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Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service, Walker County

Agricultural Education Events & News Update

(March Edition 2013)

Don't miss out on these educational programs!

Third round of educational workshops slated for Trinity River basin (2.0 hrs. CEUs -1.5 hr. gen & .5 L&R)

Event Date: 3/27/2013 Friday

(1:00 PM - 4:00 PM)

*At the Walker County Extension Office (102 Tam Rd & Highway 75 N. Huntsville TX)

RSVP will be required: Contact Blake Alldredge at (979) 845-0916 for more information or register online at http://nrt.tamu.edu/schedule

CORSICANA/HUNTSVILLE/ATHENS — Trinity Waters and the Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service will be hosting a third and final round of workshops for landowners in the Trinity River basin area, coordinators said.

"The focus will be on beef cattle production and feral hog control so producers can improve profitability, reduce hog damage and benefit area water resources," said Blake Alldredge, AgriLife Extension associate and education and outreach coordinator for Trinity Waters, College Station.

Alldredge said Texas has suffered from a multi-year drought that has caused many difficulties for the state's cattle industry.

"In the workshops, Dr. Larry Redmon of AgriLife Extension will discuss stocking rates and pasture management techniques that will help producers manage their land during times of drought," he said. "Redmon will also discuss ways cattle producers can protect the water quality in their area through the innovative Lone Star Healthy Streams program."

While drought has negatively affected cattle numbers statewide, the feral hog population has continued to increase, Alldredge noted.

"Feral hogs cause an estimated \$52 million in damage to the agriculture industry in Texas every year, including destruction of pastures and crop fields," he said. "In addition, feral hogs are known to be a contributor to the bacterial impairments that affect our water bodies across the state."

He said an AgriLife Extension wildlife expert will discuss basic biology, laws, regulations and techniques for controlling hogs. Also, a representative from the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Natural In This Issue:

Local educational programs

March 27th Cattle Grazing Management & Feral Hogs

April 11th Plant ID Workshop

April 30th Lone Star Healthy Streams

<u>Area/Regional educational</u> <u>programs</u>

March 9th Construction of High Tunnel/Hoop House for Vegetable Production

March 15th Online Webinar-Organic Pest Control Options

April 12th Online Webinar – Starting an Urban Farm

More Local Events

March 9th WCMG Spring Plant Sale

April 6, 2013 Annual Electronic Recycling Day

Water

Importance

Resources Conservation Service will update participants on the status of financial assistance programs funded through the Farm Bill.

Alldredge said this third round of informational workshops for area landowners is provided at no cost and is open to the public. Two hours of continuing education units –1.5 general, 0.5 laws and regulations — will be available for participants as well.

To RSVP for one of the workshops, contact Alldredge at 979-845-0916 or balldredge@tamu.edu, or go to http://nrt.tamu.edu/schedule and search for "Cooperative Conservation in the Trinity River Basin."

Alldredge said previous workshops provided basic information on what watersheds are and how they function, how the state manages water quality in creeks and rivers, and provided some tools landowners can use to help efficiently manage their land. Presentations from these workshops may be found on the AgriLife Extension wildlife and fisheries unit YouTube channel at http://www.youtube.com/user/WFSCAgriLife.

The Building Partnerships for Cooperative Conservation in the Trinity River Basin project is managed by the Texas Water Resources Institute and funded by the Texas State Soil and Water Conservation Board through a Clean Water Act grant from the U.S Environmental Protection Agency.

How to Construct a High Tunnel/Hoop House Workshop

Event Date, Saturday, March 9, 2013

Time: 9:00 AM - 2:00 PM

(In Waller County - Exact Address given upon R.S.V.P)

Join us in gaining hands on experience on constructing a high tunnel greenhouse. High tunnels are less expensive greenhouses that can be used to extend growing seasons and protect vegetables from frost. Dr. Mengmeng Gu, Texas A & M AgriLife Extension Assistant Professor and Ornamental Horticulturist and Dr. Joe Masabni, Texas A & M AgriLife Extension State Vegetable Specialist and will be providing expert knowledge on high tunnel construction.

