

Final Report

Blueberry Management Practices for Growers and Agents in Mississippi and Louisiana

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Objective:

Conduct blueberry management workshops in Mississippi and Louisiana.

- Discussion of best management practices
- Pruning demonstrations
- Hands-on pruning practice for workshop participants

Justification and Description:

Blueberries were once a small-scale crop, but they are now grown throughout the world. Highbush blueberries (*Vaccinium corymbosum*) are the primary type of commercially grown blueberry, but southern highbush (*Vaccinium* spp.) and rabbiteye (*V. virgatum*; syn. *V. ashei*) are also widely produced.

Blueberries are grown in Mississippi, Louisiana, and throughout the southeastern United States by commercial producers for local and wholesale, fresh and processing markets. Since their commercial production began about a century ago, blueberries have become the most highly valued fruit crop grown in the region.

Blueberry plantings are relatively expensive to establish but can remain productive for a long time. To remain competitive, blueberry growers must have a clear understanding of several key factors and plan carefully when preparing to establish a blueberry planting. Careful consideration of site selection, preplant preparation, plant management, cultivar selection, pest management, harvesting, and marketing is crucial to success.

Two management workshops were hosted in 2023. The first was held on June 29 at the Mississippi State University Beaumont Horticultural Unit in Perry County, MS. The second workshop was held on July 14 at the Louisiana State University AgCenter Hammond Research Station in Tangipahoa Parish, LA.

The workshops covered the basics of blueberry production and management for various blueberry types. After the presentations and discussions, in-field demonstrations showed participants correct pruning and maintenance techniques. Participants were given the opportunity to practice these techniques on existing field plantings. The training was targeted toward Extension agents who were offered in-service training credit for attendance.

Each participant received a printed blueberry management information as well as a blueberry plant donated by Bracy's Nursery in Amite, LA.

**Evaluation Results from the June and July 2023 Extension Agent Blueberry
Trainings in Mississippi and Louisiana.**

Survey Question	Louisiana Results			Mississippi Results		
	A little	Some	A lot	A little	Some	A lot
The speakers were knowledge about the subject matter	0	0	21	0	1	8
The speakers related program content to real life situations	0	1	20	0	1	8
The contents were relevant to my needs	1	4	16	0	1	8
The contents were at an understandable level	0	0	21	0	1	8
The contents were well organized	1	5	15	0	1	8
The contents were based on credible up to date information	0	1	20	0	1	8
I will use the information I learned in this program	0	3	18	0	1	8
I will tell others about what I leaned in this program	1	3	17	0	0	9
Total number of answers in each category	3	16	148	0	7	65

Survey Question	Louisiana				Mississippi			
	None	A little	Some	A lot	None	A little	Some	A lot
How much of the content covered did you already know?	2	6	11	2	0	1	7	1
How many of the resources will you use?	0	1	7	13	0	0	0	9
How well did the information presented meet your expectations	0	1	2	18	0	0	0	9