

What To Do After a Hurricane

The following information is from UF EDIS Publication HS1342 “Impacts of Hurricane Damage on Southern Highbush Blueberries” (<https://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/publication/HS1342>)

One should consistently apply the following best management practices after a hurricane to alleviate or avoid additional plant stress:

- Reset and stake uprooted lodged plants as quickly as possible to reduce losses from desiccation and plant death.
- Examine irrigation systems when waters recede to make sure they are functioning properly.
- Repair raised beds and weed cloth, and resume bed irrigation and pH monitoring, adjusting as necessary.
- Carefully monitor irrigation after the storm and rains pass to prevent further drought stress in plants with damaged root systems.
- Resume scheduled fertilizer applications after waters have receded and when beds begin to drain. Consider reducing the rates of nitrogen where plants have been stressed, and begin to slowly return to recommended timings and rates for the given deciduous or evergreen production system.
- Look for disease symptoms and insect pests. Apply management and control suggestions as appropriate; see EDIS Publication HS1156, “2022 Florida Blueberry Integrated Pest Management Guide” (<https://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/publication/HS380>).
- Ideally, applications of Ridomil or another mefenoxam fungicide that help prevent Phytophthora root rot will have already been made in early summer prior to hurricane activity. Two applications of these products per year are allowed, and where a second application was not made earlier, consider making that application prior to a predicted storm impact when possible. When not possible, the second application can be made after waters have receded either in a banded bed application or through certain irrigation systems. (Consult the product label for more details.) These applications can help prevent root rot development, but they will not cure severely affected plants or those dying from flooding (hypoxia). Also consider making foliar applications of phosphorous acid products (“phytes”) when field conditions allow.
- Good recordkeeping is important to document any losses suffered. Include detailed production records from prior years and pictures and video of all areas of the farm affected by the storm.

For information on government agency resources for blueberry growers see UF EDIS Publication HS1485 (<https://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/publication/HS1485>).