

**Welcome to our UF/IFAS Extension Suwannee Valley Watermelon Crop Update. These updates will be summarized by Bob Hochmuth, Regional Specialized Extension Agent- Vegetable Crops, with input from Suwannee Valley Extension Agents: Mark Warren (Levy), Tyler Pittman (Gilchrist), Tatiana Sanchez-Jones (Alachua), Luke Harlow (Bradford), Dan Fenneman (Madison), Keith Wynn (Hamilton), Emily Beach (Lafayette), Jim Devalerio (Union), Ben Hoffner (Jefferson), Raymond Balaguer(Suwannee), Derick Conover (Columbia) Kevin Athearn (RSA-Agri- business), and Jay Capasso (RSA- Water Resources), and Sydney Williams (NFREC-SV).**

If you know someone who wants to be added to this weekly notice, have them contact Taite Miller, [taitemiller@ufl.edu](mailto:taitemiller@ufl.edu), or Bob Hochmuth, [bobhoch@ufl.edu](mailto:bobhoch@ufl.edu), or navigate to <https://subscribe.ifas.ufl.edu/extweb/nfrec-sv-watermelon.html>

We will continue this year to support our watermelon growers with a rapid diagnostics system through Suwannee Valley Regional and County Extension Agents. This industry-funded program allows Extension Agents to submit and pay for watermelon grower's plant disease and other diagnostic samples. This **SV Rapid Diagnostic Watermelon Program** will help us to get quicker diagnostic results, helping to give early alerts to everyone, and not have to charge the growers directly. Plant disease samples are typically \$40 and leaf tissue analyses are typically \$20. **We are always solicitating those industry reps interested in sponsoring this effort. The past year's sponsorships have ranged from \$200 to \$2,000 per company. Sponsors will be recognized every week beginning this week. Those interested in being added as a sponsor can contact Bob Hochmuth at [bobhoch@ufl.edu](mailto:bobhoch@ufl.edu) or 386-288-6301.**

**Current 2026 sponsors of our Watermelon Rapid Diagnostics Program include: Mayo Ag Services, Harrell's Fertilizer, BASF/Nunhems, Gowan USA, TriEst Ag Group, Allison Meharg Food Safety Consulting, and Syngenta Crop Protection. Thanks for this industry support. Other sponsors are welcome to join, simply contact Bob Hochmuth.**

## **Downy mildew in watermelon alert for North Florida:**

Well, we knew it was just a matter of time before downy mildew was confirmed in watermelon in North Florida. As expected, we now can say we have confirmed downy mildew in watermelon in the Suwannee Vally region of North Fl. Thanks to everyone in our **UF/IFAS Watermelon Rapid Diagnostics Program** to get this confirmed in our lab in about 4 hours from the sample being collected by the Extension Agent. It was seen in small areas at the end of last week but as downy mildew can do, it spread rapidly over the weekend. That fast movement is a description of how it got its name, "wildfire". It was found in a field that had been harvested a few times.

So, here we go! Unless you are at the very last harvests in a given field in the next few days, you will want to consider adding a material to the spray tank for downy mildew. Our suggestions include either Raman or Orondis Ultra. The choice of Ranman may be ok if you see no signs of downy, but otherwise if any areas of downy are of concern in a field then use Orondis Ultra. If in doubt, I suggest you use the best material we have, Orondis Ultra. Both have zero days to harvest PHI in watermelon. Remember both Ranman and Orondis Ultra are only targeted very

specifically at downy mildew and will not help on other diseases. If you see signs of downy but are not due to spray again for a few days, you may consider a separate and immediate spray for downy mildew. The signs include the firing of the leaves and the upward cupping of the affected leaves. See photo below from a severe case in past years.

**Photo: Downy mildew in watermelon (Photo by Bob Hochmuth)**

