

# Effect of GA<sub>3</sub> and Pollination on Fruit Set and Development in Rabbiteye Blueberry

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**Abstract.** To determine if multiple applications of GA<sub>3</sub> would increase size of parthenocarpic fruit, and to assess the interaction between GA<sub>3</sub> applications and pollination, 'Beckyblue' rabbiteye blueberry (*Vaccinium ashei* Reade) flowers were treated with single or multiple applications of GA<sub>3</sub> alone or in combination with full or partial pollination. Single or multiple applications of GA<sub>3</sub> resulted in similar or increased fruit set compared with pollination, and increased fruit set compared with no pollination. GA<sub>3</sub> applications decreased fruit mass and increased the fruit development period in comparison with pollination alone. Multiple, late applications of GA<sub>3</sub> were ineffective in overcoming these effects. Partial (nonsaturating) pollination resulted in an average fruit set of 60%, while set following GA<sub>3</sub> treatment in combination with full or partial pollination averaged 85%. Fruit mass was greater in the full pollination ± GA<sub>3</sub> treatments than in all other treatments. The number of large seeds and seed mass per fruit were greatest in the full pollination treatment, and were significantly decreased by all treatments in which GA<sub>3</sub> and/or partial pollination were used; however, there were no concomitant effects of GA<sub>3</sub> in delaying the fruit development period. Our results indicate that under optimal pollination conditions, no detrimental effects of GA<sub>3</sub> applications on fruit set, fruit size, or fruit development period in blueberry are to be expected, even though GA<sub>3</sub> reduces seed number and seed mass. Furthermore, GA<sub>3</sub> applications appear to be beneficial in increasing fruit set under suboptimal pollination conditions, although smaller fruit are to be expected under such conditions. Chemical name used: gibberellic acid (GA<sub>3</sub>).

Fruit set in rabbiteye blueberry is often low, and yields may be commercially unacceptable (Lyrene and Crocker, 1983). The causes of fruit abscission are unclear, but inadequate pollination, high temperatures during bloom, and/or pest problems may be factors. Gibberellic acid and potassium gibberellate have been used successfully to induce fruit set and parthenocarpic fruit development in lowbush and highbush blueberry (Barker and Collins, 1965; Doughty and Scheer, 1975; Mainland and Eck, 1968a, 1968b, 1969a, 1969b; NeSmith and Krewer, 1992). GA<sub>3</sub> also induces fruit set and development in rabbiteye blueberry when applied under greenhouse or growth chamber conditions (Williamson et al., 1995). However, results with field-grown rabbiteye blueberry have been inconsistent. Increased fruit set has been observed in some studies (Davies and Buchanan, 1979; Mainland et al., 1979; Vanerwegen and Krewer, 1991), but in others, GA<sub>3</sub> applications had no effect or actually decreased fruit set and yield (Davies, 1986; Davies and Buchanan, 1979).

The response appears to be cultivar-dependent, and optimum conditions for GA<sub>3</sub> applications in the field have not been established.

The erratic fruit set response of field-grown blueberry to GA<sub>3</sub> applications may be due to detrimental effects of GA<sub>3</sub> on pollination and/or fertilization. Gibberellins reportedly inhibit pollen germination in *Vitis vinifera* L. (Weaver and McCune, 1960). Application of GA<sub>3</sub> to rabbiteye blueberries enclosed in a greenhouse with bees significantly reduced seed number compared with that in plants that did not receive GA<sub>3</sub> (NeSmith et al., 1995), suggesting an inhibitory effect of GA<sub>3</sub> on either pollination or fertilization. However, it is unclear from this work whether all of the GA<sub>3</sub>-treated fruit were pollinated.

Even when bloom applications of GA<sub>3</sub> increase fruit set in blueberry, fruit size is often significantly reduced (NeSmith et al., 1995; Williamson et al., 1995). In both apple and grape, gibberellin applications increased fruit size following open pollination (McLaughlin and Greene, 1984; Weaver and Pool, 1971), especially when applied after completion of the fruit cell division stage (McLaughlin and Greene, 1984). In blueberry, gibberellin levels in GA<sub>3</sub>-induced parthenocarpic fruit may become depleted by the time rapid cell enlargement occurs. Thus, later applications of GA<sub>3</sub> may replenish the GA<sub>3</sub> supply, resulting in larger fruit.

