

Nematodes – Stubby-root, root-lesion, sheath, root-knot, dagger, etc.

Nematodes are tiny roundworms that live in the soil. Most feed on bacteria and fungi and are essential for mineralizing nutrients that are taken up by plants. Plant-parasitic nematodes feed on plant roots, but are generally not a serious problem in blueberries. The types listed above may cause diseases of blueberries when present at high population densities. Nematodes have also been observed to cause stunting and poor rooting in hardwood propagation beds. In addition, dagger and stubby-root nematodes are vectors of certain plant viruses such as tobacco ringspot virus.



Nematode galls on roots.

Symptoms.

Heavily infected plants are stunted and slow-growing with reduced yields. Roots may show necrotic lesions, stunting, or galls.

Disease cycle. Plant-parasitic nematodes reproduce by eggs and have four juvenile stages. Juveniles and adults feed on living plant roots. Most nematodes are migratory, but some become sedentary in roots.

Management. Avoid replanting into an infested field; have soil tested the year before planting so remedial action can be taken if nematodes that vector viruses are present; apply organic amendments such as mulch, compost, or manure; apply nematicides; fumigate soil before planting; avoid reuse or fumigate rooting media.