

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

Well for my part I am glad the weather professionals were a bit off this weekend as the terrible weather conditions that were forecast did not get as bad as it was forecast, which, had many of us in the gardening mood. For the most part most of us in this area will begin gardening activities by the middle of next month and some folks like to even gamble a little and put in some garden vegetables by the end of February. In the mean time I recommend you get your garden soil tested, check out some garden supply websites or catalogues and draw out the garden layout on a piece of paper in preparation for the growing. Greetings to all of you and thank you so much for reading this week.

**4-H Photography Volunteer Judges Needed**

Texas 4-H is seeking adult volunteers who are amateur or professional photographers and are willing to judge the 2019 Texas 4-H photography contest. All judging will take place in the comfort of your own home. It will be online between April 30 to May 17, 2019. For more information about the contest please visit <https://texas4-h.tamu.edu/projects/photography-video/>

After you visit and see the video about the contest then sign up to be a judge at: <https://fs4.formsite.com/state4h/judgephotos/index.html>

**TDA Pesticide Training Set For Area Producers**

The Zavala and Uvalde County offices of the Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service will provide this required training for producers next week. This training will be held on Tuesday January 29, 2019 at 10:00 a.m. at the Frio Room at the Uvalde Fairplex facilities located at 215 VETERANS LANE UVALDE, TEXAS. There will be a \$10.00 fee charged to attend this training to cover printing cost of training materials and other cost associated with this training.

The Texas Department of Agriculture requires an Auxin specific training is prior to applying Engenia, Xtendimax or Fexapan herbicides for any labeled use. That includes labeled uses on dicamba tolerant crops, conventional crops and any labeled non-crop use. Auxin training is also required prior to applying Enlist One or Enlist Duo herbicides over the top of transgenic 2,4-D tolerant crops. The training is not required prior to applying Enlist One or Enlist Duo for other labeled uses. To apply Engenia, Xtendimax or Fexapan you must have a certified applicator's license and attend the training which will last NO LESS than 100 minutes in length. Operators are not allowed to apply dicamba formulations in 2019 until they complete this training. To apply Enlist One and Enlist Duo you must have a certified applicator's license or be operating under a certified applicator and attend the training.

For more information regarding this training contact Marcel Valdez, County Extension Agent in Zavala County at 830-374-2883 or Samantha Shannon, County Extension Agent in Uvalde County at 830-591-9046.

**Tip of the Week: Prepare Now For Spring Gardening**

Yes vegetable gardening is not that far away for us fortunate souls in South Texas. In an earlier column I mentioned the importance of having your garden soil tested to insure that you are applying what your soil needs and not wasting you money and time on soil amendments that your soil may

NOT need. Other activities you can do now in the down time is what I would like to focus on this week and perhaps get you in the mood for spring planting.

**Start Plants Indoors:** This is the time you can search the internet for seed supply sites. Be sure that you select varieties that will do well in the Zavala County area remembers how hot it will be in a few months. Once you have located a source you can start your plants from seeds in a week or so. Starting seeds indoors is a great way to get your hands in some dirt in the dead of winter. I've said it before, but here I go again... It's so gratifying to grow your own flowers or vegetables from seed. A large window which allows plenty of sunlight or a few 2X4's in the south-side of your home with a heat lamb and greenhouse grade plastic is basically all you need to get your plants started from seed. Peppers and tomatoes are two garden staples that can benefit from this indoor head start.

**Organize Your Seed Collection:** Are you a seed hoarder collector? I am! My problem is that I buy more seeds than I can ever plant, so I just keep saving them. After I created the Seed Inventory list of what I have it makes it easy to find them when it is planting time which has made me better about not buying the same seeds over and over again each year. Plastic bolt and nut trays make good seed inventory containers. Simply label them with the vegetable seeds you have on hand and keep up with what you have when you get the urge to buy more seeds.

**Check Your Supplies:** Take an inventory of your gardening tools and supplies. Make sure they are clean, dry, sharpened and in good working order. Repair or replace any equipment that is in poor shape. Caring for your tools not only helps saves money, it helps prevent the spread of disease in your garden. Think about what supplies you might want to add to your inventory to make your garden more fruitful or to make your work easier this year.

**Create and Maintain a Compost Pile:** Your garden will benefit from the rich compost you can create from your grass clippings, vegetable waste, egg shells, coffee grounds, and woody pruning. To keep the pile aerated, turn it with a garden fork each month. Compost is easy to make and adds important nutrients to the soil and helps your soil hold moisture levels. The Zavala County Extension office has publications that give you a step by step guide in creating and maintaining a compost pile.

**Research watering options:** This is the time to look for ideas for a more efficient watering strategy. New soaker hoses or a drip watering system may save you time and money as well as conserve water. Also, think about any new ways you can capture and use rainwater in your garden or landscape. The Zavala County Extension office also has free rainfall capturing publications that include designing a rainfall capture system for your home.

So don't be idle and feeling gloomy because its not quite time to get outdoors to plant that spring garden. There are several things you can do to get a good start this year. And don't forget that important soil test. The sooner you do it the sooner you will get your results and you will have an idea what you should or should not do to your garden fertility wise. Have a great garden planning week. M.V.

January 21-25, 2019.