

# Top of the Windmill News

## Spring 2015

TEXAS A&M  
**AGRI**LIFE  
EXTENSION

Kerr County AgriLife Extension Service  
3775 Hwy. 27  
Kerrville, TX 78028  
(830) 257-6568  
kerr@ag.tamu.edu  
Kerr.agrilife.org



*Roy Walston*

**By: Roy Walston – CEA-Ag/NR**

### Calendar of Events

- Mar. 6 - Tax Valuations, Easements, Permits, Grazing & Hunting Leases
- Mar. 21 - Basic Vineyard Setup & Pruning
- Mar. 27 - Back to the Basics, Home Gardening, Chickens & Natural
- Apr 11 - Hill Country Master Gardener Blooms & Barrels Plant Sale
- Apr. 17 - Live Oak Wilt, Turf, Tree & Landscape Maintenance, Rainwater Harvest
- Apr. 21 - Pecan Grafting & Production Workshop (3 CEUs)
- Apr 23-24 - Bennett Land Stewardship Conference (CEUs)
- May 1 - Forage Production, Livestock Species Selection, Grazing Management, Fencing (3CEUs)
- May 1 - Kerr County SWCD Range Field-Day (CEUs)
- May 15 - Wildlife & Range Management, Brush Control, Plant ID (3 CEUs)
- Jun 5 - Vineyards, Orchards

### **New Landowner Series**

**SOUTH CENTRAL TEXAS** — The multi-county 2015 New Landowner Series, presented by the Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service, will be held in four South Central Texas counties from March through September.



A total of six sessions will be held in Blanco, Gillespie, Kendall and Kerr counties.

A total of six different sessions, constituting the multi-county 2015 New Landowner Series, will be presented from March through September at locations within Blanco, Gillespie, Kendall and Kerr counties. (Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service photo)

“These sessions are designed for the novice who just acquired property or is looking into purchasing land in the Hill Country,” said Brad Roeder, AgriLife Extension agent for Gillespie County, one of the series coordinators. “At these sessions, attendees can meet and speak with some of the top experts in their respective fields, as well as get hands-on experience in learning how to get the most out of their property.”

Roeder said topics addressed in the series will include learning how to make wildlife, livestock and the environment work; live oak wilt and decline; how to drought-proof pastures; taxes, permits and property regulations; growing your own food; facts about the best hay, forages and grains for the area; and herbicides/pesticides for home and commercial use.

“We will also make site visits to operations in all phases of agriculture and have hands-on activities,” he said. “And participants will be provided a new landowner notebook full of timely information and handouts.”

All programs begin with registration from 12:45-1:00 p.m., with presentations from 1:00-5 p.m.

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*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*

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*Commercial products and trade names are used for information purposes only.*

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Dates, towns and topics for the sessions are:

- **March 6**, Fredericksburg, Tax Valuations, Easements, Permits, Grazing & Hunting Leases
- **March 27**, Boerne, Back to the Basic, Home Gardening, Chickens, Natural
- **April 17**, Kerrville, Live Oak Wilt, Turf, Tree & Landscape Maintenance, Rainwater Harvest
- **May 1**, TBA, Forage Production, Livestock Species Selection, Grazing Management, Fencing
- **May 15th**, TBA, Wildlife & Range Management, Brush Control, Plant ID
- **June 5**, Stonewall, Vineyards, Orchards

Specific session sites are being identified, with maps and directions to each location to be provided to attendees prior to each session.

The cost is \$30 per session or \$100 per person, \$150 per couple, for the entire series, payable in advance or at the door. Make checks out to Gillespie County Ag & Natural Resource Committee and drop off or mail to Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service, 95 Frederick Road, Fredericksburg, Texas 78624.

Advance notice for each session is requested so adequate quantities of take-home materials can be prepared.

For more information, contact the AgriLife Extension office in Kerr County at 830-257-6568.



## Basic Vineyard Setup and Pruning HANDS on!

Saturday March 21, 10-4 pm (rain out day March 22)  
at The Lost Maples Winery/Polvadeau Vineyards

Polvadeau Vineyards (Bandera County's ONLY commercial vineyard and winery) is offering a 1 day basic training workshop to provide a "what to expect" and basic over-view of what it takes to own, operate and run a vineyard. Andrea McGilvray has been helping with pruning since 2007 and also has a nursery specializing in this variety.

