

2023 Fall and Winter Pruning Assessment of ‘Ouachita’ Blackberry Trial Complications & Updates

The ‘Ouachita’ blackberry fall and winter pruning trial at the UA Fruit Research Station was proposed in the fall of 2022 to be conducted in fall of 2023. This assessment was to study how blackberry yield, composition quality, plant morphology, and winter cane injury was impacted by pruning primocanes (next season’s floricanes) in the fall compared to traditional winter pruning in January. This assessment was set to begin in the fall of 2023, however our location had a couple days of severe thunderstorms with damaging winds and hail between the days of June 12-17, 2023 that broke many primocane lateral branches and destroyed plants that were to be used for the study. The resulting laterals left were insufficient to conduct the trial. Our plan is to delay the trial until 2024 by utilizing a newly established planting with ‘Ponca’ blackberries rather than the original plot of ‘Ouachita’ blackberries. The “Ponca” planting was established in spring of 2023. The ‘Ponca’ blackberry plants are trellised and culturally managed using the Southeast Caneberry Management Guide’s recommendations. We will begin tipping primocanes in the spring/summer of 2024 and will follow the same protocol we had proposed for the fall and winter of 2023 in the fall and winter of 2024. We will be asking for an extension of the funds previously granted to support the trial in 2024, but no additional funds are needed since we were not able to fully conduct the trial in 2023.

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