UNIVERSITY OF GEORGIA
EXTENSION
Ben Hill County

BEN HILL COUNTY AGRICULTURE NEWS

Wed 23	87°/74°	Scattered Thunderstorms	55%	ENE 9 mph
Thu 24	91°/73°	Partly Cloudy	24%	ESE 7 mph
Fri 25	94°/75°	Isolated Thunderstorms	32%	SSE 6 mph
Sat 26	96°/76°	Mostly Sunny	19%	W 6 mph
Sun 27	99°/78°	Mostly Sunny	10%	NW 7 mph
Mon 28	100°/78°	Mostly Sunny	24%	NNW 7 mph
Tue 29	98°/75°	Isolated Thunderstorms	32%	N 5 mph
Wed 30	97°/75°	PM Thunderstorms	48%	NE 6 mph
Thu 31	97°/75°	PM Thunderstorms	46%	SW 7 mph
Fri 01	95°/75°	Scattered Thunderstorms	53%	WSW 6 mph
Sat 02	94°/74°	Thunderstorms	60%	W 7 mph
Sun 03	92°/74°	Thunderstorms	60%	NNE 7 mph
Mon 04	92°/74°	Scattered Thunderstorms	56%	N 6 mph
Tue 05	93°/74°	Scattered Thunderstorms	57%	NNW 8 mph

(Forecast from The Weather Channel for Ben Hill County)

UGA Podcasts:

The Peanut and Cotton teams do a weekly or biweekly podcast that give real time updates. These podcasts are great to listen to while on a tractor or while driving. There is a lot of good information!

Link to **peanut** podcast page-

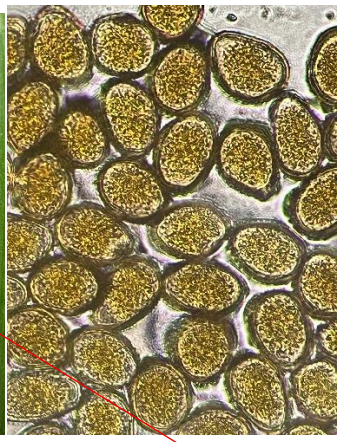
https://creators.spotify.com/pod/show/allaboutthepod/episodes/Episode-4--Season-2----Discussion-of-Grower-Meeting-Survey-Questions-Asked-at-Production-Meetings-e2vrrvh

Link to **cotton** podcast page

https://www.buzzsprout.com/2350262/episodes/16786065

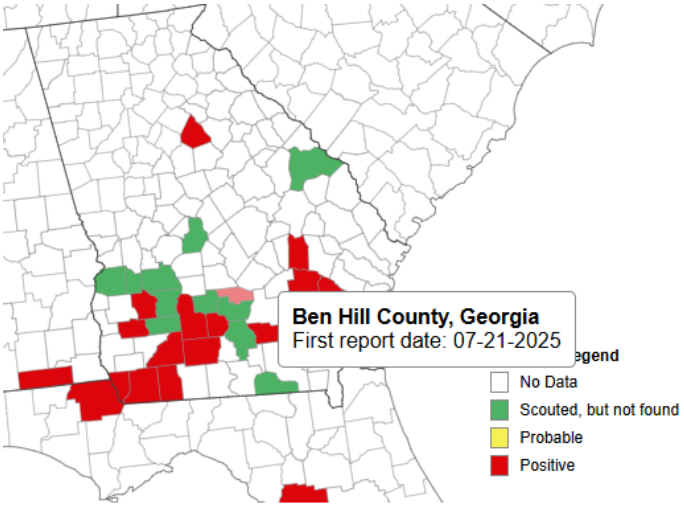
Corn Update:

Southern Corn Rust (*Puccinia polysora*) and Tar Spot (*Phyllachora maydis*) Identified in Ben Hill County

