

Gillespie County

Horticulture Newsletter
Summer 2021



Extension Office Update

Every summer I get a lot of tree and lawn questions. One common problem due to the rain that I am seeing is gray leaf spot. See page 5 for more information. I've also got photo results from the turf trial we did at the extension office, as well as an update on our tomato trial.

I got an email the other day about a new pest I hadn't seen before. Learn more about it in "Strange Tales of Horticulture" on page two.

Interested in entering in the Gillespie County Fair? Check out our tips and basic run-down of the rules before you enter to increase your chances of winning. See page eight.

We have a new assistant agent in the office. It's a trainee position, so you might see her helping with our programs, as well as site visits. Read more on page 9.

Last month's "Name That Plant" got a lot of correct responses, so I've found a hard one for this quarter. See if you can identify it without google on page 11.

As always, if you have any plant or horticulture related questions, you are welcome to contact me at Elizabeth.mcmahon@ag.tamu.edu or call the extension office at 830-997-3452.

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Strange Tales of Horticulture

Hammerhead Worms

Picture taken by C. Neff.



Recently someone emailed pictures of a type of worm that I had never seen before, asking for confirmation of what it was. I looked into it, and discovered that yes, we had our first recorded sighting of invasive hammerhead worms here in Gillespie County.

The hammerhead worm is a type of flatworm. It can be between 8-12 inches long, and has a flat shovel shaped head, like a hammerhead shark. It looks snakish, but has a slimy texture if touched. They are originally from subtropical and tropical southeast Asia.

Hammerhead worms are not a plant pest. They eat earthworms and slugs. How they eat is fascinating. First they coat their prey in slime to paralyze it, then they extend out their mouth, secrete digestive fluids and then suck the liquified parts of their prey back into their mouth. Mouth isn't the best word, because waste products also go out this way.

Hammerhead worms are hermaphrodites, having both male and female reproductive organs. Additionally, they can reproduce asexually, by pinching off a piece of themselves. Cutting them into pieces is not a good way to kill them. Instead, catch the worm and put it in a bag with vinegar or salt.

Do not handle flatworms with your bare hands, because they emit a neurotoxin. It will not kill you, but it will irritate your skin. Flatworms may carry parasitic nematodes as well. If you do make the mistake and touch one with your hands, wash them afterwards with warm soapy water and then rinse them with rubbing alcohol.

These flatworms need a moist humid environment and do not like the light, so if they are here, you would only see them at night. Greenhouse environments are ideal for them. I doubt they will become very widespread in our native pastures because they are too dry. They will likely be a more common sight around town and in moist flowerbeds or gardens.

While they have been found in East Texas, more recently they have been discovered in Uvalde and North Texas. This has caused some concern. I only know of one reported hammerhead worm here in Gillespie County, and one in the Horseshoe Bay area. They are thought to be moved by contaminated potting soil or mulch.

If you have these pests, please contact me at the extension office. Or contact Ashely Morgan-Olvera at the Texas Invasive Species Institute (invasives@shsu.edu) with a picture and address of where you found the hammerhead flatworms.



Picture taken by Mike Merchant.

**TEXAS A&M
AGRILIFE
EXTENSION**

HILL COUNTRY TREE PROGRAM

Oak Wilt Management & Planting Trees in the Texas Hill Country

Thursday, July 29, 2021
38 Business Court
Fredericksburg, TX
Registration at 9:00am
Program is 9:30am - 11:45am
Cost: \$10.00
1 IPM CEU

Texas A&M Forest Service Biologist Robert Edmonson will be giving the presentation on oak wilt, frost damaged tree update, planting replacement trees, & identifying trees.

RSVP to the Gillespie County Extension Office at 830-997-3452
 For additional info or questions, please ask for Beth McMahon.

