Disease Management
with the MELCAST System

MELCAST is a disease warning system that can help Indiana farmers schedule their fungicide applications for control of certain diseases of watermelons and cantaloupes. The system was developed by researchers in the Purdue University Department of Botany and Plant Pathology.

MELCAST is available throughout the summer at:

melcast.info

and

(800) 939-1604

Each winter, Purdue Extension plant pathology specialists conduct educational programs that address the system. For more information about MELCAST, see Purdue Extension publication BP-67-W, Foliar Disease Fungicide Control Using MELCAST, available from the Purdue Extension Education Store, www.edustore.purdue.edu; or contact Dan Egel (Southwest Purdue Agricultural Research Program) at (812) 886-0198 or egel@purdue.edu.

Slug and Snail Control

Occasionally, slugs and snails seriously damage seedlings; tender, low-growing leafy vegetables; or ripening fruit that are on the ground. Slug and snail feeding damage (hollowed-out areas) can be found anywhere on fruit, but is usually concentrated near the stem. Slugs leave behind telltale slime trails (silvery trails) on the surfaces of fruit or leaves. Slugs and snails are active at night or cloudy days.

Slugs and snails favor continuously moist soil and organic mulch. They lay eggs in groups in moist soil, and overwinter in organic mulch. Slugs can complete their entire life cycle in a field.

If slugs are a problem, their hiding places (i.e., boards, stones, weedy areas), should be eliminated. Heavy mulching creates favorable slug habitats, so should be thinned so the soil can become warm and dry. Raised beds that can dry out more readily than flat beds reduce slug problems. Using black plastic mulch discourages slug build-up because it causes the soil to heat up and dry out.

As a last resort, metaldehyde bait (e.g., Clean Crop, 3.5G® at 30-40 lbs./A or Clean Crop 7.5G® at 15-20 lbs./A) can be used and is usually very effective. Follow label instructions carefully for application methods for each particular vegetable crop. Apply bait in evening after a rain or irrigation. An organic alternative to metaldehyde is iron phosphate. Baits containing iron phosphate are sold under the trade name Sluggo® (and others) and are only slightly less effective than metaldehyde baits.