



## **Episode 22—Wiregrass Crop Update**

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Announcer:

The Alabama Crops Report podcast, your trusted information source for Alabama agriculture.

Scott Graham:

Hey everybody, and welcome in to another episode of the Alabama Crops Report podcast. I'm Scott Graham, Extension entomologist.

Amanda Shear:

I'm Amanda Shear, Extension plant pathologist. And it's been a few weeks since I've been on an episode, so you probably thought that the morning glories and my cotton plants weren't letting me out of the field, but I am back. I survived.

Scott Graham:

The morning glories, you sound like a weed scientist.

Amanda Shear:

Well, I have a borderline weed cotton trial going on in a couple of locations. The weeds were not the main goal, but they're there, whether we like them or not. So, I feel like I'm encroaching onto Steve Lee's territory a little bit.

Scott Graham:

Yeah, well it's been such an interesting year, it's been difficult for even the research station to get equipment into some of these fields to spray weeds and stuff like that. It's just been a challenging year.

Amanda Shear:

I feel like we say that every year, but it's especially true this year with all this rain.

Scott Graham:

Yeah. Well, all right, our guest today is Cedric Mack. Cedric is our Wiregrass regional crops agent. Cedric, how's it going?

Sedrick Mack:

It's going good. I'm happy to be here. How are y'all?

Scott Graham:

We're good. We're good. So, tell us a little bit, for folks who don't know you, how did you get here and what is your role with Alabama Extension?

Sedrick Mack:

Yes. I'm Cedric Mack, I'm located in southeast Alabama with Alabama Crop Group Extension System. I'm a regional extension agent for Alabama Crops. I got here, the moment I graduated from Auburn university, I actually met Dr. Mike Phillips, he offered me an intern position to see if I would like Extension, and I did. And a position opened up as this REA position and that's what landed me here, and I'm liking what I'm doing so far. I've been here a year actually.

Amanda Shear:

Yeah, and didn't you start during COVID and the height of the pandemic? So, I bet that was interesting for you.

Sedrick Mack:

That was very interesting. I got hired, actually I was an intern. I remember my intern stated from January and ended in May, and that COVID spike came through in March/April and everybody was working from home. So, I called up Dr. Phillips, I said, "What am I supposed to do?" He said, "Just work remotely." And then I got hired in June, it was still working remotely. So, I was lost. But everything is back to just about normal now. We're having face to face meetings, everything is going smooth so far.

Scott Graham:

As a regional agent, you're basically working remotely anyway.

Sedrick Mack:

That's right, you are. I'm in a truck just about every day, sometimes I'm in the office, which is rare. If I'm in there, I'm doing something on the computer, catching up on some paperwork, turning some stuff in. But yes, you're right, we're remotely.

Amanda Shear:

Yeah, I often joked last year that the safest place that you could've been was in the cotton or peanut or soya bean field. So, the work never really stopped for us, and that's really the story for agriculture in general. But just for onboarding, for getting you on the team, and Scott, same thing, I know it was a challenge for you guys last year.

Scott Graham:

And Cedric, you're a native of Thomasville, Georgia. Is that right?

Sedrick Mack:

That's exactly right, Thomasville, Georgia.

Scott Graham:

You're an Auburn graduate. We were talking a little bit earlier, so I guess it leads into what your first love was in agriculture. Tell us a fun fact about yourself.

Sedrick Mack:

I love artificially inseminating cattle. A lot of people say, "Why you didn't go to school for animal science then?" I really fell in love ... Well, we grew up with cattle, cotton, and peanuts. We rode crop and had commercial cows, but I went to Auburn and I worked at the [inaudible 00:03:50] and I just enjoyed the pure bred operation. I knew I wanted cows some day, I didn't know what route. I learnt how to artificially inseminate, I went up to the vet school to take a class up there to learn all that stuff, and I actually enjoyed it. So, cattle, I love cows. Plants as well too, but I really do love cows.

Scott Graham:

Yeah, I think they're pretty important. I ate one this weekend. Part of one [crosstalk 00:04:14].

Sedrick Mack:

There you go. There you go, very important.

Scott Graham:

Well, tell us what's been going on down the Wiregrass the last week or so.

Sedrick Mack:

The last week or so, guys are back working, and you're probably like, "What do you mean back working? What happened?" Well, we've been getting a lot of rain in the past month or two and it delayed a lot of spraying and getting in the field to keep crops up to date on your diseases, disease control and weed management control. I wouldn't say most of the farmers are caught up on everything. The plants look good. There are some disease out there, and a lot of guys weren't able to get there early to put on a preventative spray, a fungicide on crops, due to all that rain. But you're not going to control that disease 100% in my opinion, but you can manage it. I don't want Dr. [Mendit 00:05:07] to get onto me about it. I don't know what she'd think on it, but that's just my opinion. But guys are back to normal, spraying and managing their crops.

