

News From Your County Agent
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Zavala County

Very few folks were very, very fortunate to get a good 3 to 4 minute soaking last week as very scattered and I mean very scattered showers were in our vicinity late last week. Of course this activity quickly gave way to another long dry pattern which looks like will be with us for some time. But what can we expect in the middle of July in South Texas, greetings to all of you and thank you so much for reading this week.

Zavala County AgriLife To Participate In Mosquito Surveillance Program

Dr. Sonja Swiger Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Entomologist and statewide Extension expert for mosquitoes and livestock/veterinary pests will be working closely with the Zavala County Extension agent in a mosquito surveillance program to help identify and track *Aedes aegypti* and *Aedes albopictus* mosquitoes. These two species of mosquitoes are the known vectors of Zika, Dengue and Chikungunya diseases. This program will help educate the citizens of Zavala County on mosquitoes, mosquito management and vector-borne diseases.

The project will take about 4 weeks to complete, sometimes longer. This year since we are starting in July the project can be conducted every other week instead of weekly to make it a less stressful. The mosquitoes should be active from now until October, giving us plenty of time to find them. The project consists of setting 5 traps at 5 different sites (a total of 25 traps) WEEKLY. The traps are placed out on Monday and picked up on Thursday evening/Friday morning and then mailed to the Extension Center in Stephenville. We will use cups (which serve as the traps), seed paper for the traps, Ziploc bags, binder clips, prepaid envelopes and submission sheets.

This effort is of great interest to Department of State Health Services(DSHS), the Center for Disease Control (CDC), Texas A&M University Health Science Center and a benefit to the citizens of Zavala county by providing information on the presence of mosquitoes that could transmit Zika. I will be seeking assistance from local citizens in Batesville, Crystal City and La Pryor as well as 4H members and anyone that would like to help. These volunteers can help set the traps or give a location for them to be set. If you would like to help or want additional information about this program please feel free to contact the Zavala County office of the Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service at 830-374-2883.

Produce Safety Education Training to Take Place July 31/Aug.1

A train the training course for produce safety educators and others who work with fruit and vegetable growers who are interested in becoming Produce Safety Alliance (PSA) Trainers or PSA Lead Trainers. Attendees will become PSA Trainers and are able to offer the PSA standardized curriculum to growers under the direction of a PSA Lead Trainer. This two-day course will provide detailed information about Good Agricultural Practices, co-management of natural resources and food safety, FSMA Produce Safety Rule requirements, and a review of the PSA Grower Training curriculum. The course will also cover principles of adult education, how to incorporate the PSA curriculum into other extension trainings, developing working partnerships, and how to register a PSA Grower Training Course with the Association of Food and Drug Officials (AFDO). To register for the course go to <https://agriliferegister.tamu.edu/ProduceSafety> or you may register by phone by calling 979-845-2604 and ask for Dr. Juan Anciso.

Tip of the Week: Plant Flowers For The Beauty But Eat Them Too

While many Zavala county gardeners love flowers for their beauty outdoors in the garden and indoors in a vase, few raise them to eat. That's a shame because many flowers are edible and bring lively flavors, colors and textures to salads, soups, casseroles and other dishes. Eating flowers is not as exotic as it sounds. The use of flowers as food dates back to the Stone Age with archeological evidence that early man ate flowers such as roses. Some flowers are high in nutrition as well. Roses' especially rose hips' are very high in vitamin C, marigolds and nasturtiums also contain vitamin C, and dandelion blossoms contain vitamins A and C.

Any flower that isn't poisonous or causes reactions such as allergies is considered edible. However, just because a flower is edible doesn't necessarily mean it tastes good. Since looks have as much to do with taste as the actual flavor, beautiful flowers tend to be the ones selected to eat. But before you go munching through the flower garden and window box, there are a few criteria you should keep in mind. Be sure to positively identify a flower before eating it. Some flowers have look-alikes that aren't edible. Don't eat flowers if you have asthma, allergies, or hay fever. Only eat flowers that have been grown organically and have no pesticide residue. Collect flowers for eating in the cooler parts of the day -- preferably early morning after the dew has evaporated --- or later afternoon. Choose flowers that are at their peak, avoiding those that are not fully open or are starting to wilt.

Here's a short list of common edible, **annual** flowers that are easy to grow and tasty to eat. Included are a number of herbs and vegetables that have edible flowers as well as leaves and fruits.

Garland chrysanthemum (*Chrysanthemum coronarium*) produces mild-flavored, yellow to white flowers.

African marigold (*Tagetes erecta*) has white, gold, yellow or red flowers with a strongly pungent flavor.

Pansy/viola (*Viola*) has violet, white, pink, yellow or multi-colored flowers that have a sweet flavor.

Petunia (*Petunia hybrida*) is a summer blooming flower that comes in a wide range of colors and has a mild flavor.

Snapdragon (*Antirrhinum*) features spring and fall flowering plants in a wide range of colors with a bland to bitter flavor.

Scented geraniums (*Pelargonium*) has white, red, pink or purple-colored flowers with an apple, lemon, or other flavor depending on the variety.

Squash (*Cucurbita*) has yellow to orange colored flavors with a mild, raw squash flavor.

Tuberous begonias (*Begonia x tuberhybrida*) have white, pink, yellow, red, orange or multi-colored flowers with a citrus flavor.

Here are a few common edible **perennial** flowers that offer a broad range of flavors and mature at different times throughout the summer.

Baby's breath (*Gypsophila*) has white or pink colored flowers with a mild, slightly sweet flavor.

Bee balm (*Monarda didyma*) features red, pink, white or lavender colored flowers with a tea-like flavor that's stronger than the leaves.

Chives (*Allium schoenoprasum*) have white, lavender or purple colored flowers with a strong onion flavor.

Daylily (*Hemerocallis*) comes in a wide range of flower colors with a slight asparagus or summer squash-like taste.

Dandelion (*Taraxacum officinale*) has yellow, slightly bitter flowers.

Tulips (*Tulipa*) come in a wide range of colors except blue and have a mild, slightly sweet flavor.

Violet (*Viola odorata*) has violet, pink or white colored flowers with a sweet to slightly sour flavor.

While eating flowers is fun and flavorful, be careful. There are a number of poisonous plants containing substances that can cause symptoms such as upset stomachs, rashes and headaches. And even edible flowers should be eaten in moderation. You can have too much of a good thing. Some common landscape and flowering plants that you should **avoid** eating the blooms include: clematis, hydrangea, sweet peas, azalea, daffodils, daphne, lily-of-the-valley, fox-glove, bleeding hearts, rhododendron, wisteria, oleander, lupine,

hyacinth, four-o'clock, calla lily and castor bean. This is by no means an exhaustive list of non-edible flowers and you should thoroughly research any flower before munching away. For a complete list of edible flowers contact the Zavala County office of the Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service at 830-374-2883 or go to the National Gardening Association learning library at <https://garden.org/> . Have a great week. M.V.

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