

September 2026 Peanut Pointers-Irrigation and Harvest Update

Wesley Porter

Each season brings its own challenges and farmers must find the best strategy, tools, techniques, and technology to help address these challenges. Thus far, 2026 has been all over the board with moisture as some areas have had good rainfall while others have seen those undesired periods of several weeks of very dry weather. Across the entire state we have also had periods of extreme heat making conditions harder to deal with. Depending on what area of the state you are located in there has been adequate rainfall, but other areas have not had rainfall in weeks or more. Additionally, much of the rainfall that has been received has come in hard and fast events. While they help, much of rain that is received this way can become runoff or cause erosion issues.

For weekly peanut water requirements, please refer to the graph in figure 1 (the UGA Checkbook). I have highlighted the estimated growth stage as of the time I was drafting this article. Peanuts that were planted after June 1 are approximately at peak water usage right now. This graph should give you a good idea of where we stand for peanuts on August 25 according to approximate planting date windows. Keep in mind that the UGA Checkbook was developed based on a 15 year historical average ET. When we have hotter than average conditions, the Checkbook is underestimating water requirements. These estimates are also for total water requirement, which is rainfall and irrigation.

Most growers that planted in this time frame have already reached and will pass peak water use during the month of September and the daily water use has already started to decline. **DO NOT** get behind on irrigation as the weather can just as easily become hot and dry over the month of September. If long term predictions are correct we are going to continue in an overall dry condition until sometime in October. If you fall behind with hot and dry weather it is difficult to catch up with irrigation only. Many times, once digging begins, we forget that peanuts that were planted later in the season or a certain variety will need to be monitored closely for sufficient moisture due to the longer growing season. Shorting your peanuts two to four, and up to six weeks and beyond of irrigation if the fall becomes dry will negatively impact yield. It is critical to continue to manage irrigation until you make the decision on digging. For more information on the end of season peanut irrigation termination see the Extension Precision Ag and Irrigation Blog post at: [Finalizing Peanut Irrigation | Extension Precision Ag and Irrigation](#).

For those of you using a soil moisture sensor or Irrigator Pro as your irrigation scheduling method, they will provide critical data that can aid in the prevention of both falling behind and losing deep moisture and over-irrigating. Most of the irrigated peanut crop has achieved canopy closure and that will help keep soil temperatures moderated and utilize irrigation and/or rainfall more efficiently.

