

December 5, 2013

AGRIVIEW

By: Rick Hirsch
County Extension Agent

Ag producers who are in need of continuing education units (CEU's) in order to renew private or commercial pesticide applicators license, are invited to attend the annual Trinity Valley Ag Chemical Seminar on Friday, December 19th at the Mabank Fire Station. Registration begins at 8:00 a.m. Six (6) continuing education units will be provided towards the recertification of private, commercial and non-commercial applicators license.

The program will kick off at 9:00 with a session on Farm Pond Management and Aquatic Weed Identification and Control by Dr. Billy Higginbotham, Extension Wildlife and Fisheries Specialist.

Next on the program will be a discussion on External Parasite Control in Beef Herds by Dr. Jason Cleere, Extension Beef Cattle Specialist.

Other topics on the program include Effective Weed Management in Hay Fields and Pastures by Dr. Paul Baumann, Extension Weed Specialist; Herbicide Product Update by John Roach, Dow Chemical; Laws & Regulations Update by Mark Evans, Texas Department of Agriculture and Pesticide Labels by Tommy Phillips, Van Zandt County Extension Agent.

Six C. E. U.'s (2 Laws & Regulations, 2 - Integrated Pest Management and 2 - General) will be given. Cost of the program is \$25.00 per person and includes a barbecue

lunch.

This program is co-sponsored by the Extension Leadership Advisory Boards from Henderson, Kaufman and Van Zandt Counties.

Please pre-register by calling 903-675-6130 on or before Tuesday, December 16th. Individuals with disabilities who require an auxiliary aid, service or accommodation in order to participate in Extension sponsored meetings are encouraged to contact the Extension office in Henderson, Kaufman or Van Zandt Counties for arrangements to be made.

CHRISTMAS PLANTS:

Plants play an important role during the Christmas holiday season. Christmas trees, poinsettias, holly, mistletoe - all have various uses.

Christmas tree selection can be one of the more enjoyable aspects of the holiday season. The acquisition of the Christmas tree has truly turned into a family affair as everyone has their own ideas as to what constitutes the “perfect tree”. Fresh trees need a little help to stay fresh and beautiful through the holidays. When you and your family shop for a “real” tree, there are a few simple guidelines to follow in selecting and maintaining your tree choice.

A tree needs water, just as cut flowers do. Some trees will use as much as two gallons of water overnight when you first cut them. The first step, then, is to put the tree in water as soon as you get it home. Trees that have been cut for more than several hours will need a fresh cut of 0.5 to 1 inch off the bottom of the trunk to remove the seal that the tree has made and allow it to absorb water.

Determine where in the home to display the tree. This will help in determining the needed height and whether all four sides must be suitable for display. Freshness is important when selecting the tree. Hold a branch about six inches from the tip between your thumb and forefinger, and pull your hand towards you as the branch slips through your fingers. The needles should adhere to the branch and not fall off in your hand. A fresh tree will have a nice fragrance and a good green color.

One extremely important decision is where to put the tree or rather, where not to put the tree, place the tree away from heat sources, such as fireplaces, radiators and TV sets. Be sure to turn off the tree lights when you leave your home and before you retire at night. A fire caused by a burning Christmas tree can have a devastating effect on your holiday season. Do not use combustible decorations, and check all electric lights, cords and connections before you begin decorating. Also, don't use lighted candles or lights with worn or frayed cords.

The most popular plant for Christmas is the poinsettia. There are some simple guidelines to help you maintain and grow your plant during the holiday season.

The poinsettia thrives on indirect, natural daylight, and exposure to at least six hours daily is recommended. If direct sun cannot be avoided, diffuse with a light shade or sheer curtain. To prolong the bright color of the poinsettia bracts, daytime temperatures should not exceed 70 degrees F. Avoid placing the plants near drafts, excess heat, or the dry air from appliances, fireplaces or ventilating ducts.

Poinsettias require moderately moist soil. Water the plants thoroughly when the soil surface feels dry to the touch. Remove the plant from decorative pots or covers, and water

enough to completely saturate the soil. Do not allow the poinsettia to sit in any standing water. It is not necessary to fertilize the poinsettia when it is in bloom.

Since poinsettias are sensitive to cold weather, frost and rain, outside placement during the winter months should be avoided. However, in mild climates, an enclosed patio or entry way may be suitable, provided the night temperatures do not drop below 55 degrees F. Make certain the delicate bracts are well protected from wind and cold rain.

After the holidays keep the plants in indirect sun and water regularly. Place your plants outdoors, where they can grow in the warmth of spring and summer, after outside night temperatures average 55 degrees F or above. When bracts age and lose their aesthetic appeal, usually by late March or early April, cut the poinsettia back to about 8 inches in height. By the end of May you should see vigorous new growth. Continue regular watering during the growth period. Fertilize every 2 to 3 weeks throughout the spring, summer and fall months with a well balanced, complete fertilizer. Around June 1st, you may transplant your poinsettias into larger pots. Select pots no more than 4 inches larger than the original pot. A soil mist with a considerable amount of organic matter, such as peat moss or leaf mold, is highly recommended. If you wish, you may transplant the poinsettias into a well-prepared garden bed. Be sure the planting bed is rich in organic matter and has good drainage. Pruning may be required during the summer to keep plants bushy and compact. Do not prune after September 1st.

IMPORTANT DATES:

December 12th - Dash for Cash Beef, Goat and Lamb Workshop - Henderson County Fairgrounds - \$6.00/Person - 5:00 p.m.

- December 13th** - **Dash for Cash Winter Classic - Henderson County Fairgrounds - For more information or to pre-register contact the Extension office at 903-675-6130**
- December 13th** - **Hunter Education Class - Texas Freshwater Fisheries Center - Athens - 903-676-2277 - 7:30 a.m.**
- December 19th** - **Trinity Valley Ag Chemical Seminar - Mabank Fire Station - 8:00 a.m. - 3:30 p.m. - 6 C. E. U.'s - \$25.00/Person - Contact the Extension Office at 903-675-6130 for more information or to pre-register**

Rick Hirsch is the Henderson County Extension Agent - Agriculture for the Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service. Visit our web page at <http://henderson.agrilife.org/>.