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AGRIVIEW

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The 2014 crop season is underway. That means motorists traveling Henderson County highways and rural roads may find themselves sharing the road with the large, slow-moving farm equipment.

As a result, motorists should keep both eyes on road and traffic conditions, learn how to identify slow-moving equipment and give it a wide berth whenever possible.

Not recognizing slow moving vehicles, or simply not being aware of them until it is too late, is a leading cause of collisions between motorists and farm equipment.

Farmers and ranchers are very busy at this time of year, and they often have to move their equipment along the road. Motorists who encounter this situation should remember they have a limited time to slow down or pass.

A car traveling 55 miles per hour can close a 300 foot gap (the length of a football field) and overtake a tractor moving at 15 miles per hour in about five seconds. At 65 miles per hour, that time drops to about four seconds.

You should also be aware that the most common farm vehicle accident occurs when a slow-moving vehicle makes a left turn after the motorist behind begins to pass. So let's be careful out there.

EAST TEXAS HORTICULTURAL FIELD DAY:

For the first time since 2009, the 2014 Overton Horticultural Field Day will include vegetable trials in addition to the hundreds of bedding plant trials that are the standard fare, according to Texas A&M AgriLife Research experts.

Set this year on June 26th at the Texas A&M AgriLife Research and Extension Center at Overton, gardeners, professional landscape managers and seed company representatives will learn which landscape plants do well under East Texas heat and sunshine at the field day.

The trials were started in 1994 in response to need by both commercial seed companies as well as for local nursery managers and gardening enthusiasts.

There is no cost to attend or for the barbecue lunch. The field day will begin at 8:30 a.m. at the center's North Farm site, about four miles north of the Overton Center on Farm-to-Market Road 3053.

The field day will feature more than 500 bedding plants, including everything from geraniums to petunias to verbena to begonias in outdoor plots.

The vegetable trials are a collaborative effort between AgriLife Research and Kilgore College, Kilgore. They are conducted by Dr. Karl Steddom, AgriLife Research plant pathologist who also is an instructor at Kilgore College.

Steddom's vegetable trials include more than 30 tomato varieties, five pepper varieties, cantaloupe, strawberries in low tunnels, a fungicide trial on watermelon and a pruning trial on watermelon.

He noted that watermelons are subject to several diseases, including powdery

mildew, downy mildew and gummy stem blight, all of which can be devastating for both commercial growers and home gardeners.

The bedding plant tour will continue at the North Farm, as will the vegetable tour, until about 10:30 a.m., then both tours will move to the Overton center's headquarters building at about 10:30 a.m. Lunch will be served at about 11:45 a.m.

The program will move inside after lunch with presentations by Pemberton and Dallas Arboretum representative Jenny Wegley, who will discuss the 2014 California Spring Showcase, also known as Pack Trials, as well as top performers for 2013.

Indoor presentations will begin at 1 p.m., and the program will conclude by 3:15 p.m. There also will be indoor presentations on vegetables by Steddom and Texas AgriLife horticulturists from College Station.

Participants are welcome to start the day at the Kilgore College site, then move to the bedding plant trials, or vice-versa. Or they may tour only one of the sites if they wish, and still have lunch at the Overton Center and attend the indoor presentations.

The new Cora Cascade vinca will be on display as well as a large number of trailing petunias.

Newer additions will include Napier grasses, almost all of the commercially available varieties of seed-grown pentas and a large number of new New Guinea impatiens entries.

New Guinea impatiens have received a lot of attention due to the fact that they are resistant to downy mildew, he said, and also noted the impatiens are great plants for shade gardens.

There is also a huge selection of geraniums this year. New interspecific hybrids that

have better heat tolerance are becoming widely available now and many are in the trials.

There will be an expansion of the tests of verbena from 2012 and 2013.

The bedding plant industry has had a \$500 million annual economic impact on the region for at least a decade, and though not recession proof, it hasn't experienced the downturn in consumer spending that other businesses have in the last couple of years.

The center and the North Farm site are north of downtown Overton on Farm-to-Market Road 3053. For driving directions, go to <http://flowers.tamu.edu/field-day/> or call 903-834-6191.

The Kilgore College Demonstration Farm can be reached from downtown Overton by going north 2 miles on Highway 135.

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