

**Extension Information Corner**  
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**Zavala County**

I hope everyone had a wonder Christmas weekend and are now preparing to usher out 2016 and welcome in 2017. Of course, each new year brings new hope and many opportunities to set new goals and of course the annual traditions of setting New Year's resolutions over the traditional bowl of black eyed peas and for most South Texan's a hot bowl of menudo. Of course according to [statisticbrain.com/new-years-resolutions](http://statisticbrain.com/new-years-resolutions) 38 % percent of Americans who absolutely never make New Year's Resolutions, almost half of us or 49% percent have infrequent success and only 8% percent of people who are successful in achieving their resolution which leaves 24% percent who never succeed and fail on their resolution each year. I hope that if you are one of those who do make resolutions that you will be one of the 8% that are successful. The end of the old year makes us ponder of all the things good or bad that may have occurred during the current year. As I produce my final column of 2016 I want to end the year by wishing all of you much success, prosperity and happiness in 2017. Happy NEW YEAR!!

**New Year Brings Changes To Animal Drug Use**

As of January 1, 2017, animal producers will not be able to purchase feeds over the counter that contain antimicrobials deemed important for human health. Instead, to buy and use feeds containing those antimicrobials, animal producers must be authorized by a licensed veterinarian who is operating under the Food and Drug Administration's revised Veterinary Feed Directive, or VFD, rule. The VFD rule has been in effect for 20 years, but it affected only a small number of producers and just a few antimicrobials. As of January 1, changes to the rule will mean that it will impact most animal producers and apply to many more antimicrobials.

Also, after January 1, animal drug sponsors will have removed the claims of "growth promotion" and "feed efficiency" from the labels of medically important antimicrobials. Animal drug sponsors, in cooperation with CVM, are currently changing the labels for their products so that production claims such as "growth promotion" or "feed efficiency" will be gone from labels, thus those uses will no longer be permitted. These changes will have a significant effect on the animal production industry. Any animal producer in Zavala County that may have specific questions about the VFD rule including 4-H and FFA show animals can send those questions to this e-mail address: [AskCVM@fda.hhs.gov](mailto:AskCVM@fda.hhs.gov). Your questions will be promptly answered. The changes in the VFD rule is intended to help FDA address the issue of antimicrobial resistance. Finding antimicrobials to treat a disease is far more difficult when the disease is caused by resistant bacteria. The Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Agent in collaboration with local veterinarians will be holding community meeting to assist producers in understanding these changes which will greatly impact the livestock industry.

**New Year Brings Changes to WPS Standards**

The Environmental Protection Agency EPA is finalizing updates and revisions to the existing worker protection regulation for pesticides. This final rule will enhance the protections provided to agricultural workers, pesticide handlers, and other persons under the Worker Protection Standard (WPS) by strengthening elements of the existing regulation, such as training, notification,

pesticide safety and hazard communication information, use of personal protective equipment, and the providing of supplies for routine washing and emergency decontamination. EPA expects this final rule to prevent unreasonable adverse effects from exposure to pesticides among agricultural workers and pesticide handlers, vulnerable groups (such as minority and low-income populations, child farmworkers, and farmworker families) and other persons who may be on or near agricultural establishments, and to mitigate exposures that do occur. In order to reduce compliance burdens for family-owned farms, in the final rule EPA has expanded the existing definition of “immediate family” and continued the existing exemption from many provisions of the WPS for owners and members of their immediate families.

This final rule went into effective January 1, 2016. However, Agricultural employers and handler employers will be required to comply with most of the new requirements on January 2, 2017, as provided in [40 CFR 170.2](#). Agricultural employers and handler employers will be required to comply with certain new requirements on January 1, 2018 or later, as provided in [40 CFR 170.311\(a\)\(3\)](#), [170.401\(c\)\(3\)](#), [170.501\(c\)\(3\)](#) and [170.505\(b\)](#). For more information contact Jeanne Kasal, Field and External Affairs Division, office of pesticide programs, EPA, 1200 Pennsylvania Ave. NW., Washington DC 20460-0001; telephone number:(703) 308-3240. Her e-mail address is [kasal.jeanne@epa.gov](mailto:kasal.jeanne@epa.gov). An update of this rule will be covered at the pesticide applicators CEU meeting in La Pryor this Wednesday beginning at 9:00 a.m.

