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**FROM THE TOP RAIL**

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Waco, TX 76701

254-757-5180

February 2016

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**Forage Workshop**

On April 26<sup>th</sup>, there will be a grass establishment and management workshop at the Ronnie Dowdle Farm. Registration will begin at 7:30 a.m. in the field. We will meet right off Loop 340; 0.5 miles South of Hwy. 6/Loop 340 Intersection.

Program topics and speakers include: Improved Warm Season Grass Management - *Vanessa Carriher-Olson*; Sprigging/Hay Equipment Demonstration by *Ronnie Dowdle*; Managing Weeds in Grass Pastures - *Jack Leclair*; and Economics of Hay Production - *Vanessa Carriher-Olson*.

Two (2) General CEU's will be offered. There will be a \$10 registration fee. Please RSVP by April 22<sup>nd</sup> to (254)757-5180. Breakfast will be provided by Capital Farm Credit. Door prizes for all that attend. Program offered by McLennan and Limestone Counties Extension Beef and Forage Committees.

*Sometimes I can make a very effective statement by saying nothing.*

**Small Grain Field Day**

The Small Grain Field Day will be on April 29<sup>th</sup> at a new location. Registration will take place at 7:30 a.m. in the field off of FM 2617 or Mother Neff Parkway. From the intersection of FM 2617 and Hwy 317, drive west for 4.3 miles, the field will be on the right.

Topics and speakers will include: Small Grain Update - *Dr. Clark Neely*; Commodity Market Update - *Mark Welch*; Grain Storage and Other Concerns - *Dr. Clark Neely*; Sugarcane Aphids and Small Grain Insects - *Dr. Allen Knutson*; and Precision Agriculture - *Ryan Strong*. Breakfast will be provided by Lone Star Ag Credit.

This program will offer 3 CEU's (1 IPM, 2 Gen). Registration will be \$10. Thank you to Jason Niemeier for finding the meal sponsors. The District 8 County Agent Steak Cooker Team will be cooking the meal. Please RSVP by April 25<sup>th</sup> at (254)757-5180.

*It's better to sit on your horse and do nothing than to wear him out chasing shadows.*

**We are now on Facebook!**

**For upcoming program information - connect with us on Facebook "McLennan County Agriculture - Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service."**

**"Ag Alert" E-Mail Group**

**If you would like to be included in the "Ag Alert" e-mail group, please let us know. Notices are sent out on upcoming programs.**

## Stocker Cattle Program

On July 6<sup>th</sup>, West Auction will host a Stocker Cattle Program. Topics and speakers include: Producing Premium Calves - Sire Influence with *Dr. Jason Cleere*; Factors of Stocker Cattle Value - *Brian Uptmore*; Mineral Supplementation - *Kyle Latham*; Stocker Cattle Health - *Dr. Harold Newcomb*; and Theft Prevention with *Marvin Wills*.

Registration will begin at 7:30 a.m. 1 CEU will be offered toward TDA pesticide applicator license. Capital Farm Credit will provide breakfast. There will be a \$20 registration fee at the door. All persons interested in attending should RSVP by calling the McLennan County office at (254)757-5180 prior to June 30<sup>th</sup>.

*Act as if what you do makes a difference. It does!*

## Spring Lawn Care

With cool season plants actively growing in your lawn, many homeowners want to spray them. I suggest you lower your mower and scalp the lawn to open the lawn canopy to allow sunlight to assist the warm season grasses to break dormancy and grow. How low do I set the mower? As low as it will go. February 15<sup>th</sup> is a good day to apply pre-emerge for spring weed control of weeds originating from seed. If you missed this date, it's not too late, but apply that pre-emerge product soon. I will continue to mow my lawn with the lowered blade setting until my warm season Bermuda grass and St. Augustine has a solid covering or good overall emergence. Then I will raise my mower to 1 ½ to 2 inches height on Bermuda and 3 to 3 ½ inches on St. Augustine.

I have attached a great lawn management book with this newsletter.

### **PLEASE REMEMBER!!**

When you sign in at a program...you HAVE to use your TDA number. They no longer accept Socials or Driver's license.

