News on Hoppers, Lavender & BFG Supply

Research and News on the latest pest management techniques

GROWERTALKS MAGAZINE greenPROFIT MAGAZINE

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Pest Talks

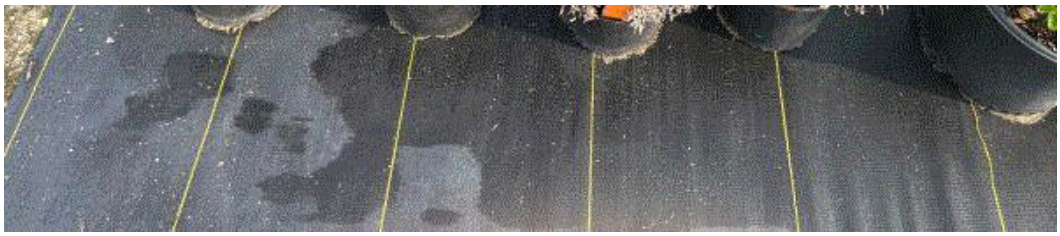
COMING UP THIS WEEK:

What the ... ?
BFG News
TSCL Review
New Planthopper
Phytophthora vs. Lavender

What the ... ?

I know my email inbox will be bombed if I say it, but I'm going to say it anyway: I don't know why we bother to grow lavender in the South.

I never have much luck with keeping lavender alive. I've grown them in well-drained media and I've grown them in sandy, dry soil. They never survived for more than a few months. Okay, I acknowledge that, as an entomologist, I don't really know how to grow plants (any plant) and that I grow plants just so I can get some bugs or diseases on them. But the high humidity and frequent summer rains, and the problems associated with these conditions, just beat the living daylight out of lavender. I'm sure lavender would beg to go back to the Mediterranean Basin if they can speak. South Carolina isn't a friendly territory.



I included a group of lavender in a trial I started a month ago. A few of them got really sad within a week of application. I knew my treatments didn't cause the sadness because the moribund plants, shown in the picture above, were scattered in several treatments. I thought, "Uh oh." Sure enough, all the plants were dead last week. Needless to say, my trial on lavender is a dud. (I was so sad I couldn't even take a picture of all the dead plants.)

What killed my precious test plants?

BFG News

There was a bit of scrambling at work this past week because we received word that BFG Supply is going out of business. BFG Supply, based in Burton, Ohio, is a major distributor of SEPRO Land's products. In fact, it's one of the largest distributors in our industry, period.

While we worked on confirming the news and felt sorry for our colleagues and friends who are impacted, we want to make sure plans are in place so that our customers are taken care of.

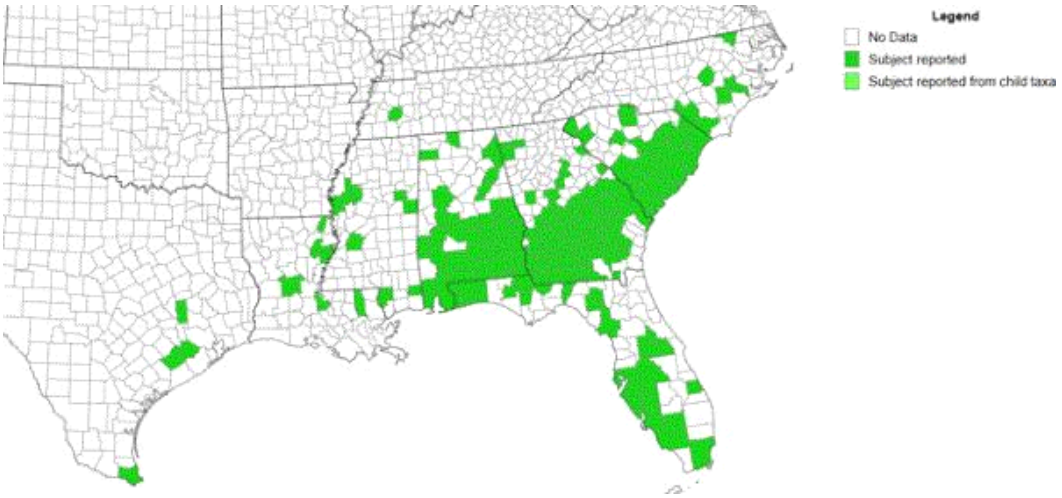
I've seen Reddit chatters about BFG closing and layoffs for a week now. Some exhibitors at BFG Expo East (Cleveland, Ohio) and West (Reno, Nevada) received cancellation notices late last week. It certainly looks like things are moving in a certain direction and changes are happening quickly.