To date, exogenous applications of GA<sub>3</sub> to

increase fruit size in blueberry have not been tried in stages of development other than the cell division stage. In addition, the combined effect of GA<sub>3</sub>, pollen source, and pollen amount has not been studied in blueberry. Thus, the objectives of the present experiments were to 1) evaluate the effect of GA<sub>3</sub> concentration and application time on fruit set, fruit development, and fruit quality in 'Beckyblue' rabbiteye blueberry, and 2) evaluate the interaction between GA<sub>3</sub> and pollination on fruit set and fruit development.

## Materials and Methods

*Experiment I.* Five uniform 4-year-old 'Beckyblue' rabbiteye blueberry plants were grown outdoors in 12-L containers in 1 peat : 1 pine bark. Plants were watered as needed and fertilized with water-soluble fertilizer (20N-6.1P-11.6K) at 1.0 g·L<sup>-1</sup> (Peters, Scott-Sierra Horticultural Products Co., Marysville, Ohio) once a week until early September. In November, plants were chilled in the dark at 7 ± 1 °C for 30 d. After the chilling period, the plants were transferred to a greenhouse with average temperatures of 17 °C day/16 °C night to force budbreak. Single or multiple applications of GA<sub>3</sub> were sprayed on individual flower clusters (five to nine florets per cluster) beginning at full bloom (FB). The following treatments were applied: 1) a single application of either 0.6 mM or 1.4 mM GA<sub>3</sub> at FB, 2) two applications of either 0.3 or 0.7 mM GA<sub>3</sub> at FB and FB + 7 d after full bloom (DAFB), 3) three applications of either 0.2 or 0.5 mM GA<sub>3</sub> at FB, FB + 7, and FB + 21 DAFB, or 4) four applications of 0.1 or 0.4 mM GA<sub>3</sub> at FB, FB + 7, FB + 21, and FB + 42 DAFB. A hand-pollinated and a nonpollinated control were also included for a total of six treatments. Prior to treatment application, each flower cluster was tagged, and the floret number and date were recorded. All treatments were applied on a single plant, which constituted a replication. There were 48 to 99 florets/treatment for each plant arranged in a randomized complete-block design, with five replications.

*Experiment II.* To further evaluate the effects of GA<sub>3</sub> when applied during later stages of fruit development, 45 one-year-old 'Beckyblue' rabbiteye blueberry plants were grown outdoors in 2-L containers in a 1 peat : 1 pine bark mixture, and budbreak was forced as described above, except that the average temperatures in the greenhouse were 25 °C day/22 °C night. Gibberellic acid at 0.3 or 0.7 mM was applied at FB and 7 DAFB, or 0.4 mM GA<sub>3</sub> was applied at FB, 7 DAFB, 21 DAFB, and 42 DAFB. Hand-pollinated and nonpollinated controls were also included, for a total of five treatments. The number of florets per cluster varied from four to seven and the average number of florets/plant from 26 to 35. Plants were blocked by size, and each treatment was applied to a single plant in a randomized block design, with two blocks per treatment, four or five plants per block, and nine replications.

For both experiments, GA<sub>3</sub> solutions were prepared from Pro Gibb (Pro Gibb 4%; Abbott

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Laboratories, Chicago) in McIlvaine buffer (Dawson et al., 1986), pH 3.5, with 0.01% Tween-80 as a surfactant. Pollinated treatments were hand-pollinated once at FB with 'Climax' pollen. Nonpollinated treatments were sprayed at FB with McIlvaine buffer.

Fruit abscission was monitored on a weekly basis and final fruit set was determined at 70 and 48 DAFB for Expts. I and II, respectively. The fruit development period (FDP) was calculated as the time when 80% of the fruits had been harvested. For each treatment, fruit from all harvests were pooled for fresh mass, soluble solids, titratable acidity, and pH measurements. Soluble solids were determined with an Abbe refractometer (model 10460; Cambridge Instrument, Buffalo, N.Y.). Titratable acidity was determined by titrating 5.0 mL of juice with 0.1 N NaOH to pH 8.2 using an automatic titrator (model 380; Fisher Scientific Co., Pittsburgh). Yield per treatment was calculated as a product of fruit fresh mass and final fruit number.