## Eastside Row Crop Tour

The Eastside Row Crop Tour will be held on Friday, June 10<sup>th</sup> in the field located 2.5 miles from Loop 340/FM 434 Intersection. Registration will begin in the field at 7:30. There is a \$5 registration fee.

Tour topics and speakers will include: *Keith Hanson* - Corn Variety Trial, Sponsor Presentations; Drift Minimization and Sprayer Management - *Justin Lehrman*, Wylie Sprayers; Climate Patterns - *John Nielsen-Gammons*, Texas State Climatologist; Managing Corn Insect Pests and Disease - *Steven Carlson*, Monsanto; Laws and Regulations - *Don Renchie*, Extension Pesticide Safety Coordinator; and Farm Service Agency Update - *Mike Maedgen*, McLennan County FSA.

Three (3) CEU's will be offered: 1 IPM, 1 Drift, 1 L&R. Four (4) CCA's will be offered: 2 IPM, 1.5 Crop Management, .5 Professional Development. Please RSVP to the Extension office by June 6<sup>th</sup> at (254)757-5180.

## Westside Row Crop Tour

The Westside Row Crop Tour will be held on Friday, June 17<sup>th</sup> in the grain sorghum field on FM 938/Farmview Parkway. Registration will begin in the field at 7:30. There is a \$5.00 registration fee.

Tour topics and speakers will include: *Mark Wiethorn* - Grain Sorghum Trial, *Sponsor Presentations*; *Greg Westerfeld* - Corn Trial, *Sponsor Presentations*; Risk Management and Ag Commodity Market Update - *Jason Johnson*, Extension Economist; Farm Vehicle Compliance - *Trooper*, Texas Department of Public Safety; Laws and Regulations - *Don Menchie*, Extension Pesticide Safety Coordinator; and *Mike Maedgen*, FSA Update.

Two (2) CEU's will be offered: One (1) General and One (1) IPM.

Please RSVP to the Extension office by June 13<sup>th</sup> at (254)757-5180.

## Phylloxera Gall On Pecan

Each year I receive phone calls on round galls on trees that will be 1/4" to 1" in diameter. This is very common. On pecan trees, these galls will split open in late May to early June releasing a small green winged aphid-like insect. These galls will then dry and cause twig die back and leaf drop.

The overall appearance and tree vigor is reduced. Severe infestations can wipe out the current and following year's crops. The galls are from a dot-sized insect called pecan phylloxera. They inject a toxin into new growth that form a gall around the insect. The most effective control is during the spring when eggs hatch and insects crawl to buds (early April), but before the nymphs are protected inside a gall.

*“Ambition and determination are no replacement for experience.”*

## Strip Trial Demonstration vs Replicated Research

There are basically two kinds of on-farm variety trials. The first is a replicated trial that tries to account for field variability with repeated randomized comparisons. These are normally conducted by universities, plant breeders, and industry/companies. The other type is non-replicated demonstrations such as the demonstration/strip trials conducted in McLennan County that we highlight at our Field Days.

Field variability can easily account for differences. Do not put a lot of stock in results from one location and one year, even if the trial was managed perfectly. With the variability of Central Texas growing conditions, you must look at multiple years of results to get a general idea of how a variety will grow and yield in our local conditions. I encourage you to use scientific university trials, local demonstration plots, and your own on-farm trials to select the varieties that you will plant. I look through variety trials I have conducted here in McLennan County since 2008 and it is easy to see that varieties used here are consistent producers, most years. Thank you to our local ag businesses for providing seed for the county demonstration plots.

The non-biased science-based work of Extension education has a great partner in our local ag businesses. Thanks to Jerry and Jason Niemeier, Kevin Huffman, Mark Wiethorn, Greg Westerfeld, Steve Lovecky, Don Ramsey, Tommy Kutcherousky, Jason and Ben Dietrich, and Keith Hanson for agreeing to plant these plots. I know you're busy and I greatly appreciate it.