Amanda Shear:

Yeah. Surprisingly Cedric, I was a little worried that they wouldn't be able to catch back up, and I think a lot of producers, we've had enough breaks in the rain where they were able to get back onto those fungicide spray schedules. So, I think we're in much better shape, but I was a little bit more concerned maybe about a month ago, but I think they've caught up for the most part in cotton and peanuts. And just for our listeners, Cedric's in the southeast part of the state. Do you want to talk about the main agronomic crops that you have in your region, Cedric?

Sedrick Mack:

Yes ma'am. Cotton, peanuts and corn are the top main three, and you see some guys in this part of the world, they have very little soya bean, but primarily it was cotton and peanuts, that would be the top two. A lot of guys don't want to waste their irrigated grounds with much. But you see guys plant a few soya beans, very little. Covington County actually has a good bit of beans over there.

Scott Graham:

I was-

Amanda Shear:

Sorry, Scott. I know soya beans are one of your first loves.

Scott Graham:

Well, I like all my crops; cotton, soya beans, peanuts. I was down at the Wiregrass at the research station this morning actually, and it looks to me Cedric like a lot of, or most of our peanut fields are lapping, they're starting to get some good growth there.

Sedrick Mack:

Yes.

Scott Graham:

There's a couple of fields that look like they had some issues with maybe weather related things. Cotton seems to be over the board, but for the most part it looks like we're blooming across most of Wiregrass, is that ...

Sedrick Mack:

Yes, that's true. That's true. I got out a little bit, went out and got some lunch, just to go get something to eat of course, and you've got cotton blooming at the top already, and that bottom is putting bolls on pretty good.

Scott Graham:

We're blooming up the top a little bit early right now.

Sedrick Mack:

We are.

Scott Graham:

But all that rain, and the cotton doesn't have any root system, and now that it's finally getting dry, there's nowhere to go to mine that extra water.

Sedrick Mack:

That's right. With these peanuts, I had a farmer called today and he was a little concerned. He said, "You think it's going to be dry in August?" I said, "We don't know." None of us could predict that. But we need our rains, we need them now, August. I was looking at an article the other day and peanuts require, if I'm saying this right, I read it correctly, but don't quote me. It's [inaudible 00:07:40] literature out there that'll for sure tell you. When peanuts are 70 days old, they require approximately about a quarter of an inch of rain a day to reach potential year. And of course that varies, you've got variables in that equation; soil types, there's a whole bunch of things in there that ties with that.

Scott Graham:

Yeah. I was talking somebody and they were all upset about all the rain we were getting at one point, but now we're not getting any rain and we're all upset about that too, but that's just the nature of it. It helps to have irrigated fields where you can control that a little bit, but really farming, a lot of it is where it's at the mercy of the weather.

Sedrick Mack:

That's right. I think we're going to have some good crops this year. I really do, I think so. I looked at some peanuts with a guy the other day, and we were just walking through some fields. They're green, and they're

pretty, nice foliage. Pests weren't a menace. Not a menace, a problem there with his peanuts. Foliage looks good, we pulled peanuts from different parts of the field. I mean, the peanuts look really good.

Amanda Shear:

Yeah. The only thing I'm really seeing right now, is a lot of tomato spotted wilt virus, and unfortunately there's not much we can do for control now. That's really decisions that are made before planting and before the furrow is closed. So, I'm definitely seeing it in more susceptible varieties, it's not as much in some of those resistant varieties. Georgia 12Y seems to be holding up pretty well. But that is something that even you'll notice going through fields, where with the canopy being nice and full and green, it's easier to spot those plants. So, I don't want producers to be worried about it, because there's really not much they can do, just be aware of it for next year when you're making those management decisions.

Sedrick Mack:

That's right. And I'll be honest with you, I see a little bit of that, or maybe I'm not walking enough peanut fields to see, but I have been seeing a good bit, but not as much as I'd seen last year. Last year I saw a ton of it.

Amanda Shear:

Yeah, and that's how it is. It can be localized to one part of the county, or just a couple fields and then the other ones will look really nice, so it just depends. But I think last year overall, across the southeast we were a little bit lower than what we were in terms of pressure in 2019. So, it'll be interesting to see across the board what tomato spotted wilt does this year, but I think it's a little bit higher in some spots than last year, but overall not horrible like it was in 2019, at least so far.