**Experiment III.** In order to assess GA<sub>3</sub> and pollination interactions, nine uniform 2-year-old 'Beckyblue' rabbiteye blueberry plants were grown in a 1 peat : 1 pine bark mixture in 12-L containers, chilled, and forced to budbreak at average greenhouse temperatures of 27/22 °C as described above. At bloom, the following treatments were applied: 1) saturating cross-pollination (X); 2) saturating cross-pollination + 0.7 mM GA<sub>3</sub> at FB + 7 DAFB (X + GA); 3) 1/4 saturating cross-pollination (1/4X); 4) 1/4 saturating cross-pollination + 0.7 mM GA<sub>3</sub> at FB + 7 DAFB (1/4X + GA); 5) saturating self-pollination (S); and 6) saturating self-pollination + 0.7 mM GA<sub>3</sub> at FB + 7 DAFB (S + GA).

'Climax' pollen was used for all cross-pollination treatments. The saturating pollination treatment consisted of applying 200 pollen tetrads to the stigmatic surface, while the 1/4 saturating pollination consisted of application of 50 pollen tetrads. The number of pollen tetrads selected for the treatments was based on work by Parrie and Lang (1992) indicating that blueberry stigmatic pollen saturation, i.e., the maximum number of pollen tetrads that the stigmatic fluid can hydrate, ranges from 200 to 300. Pollen tetrads were counted on a 100 mm<sup>2</sup> black lid under a stereoscopic microscope at 15× magnification. The pollen was transferred by touching the black lid to the stigma. After each transfer, pollen tetrads left on the black lid were transferred onto the stigma with a spatula. This process was repeated until all the pollen tetrads were on the stigma.

All treatments were applied on a single plant, using ≈10 florets/treatment for each plant, in a randomized complete-block design with nine single-plant replications. GA<sub>3</sub> treatments were applied in the evening, at least 4 h after pollination. Treatments not receiving GA<sub>3</sub> were sprayed with buffer and surfactant at the same time.

Fruit abscission was recorded weekly, and final fruit set was determined at 56 DAFB. Fruit was harvested every other day and weekly harvests were pooled to determine fresh mass.

Subsequently, fruit was macerated with a mortar and pestle and seeds were separated and air dried for 24 h. Total seed number and seed mass per fruit were recorded, then seeds were separated into small and large seeds using a sieve of 1 mm<sup>2</sup>, counted, and weighed. Viability of small and large seeds was not determined.

Data for all experiments were analyzed by analysis of variance (ANOVA) and means separated by LSMeans. Fruit set data were arcsin transformed prior to analysis. For Expt. II, both block and replication were analyzed as factors in the ANOVA.

## Results

**Experiments I and II.** Final fruit set was significantly lower in the nonpollinated treatment than in the pollinated or GA<sub>3</sub> treatments in both experiments (Tables 1 and 2). Final fruit set did not differ among any of the GA<sub>3</sub> treatments within an experiment. Fruit set in the pollinated and GA<sub>3</sub> treatments was similar in Expt. I; however, in Expt. II, fruit set in the pollinated treatment was significantly lower than in the GA<sub>3</sub> treatments.

Application of GA<sub>3</sub> reduced fruit fresh mass compared with the pollinated control in both experiments (Tables 1 and 2). In Expt. I, fruits from the pollinated control were four times as large as those from GA<sub>3</sub> treatments,

but in Expt. II these differences were not as great. Yield was lower for GA<sub>3</sub> treatments than for pollinated treatments in Expt. I, but there were no differences in total yield among treatments in Expt. II.

In Expt. I, GA<sub>3</sub> treatments increased the FDP by 34 to 49 d relative to the pollinated control (Table 1), while in Expt. II, a 10-d delay in development was observed only with two applications of 0.3 mM GA<sub>3</sub> or four applications of 0.4 mM GA<sub>3</sub> (Table 2). In general, GA<sub>3</sub> treatments reduced fruit soluble solids compared with the pollinated treatment in Expt. I (Table 1); however, no differences in solids were found in Expt. II (Table 2). There were no consistent differences in pH or titratable acidity among treatments.

