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Upcoming Dates

- *Generation Next: Finances: Loans and Record Keeping* Mar 11th
- *Generation Next: How to set up grazing & wildlife lease agreements* Mar. 18th
- *Cattle, Quail & Corridors* Apr. 13th
- *Ag Symposium* Apr. 17th
- *2018 TLAER- Hazmat/ Decontamination & Behavior Class* Apr. 26th
- *TX Technical Lg Animal Emergency Rescue Class* Apr. 27-28th
- *Lone Star Healthy Streams - 3CEU's* June 8 (tentatively)
- *Rookie Rancher* June 9 (tentatively)
- *Horse workshop series* TBA

Check for fliers in the back of the newsletter for more information



Ag Newsletter

March 2018

Texas Leaf-Cutting Ants

The Texas leaf-cutting ant (*Atta texana*) is a serious pest in recently-planted pine plantations in East Texas and westcentral Louisiana, and in the citrus groves of South Texas. Treatments to eliminate nearby colonies are routinely required to successfully establish pine seedlings in areas where leaf-cutting ants are abundant.



In a 1981 survey of forestry industry within East Texas the Texas leaf-cutting ant was rated third in relative pest importance, exceeded only by the southern pine beetle and fusiform rust. In an average year in East Texas, this ant kills pine seedlings on nearly 12,000 acres, and control and seedling replacement costs average \$2.3 million. This insect also can be a considerable pest in residential areas within its range by foraging on ornamental shrubs, rose bushes, fruit trees or in gardens. Harvested plant material is used to cultivate a fungus which serves as the ants' principal food source.

The Texas leaf-cutting ant (also called town ant, parasol ant, or cut ant) is the most northern representative of the genus *Atta*, considered among the most destructive insects of plants in the tropical and subtropical Americas. Leafcutting ants are generally confined to well-drained, deep sandy soils. There are 129 Texas counties and 13 Louisiana parishes where Texas leaf-cutting ants are known to occur. This species also is reported in at least two states in northeastern Mexico.

Texas leaf-cutting ant castes are comprised of the winged reproductives, or "alates, (female queens and male drones having wings), and wingless workers. The queen is the reproductive center of the colony and lives in chambers below the ground. Many colonies have five or more fertilized queens. Most eggs laid by the queens develop into sterile female workers. The workers (2 million or more) vary considerably in form and size; from 1/16 to 1/2 inch. Generally, large workers (soldiers) serve to protect the nest while medium-sized workers forage for plant material and construct tunnels and chambers, and the small workers maintain fungal gardens and care for brood ants.

During the spring months, some immature ants will develop into winged males and others into winged females. Workers will emerge at this time to widen entrance holes and remove all vegetation hanging over these holes. Mating flights then occur on clear, moonless nights following a rain of at least 1/4 inch, primarily in May and June. Mated females disperse, land, and then congregate with other females to establish a new colony. Each female carries with her a plug of fungus to begin a new fungal garden.

The nest area of the Texas leaf-cutting ant is marked by characteristic crescent-shaped mounds. Each mound surrounds an entrance hole. The above-ground portion of the nest consists of a central nest area (mound density > 5 mounds/yd²) and peripheral foraging mounds. Nest size varies from that of a single mound (starter colony) to more than 1000 mounds occupying up to 1 acre. Underground, tunnels extend from the entrance holes to other tunnels or chambers that are constructed as deep as 25 feet.



Three types of chambers have been observed: 1) garden chambers-- where plant material is incorporated into fungal mats and where brood ants develop; 2) detritus chambers -- where waste materials are stored; and 3) dormant chambers-- of unknown



Master Gardeners: Tomatoes Rule: by Connie Holub

Tomatoes Rule! At least in my garden, tomatoes are queen. They are looked after, pampered and talked to on a daily basis. No other vegetable in my garden gets more attention. Once thought to be poisonous as well as an aphrodisiac, today it's considered to be the second most consumed vegetable in the country behind the potato. Now, how many people do you know swoon over potatoes? Not in my garden.

There are literally hundreds of types, varieties and colors of tomatoes to choose from. However, not all of them do well in our neck of the woods. You have to remember that Texas has a short growing season. Once the heat starts, the larger tomatoes stop setting fruit. Therefore, we need to look at varieties with a short days-to-harvest interval. In other words, tomato varieties that are listed as no more than 60 to 65 days to harvest.

