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Ohio State University Extension Vegetable Crops
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Sunscald and Cucumber beetle on pumpkins

Pumpkin growers can expect to see sunscald and possibly cucumber beetle feeding damage to the rind of pumpkin fruit. The recent spell of sunny, hot weather with several days in the mid to upper 80's have caused more problems for pumpkin growers. The warm temperatures and bright sunshine has damaged the surface of mature fruit. Pumpkins without irrigation and certain varieties seem more susceptible but all fruit can be affected. In some fields, damage can range anywhere from 5-10% to as high as 20%. If warm temperatures and bright sunshine persist, remove fruit to a location where you can provide adequate storage conditions. These include: cool air, good air circulation and dry conditions. Illustrations and descriptions of the symptoms are below.

Early symptoms start off as small dark red patches on the surface. These areas are slightly sunken.

Mature fruit with sunscald starting to develop

Area enlarges and starts to soften with secondary infection

Late season beetle feeding injury on mature fruit

In some locations, cucumber beetle and corn rootworm beetle populations have jumped dramatically over the last several days. These beetles will feed on the rind of pumpkin fruit which results in severe scarring (see illustration above) making the fruit unmarketable. Significant damage can occur in as little as two to three days. Be sure to check your fields often if you plan to delay harvest.

To avoid further damage from sunscald and cucumber beetles, consider harvesting your crop early. Follow the guidelines below.

Pumpkin Harvesting, Curing and Storage.

Here are some pointers on curing, handling and storing pumpkins and winter squash.

Harvest fruit as soon as they are mature and prior to frost. Both squashes and pumpkins should be well matured before harvest and storage. In some years when maturity is late, pumpkin fruit with at least 40-50% of the fruit surface with orange color will continue to ripen. Use care in handling fruits to avoid wounds. Cuts and bruises in the rind are open to decay organisms that may cause a great deal of loss

in the short run. Under proper conditions wound areas can heal over by producing cork tissue. The protective tissue seems to develop best at relatively high temperature and in moist atmosphere.

Harvest fruit when mature avoiding cuts and bruises.

Cure after harvest 80-85 degrees F and 75-80% humidity for about 10 days.

After curing, store at 50-60 degrees and 70% humidity.

Keep fruit dry and provide good air circulation.

Temperatures below 40 degrees for long periods cause chilling injury and lead to fruit rots.

Pumpkins will keep for 2-3 months

It is essential to keep the surface dry during the storage period. Any dry place where as close as possible to the desired storage temperatures can be maintained is suitable for storage of pumpkins and squashes. They keep best when not piled on top of each other but this is not practical for most operations. Try to keep stacks at minimum heights leaving room for good air circulation. Pumpkins will not keep so well as the hard winter squashes but pumpkins in good condition can be held 2 to 3 months without problems.

Crop Reports Southeast OH, Sep. 1, 2005 by Hal Kneen

Late season vegetables almost ready to pick. Still picking peppers, cucumbers,

eggplant and other miscellaneous vegetables. Little sweet corn left to harvest.

Canning tomato sales are almost complete. Two and one half to three inches of

rainfall fell over the weekend and into Wednesday, August 31, 2005. Helped

growers who are removing tomato stakes. planting Fall cover crops and other field

work however rains did little for the summer's vegetable crop. Late season

vegetables will utilize this rainfall.

Insect counts for August 23- August 31: Beet armyworm moth - Trap A - 326, Trap

B 304. Tomato fruit are now infected with BAW.

Southwest OH Sep. 2 2005 by Brad Bergefurd

Harvest of all summer produce melons, watermelons, sweet corn, potatoes,

beans, peppers, tomatoes, cabbage continues for the last big summer holiday

weekend, Labor Day weekend, with some crops such as sweet corn, green beans and

summer squash getting to be in short supply due to the past 90 days of drought our

Southern Ohio area has been experiencing. Prices for these produce items is running

above average wholesale prices.

Harvest of pumpkins, winter squash, gourds, Ornamental corn and broomcorn has started as Labor Day marks the beginning of the fall harvest season. The southern Ohio pumpkin crop has been experiencing some severe disease outbreaks in the area, with Downy Mildew disease pressures being brought in on the remnants of Hurricane Katrina this week, many pumpkin fields have been totally killed by this disease already resulting in almost a complete crop loss in some situations, since the pumpkins in these fields had not yet reached full maturity before the plants were

killed. Many growers spent Saturday, Sunday, and Monday Am in the fields applying protectant fungicide sprays to vine crops and pumpkin crops in particular due to the heavy Downy Mildew pressures being experienced in the southern Ohio region. Cucumber beetle populations seem to be increasing slightly with the onset of cooler temperatures.