**Experiment III.** Fruit abscission was minimal for X, X + GA, 1/4X + GA, and S + GA from 0 to 21 DAFB, averaging 5% for all treatments (Fig. 1). This was followed by a slow increase from 21 to 35 DAFB, after which abscission ceased. In contrast, abscission in the 1/4X and S treatments increased slowly from 0 to 21 DAFB, followed by a dramatic increase from 21 to 42 DAFB. There were no significant differences in final fruit set among X, X + GA, 1/4X + GA and S + GA treatments, with set averaging ≈85% (Fig. 1). Final fruit set was significantly reduced by the 1/4X treatment (60%), while set in the S treatment was the lowest, averaging <20% (Fig. 1).

Table 1. Effects of gibberellic acid (GA<sub>3</sub>) on fruit set and development in 'Beckyblue' rabbiteye blueberry (Expt. I).

No. applications <sup>w</sup>	Concn (mM)	Flower no./plant	Fruit set <sup>z</sup> (%)	FM (g/fruit)	Total yield (g/trt/plant)	FDP <sup>y</sup> (days)	SS <sup>x</sup> (°Brix)	pH
1	0.6	71.0	62.8 b <sup>z</sup>	0.49 b	28.2 b	134.6 a	10.4 b	3.7 a
	1.4	57.0	74.6 ab	0.53 b	25.7 b	126.4 ab	11.4 b	3.9 a
2	0.3	77.0	77.6 ab	0.51 b	31.9 b	131.4 ab	10.6 b	3.6 a
	0.7	72.2	77.8 ab	0.46 b	26.9 b	120.8 ab	11.7 ab	3.7 a
3	0.2	75.8	79.8 ab	0.57 b	36.0 b	129.8 ab	10.6 b	3.6 a
	0.5	98.8	84.6 ab	0.42 b	36.2 b	124.4 ab	10.5 b	3.6 a
4	0.1	81.2	77.0 ab	0.52 b	31.4 b	126.8 ab	11.7 b	3.9 a
	0.4	53.8	85.8 ab	0.46 b	22.1 b	119.8 b	12.3 ab	3.6 a
Hand pollinated		48.2	78.4 ab	1.67 a	79.0 a	85.0 c	13.4 a	3.7 a
Nonpollinated		52.0	29.0 c	---	---	---	---	---

<sup>z</sup>Data were arcsin transformed prior to analysis.

<sup>y</sup>FDP = fruit development period.

<sup>x</sup>SS = soluble solids.

<sup>w</sup>GA<sub>3</sub> application times: 1 application = full bloom (FB); 2 applications = FB and FB + 7 d after full bloom (DAFB); 3 applications = FB, FB + 7, FB + 7 + 21 DAFB; 4 applications = FB, FB + 7, FB + 7 + 21, FB + 7 + 21 + 42 DAFB.

<sup>v</sup>Mean separation within columns by LSMeans, *P* < 0.05.

Table 2. Effects of gibberellic acid (GA<sub>3</sub>) on fruit set and development in 'Beckyblue' rabbiteye blueberry (Expt. II).

No. applications <sup>w</sup>	Concn (mM)	Flower no./plant	Fruit set <sup>z</sup> (%)	FM (g/fruit)	Total yield (g/plant)	FDP <sup>y</sup> (days)	SS <sup>v</sup>	TA <sup>x</sup> (%)	pH
2	0.3	32.9 a	76.2 a <sup>z</sup>	1.18 b	30.3 a	64.4 a	11.6 a	0.69 a	3.1 ab
	0.7	28.2 a	74.8 a	1.19 b	25.0 a	57.8 b	12.0 a	0.98 a	3.0 b
4	0.4	34.8 a	68.8 a	1.11 b	26.4 a	66.1 a	12.6 a	0.89 a	2.9 b
		34.8 a	43.0 b	2.04 a	23.7 a	55.6 b	12.1 a	0.69 a	3.2 a
Hand pollinated		26.1 a	3.3 c	---	---	---	---	---	---
Nonpollinated									

<sup>z</sup>Data were arcsin transformed prior to analysis.

<sup>y</sup>FDP = fruit development period.

<sup>x</sup>TA = titratable acidity.