Sponsor: Texas A&M University

Contact/Additional Information or to R.S.V.P.: Call the Waller Prairie View Cooperative Extension office at (936) 261–5138. Seating is limited. Cost: \$10.00

Organic Pest Control Options: SAHC Online Webinar

Event Date: Friday, March 15, 2013

Time 9:00 AM - 10:00 AM

Location: Online

Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service has developed the Small Acreage Horticultural Crops Program to assist in identifying and evaluating diversification strategies for risk mitigation and improved economic sustainability using a variety of small acreage horticultural crops. Each of the hosted seminars will include a live webinar question/answer session featuring the state's leading authorities.

Program website for more information & other programs can be accessed via the following link http://aggie-horticulture.tamu.edu/smallacreage/seminars/

Sponsored by the Horticultural Science & Benz School of Floral Design

For additional information, contact Joe Masabni, Extension Vegetable Specialist at (979).845.8562 or jmasabni@ag.tamu.edu

Starting an Urban Farm: SAHC Online Webinar

Event Date: Friday, April 12, 2013

Time 9:00 AM - 10:00 AM

Location: Online

Program website for more information & other programs can be accessed via the following link http://aggie-horticulture.tamu.edu/smallacreage/seminars/

Sponsored by the Horticultural Science & Benz School of Floral Design

For additional information, contact Joe Masabni, Extension Vegetable Specialist at (979).845.8562 or jmasabni@ag.tamu.edu

New Opportunity for Landowners:

Free Watershed-Based Feral Hog Educational Trainings & Technical Guidance

Opportunities Available to the Public:

- 1. Feral hog educational presentations (1 hour) for local organizations, civic groups, conservation groups and other interested organizations. Presentations can be given on a wide range of topics concerning feral hogs from basic biology to current research.
- **2.** Information and publications concerning feral hogs can be found at: http://plumcreek.tamu.edu/feral-hogs
 - http://feralhogs.tamu.edu/publications
 - http://www.extension.org/feral_hogs

Opportunities Available to Land Owners or Land Managers:

1. On-site consultations to assist in identifying feral hog control opportunities specific to your property.

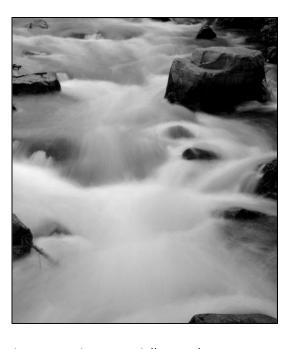
For more information contact: **Mark Tyson (979) 845-4698** (Austin, Brazoria, Colorado, Fort Bend, Galveston, Grimes, Harris, Liberty, Montgomery, San Jacinto, **Walker**, Waller and Wharton Counties)

A Little Info On Riparian buffers..

If you are dealing with problems with creeks or channels that are washing away your valuable pasture or forest land, there are few things you need to know about buffering these locations. Correction of this type problem may not always be easy but the basic steps are fairly straightforward. In addition to prevention of soil loss from erosion, benefits include slowing the water inflow to allow better adsorption into the soil, collection of nutrients benefiting the land vs. becoming a pollutant in the water, and development of additional wildlife habitat.

A properly functioning riparian buffer will be accomplishing the following things (*Steve Nelle, NRCS, Riparian Notes, 2003*):

- Banks and channels will become more stable with the right kinds and amounts of vegetation resulting in less erosion
- The high energy of flood flows will be dissipated by riparian vegetation, especially woody vegetation
- Water velocity will be slowed down, allowing more sediment to drop



- Sediment will be trapped and stabilized by riparian vegetation
- Excess nutrients, will be utilized by riparian vegetation; contaminants or pathogens (if any) will be broken down or destroyed by microbial activity in riparian areas
- Organic materials will be trapped by riparian vegetation providing a more favorable situation for additional plant establishment
- Riparian banks and floodplains, when properly vegetated will act as a sponge to absorb and store a portion of flood flows. This water will then be released slowly to improve the hydrology of the stream after a runoff event
- The diversity of vegetation will provide improved habitat for wildlife and aquatic species



A study in the Platte River riparian system showed that root biomass was over 4 times more than above ground biomass. Root biomass was about 21,700 pounds per acre consisting of grasses, sedges and forbs, while above ground production was about 4,700 pounds per acre.

