

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

Is it spring or winter? Saturday sure did not seem like a spring day at all with strong north winds, drizzle and temperatures in the 60's but that soon changed on Sunday. According to our weather professionals we are expected to get another cold wave by late this week going into the weekend, but it will not be a cold as the one we had this weekend. Soon we will be in the 90+ days and ready for a Southwest Texas summer. Greetings to all of you and thank you so much for reading this week.

**Regional Ag. Symposium-“Putting Money Back in Your Pocket” To Be Held Next Week**

Zavala, Uvalde and Kinney county Extension agents will host an agricultural producer's symposium on April 17, 2018 at the Uvalde County Fairplex in Uvalde. The event will be conducted via remote web transmission from the Texas A&M AgriLife Research and Extension Center in Corpus Christi to the Uvalde site, one of 19 sites across the state that will be participating in this valuable educational program. Participants will receive 2 continuing education units(CEU's 1-general, 1 IPM) for those who hold a Texas Department of Agriculture pesticide applicators license. Those in attendance that need the required Auxin specific training will receive this update from 12:30 to 1:15 and receive 1 additional CEU in Laws and Regulations. If you do not need this training or have received it at another meeting you will NOT be required to stay through 1:15.

The event will kick-off with breakfast and registration from 7:30 to 8:15 a.m. and the program is scheduled to conclude around noon for lunch. Some of the topics that will be discussed include “The Forgotten Goat” by Dr. Joe Paschal, Extension Livestock Specialist, “Cost Saving Tips for Brush Control” by Dr. Megan Clayton, Extension Range Specialist, “Potential Profitability of No-till vs. Conventional Cotton & Grain Sorghum” Mac Young, Risk Management Specialist and other related topics.

There is a \$20.00 dollar registration fee to attend the symposium which will cover breakfast and lunch. If you are interested in participating you are asked to register or RSVP by Friday April 13<sup>th</sup> online at [kinneyextension.ticketleap.com/agsymposium/](http://kinneyextension.ticketleap.com/agsymposium/) or call 830-563-2442 in Kinney county or 830-374-2883 in Zavala county or in Uvalde county at 830-278-6661. The Uvalde county Fairplex is located at 122 Veterans Lane, Uvalde, TX 78801

**Reminder Private Water Well Screening Next Week-April 18<sup>th</sup>**

Zavala, Dimmit, Frio, Atascosa, and McMullen Counties of the Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service is hosting a water well screening on Wednesday, April 18 at the Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service offices for Zavala County at 221 N 1st Ave in Crystal City, Dimmit County at 539 Industrial Boulevard, in Carrizo Springs, Frio County at 400 S. Pecan Street, Pearsall, TX Atascosa County at 25 E. 5th Street Leming, TX, and McMullen County, County Courthouse, HWYS 72 & 16 Tilden TX in to give area residents the opportunity to have their well water screened.

Results will be available on Friday, April 20<sup>th</sup>, at your Local County Extension Office. If results indicate high levels of contaminants then owners are advised to get a full water test done by a certified water testing lab. If samples submitted are within tolerable limits the well owner do NOT have to do any additional testing and thus save the cost of a full blown water test. The screening is presented by Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service. According to John W. Smith, AgriLife Extension Program Specialist private water wells should be tested annually. It is very important that only sampling bags from the Zavala, Frio, Atascosa, McMullen or

Dimmit County AgriLife Extension offices be used and all instructions for proper sampling are followed to ensure accurate results.

Area residents who want to have their well water screened, will need to pick up a sample bag and sampling instructions from the Zavala County AgriLife Extension office (830-374-2883), the Dimmit County AgriLife Extension office (call 830-876-4216 for more information), Frio County AgriLife Extension office (830-334-0099), McMullen County AgriLife Extension office (361-274-3323) or the Atascosa County AgriLife Extension office (830-596-8997).