If you are looking for a good hybrid tomato to plant, you can't beat 'Celebrity'. It is my favorite fall back to tomato in case all else fails. There are quite a few hybrids such as 'Better Boy,' 'Big Girl,' and others that are considered to be 'old faithfuls' also.

Heirlooms are great if you are looking for flavor, odd shapes and wonderful colors. My favorite heirlooms are 'Cherokee Purple,' 'Black Krim,' and 'German Johnson.' 'Cherokee Purple' has become very popular among many gardeners and can now be found almost anywhere they sell transplants. Paste type tomatoes are well worth growing. They are great for canning, making tomato sauce and using in salads since they are meaty, have a small seed cavity and are not as jelly/juicy as a large tomato. Several varieties I like to plant are 'Roma' and 'Viva Italia.'

Then there are the small fruited tomatoes who are not so picky about fruiting in the heat. Of the more common type to choose from are the cherry and the grape tomatoes. They are the perfect size for salads and just popping in the mouth. Some of the more popular are the 'Sweet 100' (cherry) and the 'Juliette' (large grape).

Since childhood, tomatoes have always been my favorite. My mother planted the usual hybrids. I started venturing out trying different varieties after my husband and I were married and put in our first garden. My usual Spring garden will have up to thirty tomato plants with 'old faithfuls' and new varieties of heirlooms each year.

Name that Plant? Texas Croton (Annual Croton)

Description

Like the other native, annual crotons, Texas croton has an aromatic smell when the leaves are crushed. It varies from 1 foot to 4 feet tall, depending on moisture conditions.

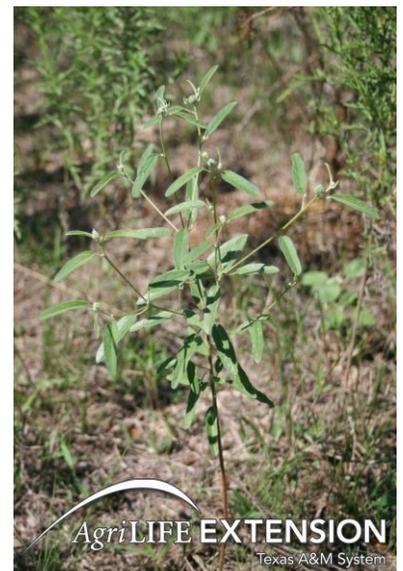
The leaves are grayish to yellowish green and may be lighter on top and darker beneath. They are usually entire or without lobes or teeth and are located alternately along the stems. Each leaf is attached to the stem by a small stalk called a petiole.

The flowers are arranged in spikes at the ends of the stems. The fruit of Texas croton is a capsule divided into three segments supporting three individual seeds.

Texas croton produces a seed crop that is very valuable to dove, quail and other seed-eating birds but has low value for livestock grazing.

Habitat

Texas croton grows on calcareous soils, sandy loam soils and loose sands. It can occur in great abundance and is generally associated with soil disturbance, lack of soil cover or overgrazing.



Continued from front page.....

function. In addition, lateral tunnels extend to foraging mounds as far as 1' from the central nest area. Worker ants, emerging from foraging mound holes, will often construct well-defined foraging trails that extend out an additional 300 feet or more in the search of a suitable plant source.

Activity of the ants above ground depends largely on temperature, as foraging ants are highly sensitive to temperatures encountered along feeding trails. During the summer, the ants remain underground during the heat of the day, often plugging the central nest holes with soil and vegetative debris, apparently to regulate temperature and/or humidity within the nest. At dusk, when temperatures drop below 86°F, ants emerge to forage throughout the night.

In the winter, ants forage during the day primarily from entrance holes above the central nest, but sometimes remain underground for extended periods when temperatures remain below 50°F. Early spring and late fall are transitional periods when ants may be active both during the day and night.

The worker ants forage on a wide range of plant species. However, damage to pine seedlings occurs primarily during winter months (December through March) when grasses and weeds have

died back and hardwood leaves have fallen. The ants forage on all species of southern pine, but given a choice the ants appear to prefer loblolly and shortleaf pines over longleaf and slash pines, perhaps in response to differences in resin production.

When foraging on pine seedlings, the ants will completely strip the seedlings of foliage and buds and often clip off the stem at ground level and carry small plant fragments back to their nest. All seedlings within five acres or more around a central nest area can be killed within a month after seedlings are planted.

