



Burnet County ANR Newsletter

MARCH 2017

It's go time for vegetable gardeners

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Dr. Joe Masabni, Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service small-acreage horticulturist, Overton, tends to seedlings inside a greenhouse at the Texas A&M AgriLife Research and Extension Center in Overton. (Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service photo by Adam Russell)

OVERTON — Dr. Joe Masabni, Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service horticulturist, Overton, said it's time for gardeners to plant some vegetables and prepare seedlings for others. "It's time to plant potatoes, onions and other cool-season crops like mustard greens, kale, peas and spinach," he said. "It's your last window to begin seeding plants like tomatoes and peppers indoors for spring gardens."

Potatoes. Masabni said potatoes are a great crop because there is a wide range of varieties for gardeners in various regions of the state. Potatoes should be planted in soil that drains well. He recommends planting a full small potato about the size of a golf ball with sprouts, but golf ball-sized pieces of larger potatoes that are sprouting can also be planted shallow in the soil, 2-3 inches deep, about 2 feet apart. "Then as the potato grows, you want to add soil on top of the stem," he said. "When the stem gets about 8 inches tall, bury about 4 inches of the stem, leaves and all, with more compost or soil mix. That lets the lateral roots develop and form new potatoes." He said that this method works well for container gardening, such as 5-gallon buckets, grow bags or large pots. For example, cut the bottom out of a white 5-gallon bucket and plant according to Masabni's instructions. When the potatoes are ready for harvest, lift the bucket to expose the potatoes. "It's an easy way to harvest potatoes and separate them from the soil," he said. "I recommend a white bucket because dark colored buckets absorb more heat and can stress the plants." Masabni said gardeners should take soil samples and have them tested to make sure the area where potatoes are planted meets requirements for potassium and phosphorous, which are important for good quality and yields.

Onions Masabni said sets of onions should be cleaned and sorted by size before planting. Dirt and dead leaves should be removed and ill-looking slips should be discarded to avoid transferring possible pathogens to the garden. Gardeners should also remove any onion slips that are smaller than the diameter of a phone charger cord, he said. He said 10-20 percent of plants in slips are typically subpar and can be discarded. Pencil-sized sprouts typically perform best. "They should be sorted by size and planted together based on size so they will grow in uniform," he said. "Bigger onions grow faster. You don't want to pick one here and one there when you can have a block or row of onions ready this week and then another ready in subsequent weeks."

Tomato seeding Masabni said it's late but not too late to start tomato seedlings. "They take 6-8 weeks to be ready, so start them as soon as possible if you haven't," he said. Masabni starts his tomato seeds in small containers filled with potting mix or compost. Be sure they drain well, he said. He recommends placing containers outside in a cold box or other cold frame structure or inside a greenhouse. "Seedlings that are grown indoors under constant warm temperatures and poor light conditions tend to grow tall and spindly," he said. "The cool nighttime temperatures in a cold frame or greenhouse slow the plant and you have a shorter, sturdier plant. They get warm temperatures and sun during the day and cool temperatures at night. The plants love it."

After germination, add some half-strength ratio fertilizer, he said. It is also best to allow the soil to dry between waterings.

Minimizing Livestock Predation Workshop slated for March 13 in Eden

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EDEN – The Minimizing Livestock Predation Workshop is set for 8:30 a.m.–1 p.m. March 13 in the Roy Burnes Civic Center in Eden.

The workshop is being conducted by the Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service.

“Predation is a constant worry to sheep and goat raisers throughout our region,” said Tanner Wieghat, AgriLife Extension agent in Concho County. “This workshop will offer topics for both new and seasoned producers, so no matter what your predator management skill level, this program will have plenty to offer.”

Individual registration will be \$20 for adults and \$10 for youth. Fees are due upon arrival and include a catered noon meal. For more information and to RSVP, call the AgriLife Extension office in Concho County at 325-732-4304.