<sup>w</sup>GA<sub>3</sub> application times: 2 applications—full bloom (FB) and FB + 7 d after full bloom (DAFB); 4 applications—FB, FB + 7 DAFB, FB + 7 + 21, FB + 7 + 21 + 42.

<sup>v</sup>SS = soluble solids.

<sup>v</sup>Mean separation within columns by LSMeans, *P* < 0.05.

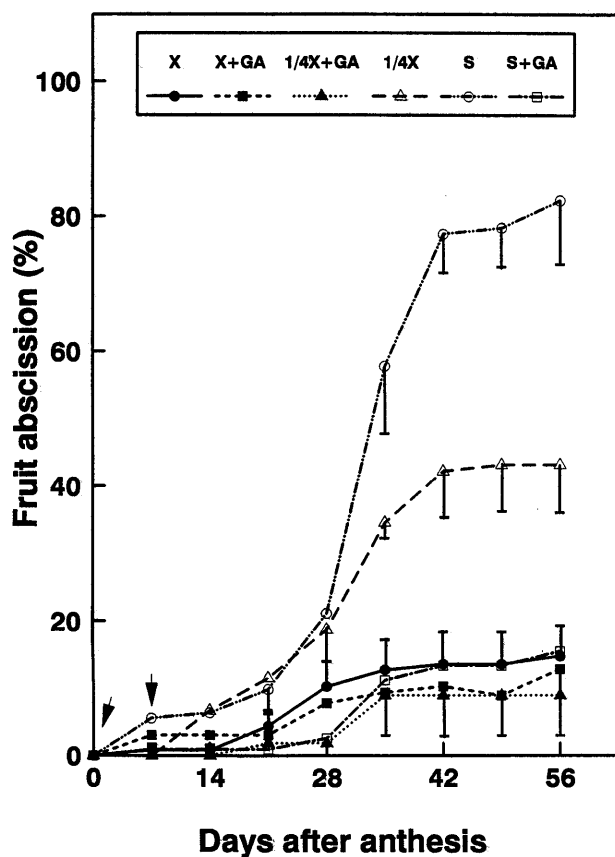


Fig. 1. Time-course and extent of fruit abscission in 'Beckyblue' rabbiteye blueberry as affected by gibberellic acid ( $GA_3$ ), pollen source, and pollen amount. X = cross-pollination (200 pollen tetrads); 1/4X = 50 pollen tetrads; S = self-pollination (200 pollen tetrads).  $GA_3$  = 0.7 mM  $GA_3$ ;  $GA_3$  application times indicated by arrows. Values are means  $\pm$  SE,  $n = 9$ ; SE bars present only when larger than symbol.

Table 3. Effects of gibberellic acid ( $GA_3$ ), pollen source, and pollen amount on fruit fresh mass (FM) and seed number/seed mass in 'Beckyblue' rabbiteye blueberry.

Treatment <sup>y</sup>	FM (g/fruit)	FDP <sup>z</sup> (days)	Seeds/fruit		Seed mass (mg)		Total per plant	
			Large	Small	Large	Small	Seed no.	Seed mass (mg)
X	1.98 a <sup>x</sup>	72 a	12.1 a	40.3 a	8.6 a	9.8 a	52.4 a	18.4 a
X + GA	2.03 a	72 a	5.0 b	37.1 a	2.9 b	8.4 a	42.1 ab	11.3 b
1/4X	1.37 b	87 a	4.6 b	32.4 a	3.6 b	5.2 a	37.0 b	8.7 bc
1/4X + GA	1.61 b	72 a	1.9 c	33.3 a	1.1 c	4.4 a	35.2 b	5.6 cd
S	1.07 b	92 b	0.3 c	28.2 a	0.1 c	3.3 a	28.5 b	3.5 cd
S + GA	1.65 b	87 a	0.5 c	30.7 a	0.3 c	2.8 a	31.2 b	3.2 d

<sup>z</sup>FDP = fruit development period.

<sup>y</sup>Treatments: X = cross pollination with 'Climax' pollen (200 pollen tetrads), 1/4X = 50 pollen tetrads, S = self-pollination with 'Beckyblue' pollen (200 pollen tetrads),  $GA_3$  = 0.7 mM  $GA_3$  applied at full bloom (FB) and FB + 7 d after full bloom (DAFB).