Jen Polanz wrote up a piece on BFG closing for Chris Beytes' latest issue of *Acres Online*. Go HERE to read what we know so far. We're keeping an eye on the fast-moving situation and will keep you updated.

A New Review Paper on Two-Spot Cotton Leafhopper

You've probably heard about the two-spot cotton leafhopper over the past year or so (unless you don't grow any hibiscus or related plants or you're in a year-long posh retreat where you're having so much fun that you don't even care about the outside world. More lavender-scented aroma therapy? Please!).

You'll be impacted by this pest and regulations associated with it if you grow plants, particularly hibiscus and its relatives, in the Southeast (see the distribution map below). Texas has a state quarantine against this pest and plant inspectors in other states are regulating it.



Current distribution of the two-spot cotton leafhopper in the United States. Counties with confirmed infestation are colored green. (Source: EDDMaps.)

A review paper on the biology, economics and management of the two-spot cotton leafhopper was published in the *Journal of Integrated Pest Management* last week. This paper is authored by Blair Sampson, Hamidou Sakhanokho and Siva Kumpatla of USDA-ARS's Southern Horticultural Research Laboratory in Poplarville, Mississippi. Go HERE to get a free copy of the paper if you want to do a deep dive into this pest.

The paper estimated that this invasive pest has the potential of causing 40% to 60% yield losses in cotton, which value at about $1 billion per year. Peak losses in southeastern vegetable production are projected at 70% to 80%, or about $600 million. Economic damage to ornamentals may also be high, but the paper didn't provide an estimated figure.

The paper also reviewed information on cultural, biological and chemical control, as well as host plant resistance. Much of this information is from around the world. Management approaches applicable to the United States, particularly to the ornamental industry, are being developed.

A good place to stay up to date on research associated with the two-spot cotton leafhoppers in all the commodities is the Stop 2SCL website. This website was developed with the help from Southern Region IPM Center (housed at the University of Georgia) and is meant to serve as a depository of all information and research results on the two-spot cotton leafhopper. Check it out!

