

Agriculture Newsletter

COLORADO COUNTY

TEXAS A&M
AGRI LIFE
EXTENSION

December 2017

20 CEUs
Inside

Most Asked Question of 2017 “Why is my tree dying?!”

I get lots of questions throughout the year relating to everything from ants in the kitchen to cover crops for rice production. The most common question I received during 2017 had to do with trees that looked poor or were dying. As humans, we often want to point to one thing as an answer for “Why is this tree dying?” However, more often than not, tree decline and death is caused by a multitude of factors, the most common being drought. Texas has periods of drought with intermittent floods. Every time the soil around a root dries out, that root dies. When soil moisture returns, the tree must re-grow new roots using stored energy. This leaves less energy for protection against disease or insects. The most common disease found in trees is called Hypoxylon canker. However, this disease only kills trees that are stressed (like during a drought). Furthermore, plant pathologists say that it would take 7-10 years of normal rainfall for a tree to recover from the drought of 2011. The second most common reason for tree decline is human activity. Trenching through roots, compacting soil in the root zone with equipment or vehicles, and excavating soil/roots or adding fill dirt for the construction of buildings have enormous impacts on trees (and again, these impacts may not become evident for 7-10 years). Here are some good general tips for caring for trees:

1. Water trees deeply and infrequently. A general rule is once every 2 weeks if we do not receive rain. Water enough that you can push a screwdriver into the soil 6-8 inches deep and there is moisture throughout.
2. Sprinkler systems that run for 15 minutes every other day do absolutely nothing for trees. The key is to water deeply.
3. Avoid damage or compaction in the root zone. Keep in mind that tree roots can extend away from the trunk 3-5 times the height of the tree.
4. Avoid injuring the trunk or branches. Black paint or tar is not a substitute for bark and infection has likely already occurred.
5. Make proper pruning cuts. This means cutting the correct branches at the correct time of year and correct maturity as well as not leaving branch stubs or cutting flush with the trunk.
6. Fertilize lightly. If you fertilize the grass around the tree, no additional fertilizer is required.
7. If your trees are truly important, then remove all turf grass beneath them and apply 2-3” of hardwood mulch instead.
8. Call your County Extension Agent when questions arise and BEFORE something becomes a problem.



First sign of tree stress: twig dieback and canopy thinning.

Texas A&M AgriLife
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Upcoming Events & News You Can Use

Brazos Valley Small Ruminant Management **January-6-2018**

This event is scheduled for Saturday, January 6, 2018 at the Brazos County Expo Center and will run from 8:30am - 3:00pm. Talks and Q&A with Industry Specialists. Topics to include Herd Health, Parasites Impacting Small Ruminants, Introduction to Industry Organizations, Path to the Plate, Emergency Preparedness with Livestock, Budget Development & Business Loans, Developing and Utilizing Effective Websites, Hands on Demonstrations—Trimming, Vaccinating, Banding, Disbudding, Tagging and Tattooing. A lamb and goat lunch is included. Registration is \$80. This event will take place at the Brazos County Expo Center, 5207 Leonard Rd., Bryan, TX. For more information and pre-registration email ejbesser@ag.tamu.edu.



Creative Sausage-Making Class - January 12-13, 2018

Creative Sausage Making was developed by the processed meats experts at Texas A&M AgriLife after numerous requests for a basic sausage course that would allow a “first timer” to be successful, or a “seasoned” veteran to pick up some new tips. The hands-on workshop will engage participants in important aspects of sausage making from meat selection, ingredients, casings, stuffing, equipment, processing and final finished product. Participants will manufacture their own sausages (smoked and fresh) and have an opportunity to take some home for further evaluation. This workshop is for those who wish to increase their knowledge and/or gain experience in sausage making. Whether you want to introduce a line of sausage products for your restaurant, or make your own sausage for tailgating parties, this course will help you understand the art and science of sausage making. The class will be held at the Rosenthal Meat Science Center on the A&M campus. Registration is \$350 for the 2-day class if you register before January 7th. Cost is \$400 after that. There is a group rate at the Aloft College Station hotel for \$95/night. For more information, email dgriff@tamu.edu. Registration can be done online at agriliferegister.tamu.edu.