The members of Texas A&M Agrilife will provide equal opportunities in programs and activities, education, and employment to all persons regardless of race, color, sex, religion, national origin, age, disability, genetic information, or veteran status. We will strive to achieve full and equal employment opportunity for all. The Texas A&M University System, U.S. Department of Agriculture, and the County Commissioners of Gillespie County, Texas Cooperating.



**TEXAS A&M
AGRILIFE
EXTENSION**

Fall Back Into Gardening: A Fall Garden Program

Friday, August 6, 2021
38 Business Court
Fredericksburg, TX
Cost: \$20
Registration at 8:30
Program is 9:00am - 12:15pm

Garden Door Prizes Too!

Main program covers preparing a garden for fall.
Breakout sessions include:
 "Alliums (Onions, etc.)"
 "Growing a Fall Salad Garden"
 "Cole Crops (Broccoli, etc.)"

RSVP to the Gillespie County Extension Office at 830-997-3452.
 For additional info or questions, please ask for Beth McMahon.

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Grow It Cook It

Come learn not only how to cook the theme vegetable but how to grow it too! Cost is \$15 per program, or \$25 for the series. Programs will be from 12-1 pm at the Gillespie County Extension Office, located at 38 Business Court, Fredericksburg. Pre-registration highly preferred.



Better Bell Peppers
August 20th,



Beaming Beets
October 1st, 2021



Healthy Creeks Initiative Underway

(July 1, 2021) – This month, contractors will begin the annual control efforts to manage Arundo along the Pedernales River and several tributary creeks. Arundo, also referred to as Giant Reed or Carrizo Cane, is a non-native, invasive plant that can take over creeks and rivers.

Since 2016, the Texas Parks & Wildlife Department (TPWD), Hill Country Alliance (HCA), City of Fredericksburg, and other organizations have partnered with volunteering landowners through the Healthy Creeks Initiative to control Arundo and enhance the creek-side (or riparian) habitat along Barons Creek, Town Creek, and other portions of the Pedernales River Basin primarily upstream of Johnson City.



Arundo, which has a cane-like stem that looks similar to bamboo, is a highly invasive, non-native grass that can grow more than 25 feet tall. This invasive plant has the potential to significantly damage the health of Hill Country streams and rivers by worsening flooding, displacing native plants, destabilizing banks, contributing to erosion, degrading fish and wildlife habitat, and increasing wildfire risk.



Daniel Oppenheimer, Land Program Manager at Hill Country Alliance, notes, “Landowners should not cut, mow, or bulldoze Arundo. These mechanical methods are likely to spread Arundo infestations to downstream neighbors through small fragments of the cane or root material.”

Over the past five years, more than 115 landowners have volunteered to participate in the Healthy Creeks Initiative to control Arundo in the Pedernales River Basin using targeted, aquatic-approved herbicide application. This control method has the least impact on the stream ecosystem and is currently being provided at no cost to the landowners.

Oppenheimer encourages landowners to talk with their neighbors. “This invasive plant does not care about property boundaries. We need to be talking with friends and neighbors, making sure everyone knows about the threats posed by Arundo, the no-cost opportunity provided by TPWD to landowners, and the importance of our healthy riparian areas.” Healthy riparian areas comprised of diverse and abundant native plants mitigate floods, improve water quantity and quality, stabilize banks, reduce erosion, and provide fish and wildlife habitat.

If landowners think they may have Arundo growing on their property or have any questions about the project, please contact either Daniel Oppenheimer at Hill Country Alliance (210-287-0478; daniel@hillcountryalliance.org) or TPWD project staff (healthycreeks@tpwd.texas.gov; 512-289-2740).

Arundo control efforts for the year will continue through August. To learn more about the Healthy Creeks Initiative, visit Texas Parks and Wildlife’s website at <https://tpwd.texas.gov/healthycreeks>.

The Hill Country Alliance is a nonprofit organization whose purpose is to raise public awareness and build community support around the need to preserve the natural resources and heritage of the Central Texas Hill Country. Visit us at www.hillcountryalliance.org.

