

**February 21, 2014**

**AGRIVIEW**

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**Ants and termites often start swarming around the latter part of February through early March. It is important to distinguish swarming ants from termites because control measures for both are quite different in technique and price.**

**Subterranean termites are the most destructive insect pests of wood. In nature, they scavenge wood, breaking down the large amounts of dead trees and other wood which accumulate in forests. The breakdown products of wood are returned to the soil as humus. Problems begin when termites invade human structures. Their presence is not readily noticed and damage often is discovered before the termites are seen. The homeowner can practice prevention, but successful chemical control nearly always requires the services of qualified pest control operators.**

**Subterranean termites are found throughout the United States except Alaska. These wood-destroying insects are found throughout Texas, decreasing in frequency from the Gulf Coast to central regions. Termites represent a great hazard to wooden structures in these areas.**

**Subterranean termites are social insects that live in nests or colonies in the soil. Three termite forms or castes are found in the colonies - reproductives, workers and**

**soldiers. Individuals of each caste have three growth stages - egg, nymph and adult.**

**Reproductives can be winged (primary) or wingless (secondary). Each has the capability to produce new offspring. Primary reproductives, also called swarmers or alates, vary in body color from coal black to pale yellow-brown. The wings may be pale or smokey gray to brown and have few distinct veins. Swarmer termites are about 1/4 to 3/4 inches long and make up the largest number of individuals within a colony. Workers gather food, enlarge and maintain the nest, and feed and care for all other castes in the colony.**

**Soldiers resemble workers in color and general appearance. However, they have large, well-developed, brownish heads with strong mandibles or jaws. Soldiers defend the colony against invaders, primarily ants. Soldiers in some types of termites generally occurring in arid regions are called nasutes. Nasute soldiers have pear-shaped heads with a long, tube-like projection on the front. They exude a sticky substance to entrap their enemies.**

**Termites will have straight antennae, two pair of equal length wings, no eyes and a thick waist - ants on the other hand will exhibit an elbowed antennae, 2 pair of unequal length wings, eyes and a thin waist.**

### **AG TECH:**

**Interested in Texas agriculture? You can catch a glimpse of it - literally - on the AgriLife Today YouTube channel.**

**The channel, <http://www.youtube.com/agrilifetoday>, features news videos produced by Texas A&M AgriLife media relations team from throughout the state. The news videos**

cover the programs and science of the Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service, Texas A&M AgriLife Research and the College of Agriculture and Life Sciences.

About 400 videos already are available on the channel. Content includes major Texas commodities, as well as gardening, the latest in scientific research and updates on critical news such as feral hog control, insect outbreaks and climatic conditions that impact the state's farms and ranches.

One of the most recent additions to the channel is a weekly news show called AgriLife Today, which highlights key stories for the week. Subscribers can follow the show and then find complete details and additional photos for more information on the channel's companion website AgriLife Today, <http://today.agrilife.org/>.

The channel allows people to subscribe for free in order to be notified of new videos or to view in your YouTube account.

#### **WOOD ASHES GOOD FOR GARDEN:**

Wood ashes from fireplaces are a good soil amendment. Excessive amounts, however, can be detrimental. Wood ashes are highly alkaline and high in potassium, calcium and magnesium. Numerous other elements are also present, but in much lower amounts. Essentially no nitrogen is present because it vaporizes during the burning process.

If ashes are spread on garden soil, a general rule of thumb is to apply 5 gallons per 1,000 sq. ft. Flower beds should receive half that much. To be safe, make only one application per year. Excessive amounts may make the soil too alkaline and thus inhibit crops from assimilating certain key elements. Should your soil have a high pH like 7 or so, don't use wood ashes.

The bottom line is that wood ashes are in general good to put on Henderson County vegetable garden soils. Just remember not to get carried away and apply too much.

**IMPORTANT DATES:**

- February 22<sup>nd</sup> - Henderson County Master Gardener Vegetable Workshop - Cain Center - Free - 9:00 a.m. and 1:00 p.m.
- Virtual 4-H Youth Bass Tournament. \$25 to join 4-H and a one-time fee of \$10 for all spring fishing events.
- Questions contact Brock Fry 903-665-2421 or visit our website [henderson.agrilife.org](http://henderson.agrilife.org).
- February 25th-26th - East Texas Beef Cattle Shortcourse. 8:30 a.m. – 5:00 p.m. Corazon-Pitchford Sale Facility, Athens. Day 1 \$15, Day 2 \$40, Both days \$45. Breakfast and lunch will be served. 1 CEU offered for Day 1. Register by February 18th. For more info call 903-675-6130

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