

News From Your County Agent
By Marcel Valdez, CEA-ANR
Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service
Zavala County

We are now in our typical South Texas summer pattern hot and dry. Good thing is that we still see some scattered rain activity north east and west of us, not reaching us but as least cooling us down like this past Sunday evening dropping 15 degrees from a hot 103 earlier in the day. Remember to be extra careful with outdoor activities that can cause a fire since we have a lot of vegetation that was produced during the wet spring and now it is dry and can ignite instantly with any little spark. Greetings to all of you and thank you so much for reading this week.

Multi-County Ranchers Leasing Workshop Scheduled For September

Zavala County AgriLife Extension joins the Agrilife Extension Offices of Dimmit, Frio and Atascosa for a Rancher Leasing Workshop covering grazing, hunting and livestock leases for landowners in Zavala and surrounding counties. The free program is funded by the Southern Extension Risk Management Education Center. Last year, 100 percent of participants in various parts of the state said they would recommend these programs to a friend thus prompting these agents in these counties to bring this program to this area. This program will be held on September 19th at 8:30 a.m. until about 1 p.m. at the Frio County office of the Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service located at 400 S. Pecan St., Pearsall Texas. Lunch will be provided and sponsored by Security State Bank of Pearsall.

Participants will need to RSVP at least one week before the meeting they will attend to Kim Garcia, 806-677-5626 or kim.garcia@ag.tamu.edu. The workshop will address the legal risks associated with agricultural leases, L The goal is to educate landowners and producers on the importance of utilizing written leases as a risk management tool. Leading the workshop will be Tiffany Dowell Lashmet, AgriLife Extension agricultural law specialist in Amarillo. Joining Lashmet on the program will be AgriLife Extension economists from around the state. Discussions will be held on the potential legal implications of failing to have a sufficient written lease and the potential legal issues and litigation that the development of written leases can help avoid. The workshop will also familiarize participants with key terms and provisions that should be considered in lease negotiations. Participants will receive a leasing handbook that covers legal issues, designing lease payment structures and calculating payments, landowner liability, as well as checklists and sample lease forms for negotiating lease agreements. For more information about this program Contact the Zavala County Office of the Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service at 830-374-2883.

Final Reminder On Upcoming Beef Cattle Short Course

I invite area ranchers and cattlemen and women to join me and other County Extension Agents at the 63rd annual Texas A&M Beef Cattle Short Course. This program has a rich tradition and historical place in the programs emanating from the Department of Animal Science at Texas A&M University. Dating as far back as 1942, Professor John K Riggs started the first in a series of Beef Cattle Short Courses held on the campus of Texas A&M College to discuss the results of beef cattle research from the Texas Agricultural Experiment Station with Texas beef producers. This historical beginning and purpose is still the standard today for the Beef Cattle Short Course

held at Texas A&M University. Today the highly respected TAM Beef Cattle Short Course is nationally and internationally recognized as the largest attended beef cattle educational program of its type in the world.

This valuable event will be held on August 7-9 2017 in College Station Texas on the campus of Texas A&M University. Part of the short course is the Cattleman's College which features more than 20 concurrent sessions. Topics include animal health, nutrition, reproduction, breeding, genetics, selection, research, marketing and handling. Management sessions will cover business, forage, range, and purebred cattle. Topics such as landowner issues and fence building will be featured at this BCSC. Sessions are designed for everyone, from the newest member of the industry to the most seasoned producer. A number of pesticide CEUs, veterinarian CECs and BQA credits are available to attendees. Additionally, over 125 agriculture related businesses and trade show exhibitors annually attend the course and attest to the fact that it is the most highly attended activity of its kind anywhere in the United States. Annually over 1400 participants attend the Beef Cattle Short Course to gain valuable knowledge about beef cattle production. To register for this event go to

<http://beefcattleshortcourse.com/content/uploads/2017/05/mailout-updateschedule1.pdf> or contact the Zavala county office of the Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service at 830-374-2883.