Tip of the Week: New Year's Resolutions for Gardeners

While our chances of keeping, or making New Year's Resolutions here are a few that I think will make this year's gardening efforts a little more fun. Good luck to all of you on a new year full of gardening success and much bounty.

**Avoid creating a landscape that demands more time and maintenance than you can keep up and enjoy.**

It's important to design a landscape that only requires as much maintenance time and effort as you have to give. Remember lawn areas, large vegetable gardens and flowerbeds are higher maintenance.

**Seek out only gardening information that is appropriate for southwest Texas**  
The Internet is full of gardening information, but much of it is not suitable for our area. This makes it easy to get confused about what plants will grow well here, common pest problems for our area and the timing of gardening activities. Always look for gardening information focused on the unique climate of Southwest and South Texas. For information on a wide variety of garden topics that is specifically prepared for Texas gardeners, check out the Texas A&M University combined *horticulture* information resources including teaching, extension, and research. Search the site with the PLANTanswer Machine by going to <http://aggie-horticulture.tamu.edu/> click on vegetable resources then click on vegetable variety recommendations then click on Zavala County and there you have them.

**Do not let weeds get out of hand before taking efforts to control them.**  
Most of us would benefit from making this resolution. Dealing with weeds is an unavoidable part of landscape upkeep. But yards with regular weed maintenance tend to have less severe weed problems.

**Effectively use mulches in flowerbeds, vegetable gardens, around shrubs and other appropriate areas.**

Mulches -- such as pine straw, leaves, dry grass clippings, ground bark and wood products -- are our best, first line of defense in controlling weeds in beds. They also conserve soil moisture reducing watering, look attractive, prevent soil compaction and moderate soil temperatures. There are few things we do as gardeners that are more beneficial than mulching.

**Get the soil tested**

Getting your soil tested will help you make the best gardening decisions. Test results can indicate what fertilizers are needed. And knowing the soil pH can help with plant selection. Contact the Zavala County office of the Texas A&M AgriLife Extension service to obtain your free soil testing bags and instructions.

**Visit at least one of the outstanding public gardens around the Southwest Texas Area.**

Besides the beauty of public gardens, they also can teach us many lessons about design and plant materials. The San Antonio Botanical Garden have much to offer. Pay special attention to water conserving plants for our area.

**Grow something you can eat this year.**

Gardening did not start off with beautiful ornamental plants. The first gardens were utilitarian and provided food and medicines. There is still a special satisfaction that comes from producing food for your family from the garden. But don't jump in blind; learn what you need to know about successfully growing your favorite vegetables and herbs. It needn't be complicated. A single tomato growing in a 5-gallon container on a porch, patio or balcony can provide the same satisfaction as a large vegetable garden. And for those vegetable gardeners who would not dream of planting something unless they can eat it, here's a resolution for you: If you only grow vegetables, try planting a few flowers this year to nourish your soul.

**Take better care of your garden tools.**

I must admit, I'm truly the worst at taking care of my tools. Good quality garden tools should last for many years. There are three important points: avoid rust-inducing moisture, keep them sharpened, and occasionally apply a coat of oil.

**Try a few new plants out in the garden.**

Trying new plants is part of the fun of gardening. But be sure to go online or consult with local horticulturists to find out about the plant before you plant it.

**Start a compost pile.**

Nothing beats biologically active homemade compost when doing bed preparation or putting together potting mixes. Composting is not complicated; it can involve nothing more than piling up grass clippings, leaves and other landscape waste in an out-of-the-way area and allowing it to naturally decay. Don't forget to harvest it and use it as needed.

**Correct some of those landscape problems and mistakes you've been living with all these years.**

Remove shrubs that are too large and require constant pruning and replace them with something smaller. Create an outdoor living area that fits your family's needs rather than accepting what was there when you bought the house. Have shade trees pruned to raise their canopies and allow more light into the yard.

**Show a child the wonders of gardening.**

This year, take your son, daughter, grandchild, niece or nephew and show them your gardens, flowers and vegetables. How many of you remember a grandparent or parent showing you how to garden when you were young? How much do you treasure that memory? Pass it on.

**Spend more time simply sitting and enjoying the garden.**

Sometimes, I will simply meander through my landscape, touching leaves, smelling flowers and appreciating what I have created. This year, I resolve to relax and to remember that my garden does not always have to look like a magazine cover.

Happy New Year and have a happy week planning your garden. M.V.

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