Gray Leaf Spot on St. Augustine Grass



If your lawn has been yellowing as of late, and has grayish spots on it, you may have gray leaf spot. Gray leaf spot is a fungal disease that targets the leaf blades. Spots start out small and brown, but grow larger and may appear gray. The entire leaf blade may yellow. If seen in mass, the lawn may appear a general yellow color, though the leaf blades do not always yellow with the disease.

Picture taken by Beth McMahon

Gray leaf spot typically appears when there is high humidity and wet leaf blades with temperatures between 80-90 F. The longer the ideal weather conditions last, the worse it gets. This disease may be a chronic condition, appearing year after year.

One can't do anything about the rain. But to prevent getting this disease whenever it's not rainy, you can take a few steps. Avoid stressing your lawn by making sure it's getting cut at the correct height, not too shady, getting what it needs with fertilizers and water. Next, avoid applications of quick release nitrogen fertilizers during the summer. The rapid flush of growth the fertilizer triggers can make it more susceptible to the disease.

Though I realize with watering restrictions this may be hard to do, when you water is very important with this disease. Water only in the early morning, between 4 am and 6 am. The foliage gets a chance to dry off if you water in the morning. If you water at night the foliage could remain wet longer, which will encourage this disease and others. Collect grass clippings if gray leaf spot is a perennial problem in your lawn.

Besides taking proper care of your lawn, there are fungicide options available.

These fungicides are best used as preventative measures. Your lawn may remain yellowish for a while after application, because these fungicides cannot fix brown spots already there.

Azoxystrobin, Thiophanate methyl, propiconazole and myclobutanil are fungicide options for gray leaf spot. They may be available as general sprays, hose end sprays or granules. Check the label to make sure that the fungicide is labeled for your kind of turf and for the disease. It may not work or it may harm your grass otherwise.



Gray leaf spot causes gray lesions with dark circles around them. Picture taken by Beth McMahon



Our Gillespie County Turf Trial is nearly at an end, and what did we find? Some bermudagrass varieties do the best, but buffalograss isn't a bad option either in some circumstances. Tall fescue should be avoided. Plots were seeded on May 7th 2021 with the help of Master Gardeners Raeann Reid and Barbara Banks. Varieties in this trial included "Sundancer" buffalograss, "Timeless 2 Way" buffalograss and blue grama mix, "Survivor" tall fescue, "Sahara", "Common" and "Monaco" bermudagrass. Three plots were planted per variety. "Timeless 2 Way" germinated first, followed by "Survivor" Tall Fescue. By the end of the first week, "Timeless 2 Way", "Survivor" and a little bit of "Common" bermudagrass had germinated. All the grasses had some germination by May 21st, though "Monaco" bermudagrass had very little. Currently all the plots have filled in nicely with the exception of the tall fescue plots. "Survivor" tall fescue was beautiful in the spring, but as it got hot and dry it didn't look as great and has died back. This grass is not recommended.

The buffalograss "Sundancer" and bermudagrass "Monaco" took the longest to fill in their plots, and thus had the most problems with weeds. However, the "Sundancer" looks nice currently, and the "Monaco" has the benefit of being noticeably shorter in height than the other bermudagrasses.

"Common" and "Sahara" bermudagrass are vigorous, with "Common" already escaping into nearby landscaping with enthusiasm. Based upon the quick cover and tolerance to mowing as well as heat, these would be the easiest varieties to establish with the fewest weeds and are highly recommended. The seeds can be found in local stores.

"Timeless 2 Way" had quick cover and germination. It doesn't look good after mowing. This would be a good grass mix to use in an area that does not need to be mown often.

If you'd like to look at the grass plots yourself, drive slowly past our office located at 38 business court in Fredericksburg. The different varieties are labeled by color. This will not last, as that the plots are no longer being managed, and the stakes will be removed in a few weeks as they grow together. If you'd like to see the progression via pictures, check out my twitter feed at <https://twitter.com/gillespiehort>.

