

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

It is with a heavy heart that I open this week's news column in light of the tragedy that occurred on Sunday morning in the small community of Sutherland Springs Texas. I have had the opportunity to travel through Sutherland Springs many times as I go to that area often to meet with hog breeders in La Vernia, St. Hedwig, Floresville and other communities selecting 4-H hog projects for our swine exhibitors. There is no way to comprehend the horrific event that took place in a house of worship, where you would least expect something like this to happen. Our thoughts and prayers for all of the people of Sutherland Springs and surrounding communities. May you find some comfort knowing that everyone has you in our thoughts during these very difficult times. May God Bless all of you and may the deceased rest in peace.

4-H Clover Kids Program Reminder To Start Getting Rabbits

Time is quickly approaching for families who plan to have their children participate in a 4-H Clover Kids program in La Pryor, Batesville or Crystal City the time is now to complete the registration of your youngsters and to make plans in locating a rabbit project for your child. All awards for this program will be made on November 27 so we need an accurate count so that awards are available for all participants. The Zavala County 4-H Clover Kids Group is a group designed just for Clover Kids. This group focuses on youth in Kindergarten up to 2nd grade and prepares them for their adventures as a 4-H member in the future. The group offers a variety of cooperative hands-on experiences to assist children in becoming competent, confident, connected, contributing, and caring citizens with character. The Zavala County 4-H Clover Kids participate in the Zavala County Junior Livestock Show with companion rabbits as their main project. Deadline to get these rabbits is December 10 but parents are encouraged to get these rabbits way before this date to allow the youngsters time to get used to caring and handling a rabbit project. For more information about this program or assistance in locating a rabbit project contact the Zavala County Office of the Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service at 830-374-2883.

San Angelo Is Site For Cattle Gathering

If you have friends or family around the San Angelo Area or if you are due for a nice drive to the San Angelo area perhaps you may want to include a stop to the free cattle gathering in this part of the state, next week. The Texas and Southwestern Cattle Raisers Association (TSCRA) will host a ranch gathering on Tuesday, Nov. 14, 2017, at the Fort Concho Stables in San Angelo, Texas. The event allows cattle producers to learn about TSCRA's recent activities and network with other cattle raisers in the area. Registration will begin at 5:30 p.m. followed by a complimentary beef dinner. The event is free and open to the public.

TSCRA Special Ranger Howard Brittain will be on hand to provide a law enforcement update and offer ranchers information on how they can keep their livestock and equipment safe and secure. Attendees will receive an update on the 85th Texas Legislative Session and recent government affairs activities. Other areas of interest to cattle raisers and the community will be discussed as well. Please RSVP to [**\(800\) 242-7820, ext. 192**](tel:8002427820), or [**rsvp@tscra.org**](mailto:rsvp@tscra.org). The Fort Concho Stables are located at **630 S. Oakes Street, San Angelo, TX 76903**. The ranch gathering is sponsored by Elanco, Central Texas Farm Credit, Capital Farm Credit, Nutrition Plus, Westway Feed Products, local Arrowquip dealer Grogan's Farm and Ranch and Palmer Farm & Ranch Supply. All members of the press are invited to attend.

Tip of the Week: Want Bluebonnets in The Spring-You Better Plant Now

A caller this week wanted to know when to plant the beautiful bluebonnets for spring color much like you see along Texas roadways in the spring. This might be a little harder than it seems but it can be done if you

follow a few tips through the process. The callers main question was when to plant them and how. Texas bluebonnet germinates in late fall so plant them now!! Once they germinate they create a low growing rosette of foliage (whorled leaves) that will overwinter, sometimes reddening after the first frost. In early spring it will expand to 12-18 inches, sending flower spikes just above the foliage. After flowering, the plant will set seed and die back to the ground.

To plant the seeds, select an area in the yard or right away around your home that is in full sun (they like eight to 10 hours a day), has excellent drainage and will not be mowed during the early spring. You should plant the seeds during the early fall after they have been scarified or soaked in hot water to hasten germination. If broadcasting seeds, rake and roughen area well and plant at a rate of approx. 2 oz per 100 square feet (1 pound per 700 square feet). If planting individually, plant 2-3 seeds together with ten inches between the next planting, thinning to one strong plant after true leaves develop. Only about 20 percent will grow if not properly scarified. Scarification can be as simple as putting the seeds in a jar with small pebbles and shaken. Warm weather will germinate the seeds, but cool weather is necessary to develop the bluebonnet's root structure. Place the seeds in a garden area and then rake the soil to cover them. If you just throw the seeds out without covering them, they ultimately become bird seed. The seeds should not be planted too deeply or they will rot. If the seeds have been scarified properly, you should expect to see little plants in about 10 to 14 days. Water causes the most problems for this drought-resistant plant, so carefully water the seeded area after planting and then leave them alone. The sandy soil in my back yard drains very rapidly and I usually just let the nature take its course.

Bluebonnets are members of the legume family that actually add nitrogen to the soil. In fact, in some parts of Texas the bluebonnet is being used as ground cover for the enrichment of agricultural soils. Once the seeds germinate, the fast-growing plant is easily identified. The five leaflets are in the shape of a palm. The annual plant typically grows between 6 to 16 inches high and can bloom as early as February and will continue blooming throughout the spring. If you want more blooms, just remove all the old blossoms; however, if you want to reseed your planting area, let the seeds form. Bluebonnet seeds are "popped" out of the seed pods, so prepare a large enough area to accommodate new plants within a 2 to 3 foot area. If conditions are favorable in your garden for the plant to set seed and re-seed itself, you can be assured of a carpet of bloom for years to come. For more information about bluebonnets contact the Zavala County Office of the Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service at 830-374-2883. Good luck planting your bluebonnets. Have a nice week-M.V.

November 6-10, 2017.