Master Gardener Training Program—**January 17, 2018**

A new Master Gardener training program will be held beginning Wednesday, **January 17, 2018**, and running through April 18, 2018. Most classes will be held at the Austin County Extension Office. An application form is available at the Extension Office or online at <http://austin.agrilife.org>. There is a fee of \$175.00 per participant, which will cover the cost of materials, and defray speaker expenses. The classes will be held on Wednesday mornings beginning on January 17th.

The Master Gardener program is a unique opportunity for individuals who are interested in horticulture and serving their community. Master Gardeners are trained in all facets of horticulture such as plant & soil science, entomology, plant pathology, landscape design, vegetable gardening and much more. Upon completion of their training, Master Gardeners will be required to give at least 50 hours of volunteer service time in their local community in order to receive the title of “*Master Gardener*”.



An open house will be held at the Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Office in Bellville on Thursday, **January 11, 2018**, from 10:00 a.m. until 12:00 noon.

An open house will also be held at the Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Office in Brenham on Tuesday, **January 9, 2018** from 11:30 a.m. until 1:00 p.m.

For more information on the Master Gardener program, contact the Extension office at (979) 865-2072 or visit the Bluebonnet Master Gardener Website at <http://bluebonnetmastergardener.org>.

Upper Gulf Coast Feed Grain and Cotton Conference **January 11, 2017**

Feed Grain and Cotton Producers and industry professionals need to mark their calendars for Thursday, **January 11, 2018** for the Upper Gulf Coast Feed Grain and Cotton Conference. This year's conference will be held in Crescent Hall at the Wharton County Fairgrounds at 6036 FM 961 Road Wharton, Texas 77488. Registration begins at 8:00 a.m., with our first speaker beginning at 8:30 a.m. The conference will conclude after the lunch meal at 12:00 noon. **3 CEUs (1 IPM, 1 L&R, 1 Gen)** will be awarded to pesticide license holders with the Texas Department of Agriculture ; and 3.5 CEUs for Certified Crop Advisors will be offered. Thanks to our generous sponsors, no registration fee will be charged.

The Feed Grain section of the conference will address the following topics: 2017 Grain and Disease Control Trials & High Plains Fumonisin and How It Relates to Local Corn; 2017 Grain Variety Trials and Research Update.

The cotton section of the conference will begin with an update on Cotton Bollworm resistance.



For 2018, special auxin herbicide training will be required for the new dicamba formulations applied on tolerant cotton and soybean crops, according to Environmental Protection Agency labeling revisions. TDA is requiring auxin-specific herbicide training for those using the new formulations of dicamba (Xtendimax, FeXapan and Engenia. The auxin training is required for all applicators including licensed applicators and unlicensed applicators who spray under a licensed applicator. Xtendimax, FeXapan and Engenia were approved for use in XtendFlex, the dicamba-tolerant cotton from Monsanto. Training is not required for the use of Enlist, the new 2,4-D tolerant cotton from Dow AgroSciences. Participants attending the January 11th Feed Grain and Cotton Conference will receive the Auxin Specific training as part of the conference, presented by our new AgriLife Extension State Weed Specialist, Dr. Scott Nolte.

The cotton section of the conference will continue with Cotton Foliar Pathogens & Fungicides Update on FOV Race 4 Fusarium Wilt. We'll follow with a Cotton RACE Trial Update/Current Cotton Research. A lunch at 12 noon provided by our sponsors will conclude the Conference.

For more information or for a copy of the conference flyer, go to <http://wharton.agrilife.org>, or contact Stacey at the Wharton County Extension Office at (979) 532-3310, or stacey.shanks@ag.tamu.edu. Please call or email Stacey by 12 noon on January 10th just to let us know that you'll be attending.