Cost \$150.00 per person

Includes handouts

5 cuttings and two 1 year old plants

Maximum 15 people

A organic lunch with a glass of wine will be served  
and a wine tasting at the end in the winery is included.

34986 Ranch Road 187

Vanderpool, TX 78885

Andrea Direct: 210-413-7392

[andrea@lostmapleswinery.com](mailto:andrea@lostmapleswinery.com)

[www.LostMaplesWinery.com](http://www.LostMaplesWinery.com)

**To REGISTER:** [www.lostmapleswinery.com/events.htm](http://www.lostmapleswinery.com/events.htm)

## When Can I Prune Shade Trees?

With the onset of winter following several good freezes we are set for pruning here in the Hill Country. While many trees may be pruned any time of the year, for example, pecans, cedar elms and ashe juniper, the live oak must be pruned during the winter months following several good freezes. These freezes should slow down the movement of any insects, in particular, the nitidulid beetle that



transmits oak wilt from Spanish Oaks to Live Oaks. Oaks just as any shade tree require pruning for several reasons: prune out excess branches to prevent rubbing together, removal of broken or damaged branches, double leaders or narrow v-shaped crotches. Annual upkeep on many trees helps to maintain a strong structural support and reduce the breakage of limbs during the growing season. Most home owners should limit their tree pruning to small branches which can be reached from the ground. The pruning of large branches and work off the ground should involve professional tree experts with proper equipment.

Many folks are under the impression that large shade trees need pruning just because they're getting too big and pretty or because it's a certain season. We witness this all across the state. Before having a tree trimmed, know why and how it should be done. Many pruning jobs could be avoided by knowing the growth habit of a specific tree and planting in a location that is sufficient for the mature size of the tree. Find out how fast and how large a tree normally grows. With this information you can avoid many maintenance requirements. Logic and reason also apply. For example, don't plant a white oak directly beneath utility lines. As the tree grows and interferes with the lines, the tree will be pruned. This completely destroys the natural character of the tree and often leads to its early decline. The same is true when choosing a tree for a planter or other limited space. Consider small or intermediate size trees such as Crape Myrtle, Foster Holly, or Redbud.

Trees planted in proper locations in the Hill Country should not need to be topped. Topping shade trees may often be recommended to prevent causing damage to the home. However, shoots which grow after topping are weaker than the original limbs. Shoots then must be selectively pruned to train for a main branch. Shoots left alone will be more likely to split off and cause damage unless they are removed every few years. Also, wood rots are more likely to be a problem in topped trees, resulting in poorer tree health and greater likelihood of limb breakage.

The only time wound dressing or paint is essential is in the pruning of oaks, especially when pruning is done out of necessity during the growing season. During this time pruning paint helps to deter beetles from being attracted to the freshly cut surface. Painting fresh cuts during this time should be done with a latex paint. Wound dressing or tree paint on all other trees is not essential; recent research has pointed out that tree paint or wound dressing is not as advantageous as previously thought. Dressings may actually harbor disease organisms rather than exclude them. It has also been determined that wound dressing slows the wound callusing (often called healing) process, rather than speeding it up. A good, clean unpainted pruning cut, while unsightly at first, will probably callus faster than a painted one.

If you have any questions concerning this article contact Roy Walston at the Kerr County Extension office at 830-257-6568.



## Blooms & Barrels Plant Sale

The Hill Country Master Gardeners will be hosting their annual Plant Sale on **April 11th** at the Kerr County Youth Event Center.

Educational programs and information will be available along with the opportunity to purchase landscape plants and rain barrels. So, put April 11th on your calendar and stop by and meet a Master Gardener.



## Pecan Grafting and Production Workshop

A Pecan Grafting and Production Workshop is scheduled for April 21st at 9:00 a.m. at Bill Hathaway's Orchard. This will be an informative and educational opportunity for those pecan producers interested in grafting pecans. Early season insect and fertilization management will also be discussed by Dr. Larry Stein, Extension Horticulturist from Uvalde.

The orchard is located on Texas highway 173, approximately 4 1/2 miles from Kerrville-Schreiner State Park. Turn left on Center Point River road and enter the first gate on the right; signs will be posted. Three hours of CEU's will be offered to Private, Commercial and Non-Commercial applicators. Anyone interested in learning more about pecan production will benefit from this field-day. Registration for the field-day is \$10.00 and is payable at the field-day. Please contact the Kerr County Extension office to pre-register for the field-day at 830-257-6568.