Amdro® Ant Block (hydramethylnon, Ambrands) is one of the options currently available to control *Atta texana*. Amdro® Ant Block is distributed in 1.5 pound containers by Red River Specialties and most retail stores. The bait is easily applied by mechanical spreader or by hand (wearing gloves) to the central nest area. Applications can be made in all seasons, but treatments should be postponed during periods of prolonged rain or freezing weather. Once the bait is applied, foraging ants search out the pellets and carry them underground. The first signs of control will be a reduction in foraging and excavation activity usually within 5 - 7 days after bait application. These activities will gradually stop

and the colony will become inactive within 2 to 3 weeks.

Another control option is the recently-registered insecticide PTM™, containing fipronil. When injected directly into leafcutting ant entrance/exit holes, it offers a more effective control than does Amdro® Ant Block, based on field trials in East Texas. Within 1-2 weeks following treatment, soil excavation and ant activity are greatly reduced. Within 4-8 weeks, the colony becomes completely inactive. PTM™ insecticide should be applied to the colony at least 4 weeks before tree planting is initiated.

When planting pine seedlings on deep, sandy soils within the geographical range of this insect, efforts should be made to find and treat all leaf-cutting ant colonies located in or near areas to be planted. Untreated colonies will remain a source of reinfestation and future losses. Colonies can be located most readily during the late fall and early winter when the ants are active and their mounds are not hidden by vegetation.

*For more information on Texas leaf-cutting ants or control methods, contact a regional forest health specialist with Texas A&M Forest Service:
Longview, TX - Allen Smith, ph: (903) 297-5094, e-mail: lasmith@tfs.tamu.edu
Austin, TX - Jim Houser, ph: (512) 339-6329, e-mail: jhouser@tfs.tamu.edu*

Generation Next Webinars

The 2018 Generation Next: Our Turn to Ranch Webinar School is now open for registration!

Generation Next is open to all landowners, but may be especially interesting to those who are new or recently have inherited land. The weekly topics only take 1 hour and can be done on your own time! Classes start the week of Feb. 18th and run until May 12th. During early May, an optional, in-person 2 day session will be held for all participants to gain hands-on experiences. A detailed schedule with topics is attached for, in the back of the newsletter.

Registration is \$120. Texas. <https://agriliferegister.tamu.edu/ESSM>

**Estray Livestock Signs— Sold by Beef & Forage Committee**

These signs are available to the residents of Waller County for \$12.00 each and are about 5"x20" in size. They can be attached to gates or fences where they are visible from the road. The signs are durable and individualized for each producer with an assessing number and a place for a phone number, Ranch name, or Owners Name.

Please call Waller County Extension Office at 979-826-7651 or visit the Extension office at 846 6th Street in Hempstead, TX for further information or to purchase yours today .





Training-\$10

Books - \$40

(2 manuals)

***Please RSVP to
reserve your
spot, space is
limited.***

***Please mail
checks or bring
money by before
the Training.***

***Checks payable:
Extension
Program Council***

Nonrefundable

Texas A&M AgriLife Extension
Service

Waller County Office &
Cooperative Extension Program

846 6th Street
Hempstead, TX 77445

Phone: 979-826-7651
Fax: 979-826-7654

<http://waller.agrilife.org>

TEXAS A&M
AGRILIFE
EXTENSION

Private Applicators Licenses Training

When: Thursday, February 15, 2018

Thursday, May 10, 2018

Thursday, August 23, 2018

Thursday, November 8, 2018

Trainings are from 1pm to 5pm

Check in/Registration starts 30 mins before

Dates & Times are subject to change

Where: Waller County Extension Office,

846 6th Street, Hempstead, TX 77445

The purpose of this training is to obtain a Private Applicator License from Texas Department of Agriculture. This license will enable the applicator to purchase and apply state limited use and federally restricted chemicals on his land or land he has control of for the purpose of production of agricultural commodities. All farm and ranch operators who do not have a Private Applicator's License to purchase "restricted use" pesticides (such as 2, 4-D, Grazon P+D, Tordon 22K, etc.) will need to attend this training.

If you are interested in obtaining a Private Applicator license, please contact the Waller County office at (979) 826-7651 to RSVP and to purchase the manuals.