Water Requirements: Peanuts water use for August 25

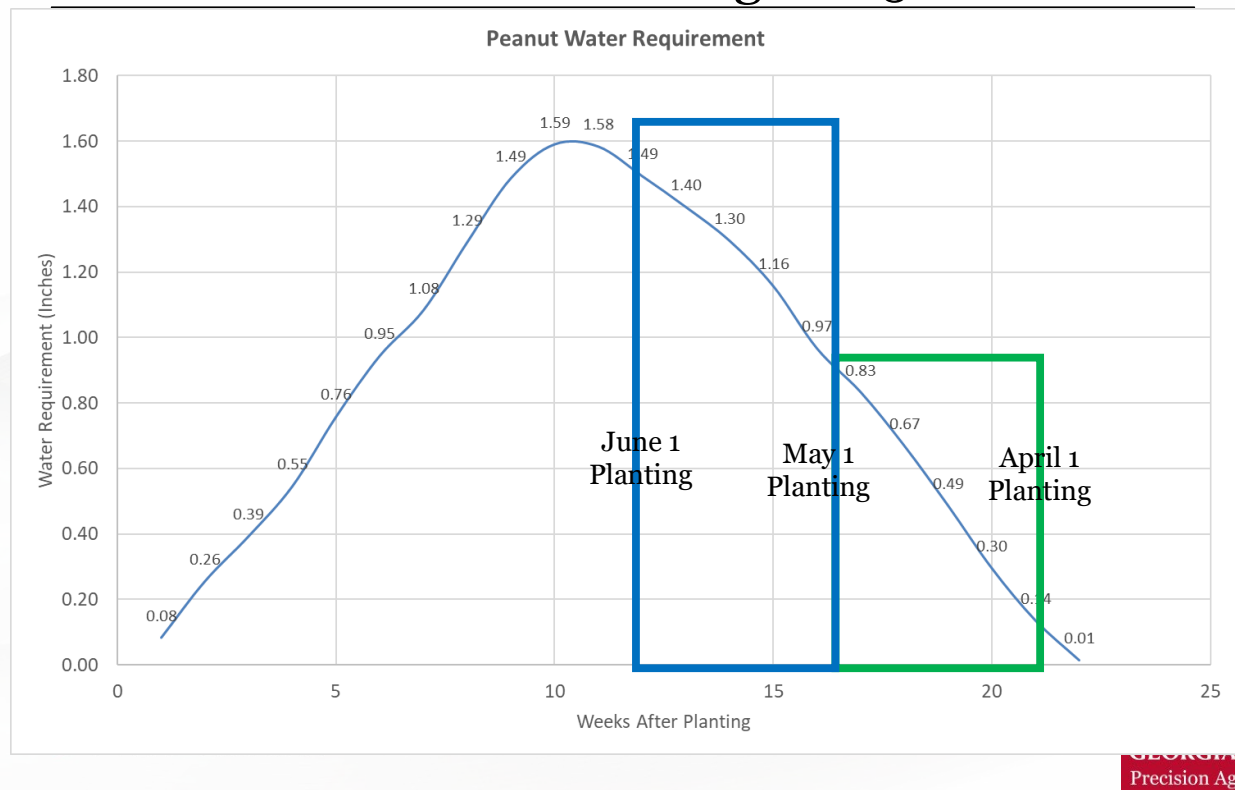


Figure 1. UGA Checkbook for Peanuts with the estimated August water requirements highlighted.

If you used Irrigator Pro and have not used it yet, it will hit a “dry-down” stage. According to the crop model, this growth stage will occur at roughly 95 DAP. You will notice that the app will tell you to stop irrigating for about a week. This is to intentionally withhold water once a maximum fruit load occurs on the plant and to stress the peanut plants so that it will stop flowering and allocate resources to maturing the peanuts that are already on the plant. So, if you see this occur and feel like your field is getting dry, don’t panic its part of the model. This is how the soil moisture needs to be handled to ensure the plant reacts appropriately physiologically. I would make the statement to not let the field get too dry during this period. If you were already drying out and see deep moisture depleting rapidly you may want to still irrigate to prevent falling behind later in the season. If you had wet conditions during plant development, plant roots sometimes do not enter those deeper depths. It is important to maintain adequate moisture within the active root zone. Through monitoring soil moisture sensors in certain areas, we are noticing, a majority of moisture is being utilized from the deeper depth sensors. In cases like this it is tough to keep up with water requirements because irrigation typically only refills the shallower depths. It’s times like these situations when one may question the accuracy of a soil moisture sensor. The tried

and tested method of using a 1-3-inch diameter auger and drilling down near the sensor while noting the moisture level can help validate the data being logged and transmitted.

It seems this season as we have received rainfall several times it has been in large rain events. When these heavy downpours happen, we need to keep in mind two things which impact how much of that rainfall we capture and are able to utilize for our crops. They are the water intake rate and water holding capacity of our soils. When we receive those 3" rainfall events we may only infiltrate or "bank" 0.75" or 1" of it according to rainfall intensity and soil conditions. Thus, a singular rainfall event across a week or longer will not be adequate and irrigation will be needed.

Also, something to note, as we move later in the season is to prepare for harvest Last year I wrote an Extension Precision Ag and Irrigation Blog Post with the help of Ashley Smith on proper Peanut Inverter Setup. I do plan to update that later this year. However, it is important to make sure that you are prepping your equipment for harvest. Last fall was very dry and that caused blades to wear out rapidly. I would encourage you go through this checklist and make sure you are ready when your peanuts reach maturity. [Peanut Inverter/Digger Set-Up | Extension Precision Ag and Irrigation](#)

If you have further questions about irrigation requirements, scheduling, harvest prep, or other related questions reach out to your local UGA County Extension Agent.