<sup>x</sup>Mean separation within columns by LSM means,  $P < 0.05$ .

Fruit mass in the X and X + GA treatments was significantly greater than in the other treatments, averaging 2.0 g/fruit (Table 3), but differences in berry mass among 1/4X, 1/4X + GA, S, or S + GA treatments were nonsignificant. The FDP was similar among all treatments except for the self-pollinated (S) treatment, in which the development period averaged 14 d longer (Table 3).

The number and mass of large seed per fruit were greater in the cross-pollinated (X) treatment than in the other treatments (Table 3). Within a given cross-pollination treatment (X or 1/4X), application of  $GA_3$  significantly reduced number and mass of large seeds compared with the pollination treatment alone. The number and mass of small seeds per fruit

did not differ among treatments. Total seed mass per fruit in the cross-pollinated (X) treatment was significantly higher than in all other treatments.

## Discussion

In controlled studies, where blueberry flowers were either pollinated or treated with  $GA_3$  (but not both), fruit set of  $GA_3$ -treated plants was as high or higher than in pollinated plants (Mainland et al., 1979; Mainland and Eck, 1969a, 1969b; Williamson et al., 1995). Results from our studies confirm this. The reason for the relatively low fruit set observed in the pollinated treatment in Expt. II relative to Expt. I is unknown, although it may be par-

tially due to the higher greenhouse temperatures that occurred during the fruit setting period (25/22 °C) in Expt. II vs. 17/16 °C in Expt. I. Temperatures of 26 °C day/21 °C night decreased fruit set 23% in rabbiteye blueberry relative to 26/10 °C (Williamson et al., 1995). High temperatures may decrease set by reducing pollen germination and/or tube growth, stigmatic receptivity, or ovule longevity. Since  $GA_3$  substitutes for pollination and fertilization, high temperatures probably have a much less negative impact on  $GA_3$ -induced fruit set.

In both experiments, average fresh mass of  $GA_3$ -treated fruit was less than that of pollinated fruit. In Expt. I, initial numbers of flowers/plant averaged 48 for pollinated treatments, vs. 73 for  $GA_3$  treatments. Although these differences were not statistically significant, the increased flower number in the  $GA_3$  treatments, combined with similar fruit set percentages among all treatments, resulted in higher fruit loads in some of the  $GA_3$  treatments compared with pollinated treatments. This may partially explain the decrease in fruit mass caused by  $GA_3$ . However, calculations of fruit number within each treatment revealed no significant differences in fruit number between the pollinated and several of the  $GA_3$  treatments (one application of 0.6 mM or 1.4 mM  $GA_3$ , four applications of 0.4 mM  $GA_3$ ), yet fruit mass was still significantly less in all of the  $GA_3$  treatments. This suggests that the decreased fruit mass in  $GA_3$  treatments was not solely due to increased fruit load. These results agree with previous work in which  $GA_3$ -induced parthenocarpic fruit was significantly smaller than pollinated fruit even though fruit number on the  $GA_3$ -treated and pollinated plants was identical (Williamson et al., 1995).

The decreased fruit mass in  $GA_3$  treatments may be related to seed number, since berry mass and seed number are positively correlated (Aalders and Hall, 1961; Darnell and Lyrene, 1989; Lyrene, 1989; Moore et al., 1972; Payne et al., 1989). Although seed number was not recorded in Expts. I and II, no seeds were observed in  $GA_3$ -treated fruits. In Expt. III, there was a positive correlation between fresh mass and total seed number ( $r^2 = 0.60$ ,  $P < 0.01$ ). Thus, a decrease in seed number probably accounts, at least partially, for the decrease in mass of  $GA_3$ -treated fruit.

Fruit mass was significantly lower in Expt. I relative to Expt. II, especially for the  $GA_3$  treatments. The relatively greater decrease in mass of  $GA_3$ -treated fruits vs. pollinated fruits in Expt. I may be due, in part, to the fact that all treatments were applied to the same plant in that experiment. Since pollinated fruits are stronger sinks than parthenocarpic (i.e.,  $GA_3$ -treated) fruits (Goldwin, 1984), pollinated fruits would outcompete  $GA_3$ -treated fruits for assimilates. Because fruit size was the dominant factor in yield in Expt. I ( $r^2 = 0.92$ ,  $P < 0.01$ ), this would also explain the differences in yield between the pollinated and  $GA_3$  treatments in that experiment.