Texas A&M AgriLife Extension provides equal opportunities in its programs and employment to all persons, regardless of race, color, sex, religion, national origin, disability, age, genetic information, veteran status, sexual orientation, or gender identity. The Texas A&M University System, U.S. Department of Agriculture, and the County Commissioners Courts of Texas Cooperating

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Cattle, Quail & Corridors

3:00 PM Welcome

Friday, April 13, 2018

3:10 PM Understanding Quail and
Native Grass Restoration
*Garry Stephens - Wildlife
Habitat Federation*

Washington County
Fairgrounds - VIP Building
1305 East Blue Bell Road
Brenham, Texas 77833

3:40 PM Quail Myths and
Misconceptions
Robert Perez - TPWD

4:10 PM Cattle, Quail and Native
Vegetation
Dr. Bill Eikenhorst, DVM

4:40 PM Opportunities for Financial
Assistance with Restoration
and Management
Veronica O'Donnell - NRCS

5:00 PM Social



Please RSVP by April 9 to: Texas A&M AgriLife Extension at: 979-277-6212
Or email: stephanie.damron@tpwd.texas.gov



Washington County
Wildlife Society



TEXAS A&M
AGRILIFE
 EXTENSION

2018 Agriculture Symposium Webinar



Date: April 17, 2018

Time: 7:30am–12:15pm

* Registration begins at 7:30am *

8:00: Baitfish Secondary Crop for Aquaculture Producers

Dr. Andrew Ropicki, Marine Economics Specialist

8:30: The Forgotten Goat

Dr. Joe Paschal, Extension Livestock Specialist

9:00: Alternative Ranching Operations

Dr. Megan Clayton, Extension Range Specialist

9:30: Tips for Stretching Your Dollar in Forage Production

Dr. Josh McGinty, Extension Agronomist

10:00: Internal and External Parasites in Livestock

Dr. Joe Paschal, Extension Livestock Specialist

10:30: Cost Saving Tips for Brush Control

Dr. Megan Clayton, Extension Range Specialist

11:00 – COFFEE BREAK

11:15: Protecting Your Investment in Cotton & Grain Production

Dr. Josh McGinty, Extension Agronomist

11:45: Potential Profitability of No-till vs. Conventional Cotton & Grain Sorghum

Mac Young, Risk Management Specialist

12:15: – ADJOURN

12:30-1:15: Optional Auxin Applicator Training

**Waller County Extension
 Office**

846 6th St

Hempstead, Texas 77445

Whole seminar is webinar based

Registration is \$15 per person.
**RSVP'S MUST BE RECEIVED BY
 APRIL 13 BY 5 PM**

**REGISTRATION MADE AFTER
 APRIL 13 IS \$25 PER PERSON**

Lunch Sponsored by: Robert
 Smith

Food Provided by: 1st Class BBQ

2 CEU's

TDA-1 IPM, 1 General

Optional 1 Auxin CEU

Please Register at:

Waller County Extension Office
 846 6th Street, Hempstead, Texas
 77445; 979-826-7651

**Please mail checks or bring money
 by before the event. Checks payable:
 Extension Program Council**

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2018 TLAER - Hazmat / Decontamination & Behavior Class

Sponsored by:

Montgomery County Adult Horse Committee

This class is designed for: Veterinarians, First Responders, animal incident managers and responders, and those who own or manage animals/livestock.

Date: April 26, 2018

Location: Texas A&M AgriLife Extension—Montgomery County

9020 Airport Rd Conroe, TX 77303

Cost: \$50 (includes lunch) Checks payable to Montgomery County Ag Committee

Dr. Rebecca Gimenez of Technical Large Animal Emergency Rescue will present lectures and hands-on demonstrations.

A few of the topics include:

- Awareness of HAZMAT issues in TLAER scenarios
- Laws & regulations governing HAZMAT and DECON of animals
- Commonly encountered substances, contaminants, toxics, non-chemical exposures, agricultural contaminants, and spills
- Behavior, approach, basic handling, restraint, and leading of live animals for DECON
- Intro to large animal behavior and senses in normal, stress, and panic situations

Space is limited! Register early!

For more information and registration information, contact Texas A&M AgriLife Extension:

Phone: 936-539-7822 Web: <https://montgomery.agrilife.org/agriculture-natural-resources/>

Registration is limited. Register by Tuesday, April 10th



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, veteran status, sexual orientation or gender identity and will strive to achieve full and equal employment opportunity throughout Texas A&M AgriLife.