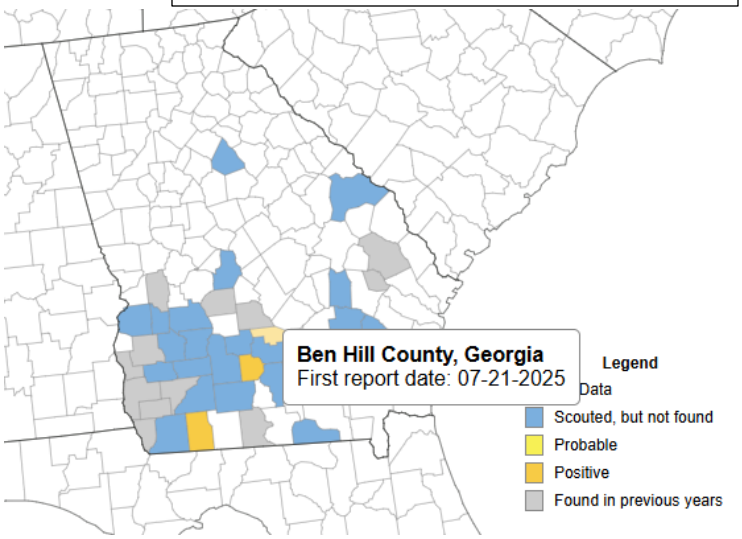


While Scouting Monday (7-21-2025), I came across one lesion of **tar spot** (bottom left) and one leaf that had a few **southern corn rust** (SCR) pustules (top left). **What does this mean?** If the crop is already past the **hard dough stage**, there is no need for a fungicide application. Yield is not threatened. IF you have a younger crop of corn, a fall crop, consider applying a multi-mode of action fungicide by the time the crop tassels.

The pictures to the left show foliar symptoms found and the spores to identify. The SCR pustules, or uredia, produce urediniospores as shown on the top right picture. Tar spot produces stromata (the black lesion) and in the stromata produce asci ( ) that contain 8 ascospores.



Southern Corn Rust Map



Tar Spot Map

When To Terminate Irrigation

When it comes to irrigation termination on corn, the bottom line is at black layer, the crop doesn't need to be irrigated. The crop is made and now it is time to wait for the right moisture to harvest.

But can we get away with terminating irrigation early?

If the soil has adequate moisture or if a rain event is near, and the milk like **has reduced 75% or better**, we can get away with cutting the pivots off early. **Do Not** cut them off unless you are sure the soil **has enough moisture to finish out the crop**.

Peanut Update:

Yellow Peanuts:

I have seen many fields with areas of yellow peanuts, what is happening?

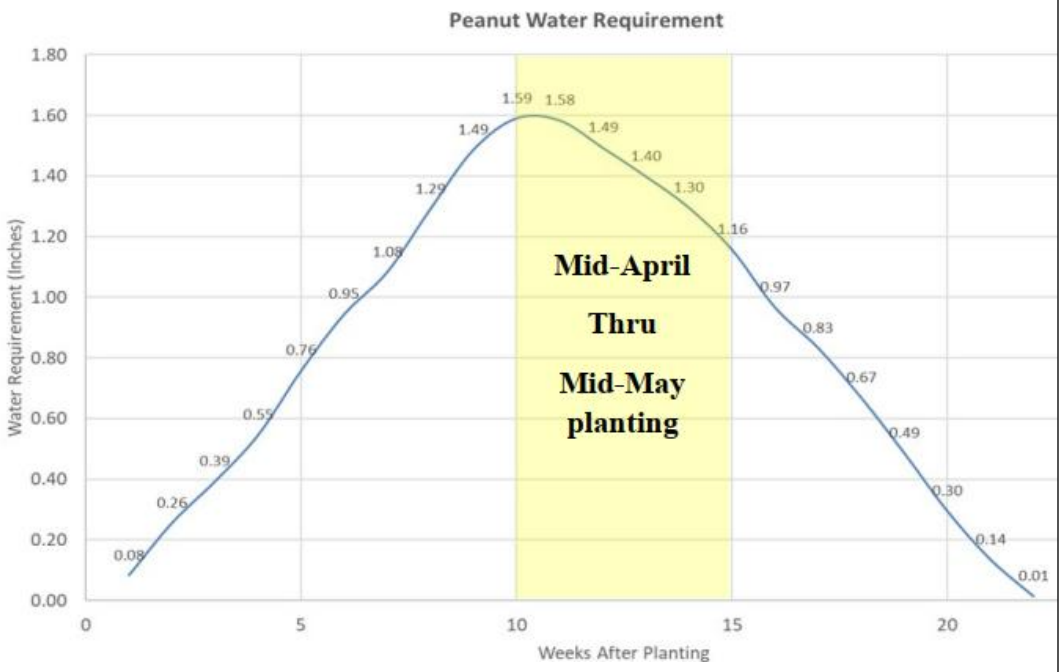
Bottom line is **the roots are weak, and nodulation is poor**. The nodules present on the plants are not pink on the inside (**pink means nitrogen fixation is occurring**). These plants are nitrogen deficient. I have samples in Tifton being tested to see if a pathogen is at fault.