Three broad types of riparian vegetation help provide needed stability:

- **Colonizer plants** very quickly spread and put down a mat of new roots by stolons or rhizomes (knotgrass, spikerush, some sedges, water hyssop, water primrose).
- **Stabilizer plants** are usually taller upright plants with strong dense root masses (switchgrass, Emory sedge, sawgrass, eastern gammagrass, bushy blustem).
- **Riparian Woody plants** with larger diameter roots function as "riparian rebar" (black willow, sycamore, button bush, little walnut, baccharis, indigobush amorpha).

A riparian area that is functioning properly will support a heavy stand of densely rooted upright vegetation. Riparian plant species have different rooting characteristics than upland

plants. Root systems of riparian vegetation are denser and stronger than upland species. This dense, strong root mass is one of the critical factors in maintaining bank and channel stability. The power of rushing floodwater is immense and an equally immense network of roots to support and reinforce wet banks and riparian soils is needed.

Wetland plants are classified using the following system of classification; all plants are assigned into one of five categories as described below:

OBL *Obligate Wetland* species almost always occur in wetlands (greater than 99% probability). **FACW** *Facultative Wetland* species usually occur in wetlands (67% - 99% probability), but are occasionally found in non-wetlands.

FAC Facultative species are equally likely to occur in wetlands and non-wetlands (34% - 66% probability).

FACU Facultative Upland species usually occur in non-wetlands (67% - 99% probability), but are occasionally found in wetlands.

UPL *Upland* species almost always occur in non-wetlands (greater than 99% probability) and almost never occur in wetlands.

The abbreviated list below shows the Wetland Indicator Category and Proposed Stability Ratings for some of the more common plants found in riparian areas. By looking at these classifications, the riparian manager can begin to more clearly understand what the right kinds of vegetation are.

Emory sedge	OBL	9	Bermudagrass	FACU	5	Buttonbush	OBL	7
Sawgrass	OBL	9	Texas wintergrass	FACU	4	Indigobush amorpha	OBL	7
Bulrushes (most)	OBL	9	King Ranch bluestem	UPL	5	Black willow	FACW	6
Spikerushes	FACW	5/6	Water willow	OBL	8	Baccharis, seepwillow	FACW	6
Knotgrass	FACW	6	Scouring rush	OBL	7	Cottonwood, Fremont	FACW	6
Bushy bluestem	FACW	6	Spiny aster	FACW	8	Sycamore	FAC 6	
Rabbitsfoot grass	FACW	3	Frogfruit	FAC	4	Little walnut	FAC	6
Switchgrass	FAC	9	Tall goldenrod	FACU	7	Roughleaf dogwood	FAC	6
Eastern gamma	FAC	9	Maximilian SF	FACU	6	American elm	FAC	6
Deergrass muhly	FAC	9	Common ragweed	FACU	2	Hackberry	FACU	5
Big sacaton	FAC	9	Juniper	UPL	5	Mesquite	FACU	5

On perennial creeks, OBL and FACW and some FAC species are considered to be riparian species. These are usually the plants that have the necessary dense root masses capable of withstanding high flow events. On seasonal creeks, some OBL or FACW species should be present, but the dominant riparian plants may be FAC and some FACU species. Riparian areas dominated by FACU and UPL species will very likely not be functioning properly.

Another rating system has been developed to estimate the ability of plants to resist erosion and stabilize creek banks. A rating of 10 would provide the maximum stability and is equivalent to the strength of anchored rock. A rating of 1 is equivalent to bare ground. Generally, if riparian areas are dominated by combinations of plants rated 6 - 9, stability would be considered adequate.

AgriLife Extension challenges Texans to save 40 gallons of water daily.

COLLEGE STATION – The Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service is strengthening its challenge to Texans to save millions of gallons of water annually as well as money on their monthly water bills.

The Texas map is beginning to change colors as more people sign up to participate in the 40 Gallon Challenge being issued by Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service. (Courtesy photo)
The 40 Gallon Challenge is a program that calls on residents and businesses to reduce their average water use by 40 gallons per day, according to Dr. Diane Boellstorff, AgriLife Extension water resources specialist in College Station.

Boellstorff became involved in the voluntary national program in 2011, serving as the Texas representative.

After one year, she and AgriLife Extension economist Dean McCorkle in College Station completed an economic impact study in November, which showed that Texas participants, based on average municipal



rates, were saving an estimated \$299,000 a year, in addition to the water savings.

