



Martin-Gatton
College of Agriculture, Food and Environment
Cooperative Extension Service

Plant Pathology Fact Sheet

PPFS-VG-49

Organic Commercial Spray Schedule for Field Production of Melons

Nicole Gauthier
*Plant Pathology
Extension Specialist*

Kim Leonberger
*Plant Pathology
Extension Associate*

Sara Long
*Plant Disease
Diagnostic Assistant*

Rachel Rudolph
*Horticulture
Extension Specialist*

INTRODUCTION

Commercial field production of organic muskmelons and watermelons allows growers to yield premium crop prices. However, numerous plant pathogens can cause disease, resulting in plant damage and yield loss. Applications of fungicides and bactericides are often necessary to limit the impact of plant diseases. These products provide the greatest efficacy when applied prior to disease onset. Growers should develop a preventative spray schedule for each crop and season to limit the impact of diseases. Organic growers will rely on specific products to maintain certifications or be able to market produce as organically produced. This document provides information on the timing of the most common melon diseases, as well as an example spray schedule. Fungicides recommended here include a few of the most common products; a complete list of registered fungicides can be found in *Vegetable Production Guide for Commercial Growers* (ID-36) and *Southeastern U.S. Vegetable Crop Handbook* (SEVEW); generic products may also be available. Information on OMRI approved products is available at <https://www.omri.org/>.

Muskmelon	
Disease	Time Period
Pythium root rot	May – July
Bacterial wilt	June – Aug
Anthrachnose	July – Aug
Powdery mildew	July – Aug
Alternaria blight	July – Aug
Cercospora leaf spot	July – Aug
Southern blight	July – Aug
Downy mildew	Aug - Sept

Watermelon	
Disease	Time Period
Pythium root rot	May – July
Pythium cottony leak	June – July
Gummy stem blight	June – Aug
Anthrachnose	July – Aug
Powdery mildew	July – Aug
Southern blight	July - Aug

TIMELINES OF COMMON AND IMPORTANT DISEASES OCCURRING ON MUSKMELON (CANTALOUPE) AND WATERMELON.



GUMMY STEM BLIGHT IS A FUNGAL DISEASE COMMON TO BOTH WATERMELON (shown here) AND MUSKMELON.

Disease Management for Organic Melon Production

GENERAL NOTES

The following list includes an example of products; this list is not comprehensive. A complete list of fungicides and their efficacy can be found in the *Vegetable Production Guide for Commercial Growers* (ID-36) and the *Southeastern U.S. Vegetable Crop Handbook* (SEVEW). See Additional Resources section.

Always read product labels for specific use instructions. The label is the law.

PREPLANT

Rotate out of cucurbit crops for at least 3 years in the same field, especially for sites with a history of soilborne diseases. Space plants for maximum air circulation. When available, use resistant cultivars (e.g. powdery mildew resistant cultivars). Follow cultural practices (rotate crops, improve drainage, practice sanitation).

AT PLANTING (Approximately early May to mid-June)

Apply LalStop K61, Obtego, or RootShield Plus if Pythium root rot or damping off disease emerges or if field has a history of belly rot, cottony leak, or Fusarium fruit rot. To prevent bacterial wilt, manage cucumber beetles beginning at seedling stage (See *Cucumber Beetles* Entfact-311 publication).

VEGETATIVE GROWTH AND FLOWERING (Approximately June and July)

Practice good sanitation. Avoid moving soil from contaminated fields via tools or equipment.