I think These are low areas that were saturated and **led to the rhizobia bacteria** (responsible for creating nodules and nitrogen fixation) **vacating.**

Tomato Spotted Wilt Virus (TSWV)

As these peanut plants lap and vines grow, TSWV is becoming more noticeable and prevalent. Though it is beautiful with its color pattern, it can be devastating at times.

Highlights from peanut pointers by UGA water team team:



By the middle of July, those early/mid-May planted peanuts can use up to **0.3" of water per day on days that it is hot, windy, with low humidity**, so it is important to not get behind on irrigation. It is also important to not let your **soil temperature get too high. can burn off pegs.**

The soil water holding capacity of most of our sandy loam soils range **1.0 inches per foot of soil with 50% of that being plant available**. Thus, even with a two foot rooting depth, you will only have **1.0 inches of water available to the crop and that will be utilized in three days at the rate of 0.3 inch usage per day**.

Growth Regulator Guidance: Dr. Scott Monfort

Over the past week, I've received numerous calls and emails regarding growth regulators (Kudos or Apogee). In many early-planted peanut fields, we're seeing row closure much earlier than expected—some even within 55 days, particularly on sandy soils with good moisture. This has led growers to ask whether they should go ahead and apply or wait until the typical 65 days after planting.

My Take: Follow the plant's actual growth—not the calendar. In some fields, expected at 65 days, vegetative development has lagged despite ample rainfall. This reinforces that timing decisions should be based on observed vine growth, not just days after planting.

Growth Regulator Timing & Rate Recommendations

If you planted peanuts in late April to early May, the first application should ideally have been initiated by now (75–80 days). Delayed application may reduce the regulator's effectiveness.

Recommended application guidelines for **runner peanuts**:

• Rate Range: 3.5–5.4 oz/acre, applied twice

• Trigger: When 90% of vines are lapped (≥50% lateral vines touching in row middles)

• Second Application: 14–21 days after the first

• Avoid: 7.25 oz/acre applied twice—this rate is excessive for runner types

Total seasonal application **should not exceed 11–11.5 oz/acre**, as higher rates may cause **plant stress** and reduce yields.

Irrigated Fields

• Use growth regulator only if you have a history of aggressive vine growth or are growing vigorous varieties like GA-12Y or TIFNV-HG.

• **Avoid spraying during hot, dry spells** (90°F+ with no expected rain). High temps and regulator use together may over stress plants.

Wait until weather moderates.

Apply irrigation 1–2 days prior to spraying.

