News From Your County Agent
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Zavala County

Good bye April and hello May. The year seems to be flying by so quickly that myself and many other folks seem to not have time to transition from one quarterly work plan to another. We have really enjoyed an odd spring with many of us using our air conditioning systems pretty sparingly unlike other springs past. Chances for rain all week are in the forecast so hopefully this will become a reality and get some rainfall which we really need ASAP. Greetings to all of you and thank you so much for reading this week.

Oklahoma Extension Seeks Help For Ranchers Affected By Wildfires-Here Is How To Help

Two major wildfires in Oklahoma have been contained after killing two people and at least 1,500 cattle while burning almost 350,000 acres. Now producers are trying to pick up the pieces and there are ways to help. (Oklahoma State University) After burning for two weeks the Rhea and 34 Complex wildfires have been contained allowing producers to assess damage and start to recovery efforts. Wildfire containment for the Oklahoma wildfires was aided by much needed rainfall which fell across the affected area last week. The moisture was more than what the region had seen in the past six months. Oklahoma Forestry Services say there are still hot spots within the containment zones of each fire where some cedar trees and other brush are still burning. Containment just means a fire line has been established around the perimeter of the fires, but the spread of the fires should be halted.

Local Oklahoma Cooperative Extension Service agents are helping facilitate donations of hay, feed, milk replacer and fencing supplies. The following phone numbers can be called to setup a donation through the Oklahoma Cooperative Extension Service: (405) 590-0106, (405) 496-9329 and (405) 397-7912. You may also help the affected Oklahoma ranchers through the Oklahoma Cattlemen's Foundation. Make checks payable to Oklahoma Cattlemen's Foundation with "Fire Relief" in the memo line and mail to P.O. Box 82395, Oklahoma City, OK 73148. To donate online, visit **www.okcattlemen.org**. You may also help through the Oklahoma Farming and Ranching Foundation. Make checks payable to the Oklahoma Farming and Ranching Foundation with "Wildfire Relief" in the memo line and mail to 2501 N. Stiles, Oklahoma City, OK 73105. To donate online, visit **www.okfarmingandranchingfoundation.org** and donations can also be made to the Oklahoma Farmers Union Foundation**.** Make checks payable to Farmers Union Foundation, Inc., with "Wildfire Relief" in the memo line and mail to the attention of Wildfire Relief at P.O. Box 24000, Oklahoma City, OK 73124. These organizations will deliver 100% of proceeds to victims of the wildfires to aid them in their time of need.

Reminder-Vegetable Field Day Next Week-Friday May 11th

The Annual Spring Vegetable Field Day will be held at the Texas A&M AgriLife Research and Extension Center in Uvalde on Friday, May 11, 2018 beginning at 7:15 a.m.. Marcel Valdez, Zavala County Extension Agent will open the meeting with a brief description of the 2 CEU's that will be offered at this meeting to agricultural producers that hold a Texas Department of Agriculture pesticide applicator license. These individuals will receive one CEU in the IPM category and one in the general category.

The field day will include presentations on harnessing the Nutraceutical Potential of Spinach and watermelons, high tunnel and grafted tomato for organic and conventional systems, Texas A&M short day onion evaluations for southern Texas and several others. The field day will include a field tour with stops to look at Hydroponic leafy greens, Humic Acids in watermelons, olive varieties for Texas, Onion and

watermelon varieties, and tomato grafting practice and others. Lunch is provided by First State Bank of Uvalde. If you plan to attend this event you are asked to RSVP by this Friday, May 4th for the lunch count. RSVP to Liza Silva by e-mail at **lmsilva@ag.tamu.edu** or by calling 830-279-9151 extension 232.

