

Do you have Blueberry Stunt?

A concern for everyone with highbush blueberries in Nova Scotia.

Introduction

Blueberry 'stunt' is a phytoplasma disease of highbush blueberries that was identified on several farms in the Annapolis Valley in 2014. Although reported previously in the province we are concerned that this disease is on the increase and would like all growers to scout their fields for symptoms.

Symptoms

The upper right picture illustrates the typical symptoms of the disease which are downward cupping of the leaves and chlorotic edges and interveinal areas. However, there can be variations of these symptoms depending on the variety and progression of the disease.

Spread

The disease is spread by the 'sharpnosed leafhopper' (adults pictured at right) which has been confirmed in several orchards but its flight timings and significance have not been determined in Nova Scotia at this time. Blueberry stunt can be spread by taking cuttings from infected plants so propagation of stock from infected orchards should be avoided.

Effects on Productivity

Blueberry stunt is a debilitating disease that reduces growth and productivity over time. It may take several years for this to happen and during this time infected plants are a source of inoculum for new infections. It also takes 1-3 years for symptoms to show after initial infection so fields should be monitored regularly on an annual basis to identify bushes as soon as symptoms express.

Management

When symptomatic bushes are identified they should be removed and destroyed immediately as this is the only way to kill the disease. Some sources recommend spraying an insecticide prior to removing bushes to prevent leafhoppers from spreading the disease to adjacent bushes. Monitoring and control of the leafhopper vector may also be required if there is a history of the disease on your operation. Contact your local extension agent to discuss registered control options and timing of applications.

Perennia management schedules are regularly updated. Producers are advised to check them for up to date pest information.



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Photo Source: Rutgers Cooperative Extension

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