Rate Adjustments by Variety & Vigor	
Situation	**Recommended Rate**
GA-20VHO, GA-21GR	Not recommended
GA-06G and other varieties	3.5 to 5.4 oz/acre twice
GA-12Y, TifNVHG	5.4 oz/acre twice
Rapid vine growth	7.25 oz/acre followed by 4 oz/acre
Missed 60–75 day window	One application of 7.25 oz/acre (up to day 80–85)

Non-Irrigated Fields

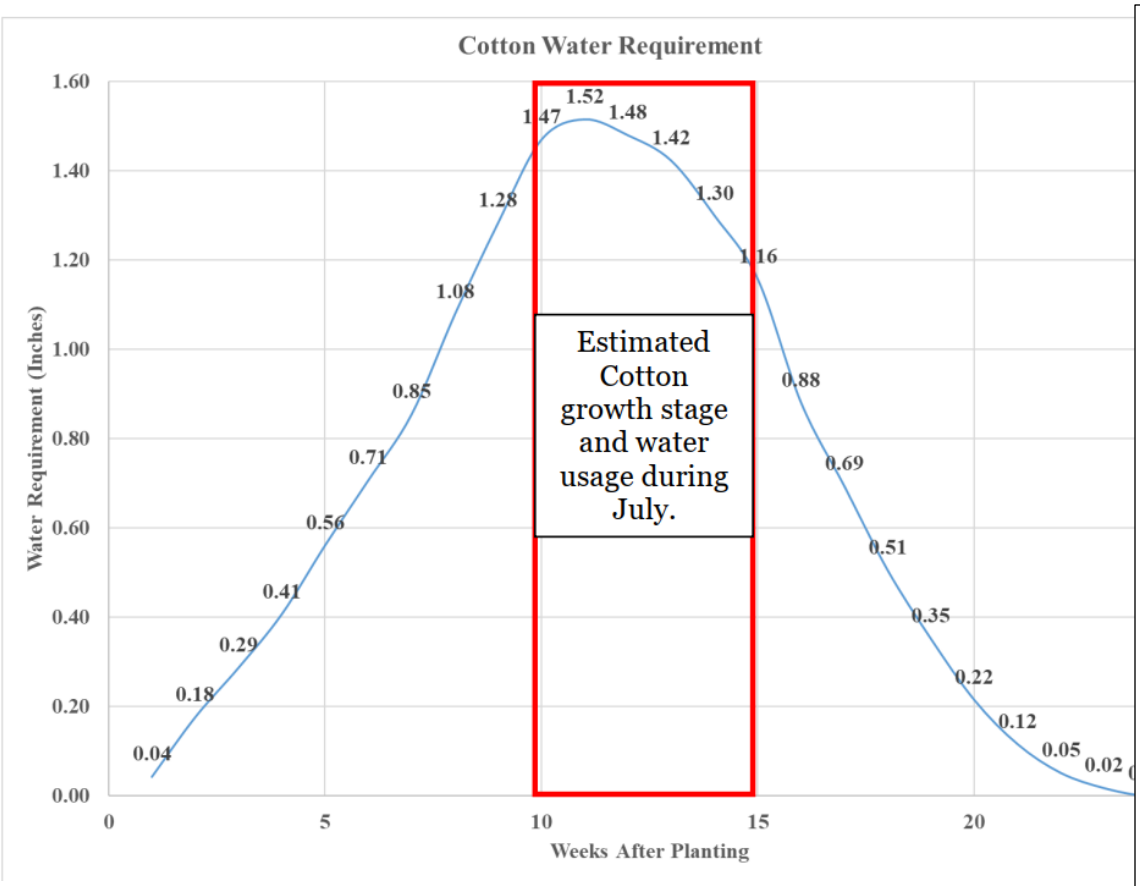
• Generally not recommended—but if conditions are excessively wet:

Consider 1 application at 7.25 oz/acre (between 60–75 days)

Avoid two applications unless rains continue steadily; dry, hot conditions after a second spray can severely impact yields

Your Field Conditions and Timing all play a role in the effectiveness of Growth Regulators

Cotton Update:



Based on when your cotton was planted, you will enter peak demand during the month of July. During this stage, cotton may require up **to 1.5 inches per week or 0.2 inches per day**. Back to our ET rates, they reached up to and above 0.25 inches per day during June. Keep in mind that the Soil Water Holding Capacity (**SWHC**) of most of our soils is around 1.0 inches/foot of soil. The crop can only access water where it has roots and of this SWHC only about 50% of it is plant available. Thus, a cotton plant with an 18-inch rooting depth will have access to 0.75 inches of water at field capacity.