Please note, August is not a good time to be starting a new lawn from seed. Wait until next late spring to plant the grasses mentioned in this trial, with the exception of "Survivor" tall fescue. The grasses grown in this trial need full sun to thrive and will not grow well in shade.



Timeless 2 Way Buffalograss & Blue Grama Mix

June pictures were taken by Beth McMahon. July pictures were taken by Sydney Boyer.



Sahara Bermudagrass



Common Bermudagrass



Monaco Bermudagrass



Survivor Tall Fescue



Sundancer Buffalograss

How to Win at the Gillespie County Fair

August may be a hard month to keep garden vegetables alive, due to the heat and increased disease and insect pressure, but it's worth it so you have something to exhibit at the Gillespie County Fair Agricultural Products Show.

Last year was a low year for entries, but not terribly so. Categories with more than three entries included: okra (easily the most entries out of any category), yellow onions, chili pequin peppers, butternut squash, spaghetti squash, cherry tomatoes, grape tomatoes,



jujubes, pecans, sunflower heads, figs, dark green watermelons, and pumpkins (not pie pumpkins). Eggs and jalapenos are usually fairly competitive, but were rare last year.

The most surprising thing about the 2020 Agricultural Products Show was the blueberry entries. Yes, we can grow blueberries here. One only has to grow them in pots of peat moss and water them with rain water.

If you are looking to enter, here are a few tips. First, follow the rules regarding the number of vegetables required to make an entry. For example, if you have eleven jalapenos, your entry will be rejected. Second, make sure you are entering it in the correct category. Third, uniformity rules the day. Vegetables are first judged on how uniform they are, then how pretty the entry is. If an entry is overripe or underripe, it usually does not do well. For single entry classes such as butternut squash, I've noticed that the bigger squashes tend to win, but this isn't

always the case. Also, you may spend time arranging it prettily on the plate, but the entries do get slung around when being taken to the judging table, and the judges pick up and examine the entries, so they do not stay arranged prettily.

If you do not want to stand in line to enter your entries, the time when the least number of entries are received is from 1:30-2:45 pm. After school is released more people show up. The rush begins after 5:00 pm.

For the 2021 fair catalogue and vegetable categories, please see <https://gillespiefair.com/gillespie-county-fair> . You can also call the fair office at 830-997-2359 or email them at info@gillespiefair.com .



Slicer tomato entry at county fair. Picture by Beth McMahon.



Basic Rules for the Gillespie County Agricultural Show

- Must be grown between September 1, 2020 and August 26, 2021.
- You must be the grower of your entry.
- The fair isn't responsible for accident or loss of your entry. (For example, sunflower heads are usually missing seeds by Sunday.)
- Premiums and items must be picked up after the completion of the fair on Sunday August 29th, 2021 and will be held for a short time period. Premiums will be held for 60 days afterwards.
- Adult division is open to all ages, Junior division to kids only. You cannot enter one entry in both divisions.
- Items will be received between 11:00 am and 6:00 PM on Thursday, August 26th, 2021.
- Entries must be from Gillespie County or adjoining counties.
- No greasing, waxing or sanding of any items.

New Gillespie County Assistant Extension Agent

Hi, my name is Sydney Boyer, and I am your new Assistant County Extension Agent for Gillespie County. In this job I hope to expand my knowledge and learn what it takes to be a great extension agent so that I can someday move to a permanent position. I will graduate from Texas Tech University in August of 2021 with my bachelor's in animal science with a concentration in production. I chose to join the extension world because of my love for agriculture and helping communities. I grew up in Leakey, just a few counties over in Real County, raising goats with my dad and grandfather. I am so happy to be a part of this community and cannot wait to meet everyone!