## Musk Thistle Control in Permanent Grass Pastures

Musk thistle (*Carduus nutans*), or sometimes referred to as nodding thistle, is a weed that is increasing in pastures throughout the western and southern counties of Indiana. Its rapid invasion of pastures can quickly decrease the size of grazing areas for livestock. Understanding the life cycle and growth habits of this weed is useful for implementing effective control practices.



### Identification and Life Cycle

Musk thistle is a biennial weed. Biennials require portions of two growing seasons to reproduce. The first season the plant germinates from seed and produces a rosette of basal leaves. These basal leaves are characterized by having a wide, white midvein and whitish leaf margins and tips. The rosette overwinters and the cold temperature causes the rosette to send up a stalk the next season, flower and produce seed. Rosettes may reestablish any time during the growing season. Some rosettes may extend three feet or more in diameter by late fall.

Flower shoots are initiated in early May and the plant reaches full flower in early June. Plant size at flowering may reach a height of six feet. Seed production is usually completed in mid-to-late June. Once seeds mature, the plant dies.

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The red-purple flower of musk thistle is about two inches in diameter, which is larger than other biennial thistles (i.e., bull and tall) and perennial thistles, such as Canada thistle. The drooping or nodding flower head is surrounded by broad, spiny-tipped bracts. One plant may produce as many as 50 flowering heads, with each flower producing about 50 to 80 seeds. Since musk thistle only reproduces by seed, *destruction of plants prior to flowering is an effective means of preventing seed formation and subsequent spread*. Dispersal of seed is mainly by wind and transport in thistle-infested hay.

## **Control Practices**

*The best time to treat musk thistle, or other biennial thistles, with herbicides is in late fall or early spring when the rosettes are present, but before flowering stalks are initiated.*

Musk thistle plants with flower stalks are more difficult to kill than the rosettes. Rosettes need to be treated when they are actively growing and not under drought stress. The younger the rosette, the more susceptible it is to the herbicide.

## **Foliar Herbicide Treatments for Selective Control in Grass Pastures**

One properly timed herbicide treatment per year should prevent seed formation. Fall treatments should be made late enough to kill all rosettes germinated before winter. Late germinating rosettes that establish after early fall herbicide applications could flower the next growing season.

Early spring treatments should kill all overwintering rosettes and those rosettes germinating later in the season should not produce seed until the following year.

Several herbicides have been screened for their effectiveness in controlling musk thistle in pastures. These herbicides have provided good to excellent control of musk thistle rosettes in Purdue University trials.

## **Cultural and Mechanical Methods of Control**

Weed control in pastures starts with good management practices. Forage grass plants are most competitive with weeds when conditions are right for optimum growth. Therefore, proper liming and fertilization as well as preventing the overgrazing of livestock is important.

As mentioned previously, preventing seed production is essential for long-term control. Mow pastures after stem elongation, but before flowers open. Some regrowth will occur, so a second or third mowing may be necessary. Also, to avoid spread of the seed, keep areas such as fence rows, adjacent pastures and farm lots free of musk thistle.

## **Musk Thistle Control in Conjunction with Pasture Improvement**

Several of the herbicides listed above will injure or kill forage legumes. MCPA (Rhonox) is safer than most herbicides on legumes, but may still cause injury. Thus, treatments to control musk thistle need to be made prior to legume establishment. Spot spraying individual rosettes rather than broadcast spraying the entire pasture also spares the legumes. Since musk thistle seed can survive in the soil for a number of years, it may take two or more years of excellent control before seeds are reduced to the point that allows for legume establishment.

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Common name	Trade name	Rate per acre	Comments*
2,4-D	numerous	1.5-2 pint	both amine and ester forms are effective
dicamba	Banvel	1 pint	<b>will severely injure forage</b> legumes
clopyralid	Stinger	1/3 pint	legumes cannot be seeded into treated areas for 12 months following treatment
metsulfuron	Ally	1/3-1/2 oz.	mixing with 2,4-D may help reduce injury methyl to forage grasses.
MCPA	Rhonox	1-1.5 quart	less injurious to forage legumes than other herbicides
triclopyr+2,4-D	Crossbow	2-4 quart	also effective on many woody species
picloram	Tordon	1/4-1/2 pint	longer soil persistence than other herbicides (A restricted-use pesticide)

\* Read and follow label directions; particularly note the grazing and haying restrictions.