Preparing for Cover Crops (Singleton)

With harvest fast approaching, that means it's time to start thinking about plans for planting cover crops this fall. If you're an experienced cover crop user, you know that planting cover crops is more than just throwing some seed out – it requires a complete rethinking of how you approach your production system. Depending on your current practices, it *may* require a change in timing, logistics, and priorities surrounding fertilization, equipment, weed management, planting, and harvesting. If you're new to cover crops and interested in trying some out on your operation, it's best to ease in slowly on a small area until you are comfortable with the changes. Some things to keep in mind:

1. **Understand goals** – Clarify what you want to achieve through using cover crops, whether its mitigating erosion/runoff, suppressing weeds, boosting soil health, or just keeping the soil covered during the offseason.
2. **Start small** – Try it out on a small area to begin with and increase your acreage as you get more comfortable. If you have a small field that you see often or have an area that's prone to erosion/runoff/leaching this is a great place to start. To really get a good understanding of how to make these practices work, it's most helpful to be able to closely observe the site throughout the year.
3. **Easy entry points** – If you can, pick a field that will allow you to have “extra time” to plant and manage your cover crop. This might be a field that you harvest first or plant later...giving you some wiggle room in the “in-between crops” period that improves flexibility and helps you see what needs to be adjusted for next time.
4. **Select compatible species** – Considering what crop you are planning to plant next, keep species selection simple to begin with. Rye/oats/other small grains are a great place to start (*cheaper \$*), before trying more complex species mixtures (*more expensive \$\$\$*). Match the species to the goals you want to achieve (ex. weed control = high biomass cover crop, etc.).
5. **Understand agronomic practices** – Once you select your species, adjust your seeding rates based on your planting method (broadcast vs drilled). Keep an eye on the weather and hold off on planting until adequate soil moisture is present. Overseeding into standing cash crops (before harvest) is an option, however this will introduce another level of complexity that must be considered (cash crop maturity, potential for seed to reach the soil, etc.). Drilling the cover crop will provide the best seed to soil contact after the cash crop has been harvested.
6. **Understand termination** – In the spring, don't let termination slip up on you....understand when the cover needs to be terminated based on the relationship between the cover crop species selected and the upcoming cash crop. When the cover is terminated will influence how much biomass/residue remains when it's time to plant the cash crop, so keep equipment considerations in mind and level of comfort when starting out.

Most folks in peanut/cotton rotations utilize cereal rye, oats, or wheat as their cover crop of choice. Each of these small grain species are relatively cost effective, produce sufficient biomass in our environment, and generally shape up into a nice conservation tillage production system in the spring.

For more information about each of these species, check out these fact sheets by the Southern Cover Crop Council:

Cereal Rye – [Link](#)

Oats – [Link](#)

Wheat – [Link](#)

Just like yield with a cash crop, we want to manipulate our cover crop to maximize growth potential in the time it's in the ground – more growth *generally* means greater benefit to our system (i.e. biomass, weed suppression, soil erosion prevention, etc.). This means it's important to think about species selection and a realistic timeline for how many days we expect to have that cover in the ground for – before we plant the first seed.

To be successful, we need to understand how much time we reasonably have between harvesting our 2026 cash crop/planting our cover crop, and when we intend to terminate before next year's cash crop planting (2027). With an understanding of when we intend to plant the cover and when we will terminate before the next crop, will that leave enough days for the species we select to accumulate enough biomass for us to get our money worth? Here's a couple of planting/terminating window scenarios:

Cover Crop Planting Date	Termination Date	Growing Window (Days)
October 15	March 15	150
October 15	April 15	180
November 1	March 15	135
November 1	April 15	165
November 15	March 15	120
November 15	April 15	150
December 1	March 15	105
December 1	April 15	135

Understanding how many days we are working with can help us make sure we select a species (and variety) that fits our window and serves our goals. Just keep in mind, your cover crop is not going to be growing the whole time it's in the ground – you will see early season growth before the temps turn off cold, then growth will start again in the spring. Generally, the more time you can give that cover crop to grow in the spring (warming temps, longer days, rapid growth), the more biomass you will generate. Unless you are terminating ahead of corn, I'd encourage you to consider holding off on terminating until closer to planting the cash crop (even though it's tempting to just terminate everything in March while there's time!).