The cost is \$15 per sample and samples must be turned in by 9 a.m. on April 18<sup>th</sup>. Samples will be screened for common contaminants, including fecal coliform bacteria, nitrates, high salinity and presence of hydrocarbons. The presence of fecal coliform bacteria in water indicates that waste from humans or warm-blooded animals may have contaminated the water. Water contaminated with fecal coliform bacteria is more likely to also have pathogens present that can cause diarrhea, cramps, nausea or other symptoms. Water with nitrates at levels of 10 parts per million is considered unsafe for human consumption. Nitrate levels above 10 parts per million can disrupt the ability of blood to carry oxygen throughout the body, resulting in a condition called methemoglobinemia. Infants less than 6 months of age and young livestock are most susceptible.

Salinity as measured by total dissolved solids will also be determined for each sample. Water with high levels may leave deposits and have a salty taste, and using water with high levels for irrigation may damage soil or plants. For more information, please contact your local County Extension Office . To learn more about the programs offered through the network or to find additional publications and resources, please visit <http://twon.tamu.edu>. Support for the Texas Well Owner Network program is provided through Clean Water Act nonpoint source funding from the Texas State Soil and Water Conservation Board and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency.

### **Tip of the Week: Organic Options To Control Garden Pest Including Your Neighbors Cats**

Last week I received a request about ideas on controlling insects and other pest in the vegetable garden but without using chemicals. Many times I receive these calls I always want to insure people that chemicals when used safely and according to the label are both safe and effective. However many individuals prefer NO chemical uses in garden vegetable. With this thought in mind here are a few ideas that you may want to try in your garden all natural and completely chemical free.

To eliminate insects around the garden, take an empty 2 liter soda bottle with 1 cup apple cider vinegar and 1 cup sugar. Slice up a banana peel into small pieces, put into the bottle, add 1 cup cold water, shake. Tie a piece of string on a low tree branch or place it on the ground to kill pests.

Get rid of mealy bugs, one of the most insidious and common pests, by soaking q-tips in white vinegar. Nip them by dabbing insects with full strength white vinegar.

Keeping hungry insects away from vegetables by shredding aluminum foil into strips and mixing them in the garden mulch. The foil will reflect light back up onto your plants. Try mixing old tinsel from your Christmas tree into your mulch. It will serve the same purpose as shredding aluminum foil.

Planting companion plants in your garden will deter insect pests. Aromatic plants such as basil, tansy, marigolds and sage will send a signal to bugs to go elsewhere. Try planting some near your prized vegetables. Mint, dill, thyme and sage are great near cabbage family plants. Best of all the savory herbs are

edible.

To foil those cutworms that destroy your seedlings stick a toothpick in the soil about ¼ inch from each stem. Cutworms kill seedlings by encircling the stem and severing it.

Make collars for the vegetables by using empty milk cartons to discourage grubs and cutworms from attacking your young tomato and pepper plants. Cut off top and bottom of container and when ground is soft, push them into the ground around the plants.

Get slugs and snails out of your garden. Take a container of salt and douse the offenders. They won't last long. Since they are mostly water, salt acts like a drying agent.

Plagued by earwigs? Roll up a wet newspaper and put a rubber band around it to keep it from unraveling. Place it in the area where you have seen the insects and leave it overnight. In the morning it will be full of bugs. Carefully place the newspaper in a plastic grocery bag, tie in a knot and put in the trash. Repeat until they are all gone.

Do you have moles or gophers popping up in or near your garden? Try putting dirty used cat litter down the hole. They will leave to find a home somewhere else.

Deter deer from your garden by spraying your bushes with cayenne pepper and water mix.

If there are neighborhood cats that think your garden is their private cat box, foil them by putting orange peels and coffee grounds around your plants. Also acts as a great fertilizer.

Keep four-legged pests out of your garden by soaking several rags in white vinegar and place on stakes around your vegetables. Re-soak the rags every 7-10 days.

Repel birds, rabbits and squirrels with help from the shiny metallic balloons that we all receive on birthdays, anniversaries, etc. Simply cut them into vertical strips and hang them from poles around your vegetables and on fruit trees.

Repel flies by filling a zip-lock bag half-way with water and attach over entry-ways.

Pests are a problem in many gardens and can ruin flower bed and vegetables. When dealing with pests, these methods are safe for both plants and humans. In some cases the integration of chemical and natural controls can also be effective. Next week we will discuss this kind of pest control which is commonly known as IPM or integrated pest management. Learn all about it in next weeks "Tip of the Week". Have a great week. M.V.

April 9-13, 2018

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