Sedrick Mack:

Mm-hmm (affirmative). That's right, I agree.

Scott Graham:

Well, Cedric, tell the folks a little bit about some of the stuff you've got going on there across the Wiregrass. [inaudible 00:10:19] trials, things like that.

Sedrick Mack:

Yes. Yeah, I do have a few ... I have one dry land corn [inaudible 00:10:27] trial, one irrigated, and those are in Pike County, and I do have two on farm cotton [inaudible 00:10:34] trials, and they're both dry land. One in [inaudible 00:10:36] county and one in [inaudible 00:10:37] county, and another project that I'm working on with Dr. Ron and Dr. Graham, the pheromone trials, these moth traps. And I don't know what's going on with my moth traps. One week they'll be loaded, another week they won't be loaded. I don't know what's going on with these traps out here.

Scott Graham:

Yeah, there's a fair amount of traps trying to catch the soya bean [inaudible 00:11:01] moths. You can move them a quarter of a mile down the road sometimes and they'll pick up three times as many as they were where you got them.

Sedrick Mack:

Mm-hmm (affirmative). When I was a student at Auburn, I had one of the, I want to say shorter [inaudible 00:11:16] farm, you know what I'm talking about. It was consistent every time, it would be loaded. It didn't vary too much in there, it had good pressure there.

Scott Graham:

Another thing Cedric, I'll break it to you here now, live, you can probably help us evaluate some stinkbug cast in the next couple of weeks, if you're around the research station.

Sedrick Mack:

Yeah, if I'm around. Give me that notice. With stuff going like they are, I can be here today and won't be back until next week. That's working remotely. I'm [inaudible 00:11:52]. I'm very surprised, me being young like I am, and this job people got to build trust in you to call on you, but I'm fortunate to say that I have people trust me, they call, I'm actually busy. I'm some of everywhere.

Scott Graham:

Yeah, for sure. Well, you got to ride around a good bit some with [inaudible 00:12:17] last year and see the ropes and things, so I think you're well prepared to try to help the folks down in that part of the state.

Sedrick Mack:

That's right. And I guess just being active. When people see you out and about wanting to learn, like what you're doing, they'll use you. They will use you.

Amanda Shear:

Yeah, that's the biggest thing that we do in Extension, and just chatting with our stakeholders, producers, and the best thing you can do is just go out there and check out their farm, and I get tons of texts from Cedric and some of our other REAs. So, it's always good to hear that you guys are getting out and about, and being so new to the system, that they're trusting you and reaching out.

Sedrick Mack:

That's right. And one thing that I like about Extension, we're not selling anybody anything, we're just education. It's no stress. It can be stressful when you [inaudible 00:13:07] yourself up. But as far as trying to sell something, all I'm doing is selling you the research that y'all guys have done. You can't beat that.

Scott Graham:

Well, all right Cedric, we appreciate your time. We know you're a busy man, but unless you've got any other parting shots or if you've got any field days or anything lined up for the next month or so. I guess we do actually have one, so why don't you talk about ...

Sedrick Mack:

We do. Yeah. So, we actually have a field day this month, August 20th. Come if you can, we'd like to see you. We will have a fish fry, if that'll get you to come as well. But yes, that starts at 8 o'clock, come on, get registered, sign in and come see some good crops and some research, and hear some updates from our specialists.

Scott Graham:

Yeah, so I'm looking at it here and the registration starts at 7:30, and we've got several updates until 11:30 from different folks at Auburn on some of the research that we're doing in the Wiregrass. So, that'll be at the Wiregrass research and Extension center in Headland. Registration starts at 7:30 and the tour groups leave at 8:00.

Amanda Shear:

Yeah, it'll be exciting for our listeners, because if you do come you'll get to meet me and Scott in person, if you haven't already. Steve Brown, who's also been on the podcast will be there, Chris [inaudible 00:14:20]. So a lot of good guests that we've heard from throughout this podcast season will be there.

Scott Graham:

Yeah, the dirt doctor, Audrey Gamble, will be there as well.

Amanda Shear:

Uh-oh, she's going to get you for calling her the dirt doctor.

Scott Graham:

All right, Cedric, well thanks. We appreciate your time and sitting down to business with us today on the Alabama Crops Report podcast, and appreciate our listeners, folks, for logging in and listening to us every week. As always, if we can ever be of any help, please don't hesitate to reach out and let us know.

Sedrick Mack:

Yes, call us if you got a problem.

Announcer:

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