



## Walker County Agriculture Update

**March 2021**  
(Mid edition)

Greetings from the Walker  
County, Texas A&M AgriLife  
Extension office!

Thanks to those who participated in the Walker County Master Gardener Online Spring Plant Sale. They say the more you do something, the better you become at it. We always want to improve our methods and this online version seemed to work great on the user side with photos and descriptions of the plants. **Special THANKS** to all the Walker County Master Gardener volunteers who invested numerous hours of time developing the online platform and those who worked so hard to have the plants ready to go out into our community for spring planting. Great Job!

### TexasSpeaks

TexasSpeaks is being conducted in Walker County and across the State of Texas to allow the citizens of Texas to provide their input on the assets and issues in their communities. The Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service has a rich history of providing educational programs that address the most critical issues in the county and we invite your participation in the TexasSpeaks process.

You can provide your input by going to the following <http://tx.ag/texasspeaks>

### **Featured Upcoming Events:** (note events below are ordered/grouped by topic more than date)

#### **2021 Walker County Farmers Market Organizational Meeting**

**Date:** April 12, 2021.

**Time:** 6:00 PM

**Location:** TBD depending on COVID-19 requirements

**Cost of meeting participation:** FREE!

**Registration:** Preregistration **REQUIRED** at <https://www.eventbrite.com/e/2021-walker-county-farmers-market-organizational-meeting-tickets-145346955657>

Due to ongoing COVID-19 precautions the Walker County Farmers Market Organizational Meeting will **require preregistration for ALL participants** regardless of whether we meet in person at the AgriLife Office or virtually. Preregistration will ensure that you receive a meeting link in the event that this meeting must be held online. Farmers interested in participating with the 2021 WC Farmers Market are encouraged to join us for this meeting where we will discuss selection of "Opening Day" and the Association By-laws. Currently, membership in the WCFM Association is a \$5.00 annual fee. We encourage those who grow local produce and make agriculturally based products for market to participate in this Association which has been active in Walker County since the early/mid 1960's. The Walker County Farmers Market is held in the parking lot of West Hill Mall.

## **Pond Management Webinars hosted by AgriLife Rangeland, Wildlife & Fisheries**

### **Management:**

Registration Links for each are below.

Cost: \$35.00 per participant

For additional information, contact: Todd Sink [todd.sink@tamu.edu](mailto:todd.sink@tamu.edu) or Brittany Chesser

[Brittany.chesser@tamu.edu](mailto:Brittany.chesser@tamu.edu)

### March 16, 2021: Fish Management Strategies by Dr. Todd Sink

Join us for a how-to educational program on fish management strategies for ponds and lakes as we cover the pond food chain, what it takes to grow abundant or large fish, fertilization programs, fish feeds and feeding fish, sampling the fish population, many common problems that can be found within a fish population, and how to determine if your pond is suffering from stunted fish. We will also cover the maximum fish production, trophy bass, trophy bluegill/sunfish, trophy catfish, and black crappie management strategies that can be employed in your pond or lake. Finally we will conclude with the types of structure and fish attractors that can be added to a lake to improve fishing.

### April 20, 2021: Aquatic Herbicides & Permitting by Brittany Chesser

Join us for an in-depth program as we cover the 15 aquatically approved herbicides, their common uses, modes of action, and differences between terrestrial herbicides for a better understanding when making management decisions. We will also cover frequently asked questions on aquatic herbicide use including water restrictions ( i.e. "Can I still eat my fish?", "Is this toxic to my fish"). Lastly, we will go over what type of permitting you may or may not need for aquatic vegetation management in lakes or ponds.

### May 18, 2021: Water Quality for Fisheries Management

We will cover what is water quality, how do you determine water quality, the link between water quality and chemistry, why you should worry about water quality for your fish. Most people are surprised to learn how critical water quality is for their fish, how many different water quality factors can impact their fish (often in unusual ways), that toxic organisms in their pond can kill their fish, livestock, or companion animals, and how minor amendments to water quality can drastically improve their fishery. We will also cover what is tested during a standard water quality test, how each parameter tested affects your fish, how to fix any issues found during the test, how to apply treatments, and how to have your water quality tested.

