

**News From Your County Agent**  
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**Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service**  
**Zavala County**

I hope all of you had a safe and happy 4<sup>th</sup> of July weekend with friends and family, and tried to stay cool as temperatures were hot like the fireworks that were going off across the county. The scattered showers that marched through our area a week ago have gone east so all we can do is hope for another low pressure area to make its way soon across the west coast but it will be a wait and see game once again. Greetings to all of you and thank you so much for reading this week.

**Zavala County College Forward Program Update**

On June 26 and 27 I joined county agents representing 9 Texas pilot sites for the Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service and College Forward meeting in College Station to discuss results of the site visits conducted earlier this year. In Zavala County the La Pryor I.S.D. was selected as one of the 9 pilot sites to implement this program. After visiting nine rural counties throughout Texas, Bee, Cameron, Dimmit, Fannin, Jasper, Lamar, Nolan, San Augustine and Zavala, College Forward (CF) observed a serious need for increased college and career advising for rural students. Though there is a strong desire and high expectation for students to attend some type of postsecondary institution, there are limited resources available in the rural community and many barriers to completion.

During the meeting in College Station discussions focused on the experience from visiting these nine counties and learning about the unique challenges and successes in each community, College Forward has developed recommendations that we believe will improve college matriculation and graduation rates. Perhaps one of the most significant recommendations is that College Forward would plan to build customized curricula with resources and training plans to meet the unique needs of each rural community. The recommendations simply provide potential building blocks for what AgriLife and College Forward could provide to students together. To make this possible funding sources from the Texas A&M Foundation and the Greater Texas Foundation are already being discussed. Work to be completed for the remainder of 2017 is to develop customized curricula with resources and training plans by the spring of 2018 and implementation of the Rural Texas College Access Plan(RTCAP) by the Fall of 2018.

**Wintergarden Spinach Producers Board Election and Referendum to Take Place**

Being certified by the Commissioner of Agriculture of the State of Texas, Wintergarden Spinach Producers Board, P.O. Box 886, Uvalde, Texas 78802, will hold its biennial election and referendum on August 31, 2017, on whether or not Spinach producers in Atascosa, Dimmit, Frio, Maverick, Medina, Uvalde, and Zavala counties shall be assessed, on a refund basis, at a maximum amount of \$0.03 per crate or \$1.00 per ton on Spinach, to be collected at the first point of processing, under the provisions of the Texas Commodity Referendum Law, Chapter 41, Texas Agriculture Code.

The Wintergarden Spinach Producers Board will also hold an election which will be held by mail balloting to fill two positions. Spinach producers in Atascosa, Dimmit, Frio, Maverick, Medina, Uvalde, and Zavala counties will receive their ballots by mail approximately two weeks prior to the

established August 31, 2017 election date. All ballots must be postmarked no later than August 31, 2017. Any person who produces spinach, and would be required to pay the assessment within the counties listed for commercial purposes, is eligible to vote.

Any person qualified to vote in the election may place his/her name in nomination for election to the Wintergarden Spinach Producers Board by application to the Wintergarden Spinach Producers Board, signed by him/herself and at least ten other persons eligible to vote in the election. Such applications must be received by August 1, 2017, in order to have his/her name placed on the ballot. A board nomination form can be obtained upon request by contacting your local AgriLife Extension Office or the Wintergarden Spinach Producers Board at P.O. Box 886, Uvalde, Texas 78802. Any person qualified to vote that does not receive a ballot 15 days prior to the election, may obtain a ballot from one of the locations listed below: Atascosa County, AgriLife Extension Office, 830-569-0034, 25 East Fifth Street, Leming, Texas 78050; Dimmit County, AgriLife Extension Office, 830-876-4216, 539 Industrial Boulevard, Carrizo Springs, Texas 78834-3801; Frio County, AgriLife Extension Office, 830-334-2752, 400 South Pecan Street, Pearsall, Texas 78061-3136; Maverick County, AgriLife Extension Office, 830-773-5064, 2350 East Main Street, Eagle Pass, Texas 78852; Medina County, AgriLife Extension Office, 830-741-6180, 1506 Avenue M, Hondo, Texas 78861-1754; Uvalde County, AgriLife Extension Office, 830-591-9046, 122 Veterans Lane, Uvalde, Texas 78801 and Zavala County, AgriLife Extension Office, 830-374-2883, 221 North First Avenue, Crystal City, Texas 78839-3503.

### **Tip of The Week: Producing Tomatoes During the Hot Summer Days**

It is possible to plant and grow summer and autumn tomatoes in June or July in hot-summer south Texas areas, particularly during cool years or if you are able to time planting and establishment during a cool period such as this spring. Late planting of tomatoes in hot-summer areas is recommended for experienced and skilled gardeners who have developed fertile, living garden soil over time, and with the understanding that intense heatwaves and even normal hot-summer weather may cause great difficulty with establishing and growing tomatoes.

Take care of heat-tolerant varieties, especially vigorous hybrids, early varieties, and parthenocarpic varieties such as Oregon Spring that will set fruit during hot weather. Cherry tomatoes often outperform other types in challenging environmental conditions. This is the time to make friends with vigorous, heat-tolerant, hybrid cherry-tomato seedlings if you can find them. Consider trying a determinate early hybrid tomato if you can find seedlings, which will produce a larger harvest all at once and save you the perpetual grind of tomato-care and plant/person stress during hot weather in September and October. Try a vigorous heat-tolerant heirloom or two only if you're feeling especially attentive and brave.

Plan carefully for sun and shade. If possible, plant tomatoes in areas that will receive sun from early morning to early afternoon and be shaded thereafter. If starting late with tomatoes, you will need to provide shade on hot summer days to maximize yield. This can be done by using shade nets found at most garden centers. These nets provide shade but also allow some sunlight to reach the plants and keep them growing and producing tomatoes for you.

Consider growing tomatoes in large containers on wheeled carts or wheeled plant stands so you can

move them out into full sun on cooler days and keep them shaded or in cool areas during heatwaves. Container tomatoes will need extra water and attention during hot weather

Plant tomatoes into rich, deep, fertile, and living soil; or use raised beds and large containers filled with fertile topsoil, washed sand, compost, and organic amendments. Chances are low for a good yield when planting tomatoes into previously uncultivated soils especially infertile sandy soils or heavy clay soils. Be sure to mulch well to maintain even soil moisture and prevent cracking on ripened fruit. Growing tomatoes in the south Texas heat is a challenge but with the new varieties and following these easy tips you should be successful for the next few hot summer weeks. Have a great week. M.V.

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