

**News From Your County Agent**  
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**Zavala County**

Greetings to all of you and I hope all of you had a wonderful mother's day weekend. If you were like me I had to set aside some time during this special weekend to catch up with my mowing duties, thanks to recent rains that have given our lawns the necessary moisture needed to take off and grow and grow fast I must add. Of course we need to look ahead to the summer when temperatures will no doubt rise and conditions will call for special care of your lawn when it comes to mowing (Please read this week's - Tip of the Week).

**Zavala County Pecan Growers Reminded of Pecan Nut Casebearer (PNC) Surveillance**

Anyone in the pecan business in Zavala should know the importance of monitoring and management of PNC. The impact of first generation PNC can range from beneficial with light infestations thinning an overloaded crop to 100 percent crop loss. As a commodity, we are fortunate in that we have an excellent monitoring tool with the PNC pheromone trap and excellent insecticides for management when needed. Data from PNC pheromone traps allow producers to anticipate events of egg lay (oviposition) and nut entry. From the time of first significant catch, which is the date of the first catch of two consecutive collection dates, egg lay begins in 7 to 10 days while nut entry will start 12 to 16 days after first significant catch. For more information on PNC activity and trap monitoring check out the PNC information in our commercial pecan insect guide at: <http://www.texasinsects.org/tree-crops.html>

**Zavala County 4-H Recordbook Workshop Set For May 21<sup>st</sup>**

Have you ever thought about doing a record book? A record book is good for those who want to keep records of their 4-H career, win awards for resumes, or help you with filling out your scholarship applications. All seniors who complete a record book say that it helped them with filling out their scholarship applications a lot. A 4-H recordbook workshop has been set for ALL interested 4-H families to attend and learn the basics of completing a 4-H recordbook. The workshop will take place on Tuesday, May 21<sup>st</sup> at 6:00 p.m. at the La Pryor School Cafeteria. The workshop is free to all 4-H members in Zavala county.

Additionally the District 12 4-H Record Book Judging is an annual summer event where the records kept by 4-H members from across the district are evaluated based on a range of criteria that includes leadership experiences, community services performed, project experiences, knowledge gained, honors, awards, and allows the 4-H member to express the value of their involvement in a specific project area to their own growth and development. The records are evaluated and awarded quality scores also naming a top award within each project area. For more information about this workshop, contact the Zavala County office of the Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service at 830-374-2883.

**Tip of the Week: New Mowing Recommendations For Warm Season Turf Grasses**

Recent rains have really helped our turf grasses in Zavala county to respond well to this moisture prompting many of us to get active with mowing activities. Of course we need to keep in mind that this kind of rapid grass growth will start to slow down as we go into the hotter and drier part of the year. Mowing is perhaps the most common cultural practice performed in turfgrass systems. When performed properly, mowing is used to maintain a particular turfgrass height and appearance that supports the specific use and aesthetic expectations of that area. It is important to remember that while turfgrasses have evolved to tolerate mowing, this practice is still a stress factor for your lawn. Such stresses may include temperature extremes, drought, nutrient deficiencies, shade, traffic and pests. Mowing practices — including height of cut and mowing frequency — can impact turfgrass response to each of these stresses. Therefore, it is important to take steps to adopt appropriate mowing practices that support the overall health of the turf and simultaneously optimize resource-use efficiency.

Several factors determine the appropriate height of cut for any designated turfgrass . When possible, it is generally recommended that turfgrasses be maintained at the higher height of cut for the given species and cultivar. Taller canopy growth generally corresponds to greater energy production which supports deeper and more vigorous rooting. Deeper root systems may result in improved water infiltration, nutrient and water - use efficiency, and improved overall turfgrass stress tolerance. Some species, a higher height of cut has also been found to reduce weed pressure, as taller grass is better able to out-compete encroaching weeds for resources such as light, water, and nutrients. Finally, a higher height of cut will require less frequent mowing based on the 1/3 Rule.

As a general rule of thumb, no more than 1/3 of the total turfgrass plant should be removed at any one time. For example, if your intended mowing height is 2", then you would need to mow before the plant has exceeded 3" in order not to 'scalp' the turf. Therefore, appropriate mowing frequency is determined by the rate of growth. Several factors including temperature, precipitation, light, and nutrient management will impact the rate of turfgrass growth throughout the year. Remember that supplemental nitrogen, though generally beneficial to turfgrass growth, will encourage faster growth that may not be appropriate for areas that will be mowed less frequently. Nitrogen applications should, therefore, be partially determined by management capabilities.

During peak periods of growth for warm-season grasses (summer), more frequent mowing—sometimes two times per week—may be required to prevent turfgrass scalping. Scalping is the excessive removal of leafy green growth from turfgrass resulting in injury to the turfgrass. It is important to remember that plants require adequate green leaf tissue for photosynthesis and energy production. Excessive removal of leaf tissue through scalping can be detrimental to turfgrass health, as it limits the plant's ability to produce adequate energy to sustain growth. When turfgrass is mowed too infrequently, scalping is more likely to occur. When turfgrass has become unavoidably overgrown, consider gradually lowering the height of the turfgrass over time to prevent the removal of more than 1/3 total height in a single mowing. Turfgrasses that are maintained at a lower height of cut will require more frequent mowing to follow the 1/3 Rule.

It is important to properly maintain any equipment that is being used to manage a turfgrass area. Dull mower blades will not cut grass properly and may cause injury by crushing, shredding, or leaving jagged, uneven cuts on turfgrass leaf blades. These injuries will increase turfgrass susceptibility to pests including diseases and insects and will ultimately compromise turfgrass response to other environmental stresses such as drought or heat. Most mower blades can be sharpened at home or professionally. Dirty or contaminated mower blades can also increase the likelihood of the spreading of some turf diseases and may physically disperse turfgrass pests including diseases, insects, and weeds.

When mowing multiple areas with different pest populations, take steps to adequately clean equipment to prevent contamination across sites. The use of a hose, scrub brush, and dish soap can be beneficial in cleaning mower blades. The objective should be to remove any grass clippings or outdoor debris from the blades and surrounding crevices on the mower deck. When possible, take steps to ensure that the blades dry properly before the lawn mower is returned to storage. In some cases, it has been recommended to use a light coating of cooking spray or other light oil on mower blades to reduce accumulation of debris on the blades and facilitate easier cleaning. For more detailed information on this topic contact the Zavala County office of the Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service and ask for Extension publication ESC-052. Have a great mowing week M.V.

May 13-17, 2019.