

News From Your County Agent
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Zavala County

Another week of hot temperatures but at least with scattered showers across the area over the weekend brings us hope that we will soon get some much needed moisture. Many of these showers over the weekend were hit and misses so those of you that were fortunate enough to get a rain shower count yourself very lucky, lucky enough to go buy you a lottery ticket. Greeting to all of you and thank you so much for reading this week.

Area Ag. Producers Reminded of Deadline To Enroll in USDA ARC/PLC Programs

U.S. Department of Agriculture-Texas Farm Service Agency reminds farmers and ranchers that they have until Aug. 1 to enroll in Agriculture Risk Coverage(ARC) and/or Price Loss Coverage(PLC) programs for the 2017 crop year. These programs trigger financial protections for participating agricultural producers when market forces cause substantial drops in crop prices or revenues.

Producers may have already elected ARC or PLC programs, but to receive program benefits they must enroll for the 2017 crop year by signing a contract before the Aug. 1, 2017 deadline, please contact your local FSA office(not the Extension Office) to schedule an appointment if you have not yet enrolled.

Covered commodities under the programs include barley, canola, large and small chickpeas, corn, crambe, flaxseed, grain sorghum, lentils, mustard seed, oats, peanuts, dry peas, rapeseed, long grain rice, medium grain rice (which includes short grain and sweet rice), safflower seed, sesame, soybeans, sunflower seed and wheat. For more program information, contact your local FSA office or visit <http://www.fsa.usda.gov/arc-plc>. To find your local FSA office, visit <http://offices.usda.gov>.

Volunteers Needed For Zavala County Mosquito Surveillance Program

The Zavala County Extension Service will participate 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.

At this time I am 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 and volunteer for this program please feel free to contact the Zavala County office of the Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service at 830-374-2883.

Tip of The Week: Plant Pumpkins Now Before It's To Late

Every year I get one or two calls about when to plant pumpkins in time for Halloween. The answer is to plant them now. Most varieties need at least 95 days to mature, with some larger varieties taking as many as 120 days. To decide which to plant, consider what you want to do with the pumpkins: eat them as a sweet or savory dish or use them as an autumnal ornament such as carving for Halloween. Also consider whether you are growing pumpkins to store for mid-winter dining and how much space you have in the garden now, because they will vine much like some watermelon and cantaloupe varieties.

There are several types of pumpkins that you can plant. The really large types like Dill's Atlantic Giant and Big Max are fun to grow since they can reach bragging size without much trouble. There are also smaller types, some of which are horticulturally classified as squash although they look just like pumpkins. The way to tell a real pumpkin from an impersonator is to study the stem at harvest. The stem of a true pumpkin will be angular and tough when you cut it. The stem of the look alike will be round and much easier to cut. Otherwise, they look and taste the same. Some pumpkins come in different shades of orange as well as blue and white. Jack Be Little is a midget variety that produces pumpkins small enough to fit in the palm of your hand. Lumina is a white pumpkin that can be down right spooky when painted up as a jack-o'-lantern. Mammoth Gold averages 20 to 25 pounds and is a good choice for pies. Remember the bigger the pumpkin variety the more days you need for them to mature in time for Halloween.

Pumpkins prefer a well-drained, fertile, loamy soil, with a neutral pH, but they will grow in heavier clay soils as long as they are not continually wet. Pumpkins require ample organic matter, slow and deep watering (they are very deep rooted). When you plant pumpkin seeds outside, remember that pumpkins need an incredible amount of space to grow. It's recommended that you plan on a minimum of 20 square feet being needed for each plant. To plant your pumpkin seeds make mounds about 6 to 8 inches high. In the center of the mound plant 3 to 5 pumpkin seeds per mound. Pumpkin seeds don't sprout well if the soil temperature is above 105, so with air temperatures near 100 degrees in most parts of south Texas right now, you'll want to prepare their planting mounds carefully. Incorporate organic matter generously into 6- or 8-inch wide bands, then fold it into your native soil. After they germinate you can thin out the weakest plants to give the good healthy ones more vigor.

Once pumpkins are in the garden and growing, they require very little maintenance, just consistent watering and a watchful eye for pests: leaf miners, squash bugs, and squash vine borers. You can use neem extracts, rotenone, or rotenone and pyrethrins to control the first two pests. The best strategy for dealing with vine borers is to time plantings so the vines are mature enough to withstand the damage. As with all insecticides, follow the label carefully and dress appropriately; organic insecticides can be just as harmful to you as chemical insecticides. I also spray the plants once or twice during the growing season with a foliar mix of kelp and liquid fish emulsion. Growing pumpkins can be a challenge but can be rewarding and fun. Have a great week. M.V.

July 17-21, 2017.