## Timely Gardening Tips

Planting flowering bulbs. Hopefully you purchased these back in the fall and have had them in the refrigerator or garage waiting to plant them when soil temperatures are cool enough for these bulbs to take root and flower next spring.

Planting and tending to annual cool season flowers. Add organic matter to the soil before planting; use composted manures, pine bark or other organic matter forms.

Fertilize established cool-season annuals with a high nitrogen fertilizer such as ammonium sulfate or blood meal. Apply ½ pound of ammonium sulfate, or 1 pound of blood meal per 100 square feet every 4-6 weeks.

Bluebonnet transplants can be planted at this time. Watch for pill bugs and sow bugs treat with snail bait if necessary. You may notice the recent rains have germinated the bluebonnets on our native range sites so, hopefully we are in for a good blue bonnet year.

Make any garden design plans during these winter months.

Cutoff dead portions of perennials killed back by freezing temperatures, or you can delay to spring.

Add organic matter to open vegetable gardens and flower beds. Organic matter such as leaves, aged composted manure, pine straw and wood chips need to be incorporated into the soil now so they have time to break down before spring planting.





## Kerr County SWCD to host Range Field-day May 1.

The Kerr County SWCD will be hosting their annual Range Field-day on May 1 at the Kerr Wildlife Management Area. We will be offering CEU's for Private, Commercial and Non-Commercial Applicators.

***Be on the lookout for upcoming details on registration and times.***

## Grassbur Control Time Near

Recent moisture in the area may spur growth of many weeds one of which is the troublesome grassbur, sandbur, goathead or sticker that tends to be a problem in many lawns and coastal fields. In lawns a good fertility, water and timely mowing program will minimize if not eliminate this problem.



A relatively new product made by DuPont has been on the market for the last couple of years known as Pastora. This product is labeled for use in established bermudagrass pastures, and hay meadows and unimproved bermudagrass turf. This product works as a postemergent when the grassburs are less than 1.5" tall. Two applications per year may be applied, a maximum application rate of 2.5 ounces per acre per year may be applied.

## BALL MOSS



Ball moss is an epiphyte. It is capable of manufacturing its own food from nutrients and moisture taken from the air. Unlike mistletoe, it does not derive its food from the host. Although often associated with plants that are in an advance stage of decline, it is not the cause of the decline. In some areas, the moss becomes so dense, that it possibly is restricting normal bud development. Although spread is somewhat restricted, the area of the state where the moss is found continues to expand. Roughly ball moss is found within the area formed by drawing a line from Del Rio to Fredericksburg to College Station to Bay City to Corpus Christi and back to Del Rio.

Small seed are produced in a capsule on a slender 3-5 inch stalk. The stalk extends above the bunchy plant growth. When mature the capsule opens and seed are released into the air. They are carried by air currents until they contact the rough bark of the tree. The seed stick onto the surface and germinate. As the plant grows, root like structures attach the young plant to the rough surface. In the case of a tree this is the older bark. Although the structures extend down into the bark, they are not true roots. They are called 'hold fasts'. Although ball moss will attach itself to many different rough surfaces, property owners are most concerned about shade trees.

**Control:** Ball moss is controlled with foliar applications of Kocide DF, Blue Shield and Champion are approved by the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA). These products are most effective when applied in late winter. The time between February and mid -May is suggested as the best period for treatment. A rain following treatment application is necessary for maximum effectiveness. It is speculated that the moss quickly takes in nutrients through its leaf like structures following rain or heavy dew. When evaluating the copper fungicides as a control for ball moss, an application was observed to remain on the tree for 7 months before significant rain occurred. Soon after that the moss was observed to die. Retreating is suggested if the trees are heavily infested.

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This is necessary because of the difficulty in getting complete coverage. It is suggested that the copper be applied at the rate of 4-6 pounds or Kocide DF or similar type product per 100 gallons of water. Spray trees to drip point with the spray directed at the moss infested limbs. Within a few months the moss will have a dry, gray unthrifty appearance. It be several months after the application, before the moss will begin to fall from the tree. The hold fasts will have to decay sufficiently to release the moss from the bark. Strong windstorms can decrease the time required for removal of the moss following its death.

