

**News From Your County Agent**  
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**Zavala County**

Greetings to all of you and thank you as always for reading this column. Driving across the county for meetings, site visits and programs I cannot help but notice how green our area has become thanks to all the rain we received a few days ago. Of course mowing duties are in full speed and mosquito control and protection should be a priority. Very cool weather is going to make its presence shown this week as a strong cold front will be coming through our area late Monday and into early morning Tuesday with high temperatures in the 70's pretty cool for cold natured folks like me!

**Security Reminder For 4-H Families Registering on 4-H Connect**

If you thought last year's breach of over three billion records (and then some) was bad, this year has seen its fair share of headaches. From hacks, attacks, ransoms, and even extortion attempts, we're not done with the year yet and already we've collectively seen millions of records stolen and information compromised with security breaches the most recent one being Equifax. Many of us are concerned and I don't blame you but I just wanted to share some security information to 4-H families who are in the process of enrolling their children in 4-H through our online secured 4-H connect website. We have not had an issue to report related to security of our online 4-H enrollment website and I want to ensure that family profiles, including youth information and profiles remain secure. The security concern is as follows:

Many families do not access 4-H Connect but once a year to re-enroll. As a result, many may forget their login credentials. 4-H Connect is adequately equipped to securely reset family profile passwords as long as the family remembers the email address they used to create the profile. In some cases, you have used an email address that is no longer valid or one that you can no longer access. Here is where the opportunity to inadvertently create an information security issue, especially when you wish to change the Family Email login credential.

Here are some tips that you should keep in mind to prevent an information security issue when personal requests are made to access Family Profile logins. Before you reset or change account login credentials, especially access email (username):

1. Verify account ownership – request information on the account that verifies the person requesting the login email be changed (or password be reset) is the owner of the profile. Consider asking them to verify email address on file in addition to other account information like address and phone as well as other details in the account that is unlikely “common knowledge.”
2. Changing Family Profile email - Do not change login username (family email address) without verifying ownership. Keep in mind that you should have specific knowledge of members in the system, parent names, or other details that are not “common knowledge.” Use several pieces of information to verify.
3. Do not give out reset passwords over the phone – use the email “forgot password” function to

have account owners receive updated passwords directly to their email account. In the case of changed username (email), see #2. Again security for the 4-H system remains secure but we need to be sure that everything possible is implemented to remain secure and we all have to do our part.

### **Local Producers Encouraged To Attend South Texas Farm and Ranch Show Oct. 25-26.**

With everything now greening up and looking good you might want to take a little get away and attend the annual South Texas Farm and Ranch Show on October 25 through the 26<sup>th</sup> in Victoria Texas. A total of 12 CEU's for licensed agricultural producers who currently hold a valid pesticide applicator license will be up for grabs at this event. Those of you needing some BQA(Beef Quality Assurance) CEU's will also have a chance to garner up to 4 BQA CEU's at this event.

Some topics include "Pasture & Hay Field Weed Management Alternatives", "Fever Ticks, Screwworms, VFD, and Chronic Wasting Disease" in animals, Pesticide Compliance Issues, Native Plants for Quail Restoration, Beef Market Outlook, Water Issues in Agriculture and many more. Admission to the trade show is free and only \$20.00 per day to attend the educational programs. The event will be held at the Victoria Community Center located at 2905 E. North St. Victoria, Texas. For more information about this event contact the Zavala County Office of the Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service at 830-374-2883 or go to <http://southtexasfarmandranchshow.com> for a complete schedule.

### **Tip of The Week: Fall is For Herbs**

Last week I shared with you some information about flower gardens for the fall and this week I would like to follow up with fall herbs. Herbs are plants that are used as flavoring agents. The common herbs used in cooking are referred to as culinary herbs. Mild or savory herbs impart a delicate flavor to food while the stronger or pungent herbs add zest to foods. These herbs are attractive and varied so their ornamental value is also important.

The ornamental value of herbs enables them to be used in flower beds, borders, rock gardens, or corner plantings. Some herbs are annuals while others are perennial or come up year after year. You can locate annual herbs in your annual flower garden or vegetable garden. The perennial herbs should be located at the side of the garden where they won't interfere with next year's soil preparation.

Care for the herb garden will be similar to your vegetable or flower garden. Select a sunny, well-drained location. Apply a slow-release fertilizer at the rate of 2 pounds per 100 square feet. Water as necessary during dry periods. Generally, you need about one inch of water per week, if not supplied by natural rainfall. A mulch will help conserve soil moisture and reduce weed growth as well. The mints prefer moist soil so they will require more frequent watering. Annual and biennial herbs can be established by planting the seed directly in the garden or starting seeds indoors for later transplanting to the garden. You can save seed produced by the herb plants for next year's crop or obtain seed from your local garden center or seed catalog.

