

## Sugarcane OK in Standing Water, Helps Protect Everglades

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In a study conducted by Agricultural Research Services scientists, sugarcane has shown to tolerate flooded conditions for up to two weeks. That's good news for growers using best management practices for controlling phosphorous runoff into the Everglades, according to ARS.

Phosphorous stays attached to the soil for a long time, even with the moderate rates of phosphorous fertilizer applied to sugarcane in Florida. If growers immediately drain their flooded fields after heavy rains stirred up the soil, then soil particles -- with phosphorous attached -- flow from surrounding ditches and canals into the Everglades.

Studies reported that reducing phosphorous helps restore large expanses of native sawgrass in the Everglades that were replaced with cattails. Florida sugarcane growers are under strict regulations to cut the amount of phosphorous runoff into the Everglades, so they often delay drainage for several days and reduce drainage rates from their fields to prevent large amounts of soil and phosphorous from getting caught in the runoff. Growers are concerned, however, about how standing water affects yield and sugar content of their crop.

Results from this study, published in *Agronomy Journal*, also show that while sugarcane yielded well with periodic flooding, its yields substantially were reduced by shallow water table depths, causing a large part of the plant's roots to remain in water, said ARS, the principal intramural scientific research agency of the U.S. Department of Agriculture.