

News From Your County Agent
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Zavala County

Cool but comfortable weather conditions have been the norm following a very high windy mid-week. According to some weather experts there were gust of wind in the Crystal City area that hit almost 70 miles an hour, that is almost hurricane wind gust. Some folks reported shingles begin lost, others lost trees and some even reported losing entire roofs, but things are nice and calm now. Greetings to all of you and thank you so much for reading this week.

4-H Animal Weigh Day and Showmanship Clinic Set for Saturday

The annual 4-H animal project weigh day and showmanship clinic will be held this Saturday, December 22 at the Zavala Agricultural Exposition (ZAE) show barn in Crystal City. At 9:00 a.m. the scales will be available for all 4-H members that have steers, lambs, goats or swine projects to get these animals weighed in preparation for the upcoming Zavala County Junior Fair which will be held January 10-12, 2019. Following the weighing of animals at 10:30 a showmanship clinic will be held for all 4-H members. This is especially beneficial for those 4-H participants that will be showing an animal project for the first time. Following the clinic a 4-H county council meeting will be held, followed by a short meeting of the 4-H club managers and adult volunteers. At 1:00 p.m. the ZAE will sponsor a clean up workday to prepare for the barn for the show. At 2:00 p.m. a lamb/goat shearing demonstration will take place for those who have goat and lamb projects. We hope everyone can make it to this event this Saturday. For more information about this event please contact the Zavala County office of the Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service at 830-374-2883.

Pesticide Applicators CEU Training/Meeting To Be Hosted Next Week

The annual Zavala Agrilife Extension Service pesticide applicators training and CEU meeting will be held next week on Friday, December 28, 2018 at 9:00 a.m. at the La Pryor School multi-purpose building located on U.S. Hwy. 57 in La Pryor. Licensed private applicators are required to recertify every five years by obtaining 15 continuing education credits (CEU's), including two (2) credits in laws and regulations and two (2) credits in integrated pest management (IPM), prior to expiration of the license. There will be 6 CEU's offered at this training-2 in laws and regulations, 1 in IPM, 1 in drift minimization and 2 in general. There will be a \$10.00 fee for attending the meeting to cover training materials. Individuals that plan to attend must bring their pesticide applicators license or license number with them to register for the course. For more information about this event please contact the Zavala County office of the Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service at 830-374-2883.

Tip of the Week: Caring for a Live Christmas Tree

Last week I shared with you some information and tips on how to care for a fresh cut Christmas tree, and as promised last week here are a few tips on how to care for a living Christmas tree if you were fortunate enough to receive one or you just wanted to try a new experience for this year's holiday season. Living trees are available in various sizes, from tabletop plants to full-size trees and can be found at local garden centers. Remember to set the living tree up in the house just before Christmas and then plant it outdoors immediately after removing the ornaments. The longer a living tree of any kind is left inside, the weaker it will become and the harder it will be to establish in its new outdoor

home. Once you bring your live Christmas tree indoors, place it in a draft free location away from heaters and vents. Buy your living Christmas tree as close to Christmas as possible, and plant as soon as possible afterwards. The longer your tree stays inside, the more it's exposed to drying conditions that will weaken it. 7-10 days is about as long as you should keep your tree inside.

Most live Christmas trees come in a large pot and some come in a wrapped root ball in plastic or wet sphagnum moss. The root ball must stay damp the entire time the tree is in the house so be sure to check the moisture every other day. The very best choices for living trees to be planted in the landscape after Christmas in Zavala county are Leyland Cypress, Arizona Cypress and Eldarica Pine. The native cedar is available in many sizes and smells great in the house. When planted outside, it can take sun or shade. Pollen causing allergies will not be a problem on the small trees, but some people could possibly be allergic to the aromatic fragrance of the foliage so keep that in mind.

Once you remove the decorations from the tree it is time to plant it. Start by keeping the tree outside in a cold (cool for our area) and sheltered place. Keeping it in a cool place outside until you are ready to plant it will help with this. Now you are ready to replant your Christmas tree.

Choose an open, sunny planting spot. Research the type of tree you have and its growth potential. Make sure it won't outgrow the spot you choose for it. Look for a sunny spot that's several feet from your house or any fencing since roots and limbs could eventually cause problems for these structures.

Using a shovel, dig a hole twice as wide as the size of the root ball to give the roots a chance to spread. But don't go any deeper than the height of the root ball, since you don't want it too far below the soil level. Having it slightly higher than the soil around it will help with drainage. Remember don't dispose of any of the dirt you dig out of the hole. You'll be using this later to fill the hole back in.

Remove the burlap and any other coverings on the root ball. Place the Christmas tree in the hole and backfill the hole. Then cover the hole with several inches of mulch and water the tree. Observe the tree for the rest of the winter season (Zavala County winter). If our winter conditions this year are dry, occasionally water the tree to keep moisture near the roots. Once the spring growing season begins, water the tree regularly if we aren't getting a lot of rain. Finally remember that March can be rather windy in southwest Texas. If you have to tie the tree to the stakes using a flexible material like canvas straps. The stakes can be removed after about a year. If you are successful you can enjoy your live Christmas tree outdoors for years and generations to come. Good luck and have a wonderful week. M.V.

December 17-21, 2018.