

The Efficacy of Flower Bud Removal Techniques for Enhancing Growth of Young Blueberry Cultivars®

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In this 2-year study, flower bud removal techniques were tested on young rabbiteye blueberry (*Vaccinium ashei* Reade) plants to determine effects on flower bud mortality and growth parameters. The treatments consisted of no flower bud removal (control), hand stripping, and hydrogen cyanamide applied at 0.75% and 1.5%. Treatments were applied to three different cultivars exhibiting different stages of flower bud development. The cultivars, listed from most advanced to least advanced flower bud development were 'Climax', 'Brightwell', and 'Tifblue', respectively. Both hydrogen cyanamide treatments resulted in higher bud mortality than the control, and the 1.5% treatment was as effective as hand stripping in Year 1 (2009). Except for 'Brightwell' in 2009, leaf area was not affected by treatments. The growth index was not affected by the bud removal treatments in either year of the study. The 1.5% hydrogen cyanamide treatment appeared to be an effective method of flower bud removal, and, as a labor saving practice, could be used as an alternative to hand stripping. However, this study indicates that flower bud removal may not result in increased vegetative growth for field-grown rabbiteye blueberry plants.