### June 15, 2021: Aquatic Vegetation: Beneficial or Pest? by Brittany Chesser

Join us for an in-depth conversation on the pros and cons with having aquatic vegetation in your pond or lake. We will cover the top beneficial aquatic plants which may add aesthetic value or have wildlife value; along with covering the top nuisance species (native and non-native) which could pose a threat to your pond or lake. If you would like your aquatic vegetation identified and discussed during the presentation, please send high quality, up close photos, against a light background to [brittany.chesser@tamu.edu](mailto:brittany.chesser@tamu.edu) before June 13, 2021.

## **Forage Series: Smart Fertilization**

Date: March 25, 2021

Location: Online (Hosted by Texas A&M AgriLife Extension, Galveston & Brazoria Co)

Cost: \$15.00 per participant for virtual conference

CEU's: 1 Hour TDA credit available

Registration: Register 3 days before program [tinyurl.com/y3s8tahk](https://tinyurl.com/y3s8tahk)

For additional information contact: Jean Godwin, [jean.godwin@ag.tamu.edu](mailto:jean.godwin@ag.tamu.edu) 979-864-1558 or Reese Daily [charissa.daily@co.galveston.tx.us](mailto:charissa.daily@co.galveston.tx.us) 281-309-5068

This program is one of a 6-part series. Whether you are new to being a land steward, or have been in the business for years, there is something for everyone in this 6-part series. Come to one or come to all. Join us and guest presenter, Dr. Jake Mowrer, State Extension Soil Specialist, to discuss what is in your soil. Review basics about soil and why it is important to everything on your land. Save money by learning how to read soil

tests, compare fertilizers through online tools, and reduce use of unnecessary fertilizers.

### **Beef Cattle Management Seminar**

**Date:** March 26, 2021

**Time:** 1:00 PM to 4:30 PM

**Location:** Online (Hosted by Texas A&M AgriLife Extension, Austin Co) / in-person participation available

**Registration:** due by March 24 online at <https://austin.agrilife.org/event-registrations/>

**Cost:** \$20.00 per participant for virtual conference

**CEU's:** 3 Hours TDA credit available

**For additional information contact:** Stacie Villarreal, CEA-Ag/NR at 979-865-2072

Topics for this seminar: Utilization of drones for pasture management. Importance of soil fertility in growing forages. Improving marketable cattle with parasite control and herd health management. Speakers for the event include: Dr. Megan Clayton, Dr. Joe Paschal, and Dr. Tony Provin.

### **Small Farms & Vegetable Conference**

**Date:** April 23, 2021

**Time:** 9:00 AM to 3:00 PM

**Location:** Online (Hosted by Texas A&M AgriLife Extension, Austin Co) / in-person participation available

**Registration:** online at <https://austin.agrilife.org/event-registrations/>

**Cost:** \$20.00 per participant for virtual conference / \$30.00 per participant for in-person

**CEU's:** 5 Hours TDA credit PENDING.

**For additional information contact:** Stacie Villarreal, CEA-Ag/NR at 979-865-2072

Topics for this seminar: Backyard Gardens: What you need to know. Feral Hogs. Laws & Regulations. Backyard invasive species. Ants: Fire ants and Leaf cutters. Speakers for the event include Michael Potter, Dr. John Tomecek, Dr. Don Rennie, Dr. Megan Clayton, and Molly Keck

### **Plant Party #3 Invasive Species**

**Date:** June 23, 2021

**Location:** Online (Hosted by Texas A&M AgriLife Extension, TXP&W, USDA/NRCS, TX RREA)

**Cost:** FREE for virtual conference

**Registration:** Preregistration required prior to program <https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/PlantParty3>

**For additional information contact:** Dr. Megan Clayton, Extension Range Specialist [Megan.Clayton@ag.tamu.edu](mailto:Megan.Clayton@ag.tamu.edu)

FYI: I have been watching the Plant Party Series the past couple of months – really good material for land managers! Previous sessions are archived online for viewing: Plant Party #1 / All About Brush, and Plant Party #2 / Talking Ecology. Check these out at <https://southtexasrangelands.tamu.edu/plant-party/> if the general topics may be of interest.