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2018 Texas Technical Large Animal Emergency Rescue Class

Sponsored by:

Montgomery County Adult Horse Committee

This class is designed for: Veterinarians, First Responders, animal incident managers and responders, and those who own or manage animals/livestock.

Date: April 27-28, 2018

Location: Texas A&M AgriLife Extension—Montgomery County

9020 Airport Rd Conroe, TX 77303

Cost: \$100 (includes lunch) Checks payable to Montgomery County Ag Committee



Dr. Rebecca Gimenez of Technical Large Animal Emergency Rescue will cover two days of lectures and hands-on demonstrations that will include:

- Incident Prevention
- Emergency Scene Management
- Large Animal Restraint
- Basics of Mud, Water, Ice Rescues
- Confined Space Rescue
- Livestock Trailer Incidents
- Barn Fires and Wildfires
- Integration of Veterinarians into Emergency Response
- CE Approved—ACO, LVT, DVM
- CE Pending—TCOLE, DSHS, Fire Service

For more information and registration information, contact Texas A&M AgriLife Extension:

Phone: 936-539-7822 Web: <https://montgomery.agrilife.org/agriculture-natural-resources/>

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Generation Next

Our Turn to Ranch

Join us for an Agricultural Business Start-Up School

February 18 - May 12th
Participate from your computer on
your own time schedule!

We will cover 1 Topic per Week that
takes 1 hour to complete

- ✔ Discuss business types, tax info, & insurance needs
- ✔ Learn about financing programs and options
- ✔ Gain ideas for operations you can add to an existing ranch
- ✔ Learn options for setting up grazing & wildlife leases
- ✔ Exposure to all the latest land management tools & techniques
- ✔ Taught by professionals in each field and topic

Course Includes: 12 webinar classes of Expert Instruction, Optional in-person training opportunity in early May, Generation Next t-shirt, and a Generation Next School Completion Certificate

Registration Fee: \$120

To Register: <https://agriliferegister.tamu.edu/ESSM>

Or call 979-845-2604

For more information contact: Megan.Clayton@ag.tamu.edu or 361.265.9203





2018 Generation Next: Our Turn to Ranch Webinar School

Week of February 18

- Setting up a New Agriculture Business

Week of February 25

- Understanding Business Taxes 101

Week of March 4

- Business Insurance Needs

Week of March 11

- Finances: Loans and Record Keeping

Week of March 18

- How to set up Grazing and Wildlife Lease Agreements

Week of March 25

- Ecotourism Opportunities

Week of April 1

- Planning Land Use and Surveying Your Resources

Week of April 8

- Understanding Market Fluctuations

Week of April 15

- Alternative Ranching Operations

Week of April 22

- Agricultural Apps for Smartphones and Tablets

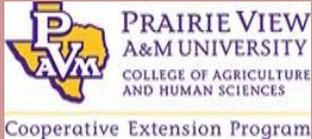
Week of April 29

- Land Management Toolbox

Week of May 6

- Targeted Wrap-Up Session

Optional, in-person training May 3-4, 2018: Location to be decided



Texas A&M AgriLife Extension
Service
Waller County Office &
Cooperative Extension Program

846 6th Street
Hempstead, TX 77445

Phone: 979-826-7651
Fax: 979-826-7654

Like us on Facebook
Waller County
Extension Office

We're on the web
<http://waller.agrilife.org/>

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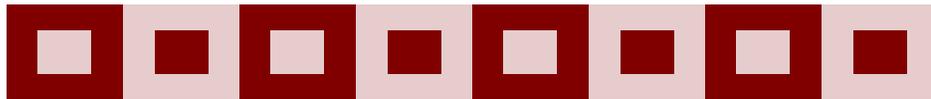
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We have a Soil & Forage Probe that can be rented out to take samples. \$50 Deposit which is returned when the probe is brought back and not damaged. For more



information or to check out one of these



Help stray livestock get home safely

Property Gate Signs

OWNER/AGENT: _____
Waller County
Sheriff's Office 979-826-8282 #XXXX

\$12 each

Signs are available for Waller County residents signs are about 5"x20" in size. Attaches to gates or fences where they are visible from the road. Individualized for each producer with an assessing number and a place for a phone number, Ranch name, or Owners Name.

Sponsored by the Waller County Beef & Forage Committee
Signs are available at Waller County Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Office
846 6th St., Hempstead, TX 77445; 979-826-7651



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