Tip of The Week: Caring For Trees Shrubs and Ground Covers During Excessive Heat

Most of the time calls coming into the office during peak extreme heat conditions usually deal with trying to keep the lawn alive and healthy during drought and heat, but seldom do I get call regarding shrubs, ground covers and trees that can also be victims of extreme heat and dry conditions. Regardless of the moisture levels in the soil, extended daytime periods of 100 degrees and above slow the biological functions of plants. This slowing phenomenon, which protects plants by reducing water loss through transpiration, is known as "self induced dormancy". Transpiration uses water, absorbed by the roots and transported to the upper parts of the plant, to be released into the air. Unfortunately, this slowing of biological function also reduces the amount of plant food (sugars, carbohydrates, and others) produced and stored by the plant. Although fertilizers are often promoted as "plant food", they are actually elements that are absorbed by the roots and transferred to the foliage. The foliage, with help from the sun, produces a plant's actual food through photosynthesis. The resulting food is stored in the plant's tissues. Extended periods of heat reduce the amount of time a plant can produce and store its food. Given our South Texas weather, even a Mexican Plum, esperanzas, bougainvillea can be affected.

A watering rule of thumb during extreme heat and dry conditions is to water deep, not often. Water should reach 8 to 12 inches down, creating a well of water for plants and trees to draw upon in high heat. To determine if you've reached your mark, press a large screwdriver into the soil: If it meets resistance, keep watering. Hand-watering with a garden hose and aerator is best. Count to 10 as you water the base of plants. Move and repeat. If you have lots of property to water, then use a sprinkler, but adjust it so it doesn't waste overspray on driveways and walkways. Tree gators (plastic donuts or sacs that slowly release water onto tree bases) and drip hoses are good helpmates, too. Watering early in the morning is best.

Focus on younger trees and shrubs. Mature trees have an extensive root system, so they are able to withstand the heat and lack of water more so than younger trees. For best results, water with a deep root feeder or sprinkler out to the tree drip line. Irrigation systems may help, but they are not designed to saturate the ground around trees and plantings and while exceptional for watering your lawn, sprinkler systems do not provide sufficient water coverage for trees and shrubs. Deep watering is slow soaking drip watering for 10 to 13 hours once a week.

Don't forget your container plants. Container plants will require daily watering, even twice a day in high temperatures. These plants should be given a thorough soaking until water can be seen coming out from the drainage holes. Placing water granules in pots also helps. As these will gradually soak up excess water, in times of dryness, the granules will slowly release some of this water back into the soil. Moving potted plants to a shadier location during the heat of the day is also recommended.

Mulch is your plants best friend during hot and dry periods of summer. If you didn't mulch in spring, do it now. Mulch will keep moisture in the ground and suppress weeds, which compete with landscaping for water. If you haven't mulched, water thoroughly, then add a layer of mulch around the base of the tree in a 3-4ft. diameter to help retain moisture. Be careful not to pile mulch high around the base of the tree trunk as it can attract insects (mulch placed around the tree base should not resemble a volcano!). then add mulch to a depth of 3 to 4 inches.

And finally I know the focus is on shrubs, trees and groundcovers but let us not forget about the lawn. For once you might want to let your lawn go. Yes you read correctly you can let your lawn go for a while during extreme heat and dry conditions. Do not water your lawn! It might be looking a ugly and dead but it will green up again as soon as the rain returns. Want an excuse to use for not cutting the yard? Don't cut your lawn either, or the water inside each undamaged blade of grass will be lost and it will take even longer to recover. Good excuse and good lawn saving tip.

Heat tolerant landscapes contain mostly native plants that are grouped in a natural setting or environment appropriate for the plant. Including other native companion plants as part of a planting group helps to create (or restore) a natural ecological balance. Any plant properly placed in a healthy and balanced ecological system will better survive anything that nature can whip up. So keep this in mind when you plan on adding new trees, shrubs and groundcovers to your landscape. Have a great cooler week. M.V.

July 24-28, 2017