25th Annual Upper Gulf Coast Grain Handlers Conference **January 16, 2018**

The Conference will be held on Tuesday, January 16, 2018 at the El Campo Civic Center. Registration will begin at 8:00 am, the program will begin at 8:25 am and should conclude around 3:30 pm. A catered lunch will be provided. **Five CEUs (2 IPM; 1 L&R; 2 General)** will be offered to all TDA pesticide applicators that sign in at the beginning of the meeting and remain through the closing of the program. No structural credits offered. The cost of the program is \$20.00 per person preregistered by January 12th or \$25.00 per person at the door. To preregister, please contact the Colorado County Extension Office and we will send a form to you. Program Topics: TDA Pesticide Laws & Regulations Update, Live Insect ID for Stored Grain, Importance of Bin Sanitation & Cleaning Techniques, Safety & Handling of Pesticides, an OSHA Update. For more information, call 979-732-2082.



Western Ricebelt Production Conference January 17, 2018

The Conference is scheduled for **January 17, 2018** at the El Campo Civic Center. Registration will begin at 7:45 a.m. Program will be from 8:10 a.m. – 2:15 p.m. **2.0 TDA CEUs (1 L&R, 1 IPM)** for those with a private pesticide applicators' license will be offered. Topics include Weed Control Update, Association Report, Rice Disease Management Update, TDA Pesticide Laws & Regs Update, Insect Management, Rice Boards in Texas, Association Report, 2018 Farm Bill Updater and The Outlook for Rice in 2018. For more information call 979-532-3310.



5 CEU Beef and Forage Educational Program - February 2018

In February 2018 (date to be determined) the Colorado County Beef and Forage Committee will host a **5 CEU** educational event for area producers. Topics will likely include: Weed Control Update, IGRs in Cattle Feed, First-hand success stories of reducing pesticide use in forage production, Laws and Regulations, and more. A catered meal will be provided. More details will be in the January newsletter. Most probable dates for the program are February 2nd or February 9th. For more information: 979-732-2082.

33rd Annual Fort Bend Regional Vegetable Conference February 8, 2018

The 33rd annual Fort Bend Regional Vegetable Conference is a celebration of vegetable production along the upper Gulf Coast region. Counties of Waller, Wharton, Harris, Galveston, Brazoria, Colorado, and Austin join with Fort Bend to put on this event focusing on teaching sustainable practices to help producers maximize efficiencies and profitability. We have something for every producer, and as always, we will offer **5 continuing education units (CEUs) for Texas Department of Agriculture** Pesticide Applicator license holders.

Come join us at the Fort Bend Regional Vegetable Conference on Thursday, February 8, 2018 at the Fort Bend County Fairgrounds (Buildings C & D) in Rosenberg, Texas. Registration will be held from 7:30 am to 8:00 am with the conference beginning at 8:00 am and ending at 3:30 pm. The cost with lunch included is \$25 before January 24th and \$30 after January 24th and at the door.

To register, please go to agriferegister.tamu.edu/FortBend or you may also register by phone by calling AgriLife Conference Services at 979-845-2604. There will be no in office registrations. For general questions, please contact Brandy Rader at 281-342-3034.

Generation Next School - New Opportunity!

Generation Next is open to all landowners, but may be especially interesting to those who are new or recently have inherited land. The weekly topics only take 1 hour and can be done on your own time with your own computer! Classes start the week of **Feb. 18th** and run until **May 12th**. During early May, an optional, in-person 2 day session will be held for all participants to gain hands-on experiences. Program features: Discuss business types, tax info, & insurance needs; Learn about financing programs and options; Gain ideas for operations you can add to an existing ranch; Learn options for setting up grazing & wildlife leases; Exposure to all the latest land management tools & techniques; Taught by professionals in each field and topic.

Registration is \$120. You can register online at: <https://agriferegister.tamu.edu/ESSM> or you can call 979-245-2604. For more information, email megan.clayton@ag.tamu.edu or 361-265-9203.

