the answer to that yet. You can find more on 'Prince' from the All About Blueberries website from eXtension: <http://www.extension.org/pages/29900/prince:-rabbiteye-blueberry-variety>

Gulf South Blueberry Growers' Field Day

The Gulf South Blueberry Growers' Association will hold their annual Field Day on **Thursday, October 11, 2012**. Registration will begin at 8AM. Location will be at Tom Giles' place in Wayne County. The cost to attend will be \$20.00 for members and \$30.00 for non members for early registration. Cost will increase "at the door" due to the need for planning of the meal, etc. Exhibitor fees will \$150.00 per booth. More details will come later as the event gets closer. It should be a great event with lots of networking and learning to do, so keep this date open and tell all your friends.



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Coastal Research and Extension
Center
South Mississippi Research and
Extension Center
810 Hwy 26 West
Poplarville, MS 39470
Phone: 601-403-8939
E-mail: estafne@ext.msstate.edu

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Spray Injury to Blueberries, continued

Eric T. Stafne, MSU



Notice how the leaves are small, yellow, and oddly shaped. The growth has also been stunted. Will this cane recover? Doubtful. Is the entire plant at risk? Possibly, but older plants are going to be more tolerant than younger plants unless they are in poor health to begin with. The lesson here is to be very careful when using glyphosate — don't apply when it is windy, don't apply to suckers, don't apply to exposed roots, and use a spray shield if possible to reduce unintended movement of the chemical to off-target plants.

Although spray injury is most common from herbicides, other sprays can cause problems if not properly done. Earlier this month I had a visit from a grower who sprayed his bushes with malathion, an insecticide, but something went haywire and it created dead leaves with an oil-soaked appearance. What happened? Hard to tell, it could be poor mixing in the tank, excessive application, or a number of other things. As with glyphosate (and other herbicides) one must be careful.