Tip of the Week: Do You Have Nematodes In The Garden?-What To Do About Them

If you have a good fertility program, sound water applications, good weed control but your garden is still wimpy perhaps it is nematodes. Nematodes – especially root-knot nematodes – cause major losses in vegetable home gardens in Texas. Root-knot nematodes are microscopic roundworms that can pierce the roots of certain plant species and lay their eggs inside the roots. This gives the roots a "knotty" appearance and results in a wilted or stunted appearance of the whole plant.

Thanks to cool weather so far in the Zavala County area nematode damage might not be showing up at this time however as we go deeper into late spring and early summer and soil temperatures remain constant at 70-85 degrees these temperatures are more suitable for nematode activity and thus you will begin to see symptoms in you vegetable garden. Root-knot nematodes can knock back yields and quality on pumpkins, tomatoes, sweet potatoes, beets, cucumbers, carrots, peaches, watermelons and okra. Even ornamental plants such as roses that have been started from rootstock can be hammered by the pest. Plants growing in nematode-infested soils usually are unthrifty, stunted, yellowish, and have galled and decayed roots. Plants with infected roots are more susceptible to other diseases caused by fungi and bacteria and tend to stop producing early. Root-knot nematode problems can be detected by examining the roots of vegetables for the conspicuous root galls (swellings) as soon as harvest is completed or through a soil assay. Once the nematodes are inside the roots, effective treatments are not available, therefore you need to begin early if you suspect nematodes in the garden.

So what can you do? Crop rotation is one of the oldest and most economical methods of controlling nematodes. Rotation is simply the practice of not growing a susceptible host in the same site for more than one year. Typically, planting a highly susceptible crop a few feet from where it was grown the previous year will avoid damage by nematodes. Also, if space is available, the entire garden site may be moved to a new location after one or two years. When the garden site is moved, it is helpful to select a site that has been in grass for several years. Non-host plants that are especially suitable for rotation with vegetables include fescue, small grains, and marigolds.

Home gardeners should seriously consider succession planting (multiple cropping) in the rotational scheme. For example, if a short-season vegetable that is susceptible to root-knot is grown in one area of the garden, a fall crop (such as a resistant variety of tomato) often can be produced in the same soil without any yield loss. It is frequently easier to plan a rotational program by dividing the garden site into thirds. With this scheme, it is easier to consider all factors that affect plant growth such as shade, fertilization, water, and time of harvest.

Another method of control is to use nematode resistant vegetable varieties. Several vegetable varieties are resistant to root-knot nematodes and will produce a good crop even in the presence of nematodes. The effectiveness is increased when combined with crop rotation. By alternating root-knot resistant and susceptible vegetables within a given portion of the garden from one year to the next, the overall nematode problem can be reduced by preventing a build-up of high populations. This practice will reduce the risk of serious damage to the susceptible vegetables. Many of these varieties, especially the tomatoes, can be purchased at local lawn and garden centers or can be purchased through online retailers. Others are more difficult to obtain and may have to be ordered directly from the producer.

Zavala county hot summer temperatures can help you control nematode problems. The population of root-knot nematodes can be reduced significantly in one season by repeated tilling (every 10 days) of the garden soil during the hot, dry summer, to bring the nematodes to the surface to be killed by the drying of the sun. The fallow section must be kept free of weeds and old roots to be effective. Covering the fallow section between tilling with black plastic may help. Remove All Plants Immediately After Harvest: Destroy plants and plant roots by pulling up immediately after harvest. Do not let stalks stand through the winter. Work the soil two to four times in winter, allowing the sun and weather to exert their killing effect. Vapam was the most effective nematicide available. Notice I wrote was, because unfortunately, the chemical control for nematodes named Vapam is no longer available. There are no chemical nematicides labeled for use on annual bedding or vegetable plants that have been effective. The bionematicide MeloCon WG contains a fungus that parasitizes nematode eggs. MeloCon can suppress but not eliminate root-knot and sting nematodes. Therefore your best bet is to use the cultural practices I have mentioned in this column. Have a great nematode free week and summer. M.V.

April 30-May 4, 2018.