

# Introduction to scouting

## Why scout blueberry fields?

Scouting for pests and diseases means looking for them in the planting at critical times in their development and recording their incidence.

Regular scouting is the foundation of effective pest management and ensures early detection of insect and disease problems before they reach damaging levels. Regular scouting also helps optimize timing of control measures.



## Strategies for scouting

- ◆ Various insects and diseases require monitoring at different times. See the scouting calendars on pages 7 and 8.
- ◆ Know and understand basic pest biology (life cycles). This will give you the best information on when pests and diseases, and their damage, can be found in the planting.
- ◆ Learn to identify disease and insect life stages and the damage they cause.

- ◆ Know where on the bush insect pests and disease symptoms are most likely to be found.
- ◆ Scout with the sun behind you, and look under the canopy at interior leaves and fruit.
- ◆ Look carefully for disease symptoms after prolonged wet periods.
- ◆ Develop field history maps with locations of areas most affected by pest and disease outbreaks, and monitor more intensively in these areas.
- ◆ Keep track of the weather and pesticide applications to help distinguish pest damage and disease symptoms from physiological disorders and pesticide injury.

### **Tools for scouting**

- ◆ Monitoring traps to track insect development.
- ◆ A 20X hand lens to help identify insects and pathogens.
- ◆ Collection bags or vials to hold samples for identification.
- ◆ Waterproof notebook and pencil.
- ◆ Field maps to document locations of pest outbreaks and locations of scouting efforts over the growing season.
- ◆ Clipboard with scouting forms, (Should include a “time in” and “time out” section to record the

amount of time spent scouting a planting. This is particularly important when determining the economics of scouting activities.)

- ◆ Colored tape or tags to mark bushes of interest.
- ◆ Water-insoluble marker to write on tags/tape or on leaves.

### **Where to monitor**

- ◆ Check border and interior areas of the field separately.
- ◆ Include adjacent habitat that may harbor pests.
- ◆ Monitor at least 100 bushes (25 bushes along the length of four different rows).
- ◆ Look in hotspots with a history of insect pest or disease problems.
- ◆ Inspect and sample both sides of the bush.
- ◆ Walk different rows each time you scout.

### **Weather monitoring**

- ◆ Weather information may be used to predict crop growth stages, appearance of specific insect pest life stages, and infection periods of the major diseases affecting blueberries.
- ◆ Weather information can also help explain weather-related disorders such as cold injury. Minimum weather parameters to monitor include daily high and low temperatures and rainfall.