Thoughts Entering July: Dr. Camp Hand

Unproven or unnecessary products – I got a call from an agent in East Georgia last week that got me a little fired up. A grower wanted to spray some products to try and push some cotton out of moisture stress due to the incredible amount of rainfall they have received since Mother's Day. So the grower's dealer recommended he spray Pix, Boron, Manganese, and a starter fertilizer heavy in phosphorus (meant for a 2x2 application at planting). A few things about this. First was that the reason for the call was that this

mix wasn't staying in solution and clogged up nozzles in the sprayer. So first thing is that this mix already cost the grower time and money by clogging up nozzles and them having to clean the sprayer out. The main thing here is that the only way the crop is going to **grow out of moisture stress is heat and sunlight – so spraying all of this to fix that problem is unnecessary.**

Timeliness is key – It doesn't matter what you are doing when you are in the field, timeliness is of the essence. Applying herbicides when weeds are small, applying insecticides when thresholds are met, fungicides before diseases run rampant, PGRs before cotton gets too tall, irrigation prior to cotton wilting, etc. We cannot afford in 2025 to not be timely, because if we aren't we will fall behind and it will cost us dearly. Whether it is more trips through the field (which is diesel and time), or utilizing higher rates/more expensive products the second time around, we need to do things right the first time so we minimize errors. Timeliness with all inputs is a good investment.

Bug Management in Blooming Cotton: Dr. Phillip Roberts

For the week **ending July 6, 2025 69 percent of the cotton is squaring and 20 percent is blooming which are similar to the 5-year averages of 68 and 19 percent respectively**. As we enter bloom the boll feeding bug complex are the primary insect pests we must manage. When we consider boll feeding bugs, stink bugs (both southern green and brown) are the most common species infesting fields. However, there are other bug species which will also feed on bolls and **include tarnished plant bug, clouded plant bug, and leaffooted bugs**. Thresholds for stink bugs rely on monitoring internal boll damage which is defined as warts/callous growths on the inner surface of the boll wall and/or lint staining. Estimating internal boll damage (IBD) has proven to be a reliable technique for timing insecticide applications when needed to preserve both yield and quality. We cannot distinguish what bug species caused IBD.

Damaged squares result in **"dirty" blooms** (discoloration of anthers or misshapen petals). The presence of dirty **blooms suggest you have or had immature plant bugs** and you need to make drops in the field to quantify immature plant bugs.

A Deeper Dive into Summer Cover Crop Species Selection (*Taylor Singleton*):

I thought we'd dive a little deeper into some cover crop options that you may be considering planting in a fallow field or other areas where you want to keep the ground covered.

Again, the two biggest factors that should drive your decision on what cover crop species to plant are: 1) Economics (What is your budget?) and 2) Goals (What do you want to accomplish?). Without clearly defining these two parameters, you may be setting yourself up for disappointment if the resulting cover isn't what you imagined. Only you can decide what will work for your operation economically during this point of the year, just keep in mind, everything has a value, including the goals/outcomes outlined below. You just must decide what it's worth to ***your operation***.

When planting summer cover crops, our goals and objectives are very similar to those we hope to achieve when planting covers in the fall. These objectives were covered in more detail last month; in general (but not exclusively), **we can expect different cover crop species to provide at least one of the following outcomes:**

1) Generating N or scavenging N, 2) Improving soil characteristics (tilth, OM, infiltration, etc.), 3) Suppressing weeds, 4) Minimizing erosion, and/or 5) Grazing/Forage source.

With this in mind, below is an in-depth look at what different types of summer cover crop can bring to the table, to help guide your decision making:

Grains/Grasses

• ***Millets*** (including browntop, Japanese, Pearl, others) – Fast growing and can produce medium to high levels of biomass (good for weed suppression). Tolerates tough summer conditions (heat, moisture/drought) well, although can be species/cultivar dependent. Attractive to wildlife as a food and habitat source. Its fibrious root system is excellent for scavenging residual soil N and helping mitigate soil erosion. Can be used for grazing and forage, however, ***must be very careful of potential for accumulation of toxic levels of nitrates during adverse conditions than can be lethal to livestock*** (check out this UGA **article** and this **one** for more info). Some species can mature very quickly (~45 days) and produce A LOT of variable seed….must manage appropriate to avoid weedy problems later!!!