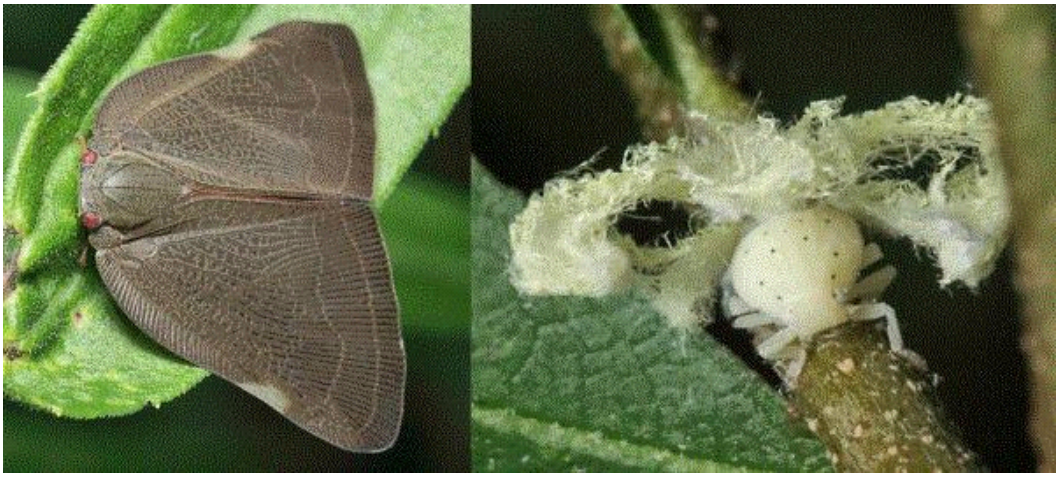
A New Invasive Planthopper in Georgia

In addition to the two-spot cotton leafhopper, folks in Georgia have been asked to keep an eye out for the brown-winged planthopper, *Pochazia shantungensis*. This is a planthopper species native to China that's recently been discovered near Atlanta, Georgia. This species has wreaked havoc in South Korea and Europe, where it has invaded since 2010.

Shout-out to Janna Beckerman at Envu for alerting me at Cultivate to this new invasive species. I just got around to writing about it.

The brown-winged planthopper is, well, brown. It's certainly not as noticeable as the two-spot cotton leafhopper or the spotted lanternfly. Adults aren't particularly big, with a body measuring at only 1/3-in. long and a wingspan of about 1 in. They often spot a pair of red eyes. Nymphs look very similar to the nymphs of other planthopper species, which are covered by white wax. The wax covering brown-winged

planthopper nymphs are fluffy and often have noticeable wax tails.



An adult (left) and a nymph (right) of the brown-winged planthopper from Gwinnett County, Georgia. (Photo credit: Dennis White, bugguide.net.)

Planthoppers damage plants in ways similar to that of their cousins, such as aphids, whiteflies and cicadas. They suck sap from plants, which leads to honeydew and sooty mold deposition and declining plant health. They may also damage plants directly when depositing eggs into stems and young branches.

What makes the brown-winged planthopper particularly concerning to regulators is its broad host range. More than 300 plant species from 81 families are known hosts. Preferred hosts include fruit trees and woody ornamental plants. Species that can be impacted include camellia, euonymus, hydrangea, maple, rhododendron, rose and many more.

At this time, it's not clear how damaging brown-winged planthopper will be. But do keep a look out, whether you live in Georgia or elsewhere. Contact your local extension service or state plant regulators if you see something that may look like the brown-winged planthopper.

Go HERE for a fact sheet on this new invasive pest from Shimat Joseph of the University of Georgia.

Answer to "What the ... ?"

Root and crown rot is often suspected when an entire block of lavender dies in a nursery. Fusarium, Phytophthora, Pythium and Rhizoctonia, even *Berkeleyomyces* (formerly known as *Thielaviopsis*), can be suspects of root and crown rot. I didn't do a proper microscopic or ImmunoStrip diagnosis, but root and foliar symptoms point to the fact that my trial was ruined by Phytophthora. *Phytophthora nicotianae* is the most common species that attack lavender.

My collaborating grower reported that the cultivar used in this trial, Super Blue, is usually less susceptible to Phytophthora root and crown rot. Certainly not as susceptible as other varieties, such as Hidcote. This year, however, every lavender cultivar was hit. He'd taken just about all of his lavender to the dump. I didn't have the heart to ask how many were thrown out.

What did I do with the dead lavender? Well, I took them back to SEPRO's research campus in North Carolina and I'm going to isolate the Phytophthora (or whatever pathogen may be the problem). Why? Not because I want more things to do. It just so happened that I have a Phytophthora trial to run and these dead plants seem like good sources for my inoculum.

I may come to regret introducing Phytophthora into my own nursery, so don't do what I did. You don't want to introduce Phytophthora into your operation. Throw away infected plants, especially when there's no hope for them.