Livestock Air Emission Rule

A federal law from 1980 required reporting of hazardous chemicals above EPA established minimum amounts to federal officials. In 2008 the EPA adopted a regulation that exempted livestock operations from reporting, limiting reporting to only larger operations called large Concentrated Animal Feeding Operations. This ag exemption was challenged in court by environmental groups, and the DC court of appeals ruled this past April that the exemption was not authorized by the original law. Reporting requirements went into effect for a short while November 15, 2017, but the call center was swamped with 1,000 calls per hour. On November 22, the court granted an EPA request to defer reporting until January 22, 2018.

It is currently unclear exactly who will be required to report livestock emissions. Minimum daily release of 100 pounds of ammonia and hydrogen sulfide is what triggers reporting requirements. It is hoped that the EPA will establish more clear guidelines on who is required to report before January 22, 2018. The current recommendation is that operations with 330 or more beef cattle should be prepared to report. From the EPA website: "EPA recognizes that it will be challenging for farmers to report releases from animal wastes because there is no generally accepted methodology for estimating emission quantities at this time." The website does offer "resources" for estimating releases, however the single study on beef cattle only considers confined feeding operations, and not pasture-raised animals. The EPA regulations allow for annual reporting, so that most livestock operations will only need to update their report annually, instead of daily.

Environmental Impact of Beef Production in US has Decreased, While Efficiency Increased

A 2014 study from Washington State University summarizes that the US beef industry has decreased environmental impact while improving efficiency. Consumers often feel that the beef industry is a big polluter, the ranchers do not care about the environment, and that at the expense of efficiency, modern beef production has a larger environmental footprint than in "the good 'ole days." However, the study found that the amount of land needed to produce a set amount of beef decreased by 33% when comparing practices in 1977 to 2007. Water use also fell by 12%, and the "carbon footprint" of beef production decreased by 16%. These improvements are likely because of a combination of factors: improved genetics leading to a faster-maturing animal that produces more pounds of beef, improved animal nutrition means less waste and more feed efficiency, and modern veterinary medicine means less animal sickness and loss. However, the same people complaining about feedlots - since they are an easy target to point to for pollution or environmental impact - are the ones pushing for more grass-fed and pasture-finished beef. What they fail to realize is that grass-fed or grass-finished beef takes longer to mature and more land per animal, thus leading to increased greenhouse gas and animal waste production since the cattle take longer to get to the desired weight.

"Farm Kid" Survey has Interesting Results

A survey administered by Osborn Barr - a rural advocacy group - had some interesting findings when they polled Generation Z members who grew up or were raised on a farm. Generation Z includes young people ages 18-22. Some of their findings were interesting:

- 71% of their parents expected at least one child to take over the farm, but only 54% of Gen Z indicate a desire to take over the farm. Most of them to plan for careers in agriculture, however.
- They had overwhelmingly positive outlook on government entities like USDA, EPA, and FDA.
- 85% view existing herbicide and insecticide technologies positively.
- Gen Z had a more negative view of organic farming and were in favor of existing ag biotech companies.
- Genetic engineering and GMOs were largely viewed as positive.

37% of Survey Respondents Believe Non-Genetically Modified Foods do not Contain Genetic Material

In 2017 Michigan State University conducted a survey of 1,059 US residents ages 18 and over. The survey essentially gauged respondents understanding of food production and the global food system. One of the questions was: True or False - Genetically modified foods have genes and non-genetically modified foods do not. An astounding 37% replied "true." Perhaps basic science textbooks should be under 37% of Christmas trees.

As always, please feel free to contact me about your individual issues, needs or concerns.

I can be reached by phone at 979-732-2082

or email at stephen.janak@ag.tamu.edu.

Sincerely,



Stephen D. Janak

County Extension Agent—Ag/Natural Resources—Colorado County

colorado.agrilife.org

Educational programs of the Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service are open to all people without regard to race, color, religion, sex, national origin, age, disability, genetic information, or veteran status. The Texas A&M University System, U.S. Department of Agriculture, and the County Commissioners Courts of Texas Cooperating. Individuals with disabilities who require an auxiliary aid, service or accommodation in order to participate in this meeting are encouraged to contact the County Extension Office at (979) 732-2082 ten (10) days prior to the meeting to determine how reasonable accommodations can be made.

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