• ***Sorghum-sudangrass*** – Fast growing and can produce tall, heavy biomass in hot summer conditions. Great for weed suppression, adding organic matter back to the soil, and holding the ground in place. Depending on the conditions, supplemental fertility may be needed to maximize biomass. Can help disrupt the life cycle of some nematode species. There are cultivars with sterile seedheads available. **If grazing, must be mindful of potential for prussic acid poisoning** (UGA **article** for more info)!!

Legumes

• ***Sunn hemp*** – A tropical legume that grows quickly, produces heavy biomass, and fixes high levels of N. Can suppress multiple types of nematodes and be used as a grazing crop at early growth stages. If allowed to grow to maturity, the plant becomes very woody and produces viable seed – a termination plan is needed before set.

• ***Cowpeas*** – Extremely productive in GA summer conditions (hot, dry), growing fast and producing moderate levels of biomass. Excellent at producing N and reducing erosion due to a deep tap root. Some varieties are nematode resistant. Their busy and viney nature can make ***mechanical control/termination very difficult***; additionally, they can mature and produce viable seed in as little as 45 days. ***Without timely management (termination @ bloom), can become a VERY weedy problem*****!**

Broadleaves

• ***Buckwheat*** – This one is one of my favorites. A super-fast-growing broadleaf that great for pollinators and beneficial insects! It does not tolerate the extreme middle-of-summer heat and drought well, so ideally a late spring planting is best (although not very realistic in most cases). Often you will see/use this in a mix with other cover crop species. Can produce a viable seed in as little as 30 days….**MUST terminate (mowing/herbicides) within one week of first flower**. Moderate levels of biomass generated; can suppress weeds and minimize soil erosion due to fast ground coverage.

• ***Sunflower*** – Hugely popular with wildlife (and pollinators), is it very versatile and adapted to a wide variety of growing conditions that we encounter in GA. A large taproot can help with compaction and residual N uptake. Moderate to large levels of biomass can be generated, helping suppress weeds and hold the soil in place; residue can become very "woody" once mature and drop seed that are viable. If weediness is a concern, make sure to terminate timely.

Whatever your objective is, there is a warm season cover crop species that can help you achieve that goal. With all the rain we've been receiving, combined with a larger-than-normal number of fallow fields, it's more important than ever that we help hold our valuable soil in place!

Extension Value added services:

There are several resources your county agent has access to for assisting the public:

- **SpotOn Digital Sprayer Calibrator & nozzle cleaner tool** - Accurate flow rate checking of individual sprayer nozzles.
    - **Fertilizer Spinner-Disc Spreader Calibration** - spread pattern testing of fertilizer spreaders.
    - **Hay Moisture Tester –** Evaluation and assessment of hay to bale at optimum moisture content - decrease mold growth and increase feed value. Test baled or unbaled (in field)
    - **Forced Motor Planter Calibration –** at-plant insecticide hopper box calibrations. Potential benefits: increase insecticide application efficacy with the appropriate and effective application of product label and recommended control rate. Decrease
    - **Mobile Irrigation Lab** – Pivot efficiency evaluation/Irrigation audits to support water conservation and decrease irrigation costs.
    - **Harvest Moisture Testing** – Corn and soybean moisture testing to decrease drying time and fuel costs.
    - **Enviroscape Watershed Model -** Environmental education programming tool. Interactive demonstration of the sources and effects of water pollution. Present and illustrate watershed/stormwater concept.
    - **Rainfall Simulator Tabletop Educational Program tool -**
    - **Digital wind meter educational tool** – Anemometer measures wind speed to support safe pesticide applications and reduce drift.
    - **Pivot Calibrations**
    - **Drone imagery/scouting**