Application Timing <i>Weeks after planting</i>	Application Notes	Fungicides/Bactericides ²	Target Diseases
Week 1 to 8	Use fungicides preventatively before disease develops. Applications should be made every 1 to 2 weeks. A SAR inducer can help plants build immunity.	Cease/Stargus	Anthracnose, leaf diseases
		Copper ^{3,4}	
		OSO	
		SAR inducer Actinovate/Regalia	

HARVEST (Approximately early July through September)

Application Timing <i>Weeks after planting</i>	Application Notes	Fungicides/Bactericides ²	Target Diseases
Week 9 to 16	Applications should be made every 1 to 2 weeks.	Cease/Stargus	Alternaria blight, anthracnose, Cercospora leaf spot, downy mildew, powdery mildew
		Copper ^{3,4}	
		OSO	
As needed ¹	For severe powdery mildew or high risk plantings, add an additional product to tank mix or add additional sprays.	Sulfur ⁵	Powdery mildew
		Cease/Stargus	
		MilStop	
		EcoSwing	

¹ Application necessary when diagnostic results confirm presence of disease or if field has history of disease.

² See SEVEW Table 3-51 Biopesticides for alternative products. (Note: This production guide is revised annually and location of this information could change.)

³ Copper products can include Badge, Basic Cop, Nordox, or NuCop.

⁴ Combining copper fungicides with SAR products like Actinovate, Regalia, and some Bacillus products can enhance efficacy of copper-based fungicides

⁵ Sulfur should not be applied within 7 days of Bacillus products.

Disease Management for Organic Melon Production

HARVEST (Approximately early July through September) (*cont'd*)

Application Timing <i>Weeks after planting</i>	Application Notes	Fungicides/Bactericides ²	Target Diseases
As needed ¹	Applications should be made every 1 to 2 weeks when risk is high. Monitor disease via ipmpipe.org forecasting site.	Zonix	Downy mildew
		MilStop	
		Copper ^{3,4}	
As needed ¹	Applications should be made every 1 to 2 weeks. (Watermelon)	Copper ^{3,4}	Gummy stem blight
		OSO	
		Cease/Stargus	

¹ Application necessary when diagnostic results confirm presence of disease or if field has history of disease.

² See SEVEW Table 3-51 Biopesticides for alternative products. (Note: This production guide is revised annually and location of this information could change.)

³ Copper products can include Badge, Basic Cop, Nordox, or NuCop.

⁴ Combining copper fungicides with SAR products like Actinovate, Regalia, and some Bacillus products can enhance efficacy of copper-based fungicides

⁵ Sulfur should not be applied within 7 days of Bacillus products.

EXAMPLE SPRAY SCHEDULE FOR ORGANIC FIELD PRODUCTION OF MELONS.

Weeks after Planting	Fungicide(s)	Target Diseases
1-8	Actinovate+Cease	A, LS
Weeks during Harvest	Fungicide(s)	Target Diseases
9	Cease+EcoSwing	A, DM, LS, PM
10	NuCop+MilStop	A, DM, GSB, LS, PM
11	Cease+EcoSwing	A, DM, LS, PM
12	NuCop+MilStop	A, DM, GSB, LS, PM
13	Cease+EcoSwing	A, DM, LS, PM
14	NuCop+MilStop	A, DM, GSB, LS, PM
15	Cease+EcoSwing	A, DM, LS, PM
16	NuCop+MilStop	A, DM, GSB, LS, PM
17	Cease+EcoSwing	A, DM, LS, PM

A – ANTHRACNOSE; DM – DOWNY MILDEW;
GSB – GUMMY STEM BLIGHT; LS – FUNGAL LEAF SPOTS;
PM – POWDERY MILDEW

DISCLAIMER

Fungicides listed here include a few of the most common products available and were selected to simplify information in this publication.

No endorsement is intended nor is criticism implied of similar products that are not named.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Additional information can be found on the UK Plant Pathology Extension Publications webpage
<https://plantpathology.ca.uky.edu/extension/publications>

- Vegetable Production Guide for Commercial Growers (ID-36)
- Southeastern U.S. Vegetable Crop Handbook (SEVEW)
- OMRI Product Website <https://www.omri.org/>

May 2025

Editor: Cheryl Kaiser, Plant Pathology Extension Support

Photo: Nicole Gauthier, University of Kentucky

Educational programs of the Kentucky Cooperative Extension Service serve all people regardless of race, color, age, sex, religion, disability, or national origin.