## **Additional Items and Information of Note:**

### **Hemp Production -new supporting resources**

As I have mentioned to numerous people with questions on this topic – The current status of production hemp in Texas is that of a “relatively” new crop for the state; therefore, the development of resources will take time. We have recently had a release of information which looks to be very useful for individuals interested in producing this crop. This information includes items on: Hemp Basics, Hemp Legal Considerations, Hemp Economics/Budgets, Hemp Crop Insurance, and Other Hemp Resources. Most of this information is featured in YouTube videos with slides available. If you access these resources, we do request that you complete the short evaluation following the presentation to let AgriLife Extension know what value the resource served. The information set can be accessed online at: <https://agecoext.tamu.edu/resources/legal-and-economic-considerations-for-growing-hemp/hemp-basics/>

## Garden Time! Walker County Vegetable Resources available

You may want to review the [Vegetable Planting Guide](http://counties.agrilife.org/walker/files/2011/05/WC-Vegetable-Planting-Chart1.pdf) publication posted on the Walker County AgriLife web page which shows the idea and marginal planting dates for most common garden vegetables grown in our county. <http://counties.agrilife.org/walker/files/2011/05/WC-Vegetable-Planting-Chart1.pdf> Take a look to know your best planting date ranges. As an additional benefit, each vegetable species is linked to the AgriLife Aggie Horticulture web page with information further supporting your growing effort.

We also have a list of recommended vegetable varieties available. [https://aggie-horticulture.tamu.edu/publications/veg\\_variety/search.php?county=Walker&co=Search+by+County](https://aggie-horticulture.tamu.edu/publications/veg_variety/search.php?county=Walker&co=Search+by+County) You may select individual vegetables (or) select All for the entire list.

## Warm-Season Perennial Grass Establishment

A common request this time of year is how to go-about establishment of grass cover in a pasture. This information will discuss warm-season perennial seeded pastures rather than vegetatively established fields although the big difference is seed placement vs. sprigs or top cuttings. The establishment process is fairly straightforward with the exception of the impact weather plays with your project. FYI: establishing seeded lawns and turfgrasses follow the same general process outlined below.

### Starting out.

- First, identify (THE) grass which best fits your needs, your soil, and your livestock which will graze the pastures. Keep in mind there will be trade-offs with this item. Cost and availability of seed can be an issue. Make sure you can actually get the seed you want.
- Some species are easier to establish which includes time to germination, seeding rates/ease of seed distribution, and general soil fertility requirements. The most popular introduced warm-season perennial grasses for pastures include bermudagrass (widespread use), bahiagrass (sandy/well drained/low fertility soils/acidic areas), and dallisgrass (heavier/wetter soil locations) for our area. Another seeded warm-season perennial grass for grazing cattle is kleingrass, although this grass is not recommended for horses, sheep, or goats due to potential toxicity issues.
- Know what you are planting. Some seeded bermudas are actually blends and mixtures. Be sure you understand the characteristics of each component in the blend/mixture prior to planting that seed. This link has some good information: <https://cdn-ext.agnet.tamu.edu/wp-content/uploads/2018/09/E320-bermudagrass-varieties-hybrids-and-blends-for-texas.pdf>

Read more about the different classes (warm-season perennial/annual and cool-season perennial/annuals, and legumes) of forages for beef cattle here: <https://agrilifeextension.tamu.edu/library/ranching/forages-for-beef-cattle/>

