

Organic Blueberry Production in BC: Pest Management Barriers

A recent survey of conventional blueberry growers revealed some interesting gaps between growers' perceptions and reality regarding organic options for pest management. In this fact sheet we review some of the tools currently available to address specific concerns identified by blueberry and cranberry growers.

Disease Control

Conventional growers ranked Disease control as a major barrier for transitioning to organic production. In comparison, organic growers ranked disease control as not being a barrier.

Selection of resistant or tolerant varieties is the foundation for disease management. The blueberry variety Bluejay has been shown to be resistant to mummyberry, Elliot and Bluetta to canker.

Organic growers diligently monitor crops for diseases so that they can time fungicide applications for optimal control.

There are several biofungicides currently approved for organic production including Serenade, Actinovate, and Regalia. These were used by organic growers for mummyberry, bacterial blight, and botrytis control.



Start with the right variety



Monitoring



Effective fungicide choices are available

Insect Control

Conventional growers ranked Insect control as a major barrier for transitioning to organic production. As with disease, organic growers ranked insects control as not being a barrier.

Variety selection can again be the foundation for insect management— especially spotted wing Drosophila (SWD) control. Early season varieties like Duke, Reka and Earliblue are better choices than late season varieties.

Steps to avoid the build up of ripe fruit, such as short picking intervals, are also used by organic blueberry growers to reduce losses to SWD.

Careful monitoring combined with insecticides (Dipel and Entrust) were used for caterpillar control, if needed.

All growers expressed interest in learning more about and using more natural enemies for insect control. Conservation of natural enemies in a perennial system like blueberries is an area with great potential.



Flowering plants like alyssum & dill can increase natural enemy activity in fields. The trick: getting the natural enemies to go from the flowers to the crop. The risk: flowers compete with blueberry for pollinators.

Entrust – Use Carefully

Entrust is approved for use in organic production and has very low mammalian toxicity. However, recent studies indicate that it may have some unintended consequences that conflict with the values of organic agriculture. There is growing data that spinosad-based products like Entrust have negative impacts on pollinators (native bees) and parasitoid wasps (*Trichogramma* spp. egg parasitoids). Growers should pay attention to pollinator and natural enemy activity before choosing Entrust for SWD or caterpillar control.