To save your own seed, harvest the entire seed head after it has dried on the plant. The seeds should then be allowed to dry in a protected location that is cool and dry. After the seeds are thoroughly dry, thresh the seed from the seed heads and discard the trash. Store in labeled jars in

a dark, cool, dry location. Some herb seeds such as dill, anise, caraway, or coriander can be used for flavorings.

Perennial herbs can be propagated by cuttings or by division. Divide plants every 3 to 4 years in the early spring. The plants should be dug up and cut into several sections. You can also cut 4 to 6 inch sections of the stem and root these by placing the cuttings in moist sand in a shady area. In 4 to 8 weeks, roots should form on these cuttings. Herbs such as sage, winter savory, and thyme can be propagated by cuttings. Chives, lovage, and tarragon can be propagated by division of the roots or crowns. Leaves of many herbs such as parsley and chives can be harvested for fresh seasonings. On these plants you can gradually remove some of the leaves as you need them. Don't remove all the foliage at one time. These plants will produce over a long period of time if they are cared for well.

On rosemary and thyme, clip the tops when the plants are in full bloom. Usually, leaves and flowers are harvested together. Basil, fennel, mint, sage, summer savory, sweet marjoram, tarragon, and winter savory are harvested just before the plant starts to bloom. Chervil and parsley leaves can be cut and dried anytime. Lovage leaves should be harvested early during the first flush of growth.

After harvesting, hang the herbs in loosely tied bundles in a well-ventilated room. You can also spread the branches on a screen, cheesecloth, or hardware cloth. For herbs where leaves only are needed, the leaves can be spread on flat trays. Keep dust off the herbs by a cloth or similar protective cover that will allow moisture to pass through. Many of the herbs we grow today are from the Mediterranean region of the world and thus hot, dry summer weather suits them perfectly which make them happy in Zavala County. All too often gardeners lose herbs because they don't have good enough drainage (they really do best in a raised bed) or because they don't have them in the right exposure. Most require sun. The mints and a few other herbs will grow well in shade or partial shade.

Following is a list and description of some commonly used, adapted herbs for this area:

**BASIL** - This is one of the easiest of all herbs to grow. It is a rather strong herb, but one that is delightful when chopped fine and mixed with butter. In addition to the standard green forms, there's a purple-leafed basil and a lemon-scented basil. Basil is quite tender so at the first sign of frost you can expect to lose it. On the other hand Parsley, chervil and chives are best planted in the fall for winter growth.

**CAMOMILE** - This herb makes one of the best of all herbal teas. There are two varieties. English and German camomile. The dried blossoms of either can be used to make tea. You'll need to experiment with the amount you want to use, but try pouring boiling water over about one tablespoon for each cup desired and then filter this through a tea strainer after it has steeped for about 10 to 15 minutes.

**CATNIP** - Is an interesting herb to grow, especially if you have cats. The cats like to roll all over the catnip as well as any surrounding plants, so you'll probably find it's best to grow this herb in a hanging basket. Although it is sometimes used to make a hot tea, catnip's main attribute seems to

be known only by cats.

COMFREY - Comfrey is a rank-growing herb with large "donkey-ear" leaves that remind one of green sandpaper. It has been promoted as being high in protein and an excellent foodstuff, but unfortunately, it's hard to find a suitable way to eat it. It is widely used as a tea made either from the leaves or from the roots.

LEMON BALM - Is a member of the mint family and it can be a very rank growing plant. The leaves have a strong lemon odor and make a delightful tea or they can be used to flavor regular teas. Because of its extreme vigor, it's probably best to grow this plant in a confined bed area or in containers.

MARJORAM and OREGANO - These herbs are quite similar, although marjoram is considered the milder of the two. They're both easy to grow and can be used year round. Except in an extreme winter, they look better in the fall and winter than in mid-summer when the growth begins to slow. Oregano is the familiar herb in pizzas and one plant would make a lot of pizzas.

MINTS - There are many mints. Spearmint is one of the most popular and the easiest to grow. Peppermint is more difficult to grow. There's a pineapple mint, an apple mint, an orange mint (this is so vigorous it soon becomes a weed) and many variations of these basic fragrances. All mints appreciate moisture and do best where they get afternoon shade. A good place to plant spearmint is at the base of a downspout.

ROSEMARY - Rosemary comes in many forms from a bush that grows up to four feet tall to a low-growing groundcover variety. The fragrance is rather strong but rosemary is typically used with many meat dishes, especially chicken. One good idea is to use a cut sprig of rosemary to dip into barbecue sauce and then brush it on chicken. These are only some of the herbs that do well in our area. For more information about herbs contact the Zavala County Office of the Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service at 830-374-2883. Have a great week. M.V.

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