Hope to meet you soon,
Sydney Boyer



Homeowner Tomato Trial Update

The homeowner tomato trial gave out tomatoes starting on April 12th, 2021 to twenty-eight people. One hundred forty-five tomato plants were given out, with every participant taking at least one "Celebrity" tomato as the standard. Participants were surveyed on June 1st, June 30th and will be surveyed on July 30th and in late August/early September.



"Big Beef" picture by Beth West

Returning varieties for this year include "Atkinson", "Big Beef", "Bella Rosa", "Cherokee Purple" and "Purple Calabash". New varieties include "Red Snapper" and "Valley Cat". "Celebrity" continued as the control.

Tomatoes seemed to be off to a slow start, but this was diminished by the first week of July. Percent flowering was lower for determinate varieties "Bella Rosa", "Celebrity", "Red Snapper" and "Valley Cat". As that these are determinate varieties, this is normal and to be expected. Flowering percentage increased for indeterminate varieties "Abe Lincoln", "Cherokee Purple" and "Purple Calabash", but not for "Big Beef" which had a slight drop. All varieties had increases in the number of new set (dime sized tomatoes). Average production increased as well.

Overall plant survival is still high, but this is expected to start dipping with this month's results. In the first week of July survey, Atkinson had the lowest percent survival (90.9%). Abe Lincoln, Bella Rosa, Red Snapper, Valley Cat and Purple Calabash still had 100% survival. All health ratings are still above 2.50, though Bella Rosa is really close with 2.57. Of those reporting in, Cherokee Purple had a perfect health rating.

Many of these varieties will have served their two-year mark at the conclusion of this year's survey. I will be looking for new varieties to replace them. If you know of a good slicer tomato variety (no cherry or grape tomato varieties please) that has demonstrated great success in your garden or your neighbor's garden, feel free to submit it for consideration for next year's trial. The final results for this year's trial will be posted in the fall newsletter.

Save the Dates

Southern Family Farmers and Food Systems Conference, August 9th, San Marcos.

<https://www.smallproducersinitiative.txstate.edu/conference.html>

Kolaches and Conversation, September 14th, Gillespie County Extension Office

Texas Fruit Conference, October 11th-12th, New Braunfels, Texas

Want to become a Texas Master Gardener?



Are you interested in volunteering with other people who love plants as much as you do? Registration is now open for the 2022 Hill Country Master Gardener Class.

Join to learn about gardening, landscaping, plant selection, growing vegetables, insects, soil, how you can help your community through gardening and more. Classes will be from February to April 2022. Cost for the class is \$200 or \$300 for couples that share the textbook. Applications must be received by February 10th, 2022.

In addition to taking the class and meeting the 50 hour educational requirement, to become a Master Gardener you must volunteer 50 hours community service your first year and then 25 volunteer hours with 6 continuing education hours following years to keep your certification. A background check must be passed to become a Master Gardener.

Would you rather visit this group before you join? The Hill Country Master Gardeners meet every first Wednesday at the Hill District Youth Event Center from 1- 3pm. Find out more information about the Hill Country Master Gardeners at hillcountrymastergardeners.org

Office Closures

We will be closed on August 27th, September 6th, November 11th and November 25-26th.

Gillespie County Horticulture Newsletter

Name That Plant!



What is the name of this plant? Both pictures are the same plant. First person to respond with the correct answer will get their name featured in next quarter's newsletter.

Last Newsletter's Plant



Last newsletter winner was Raeann Reid. The answer was Cowpen Daisy.

Picture policy-Unless specifically cited, all pictures were taken by the author of this newsletter. This newsletter is a publication comes out quarterly, with issues out on February/March (spring), June/July (summer), September/October (fall), November/December (winter). If you would like to stop receiving this newsletter, please contact us me at elizabeth.mcmahon@agnet.tamu.edu.

*For other questions, comments, and concerns, please contact us at:
Gillespie County Extension office
95 Frederick Road
Fredericksburg, TX 78624
830-997-3452*

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