"At the time that we did the impact statement, we were able to count 80 programs from 89 counties, and participation continues to increase," she said. "For example, the impact statement mentions 1,050 participating households saving 71 million gallons of water annually, but today's numbers are 1,152 participating households saving 80 million gallons annually."

That change has come in only three months. Boellstorff said many AgriLife Extension agents are beginning to deliver the program in their local counties. She is also making presentations to spread the program across the state.

This water resource conservation tool is one of many programs initiated and supported through the Southern Region Water Resource Project, funded through the U.S. Department of Agriculture – National Institute for Food and Agriculture. Dr. Mark McFarland, AgriLife Extension state soil fertility specialist in College Station, is the project director.

The 40-Gallon Challenge allows Texans to compete against other Americans who are taking the challenge in their states. At the program's website, www.40gallonchallenge.org, Texans can pledge to adopt water-saving practices and see how many gallons of water they can expect to save.

The website also shows the most popular practices being pledged, the practices that are saving the most water daily, and counties and states that are pledging the most daily savings, Boellstorff said.

Currently, the top water savers in Texas are "reduce irrigation station runtimes by two minutes," "use a broom instead of a hose to clean driveways and sidewalks," and "fix a leaky toilet." In Texas, the three counties registered to save the most gallons are Collin, Ellis and Dallas.

Boellstorff credited the higher rate of participation in these areas to work done by Susan Ballabina, AgriLife Extension regional program director for family and consumer sciences, and Clint Wolfe, urban water program manager at the Texas A&M AgriLife Research and Extension Center at Dallas.

To start saving water and take the challenge, go to the website and complete the checklist of water-saving practices, Boellstorff said. The checklist includes both indoor and outdoor water-saving tips.

3rd & Final Posting: Information that beef producers need to know about: Texas Animal Health Commission Announces Details of New Cattle Traceability Rule

AUSTIN – A requirement for adult cattle in Texas to have an approved form of permanent identification in place at change of ownership will go into effect January 1, 2013 according to the Texas Animal Health Commission (TAHC). The Commission amended its rules in June of this year to enhance the effective traceability of beef cattle movements in Texas, which is the cornerstone of disease control activities. Implementation of the changes was delayed by the Commission to ensure cattle producers understand the requirements and can prepare for the changes.

The amended rule permanently cancels the brucellosis test requirement for adult cattle at change of ownership, which was unofficially suspended in the summer of 2011. Although testing of adult cattle is no longer required with the rule change, all sexually intact cattle, parturient or post parturient, or 18 months of age and older changing ownership must still be officially identified with Commission approved permanent identification. This change primarily affects beef cattle, as dairy cattle in Texas have had an even more stringent identification requirement in place since 2008.

Before August of 2011, official identification devices such as eartags were applied automatically at the time a brucellosis test was performed. The inadvertent loss of the identification devices applied to cattle when brucellosis testing stopped has threatened TAHC's ability to effectively trace cattle as part of any ongoing disease investigation.

The TAHC routinely performs cattle health investigations where the identification and location of exposed/infected animals is critical to success. For example, 30 Brucellosis reactors, over 300 Bovine Trichomoniasis affected bulls and 22 bovine tuberculosis cases have been investigated by the TAHC to date in 2012. The new traceability rule

will help preserve the TAHC's ability to identify and trace animal movements quickly and effectively, no matter which disease is involved.

A complete list of acceptable identification devices/methods may be found at www.tahc.state.tx.us but the most commonly used devices include USDA metal tags, brucellosis calfhood vaccination tags, US origin 840 series Radio Frequency Identification tags (RFID), and breed registration tattoos or firebrands. Producers are encouraged to contact their veterinarian or TAHC to determine which method of tagging will be best for their operation.

Free USDA metal tags, and a limited number of free applicator pliers (dependent on available funding) will be provided by the TAHC to producers wishing to use them. The tags and/or pliers may be obtained by contacting local TAHC field staff and USDA APHIS Veterinary Services representatives. The TAHC is developing tag distribution partnerships with interested veterinary practitioners and Texas A&M AgriLife Extension offices. **The Walker County, Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Office does have TAHC approved tags available at no charge. We also have a limited number of tag applicators available for short duration loan.** Partner contact information will be published as it becomes available. Producers may locate the closest tag distributor online at www.tahc.state.tx.us.