For example, the most common variety of cereal rye we see in Georgia is *Wrens Abruzzi*, which matures around ~150 days. An earlier maturing variety such as *FL401* (~125 days) may be a better fit for a tighter planting window. Pay attention to what variety you are planting to maximize your investment. Best wishes for a safe and productive harvest season.

Peanut Maturity/Harvest

Scott Monfort

Peanut Harvest is approaching, and I know everyone is starting to look at peanut maturity samples. I have looked at several samples of Ga-06G and TifNV-HG. They are all showing maturity in the 140-45 DAP range for the April-planted irrigated crop. Even for DG913, I am not hearing much about them being early. I do expect we will see some variations across the state. I keep telling everyone: do not just go on the DATE AFTER PLANTING; they need to be put on the maturity board to know for sure. I would encourage newer agents to make it a point to attend other county maturity clinics to gain extra experience. You can also text me pictures of the boards if you need help. I am happy to help. Below are a few things to consider:

Irrigated --- Most irrigated peanuts planted in April – the first part of May are running on time (140 to 148 Days) for all varieties (so far), except for GA-12Y and maybe GA-22MPR. GA-12Y and GA-22MPR are likely 150 + DAP. Disease and/or weather can change maturity. I have noticed several TifNV-HG fields with some defoliation due to leaf spot. Please keep a watch on them. You may need to have the growers reduce their spray intervals and fungicide selection. We suggested digging a few fields early due to disease. Only a few irrigated fields have had maturity and yield potential off track. The main culprit was the extreme heat this summer. Do not be surprised to see some pops etc. in some fields.

Once we move into mid-May to June, maturity will likely be a little different because of the weather we experienced at planting and throughout the season.

Non-Irrigated --- The non-irrigated crop will be more of a mixed bag across the state at all planting dates. Based on my trips throughout the state, drought conditions are visible in small spots across the state through July and August. Some areas have improved in the last few weeks, but I am afraid it might be a little too late. Some early-planted peanut fields have a small to average crop from the early rains. This is going to make it tough to decide what to do. Please encourage your growers to assess all of their non-irrigated fields to see what they have.

Below are few suggested tips/questions to consider for determining when to DIG:

You cannot treat irrigated or non-irrigated or planting dates the same – Maturity needs to be examined on a field by field basis and not as much on Days after Planting.

Non-irrigated maturity will be heavily skewed due to the drought

Some acres might be abandoned due to the weather issues– **this needs to be decision of the insurance adjuster.**

Growers need to check peanut maturity as early as 120 DAP.

Non-irrigated acres with some moisture.

- a. Maturity may be normal but likely to have split crop. Split crop – This will be a challenging decision for most.
- b. Typically, a profile that is split evenly, the decision is usually to base digging on the leading edge. However; if the leading edge is minimal compared to the fruit load behind the “split”, then the decision is more difficult and cannot be answered easily.
- c. Other things that need to be considered?

- i. Potential of late crop vs. what is on the vines now?
 - ii. How do the vines look? iii. How do the pods look?
 - iv. Moisture now?
 - v. What is the short and long range forecast?
- Temperature and Moisture?

Please encourage growers to segregate irrigated and non-irrigated acres.

Do not take risk in contaminating good quality peanuts with non-irrigated that might have aflatoxin (dryland corners).

A few bad pods can cause a trailer load to go SEG 2 or SEG 3

Please feel free to call or email me if you have any questions.