### Planning ahead is a requirement.

- It takes time to collect and analyze soil samples so you know what nutrient needs must be met. Keep in mind agricultural limestone may require 6 to 12 months (or more) to react with the soil chemistry in meeting the ideal pH range for our grasses.
- It also takes time to adequately control weeds. A spring planting this year will begin the previous fall (last year) with a non-selective herbicide application which is usually followed by an initial soil preparation by plowing, disking, and rolling. The spring following fall soil preparation will be started with another non-selective herbicide application and then disking and rolling of the field after the herbicide has done its job.

### Common mistakes vs. done correctly.

- The part of warm season seeded grass establishment which most often gets too little attention and is often done incorrectly is seedbed preparation. Clean tilled are the key words! We need a clean tilled seedbed that is free of weeds, clods, cracks, etc... If the pasture looks like something you could plant vegetables into for a garden – you did it correctly.

-The next related item is soil firmness. You have to have a firm planting bed so when the seed is broadcast and then rolled in you will have good seed/soil contact. The way to know if a seed bed is acceptable is demonstrated by walking across the seedbed. Your boot tracks should sink no more than a quarter inch into the seedbed. If the tracks do not sink that deeply-the seedbed is too firm and may not allow water to infiltrate or the seed to be pressed adequately into the soil by a roller.

#### Soil fertility for establishment: when and how much.

-You should have sent your soil samples in the previous fall; hopefully early enough to allow for a fall application of limestone if needed. These sample reports will tell you what your needs are in pounds/acre for nitrogen, phosphorus, and potassium.

-During the spring establishment phase, you incorporate the needed phosphorous, potassium, (and lime if we are realistic about most people's timelines) while you are completing the spring soil preparation work with your tractor and disk.

-Nitrogen is only placed following germination of the seed.

#### Seeding processes.

-Insuring seed is distributed evenly can be a challenge. Some seeds are so small that a carrier such as sand must be added to the distributor hopper which requires careful mixing.

-If the seed is drilled you need to triple check your planting depth to insure you are not placing the seed too deeply into the ground. Basic rule of thumb for grass and rangeland type seed is no more than 4-7 times at a depth than diameter of the seed. If two different sized seeds are planted always set the planting depth for the smallest of the two.

-Remember my early comment about the weather... plant into moist seedbed for best results with gentle but effective rains to follow.

#### What is next.

Assuming everything worked well, resist the urge to graze the newly established pasture until the forage grass is about 8 inches tall. These young plants need time to establish good roots. The foolproof test is to grasp the grass leaves in your hand and give it tug. If you pull up plant and roots, keep the livestock off the field until the roots can fully anchor the plant.

For more information on establishing forage species in Texas:

[http://forages.tamu.edu/PDF/Forage%20Species%20for%20Texas\\_Final\[2\].pdf](http://forages.tamu.edu/PDF/Forage%20Species%20for%20Texas_Final[2].pdf)

#### **Want to learn more about what grows in Walker County?**

In case the information above has piqued your interest about what plants do grow in Walker County, see the map at the following link. Our county fits into parts of three ecoregions depending on exactly where you may be standing. Click on the Pineywoods, Post Oak Savannah, or the Blackland Prairies portion of the map for a quick list of plants potentially seen in Walker County, Texas: <https://rangeplants.tamu.edu/state-regions/> A word of cautionary note: Just because a plant shows up on an ecoregion list – the rainfall has to be correct for the species, so plants that don't do well with our 47-49 inches of average annual rainfall amounts probably will not be found here. I am telling you not to plant Buffalograss in your yard or pasture-we get too much rain for it!

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



*Reggie Lepley*

Reggie Lepley,  
County Extension Agent – Agriculture & Natural Resources  
Walker County  
(936) 435-2426  
[r-lepley@tamu.edu](mailto:r-lepley@tamu.edu)