Topics and presenters will be:

- Predation Identification, Coyote Biology, and “Do You Speak Coyote?” Dr. John Tomecek, AgriLife Extension wildlife specialist, San Angelo.
- Producer panel: Utilizing Guardian Dogs, Testimonials/Question and Answer Session.
- Management Strategies to Improve Guardian Dog Effectiveness, Dr. Reid Redden, AgriLife Extension state sheep and goat specialist, San Angelo.
- Laws, Regulations and Procedures for Setting Snares and Traps, Wildlife Services representative.

Three Texas Department of Agriculture general continuing education units will be offered.

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Plant ID Time!!

As spring picks up in Texas, it is time to know what plants are growing in our pastures and know what their uses can be. The picture to the right is Switchgrass and what it would look like about now. Switchgrass is a perennial grass that can reach from 3-6 ft. tall. Switchgrass offers nutritional and palatable grazing for livestock. The young tender plants can be utilized by deer, and the seeds are usually eaten by songbirds. Switchgrass can benefit riparian areas for soil stability as well as the livestock and wildlife value. Deer will also use stands of switchgrass to nest fawns and birds will often use the tall stands for nesting purposes as well. This is considered a high value grass for rangelands along with little bluestem, Indiangrass and big bluestem.

Highland Lakes Master Gardeners Lawn and Garden Show

Please join us at the Highland Lakes Master Gardeners Annual Lawn and Garden Show. There will be educational exhibits, fun exhibits for kids, nutritional exhibits, concessions, and much more! Experts in the field of horticulture will be there to answer any questions. The Lawn and Garden Show will be March 25, 2017 at the Burnet Community Center on Jackson Street. Hope to see you there!

Landowner Workshop set for April 21, 2017

A landowner workshop has been set for April 21, 2017 from 2-4 p.m. at the Burnet County Extension Office. Michael Haynes, County Extension Agent from Bandera County will be presenting on Basic Pond Management. Michael brings a vast amount of knowledge on stock tanks and pond management. The cost will be \$10.00 per participant. If you are interested in participating in this workshop, please call the Extension office at 512-756-5463.

Highland Lakes Master Gardeners and Master Naturalist off to a great start!!

Both the Highland Lakes Master Gardeners and the Highland Lakes Master Gardeners have started their training classes for 2017. Each Master Volunteer program has a full class of participants! They will train other Master Gardeners and Master Naturalists to become experts in their fields. The class coordinators have worked very diligently to ensure proper education and training for the adults joining the Extension family through the Master Volunteer programs. Congratulations to the Highland Lakes Master Gardeners and the Highland Lakes Master Naturalists for a successful start!

Small Landowner Workshops for 2017

Texas A&M AgriLife Extension of Burnet and Lampasas Counties will be hosting a series of Small Landowner Workshops. Heath Lusty and I are very excited about the opportunity to offer these educational workshops to the citizens of Burnet and Lampasas Counties.

The schedule and topics are below:

April 21, 2017—Burnet County Extension Office—Basic Pond Management

June 23, 2017—Lampasas County Extension Office—Common Plants/Weed and Brush Control

August 25, 2017—Burnet County Extension Office—Livestock Options

October 13, 2017—Lampasas County Extension Office—Wildlife Options

Each Workshop will be from 2-4 p.m.

If you are interested in attending the February Workshop, please RSVP to 512-756-5463 by February 15, 2017.

We would be happy to have you join us for this opportunity.

The Cost for the Workshops are \$10.00 per workshop or \$50.00 for the series.

Useful Websites:

<http://today.agrilife.org>

<http://agrilife.org/texasaglaw/home>

<http://aquaplant.tamu.edu>

<https://fisheries.tamu.edu>

<http://aggie-horticulture.tamu.edu>

We have Moved!!!

We are officially moved! Thank you to everyone who has offered to help. We are up and running. We are located at 607 N. Vandever Burnet, TX 78611.

Our new mailing address is 607 N. Vandever Suite #1 Burnet, TX 78611. Thank you for your patience and understanding while we have been in transition and as we continue to work out the “bugs” at our new location.

Burnet County AgriLife Extension

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Please feel free to call or email any time. We look forward to hearing from you