Other Local & Area Educational Programs:

Walker County Master Gardener's - Spring Plant Sale!

Event Date: March 9th Saturday 8:00 AM -2:00 PM

At the Walker County Extension Office (102 Tam Road & Hwy 75 N)

The Walker Co Master Gardeners are working hard to prepare for the Spring Plant Sale. Put it on your calendar Saturday, March 9th (8:00 AM until 2:00 PM). Lots of tomatoes, peppers, herbs, fruit trees and other neat plants!

Proceeds benefit Master Gardener educational programs, activities, and scholarships in Walker County. This year we will feature: Heirloom

Tomatoes, Peppers, Herbs, Roses, Ornamentals, Natives, Fruit Trees, and House

Plants. Pre-Sale Demonstrations (7:30 AM) include Tomatoes, Fruit Trees, Bee Keeping & Composting.





6th Annual Electronic Recycling Day

Event Date: April 6, 2013

At the City of Huntsville Disposal-Recycling Facility 590 I-45 North

Acceptable Items: Laptops/Notebooks, Printers/Scanners, Copiers, Projectors, Plasma Screens/LCD/LED Screens, Computer Accessories, Telecommunication/Networking Equipment, Stereos, Radios, Cell Phones/Pagers/Cameras, PDA/Palm Pilots, Rechargeable Batteries, Vehicle Batteries. For more information, please call Solid Waste & recycling Services at 936-294-5743.

Plant ID Workshop

Event Date: April 11, 2013

Huntsville, TX (contact the Extension Office 936 435-2426 for

directions)

(1:00 PM -4:30 PM)

Can you correctly name that plant you are looking at? Landowners & Natural Resource Managers are invited to attend this Plant Identification Workshop. Wear comfortable shoes! We will be walking the pastures and tree lines as we ID native and introduced plants. Dr. Barron Rector, Extension Range Specialist, will guide us through the world we have around us. This Field Based Workshop will include CEU credits for TDA Pesticide Applicators. Location to be announced. Registration for this workshop is \$10.00 per person.



Lone Star Healthy Streams Workshop

Event Date: April 30, 2013 Walker County Extension Office RSVP requested 936-435-2426

(6:30 PM -8:30 PM)

Water quality is a continuing item of concern for everybody living in Texas. This workshop to be held in Huntsville on April 30th will help introduce agricultural landowners to the means and methods of protecting our valuable water resources. Additional information written by Kathryn Boutwell: According to Dr. Larry Redmon, leader of the LSHS program, livestock producers can more easily make wise choices for reducing pollution originating on their operations if they know the benefits of clean water to agricultural operations, the current laws and policies on water quality, the ways that bacteria can enter water, and the range of solutions that are available for them to reduce water quality problems. The LSHS program is designed to educate landowners on these topics.

Through their partnership, TWRI, AgriLife Research and AgriLife Extension have successfully completed the first stage of the LSHS program and have begun the second.

Stage I: Stage I focused on evaluating best management practices (BMPs) designed to reduce bacterial contamination of water bodies, said Dr. Kevin Wagner, TWRI's associate director. This research, led by Wagner, was carried out at both private ranchesand established research centers such as the U.S. Department of Agriculture's field site in Riesel, the Texas A&M University Department of Animal Science's Beef Cattle Systems Center near College Station, and the Welder Wildlife Refuge in Sinton.

"At these ranches and research centers, both traditional and novel, or innovative, BMPs were implemented and their effectiveness evaluated so that the most successful techniques could be identified," Wagner said. "This study provided us with a good idea of which management techniques worked to reduce bacteria levels and which didn't.

"We highly recommend rotational grazing," Wagner said. The method requires moving livestock from one area to another over time. This prevents fecal material from accumulating in creek pastures during rainy seasons and ending up in streams.

"Results showed that when alternative off-stream water was provided, the amount of time cattle spent in the creek was reduced 43 percent," Wagner said.

Alternate water sources allow animals to drink at facilities away from a stream, reducing the amount of feces that enter the stream.

He said that while Stage I is technically over, research will continue to explore new BMP techniques that will benefit both streams and landowners.

