

News From Your County Agent
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Zavala County

Greetings to all of you and thank you so much for reading this week. What an enjoyable spring like weather pattern we have had over the last few day with very mild(coat free) temperatures and even chances of rain. Of course by the time you read this column we will begin cooling down on Wednesday for another one day brief cold spell on Thursday. Enjoy.

Legislation Brings Cotton Back into Title I of the Farm Bill-Important for Zavala County

By Congress for their passing the Bipartisan Budget Act on Friday February 9th, a move that keeps the government in operation and also provides necessary a critical component for cotton producers is a provision within the Act that provides for seed cotton to be made eligible for farm programs under the commodity title of the Farm Bill, restoring a much needed safety net to Zavala County cotton growers effective with the 2018 crop year. This is significant for cotton growers who for years have operated without a viable safety net, and this will allow many growers to stay in business. Cotton producers should be receiving additional information about the act by direct mail. If you need additional information about this bill contact Mary Jane Buerkle, Director of Communications and Public Affairs at (806) 792-4904; or by e-mail at maryjane@plainscotton.org or contact the Zavala County Office of the Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service at 830-374-2883.

Reminder Texas A&M AgriLife Extension And PSA Water Summit Next Week

The Zavala County office of the Texas A&M Agrilife Extension in collaboration with the Produce Safety Alliance will be hosting a Water Summit on February 27-28, 2018, to identify concerns, needs of growers, sources of information and support, and the rules for assessing produce safety hazard risks for covered produce related to water use under the FDA Food Safety Modernization Act (FSMA) Final Rule - Standards for the Growing, Harvesting, Packing and Holding of Produce for Human Consumption (21 CFR §112). The two-day Water Summit is an engagement opportunity for growers, regulatory personnel, industry representatives, educators, and researchers to increase understanding and work collaboratively to develop ideas that support risk reduction related to water used during the production of fruits and vegetables. This Water Summit will include informational presentations and breakout discussions. Participants will explore challenges related to the FSMA Produce Safety Rule Subpart E - Agricultural Water requirements and discuss potential solutions that are workable, while still protecting public health.

Through collaboration with the four Food Safety Modernization Act (FSMA) Regional Centers, and the Indigenous Food and Agriculture Initiative, multiple remote breakout session sites will be held, including multiple locations in Texas to facilitate more growers participating. The Texas A&M AgriLife Research and Extension Center in Uvalde will be one of the remote sites. These remote site sessions will meet on the same dates (Feb. 27-28, 2018), stream the meeting live to their location, and conduct breakout groups at the same time as the Water Summit attendees in Covington, KY. Information from these groups will be fed into the meeting in real time so that their feedback can be integrated into the meeting outcomes. In order to register for the Uvalde location remote site,

please complete the registration form at https://docs.google.com/forms/d/1tjnW6Rudesju_q45FyviJFGQpPp0m93zN0wLzUgfp0/edit

There is no cost to attend the remote site, but registration is limited to 30 participants for space and breakout/work groups facilitation. Breakfast items (coffee, juice, pastries) will be provided both days, as well as lunch on Feb. 27 at no cost to participants. For more information, please contact Matthew Taylor, Texas A&M University, at [979-862-7678](tel:979-862-7678) or matt_taylor@tamu.edu. or Marcel Valdez, County Extension Agent-ANR Zavala County at [830-374-2883](tel:830-374-2883).

Tip of the Week: Selecting Vegetable Varieties For Zavala County Gardens

Weather conditions with mild temperatures had many of us feeling the garden bug and started preparing the garden for this summer vegetable planting. Hopefully all of you have already done a soil test and you know what your soil has or what it needs to make this summer garden season a truly successful one. Assuming you have already done so now you need to decide what varieties do best in our area. Here a few tips.

Even before deciding on what varieties to plant a good plan is the first step in establishing a flourishing home vegetable garden. Planning includes selecting the garden location; deciding on the size of the garden; determining the types and varieties of vegetables to plant; and planning where, when, and how much of each vegetable to plant in the garden. Remember garden size Making the garden too large is one of the most common mistakes of enthusiastic, first-time gardeners. A garden that is too large will be too much work. When determining the size of your garden, consider these factors: Available room. For apartment dwellers, the garden may be a planter box. In a suburban or rural area, however, there may be plenty of ground space for a garden. Available time. If the only time you have for gardening is after work or school, or on weekends, there may not be enough time to care for a large garden. Family size. If gardening is a family activity, a large space can be cared for. A larger family also can use more vegetables.

Reason for gardening. If the garden is purely a recreational activity, a container or flower bed garden may be big enough. If you want to grow vegetables for canning or freezing, a bigger area is needed. Types of vegetables to be grown. Some vegetables take a lot of room. Most need at least 3 feet of space between rows. If you want to plant ten rows of vegetables, the garden must be 30 feet wide. The smaller the garden, the more important it is to get high production from each row. Small, fast-maturing crops such as radishes, turnips and beets yield quickly and do not require much space. Tomatoes, bush beans, squash and peppers require more space but produce over a long season. This is especially important if the garden is purely for recreation or personal enjoyment. Grow vegetables your family likes to eat. Now the varieties. Selecting the right tomato, squash and other vegetables that grow well in the Zavala County area has been made easy thanks to our Vegetable Variety Selector. First go to https://aggie-horticulture.tamu.edu/publications/veg_variety/ Select Zavala county from the drop down menu or select a general region from the list. If variety data is not available for your specific county, then regional data will be returned instead. This regional data will give you varieties for the whole region but is still reliable in making your variety selection. Once you have decided on a variety to plant remember that some vegetables produce more than others so fewer plants will be needed. The amount to plant depends on family size, expected production, and whether or not you plan to do any freezing or canning. Do not plant too much. Over-planting is

wasteful and takes too much work. Have a wonderful spring planting your garden and wish you much success. Have a great week. M.V.

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