## Upcoming Events in 2016

- April 26, 2016.....Spring Forage Workshop  
Ronnie Dowdle Farm
- April 29, 2016.....Small Grain Field Day  
McGregor Research Center
- June 10, 2016.....East Side Row Crop Tour  
2.5 miles from Loop 340/FM434
- June 17, 2016.....West Side Row Crop Tour  
FM 938 (Farmview Parkway)
- July 5, 2016.....Summer Cattle Program  
Groesbeck
- July 6, 2016.....Stocker Cattle Program  
West Auction Barn

*Timing has a lot to do with the outcome of a rain dance.*

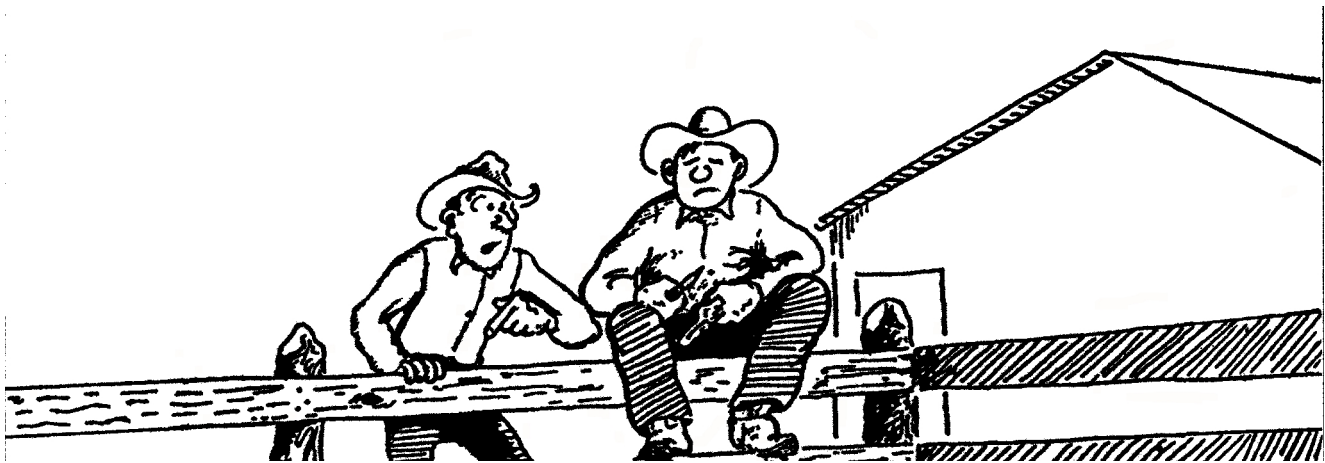
## Plant Hardiness

Getting calls in reference to plant hardiness.

We are in Central Texas Hardiness Zone 8a 10F to 15F days where temperature exceeds 86 degrees F; 121-150 days where temperature exceeds 86 degrees F; 121-150 days region: 32a - Northern Blackland Prairie Freeze Dale.

Average First Frost - November 21-30  
Average Last Frost - March 11-20

A lot of people are putting tomatoes out. Let me warn you, it is not uncommon to have a late freeze in this area, sometimes as late as Easter Sunday.



## The Good Ol' Days

When Ron Wooley called me to schedule interviews for possible Extension employment, I was driving a John Deere 4320 with an after market “bolt-on” cab and 283 row units stripping cotton. My mom had come to the field to bring us supper, it was dark and she gave me the news that the “Extension Guy” called.

The next day, I called him back and I drove to Hereford, then Canyon, Stephenville, then finally to Hillsboro. All the interviews were at “ag” counties, but only one was with a farming community. As an assistant agent, I learned a lot from my trainer agent, Bill Buxkemper. I can vividly remember painting crop marker posts early on a Saturday at Bill’s house and the times we hand-harvested grain sorghum and cotton varieties. As an assistant agent, I was forced to either be quiet-learn-listen or find something else to do for a living. I am so glad I made the right choice. Bill allowed me to make mistakes and learn from them without any long-term damage.

Hard to believe it was nearly 18 years ago that a naive country boy started Extension. The learning curve was harsh then, but it’s non-existent now. I wish we had assistant agent positions back to allow new agents that one-on-one training, to provide them the day-to-day tools to succeed and a safety net from the local trainer agent. Now new agents are thrown into the frying pan, sink/swim, fly or dive and that’s got to be tough on them. You know you are getting old when you start referring to the good ol’ days.

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