Late applications (i.e., 21 and 42 DAFB) of  $GA_3$  were ineffective in increasing fruit mass

compared with bloom applications. Application times were based on days after bloom, rather than phenological stages of development. In Expt. I, these application times corresponded to 25% to 35% of the FDP, while in Expt. II, they corresponded to 35% to 65% of the FDP. The stage(s) of fruit development at these application times were not determined. However, in a separate study, differences in fruit size between pollinated and GA<sub>3</sub>-treated fruit were due to differences in cell size, rather than cell number, with significant differences in cell size evident only after 24 DAFB (Cano-Medrano and Darnell, 1997). This represented 25% and 35% of the total FDP for GA<sub>3</sub>-treated and pollinated fruit, respectively. Thus, replenishing the GA<sub>3</sub> supply prior to and/or after differences in cell size are manifested apparently is not sufficient to stimulate adequate cell enlargement in these fruit. Applications of GA<sub>3</sub> during later stages of fruit growth (i.e., after 65% of the FDP) may be effective in increasing cell size; further experiments are required to determine if this is true.

The increased development period observed in GA<sub>3</sub>-treated fruit in Expts. I and II is probably related to decreased seed number. Increased seed number is significantly associated with a shorter FDP in both lowbush (Alders and Hall, 1961) and rabbiteye blueberry (Meader and Darrow, 1944; Tamada et al., 1977). Lang and Danka (1991) found that cross-pollination in southern highbush blueberry increased both the mean number of well-developed seeds per fruit and the proportion of early ripening fruits compared with self-pollination. A significant negative correlation between seed number and FDP in Expt. III ( $r^2 = 0.64$ ,  $P < 0.01$ ) also supports the observations in Expts. I and II.

There were no apparent negative interactions between pollination and GA<sub>3</sub> applications on fruit set or fruit size in blueberry, as has been observed in grape (Weaver and Pool, 1991) and apple (Edgerton, 1981). The fruit set percentages for both saturating cross- and self-pollination are similar to those reported by others (El-Agamy et al., 1982; Garvey and Lyrene, 1987; Lyrene and Goldy, 1983; Williamson et al., 1995). Although fruit set was relatively high under conditions of 1/4X pollination, the detrimental effect of this treatment on fruit mass suggests that yield may be negatively affected in the field under conditions of suboptimal pollination. The reduced fruit size obtained by 1/4X pollination may be partially, although not completely, offset by GA<sub>3</sub> treatment.

A comparison of the X and X + GA treatments, and the 1/4X and 1/4X + GA treatments indicates that GA<sub>3</sub> inhibits the development of large seeds in previously pollinated flowers. GA<sub>3</sub> may be acting as a pollenicide, as reported by Weaver and McCune (1960) for grape flowers. The decrease in large seed number and total seed mass in fruit from the GA<sub>3</sub> treatments did not affect final fruit mass. Subsequent studies have confirmed that GA<sub>3</sub> applications in conjunction with pollination decrease both large and total seed number compared with pollination alone, without nega-

tively affecting fruit mass (Darnell, unpublished data). This suggests that although GA<sub>3</sub> appears to be acting as a pollenicide or embryocide, sufficient seed development occurs, even under conditions of nonsaturating pollination, so that fruit size is not negatively affected. Although seed number is highly correlated with fruit mass, as indicated previously, as much as 41% to 69% of the variability in fruit mass may be attributable to factors other than seed number under conditions of varying pollination loads (Brewer and Dobson, 1969).

In conclusion, the application of GA<sub>3</sub> alone or in combination with pollination increased fruit set compared with no pollination or self-pollination. Application of GA<sub>3</sub> alone decreased fruit mass, and multiple late applications of GA<sub>3</sub> did not overcome this. Under optimal pollination conditions, no detrimental effects of GA<sub>3</sub> on fruit set, fruit size, or FDP in blueberry are to be expected. Furthermore, GA<sub>3</sub> applications appear to be beneficial in increasing fruit set under suboptimal pollination conditions (i.e., partial cross-pollination or self-pollination), although smaller fruit are to be expected under those conditions.

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