Stage II: Based on information gathered in Stage I, groups of research scientists, resource conservation agencies and producers collaborated to compile the LSHS manuals, which include BMPs identified in Stage I.

"Stage II focuses on education," said Jennifer Peterson, LSHS statewide coordinator. "For each bacterial contributor, we created a manual and a presentation outlining BMPs that are operation- specific."

The program published manuals for poultry, beef cattle, feral hogs, horses and dairy cattle. Each manual has been endorsed by natural resource agencies and industry associations. For example, the dairy cattle program has been endorsed by the Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS) and the Texas Association of Dairymen. The manuals are available both online and in hard copy.

"The management practices identified in the Lone Star Healthy Streams manuals are generally practices that can both reduce nonpoint source contributions to lakes and streams and improve an operation's bottom line," said Jay Bragg, associate director of commodity and regulatory activities at the Texas Farm Bureau.

The manuals include information about Texas water quality and sources of financial assistance for BMP implementation. Although not the focus of the LSHS program, the BMPs listed in the manuals will allow livestock owners and landowners to further protect Texas waterways from runoff that contains sediments, nutrients and pesticides. Examples of BMPs found in the manuals include rotational grazing and provisions for alternate water supplies for livestock.

"Our next step is a statewide educational program that educates livestock producers and landowners about these best management practices," Peterson said.

"We recently finished writing and publishing our curriculum and have also developed an online course for the program," she said. "We are in the process of scheduling programs around the state."

In the coming months, programs will be made available to landowners in areas that have identified the source of bacterial impairment in their watershed. AgriLife Extension will conduct programs for landowners on BMP implementation.

"The agricultural community can choose to regulate itself through stewardship and conservation practices rather than have the solutions determined by those who may not understand the industry," Redmon said. "It is important for landowners to become involved and make a difference in protecting our state's most vital resource."

The LSHS program has received support on the importance of education and BMP implementation not only from scientists, but also from farmers and landowners.

"Local demonstration projects may be the most effective way to demonstrate the benefits of these management practices," Bragg said.

"I think some good information came from the Lone Star Healthy Streams project—given they wrote a prescription for the entire state and the state is so diverse," Scrivner said.

Additional program partners include the Independent Cattleman's Association of Texas, Texas and Southwest Cattle Raisers Association, Texas Wildlife Association, Texas Association of Dairymen, Texas Horse, Texas Poultry Federation, Texas Pork Producers Association and Texas Parks and Wildlife Department.

Upcoming Webinars

Join online from (Noon – 1:00 PM)at http://naturalresourcewebinars.tamu.edu/event-category/texas-range-webinar-series/

Event Dates -

March 7, 2013: **Pastora: Sandburs and Beyond** with Dr. Vanessa Corriber April 4, 2013: **Getting Ready to Treat Mesquite** with Dr. Megan Clayton

May 2, 2013: How Herbicides Work-Modes of Action, Soil Activity, Half Life & Storage with Dr. Paul

Baumann

June 6, 2013: Importance of Plant Identification with Dr. Barron Rector

Texas Range Webinar Series

Presented by the Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service

Ecosystem Science and Management Unit

The Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service, Ecosystem Science and Management Extension Unit are conducting lunch-based webinars every month throughout 2013. The Texas Range Webinar Series will present a webinar every first Thursday of the month. The Ecosystem Science and Management Extension Unit is partnering with the Department of Wildlife and Fisheries Sciences at Texas A&M University. Information on Forestry and Natural Resource webinars will be available on our website.

If you have questions or would like more information regarding Extension Educational Programs, call us at (936) 435-2426.

Visit us on Facebook at:
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Or on the web at:
http://walker.agrilife.org



Provisions from the American Disability Act will be considered when planning educational programs and activities. Please notify the Walker County Extension Office if you plan on attending an Extension Educational program and need specialized services. Notification of at least two weeks in advance is needed, so that we may have ample time to acquire resources needed to meet your needs. Extension programs serve people of all ages regardless of socioeconomic level, race, color, sex, religion, disability or national origin. The Texas A&M University System, U.S. Department of Agriculture, and the County Commissioners Courts of Texas Cooperating. The information given herein is for educational purposes only. Reference to commercial products or trade names is made with the understanding that no discrimination is intended and no endorsement by Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service is implied.

Reggie Lepley

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