Phytophthora Management on Lavender

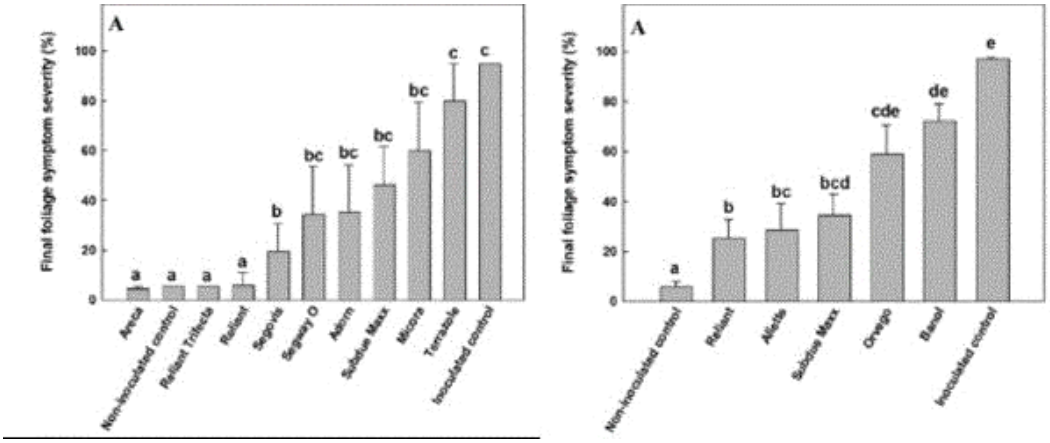
So let's say y'all got some Phytophthora in your lavender crop—what are you going to do about it?

I found this older presentation on managing Phytophthora root and crown rot in lavender from Marianne Elliot and Gary Chastagner of Washington State University. This presentation has some good general pointers on identifying and managing Phytophthora in field- and container-grown lavender.

Danny Dlugos, Billy Bridges and Steve Jeffers of Clemson University published a paper in the journal *HortScience* on fungicide efficacy against *P. nicotianae* in Hidcote Lavender. Danny did his Ph.D. research focusing specifically on Phytophthora in lavender crops. Danny is now a senior research specialist at Holden Forests & Gardens.

Twelve fungicides were evaluated in two greenhouse experiments. Each experiment was repeated in two trials. The fungicides tested (all rates were on per 100 gallons basis) include fosetyl-Al (Aliette and Areca at 12.8 oz.), ametoctradin + dimethomorph (Orvego at 14 fl. oz.), cyazofamid (Segway O at 6 fl. oz.), etridiazole (Terrazole at 7 fl. oz.), fluopicolide (Adorn at 4 fl. oz.), mandipropamid (Micora at 8 fl. oz.), mefenoxam (Subdue Maxx at 2 fl. oz.), oxathiapiprolin (Segovis at 3.2 fl. oz.), propamocarb hydrochloride (Banol at 25 fl. oz.) and potassium salts of phosphorous acid (Reliant at 12.8 fl. oz. and Reliant Trifecta at 1 gram of granules per pot). Subdue Maxx and Reliant served as standards and were included in both experiments. All products were applied as a single drench four days before the plants were inoculated. Inoculated and non-inoculated controls were also prepared.

I'm not going to go deep into the methodology of the experiments. Instead, let's go straight to what Danny and colleagues found out.



Phytophthora symptom severity on lavender treated with 12 fungicides in Experiment 1, Trial 2 (left) and Experiment 2 (right). (Source: Dlugos et al. 2025, *HortScience* 60(3): 446-454.)

All fungicides reduced disease symptom severity to some degree, but there were clear winners and losers. The phosphonates (Aliette, Areca, Reliant and Reliant Trifecta) and Segovis were the best-performing products in this study. (I don't think Areca and Reliant Trifecta are available anymore.) The performance of Subdue Maxx was inconsistent: It was ineffective in the first experiment and was as effective as the phosphonates in the second experiment. Adorn, Banol, Micora, Orvego, Segway and Terrazole were largely ineffective because they didn't cause significant reduction in Phytophthora severity in this study.

There you have it: Phosphonates and Segovis may be your best bet in fighting off *P. nicotianae* in lavender. I think cultural management practices, particularly irrigation management and providing shade in the summer, are also very important in preventing Phytophthora root and crown rot. After all, Phytophthora is a "water mold" and loves it wet!

See y'all later!

JC Chong
Editor-at-Large
PestTalks

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