

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

5, 6, 7, 8 and 9 are the numbers many folks will give you regarding the number of inches of rain they received last week. What a way to say good bye to September and hello October. The rainfall was a steady heavy rain with some runoff but a lot of percolation into the soil, providing good subsoil moisture which is good as we get closer to winter, if we can call it that in south Texas. We are still several weeks away from the first average frost so native range and pastures should respond well to this rainfall event and your lawns will grow very rapidly so dust off the old mower and get ready to work and try to keep up with mowing duties. Greetings to all of you and thank you so much for reading this week.

**Swine Validation Will Take Place This Month**

It is very important that you remember that the deadline for you to get a hog project for the Zavala County Junior Livestock Show is quickly approaching. If you are a 4-H family and have children who are planning to show a market hog or breeding gilt in the 2018 Zavala County Junior Fair in January you have about 17 days to get these animals and have them in your possession and ready to validate. Validation for all county market hogs and breeding gilt projects for the local show will take place on Saturday, October 21, 2017 at the exhibitors hog project pens starting at 8:30 a.m. The swine validation committee will be coming by your property where the hog projects are located to officially validate these animals. There will be a \$20 dollar validation fee per family and a \$5 validation tag fee per animal that must be paid on validation day. For more information about the local validation process or for assistance in locating a hog project contact the Zavala County Office of the Texas A&M Agrilife Extension Service, by calling 830-374-2883 or go to the Zavala County AgriLife Extension Service Website at <https://zavala.agrilife.org/> . This information is also provided to you via 4-H newsletter, this newspaper and on Facebook and twitter.

**Mark Your Calendars-Internet Transmitted CEU Opportunity for Certified Pesticide Applicators**

Zavala, Uvalde, Kinney and Medina county Extension agents will be hosting a live internet CEU conference for licensed pesticide applicators in these counties. The conference will take place on Wednesday October 25, 2017 in the Frio room at the Uvalde County Fairplex facility located just outside Uvalde on U.S. highway 90 west. There will be 5 CEU credits awarded at this meeting, 2 credits in laws and regulations, 1 in drift minimization, 1 in integrated pest management (IPM) and 1 in General. There will be a \$30.00 participation fee to attend the event which will include a good meal at noon and snacks and drinks during the day and at breakfast. Registration for this event will begin at 7:30 a.m. and the program will begin airing at exactly 8:00 a.m. Please bring your pesticide applicator bar code card or your current license which has the bar code already on it. For more information about this conference contact Marcel Valdez, CEA-ANR in Zavala County at 830-374-2883 or Samantha Korzekwa, CEA-ANR in Uvalde County at 830-591-9046. If you plan to attend you are asked to RSVP by 5:00 p.m. Thursday, October 19, 2017.

**Tip of the Week: Fall Flower Garden Ideas-No Need to Give Up on Flowers**

Temperatures are beginning to cool, pumpkins are finding their way into farmers markets, Friday night football games and many Halloween decorations going up is a strong clue that fall is here. This does not mean that fall and winter should not be the reason or your excuse for not having a lush beautiful fall flower bed as part of your landscape. Many folks give up their flower beds during this time of year because it just seems that fall cannot support a flower bed. . . . .wrong. There are many flowering plants that do well in the cooler, wet and even cold times of the year in South Texas. Here are a few for you to try.

**Fall Asters** make a wonderful border plant for a fall or winter Texas garden. These flowers, which look like pretty purple daisies, thrive in rocky or sandy soil, and they like full sun or partial shade best. Plant asters now for blooms later on this fall, spacing them about one-and-a-half to two feet apart. Be careful not to overwater; if you see that they're wilting, give them a spray, but let the soil dry out between waterings.

**Cornflowers**, also known as blue-bottles and bachelor's buttons, these plants can add a pretty pop of blue to your garden from autumn through winter and into spring. Cornflowers do well in full sun, spaced two or three feet apart in your garden bed or planter. This week is a good time for sowing cornflower seeds outdoors. You can also sow them indoors about a month before you plan to plant them outside, sowing a quarter-inch deep, three to four seeds per pot, and then snipping off all but the strongest plants. When your seedlings have reached between two and four inches tall, they're ready to be transplanted them to your outdoor garden.

**Dianthus**, also called Sweet William, dianthus is a wonderful option for gardeners who need flowers that grow well in cooler temperatures. Dianthus flowers come in many shades of red, pink and white, and are best planted in an area that is shady in the afternoons. Morning sun is fine, especially since this plant is prone to fungus; sunlight helps protect against this disease. Dianthus needs to be watered regularly, but not overwatered. Deadheading—pinching or snipping off any dead flowers just above the first set of healthy leaves—can help to encourage the growth of new blooms.

**Snapdragons**. These annuals do well in mildly chilly weather, but they die off in summer heat. They're best planted in November in full or partial sun. Deadheading snapdragons throughout their blooming season will encourage new buds to grow and keep their flowers fresh and vibrant.

**Bluebonnets**. While bluebonnets won't bloom in the fall or winter, the fall season is perfect for planting bluebonnet seeds in your garden. Keep weeding your flower beds through the winter to give the bluebonnets a good chance to grow. By March or April, you'll have a gorgeous display of this popular and beloved state flower of Texas.

**Petunias**. These flowers are special because they do well in both hotter and cooler weather. You can start petunias from seeds in late winter, for outdoor planting in the spring, but you can also plant them outdoors now for lovely late autumn blooms. While most petunias prefer full sun, not all varieties of petunias are the same. Certain varieties require sandy, well-drained soil, while others need to stay very moist; make sure you know which variety you're planting in order to plan accordingly. In most parts of Zavala County try those that require very moist soils, which most of our loam and clay loam soils will provide this environment for these wonderful flowering plants.

**Sweet Alyssum.** These small, pretty plants don't deal well with frost, which makes them best suited for milder winters like those in Zavala county. Sweet alyssum produces small clusters of white, yellow, pink and purple blooms through October. They perform best in sandy, rocky or well-drained soil, and prefer full sun or partial shade.

This is just a short list of some of the fall bloomers but there are many more such as ornamental kale, mums so shop around your favorite garden store or if you want to make it really challenging buy you some seeds for these fall flowers and try your luck. Remember the changing track of sunlight during the winter months in your garden allows you to create a seemingly whole new garden in the fall . Mix mums with other fall annuals and perennials, like autumn sage, aster, ornamental kale or cabbage, pansies, and moss verbena. Keep the fundamentals of color and design in mind when planting your fall garden. Have a great week. M.V.

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