Copper is a heavy metal and possibly acts as a poison that blocks the normal biochemical functions. Copper can cause foliage burn to some plants and should be used with caution around plants not listed on the label. Peach, plum, apricot and nectarine in leaf are especially susceptible to injury from spray drift. Apples and pears are not affected by the copper fungicides. Kocide and the other copper hydroxide fungicides are frequently recommended for the control of fire blight on pear and apple trees. The fungicides are approved on a local needs registration in the southeastern United States for the control of certain pecan diseases. A second concern is that spray drift can temporarily stain structures a light blue. Use precaution when applying the copper sprays. Spray on days when the wind is blowing away from sensitive areas. It will wash off when exposed to frequent rain.

Mechanical removal has been used successfully. However, new plants are quickly as new seed land on the limbs. Safety is also a concern, moss is present on many of the small limbs and branches of a tree. This creates an unsafe condition when trying to remove the moss.

### **Bennett Land Stewardship Conference set for April 23-24 in Kerrville**

FREDRICKSBURG – The second annual Bennett Land Stewardship Conference is scheduled for April 23-24 at the Inn of the Hills Resort and Conference Center in Kerrville.

The conference is funded by the Ruth and Eskel Bennett Endowment and hosted by the Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service, said Dr. Larry Redmon, co-chair and Bennett Trust AgriLife Extension specialist.

Redmon said the Bennetts posthumously provided an endowment that will support land stewardship education in the Edwards Plateau for generations to come. The Bennetts retired to a ranch just outside Dripping Springs and established this endowment by generously gifting a portion of their estate to AgriLife Extension.

“Mr. Bennett loved the Edwards Plateau and left a legacy that will afford landowners and resource managers ongoing opportunities to acquire knowledge and sharpen their skills as responsible stewards of this unique and storied part of Texas,” Redmon said. “The proceeds from the invested endowment will provide unparalleled private sector support for AgriLife Extension educational efforts in the region.”

Cost of the two-day conference is \$75 and includes all meals, break refreshments and tour transportation costs. Register by going to <https://agriliferegister.tamu.edu/BennettTrust> or by calling 979-845-2604.

Dr. Rick Machen, AgriLife Extension livestock specialist from Uvalde, said the conference will include “the best and wisest, accomplished stewards, visionaries and legacy-leavers together as educators for this conference. Those with a passion for natural resource stewardship and a love for the Texas Hill Country will want to be there.”

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Titled “Keys to Hill Country Living,” the conference’s preliminary agenda for the first day includes a presentation on the history of the Hill Country plants, animals and early people found in the region. Additional discussions regarding the water cycle of the Hill Country and Edwards Plateau will highlight the morning’s agenda.

Specific topics will include aquifer recharge and spring flow, drought, urban sprawl and rainwater harvesting, Redmon said. There will also be a presentation on juniper impacts on rangeland health, herbivore-forage interaction, and stocking rate and infiltration versus runoff on the Edwards Plateau.

“Texans work hard to purchase and maintain their Hill Country property, so additional presentations will take place regarding estate planning, elder law, 1-D-1 Open Space land tax valuation, and leasing implications,” he said. “Each of these topics is an important aspect that will enable participants to better understand how to hold on to their piece of Texas.”

The first day will close with a discussion on which animal species combinations are appropriate for which properties and an update on forage crop insurance, Redmon said.

Day two of the conference provides unique behind-the-scenes tours, Machen said.

The first tour, Natural Resource Stewardship, includes a visit to the historic Hillingdon Ranch in Kendall County and a pasture walk with Robin and Carroll Giles. Robin is the grandson of the ranch’s founder Alfred Giles, and the ranch has been in the same family for over 125 years. Identification of local plant species will also be included in this tour.

With agritourism in mind, the second tour will go to Fredericksburg and Gillespie County. It will include visits to sustainable vineyards, orchards and gardens to get a glimpse of essential elements for stewardship success, he said.

The third tour will highlight wildlife management and the hunting industry on the Edwards Plateau with stops at landowners with reputations for being good stewards of their wildlife resources.

“For as long as I can remember, the Edwards Plateau has attracted hunters from all over the state, nation and world,” Redmon said.

Both days will conclude with Texas Hill Country hospitality – good food, good music and the opportunity to sit and visit with conference presenters, the coordinators said.

For more information regarding the upcoming Bennett Trust Land Stewardship program, contact Redmon at [l-redmon@tamu.edu](mailto:l-redmon@tamu.edu), Machen at [r-machen@tamu.edu](mailto:r-machen@tamu.edu), or an AgriLife Extension agent in the region.

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please send an email to:  
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Kerr County AgriLife Extension Office  
3775 Hwy 27  
Kerrville, Texas 78028