

Late August and September bring a lot of questions about finishing up fungicide programs and getting things lined up for digging and harvesting. While there is always a dry spot somewhere, rains in late July were general and most people got what they needed and others received a lot more. Cloudy and wet conditions slow down crop growth and kernel development similar to what hot and dry conditions often do. When less than ideal conditions are combined with a wide range in planting dates (about 15% of the North Carolina peanut crop planted in early June,) the crop seems to be on a trajectory of being a late one. How late is difficult to forecast, and we won't really know until pod blasting begins in early September. As I often do with this issue of *V-C Peanut News* I will spend most of the article on digging and harvesting. At the onset it is important to protect vines from disease as well as possible. With an anticipation that the crop will be late, fungicide program most likely need to extend well into September. With some of the warming trends in September we have experienced for the past few years, peanuts in many fields will need protection from leaf spot into the month of October. I'm sure Hillary, Barbara and Dan can address those questions more accurately than I can, but certainly keeping vines healthy gives us the greatest flexibility in digging.

This past summer a group of county agents from North Carolina participated in the 50th annual meeting of the American Peanut Research and Education Society. One of the presentations was by Art Bradley, an excellent county agent in Edgecombe County. Art summarized information on digging and harvesting we collected in North Carolina, South Carolina, and Virginia during our peanut production meetings this past winter (his title was *Summary of Farmer Practices in the Virginia-Carolina Region Related to Digging and Harvesting Peanut.*) Many of you participated in the survey and recall the tool give away (in 2019 I'm thinking one big sledge hammer and an industrial strength plunger – I'll see what Lowe's has in late January.) We hope for an ideal harvest season in 2018 (we really did have a good one in 2017, for the most part.) With that in mind here are some key points from Art's presentation.

1. Challenges with digging and harvesting can be impacted by: a) maturity of the crop, b) equipment capacity, c) other crop demands, d) disease, e) soil moisture, and f) whether or not you are growing Virginia or runner market types.
2. As expected, the number of days to dig and harvest, use of a guidance system, and total digging and harvesting capacity (equipment) were linked closely with acreage.
3. With the exception of prohexadione calcium use, which was positively correlated with yield, there was no direct link (correlation) with peanut yield based on number of days required to dig and harvest, the presence of a guidance system, or total digging and harvesting capacity. I actually expected acreage and yield to be negatively correlated, just because of challenges in getting it all done in a reasonable amount of time. But this was not the case.
4. It takes almost twice as long to harvest as it does to dig.
5. Even in a fall when conditions were good for digging and harvesting, the actual number of days required to dig and harvest peanut was twice the number of days needed if farmers could dig and harvest without any weather delays or other bottlenecks. But what would happen in a fall with very poor conditions?
6. Based on the pod blasting sample shown at production meeting, about 30% of growers estimated the digging date to be 10 days away. Based on yield data from the trial the pod-

blasting sample was taken from, the estimate from these farmers was right on the money. When considering the number of farmers stating that peanuts should be dug 8 days from when the sample was taken to no more than 12 days after sampling, 57% of all farmers were within this ballpark. When considering a range of 5 to 15 days away from optimum maturity, 89% of farmers would have dug this field. These are a lot of numbers to throw at you, but what they suggest is that most farmers seem to have a really good grasp of the maturity of the crop using the pod blasting charts and that they understand how that information translates into digging. The challenge seems to be doing this in a timely manner.

7. More prohexadione calcium was used in North Carolina and Virginia than in South Carolina (51% to 56% compared with 13%) while more farmers used a guidance system in South Carolina (79%) compare with 38% (North Carolina) and 32% (Virginia). In North Carolina, South Carolina, and Virginia, 19%, 10%, and 8% of farmers, respectively, used both approaches to helping keep the digger in the right spot.

As you move into the digging and harvest season, consider checking our Peanut Portal with the North Carolina Cooperative Extension Service (<https://peanut.ces.ncsu.edu/>). We often post *Peanut Notes* and other updates, and when we move into September, there will be a lot of images on the site that show peanut maturity.