

Houston County Winter Agriculture Newsletter

Winter 2013

January 16, 2013



Dates of Interest

Jan 28–Feb 1, 2013

Texas Pecan Short course,
Texas A&M University

February 7, 2013

Turf Grass Conference
Overton Research Center

February 8, 2013

Forest Pest Seminar, Lufkin

February 26, 2013

East Texas Fruit & Vegetable Conf
Tyler, Tx



Inside this issue:

Water Conservation 1

Profits in Berries 1

Bad Bugs 3

Pruning Time 3

ET Upcoming Events 4

Cold Weather Live-
stock Stewardship 4

New Year's Resolution: Water Conservation

Each January people start the year off by making New Year's Resolutions. Many resolutions are to lose weight, to start eating healthy or other health related topic. All of these are great but how many times do we follow all these throughout the entire year. This year, maybe your New Year's Resolution could be to start saving or conserving water for the future. It will mean some adjustments in your lifestyle but it can be done.

Water conservation is something we can all learn to do a better job with. As the State of Texas continues to grow, we must conserve water for future generations. Water is essential for life. All living things need water to survive. Over 70% of the Earth is made up of water. According to the Texas Water Resources Institute, the oceans make up 97% of the earth's water in the form of saltwater. The remaining 3% is in the

form of fresh water. Of this 3%, less than one percentage of the earth's water is water either in aquifers, wells, rivers, and lakes used by humans.

There are things we can do around the home to conserve water. Inside the home we can use faucet aerators, install low-flow toilets or dual flow toilets, and wash only full loads of clothing and dishes. When brushing teeth or shaving, avoid letting water run during these practices. Take shorter

Continued on page 2

Black & Blue Profits

Be they black or blue, berries can be a profitable business provided growers plant suitable varieties and manage the challenges of these crops. "Berries are a great crop in Texas", said Monte Nesbitt, AgriLife Extension horticulture program specialist. "They can be grown

for fun or for commercial purposes." Speaking to the Texas Fruit and Nut Conference in Bryan, Nesbitt said blackberries, which are a type of bramble or caneberry, do well in Texas because they are improved varieties from wild dewber-

ries that grow along roadsides around the state. Many transplanted snowbirds have found out that berry varieties like raspberries will produce beautiful vines, but without the chill hours, little or no fruit.

Continued on page 3

showers. Some are turning on the water in the shower to get wet, then turning the water off while they lather with soap, then turning on the water again to rinse off in efforts to conserve water. While waiting for bath or shower water to heat up, some are capturing this water and using it for outdoor watering or other purposes. Repair leaks as soon as they are noticed.

The Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service Family and Consumer Science Agents have been working with people across Texas to take the 40 Gallon Challenge. What is the 40 Gallon Challenge? The 40 Gallon Challenge encourages people to save a minimum of 40 gallons a day by adopting new water-saving techniques. The pledge card outlines water-saving practices and the daily water-savings to expect. You can use the pledge to review the water-saving practices that you or your family currently puts to use. By pledging new practices, you will see the total daily savings expected for your household. Information on the 40 Gallon Challenge can be found at the following website: <http://www.40gallonchallenge.org/index.cfm>.

Another area that we can conserve water is in our landscape. Have an irrigation audit performed on your lawn or garden irrigation system. This will help determine if sprinkler heads are broken or misaligned. The audit will also determine if you are over watering or under watering your landscape.

"Water is the driving force in nature."

Leonardo da Vinci

Install a rainfall sensor to your system if you do not already have one. This will help shut off your system on days when we get rainfall. Watering at the right amounts and appropriate times will improve your root system of your lawn thus creating a healthy, dense turf. Improperly watering the home lawn can lead to shallow root systems that cannot tolerate stresses nor are they as drought tolerant. Water is a precious resource and we need to conserve this resource. Every drop counts. Do not wait until you turn on the faucet and nothing comes out. Start the New Year off by resolving to conserve as much water as you can. The resolution may be for you as an individual or for your family unit.

"When the well is dry, we know the worth of water."

BENJAMIN FRANKLIN, (1706-1790),
Poor Richard's Almanac, 1746

Thomas Fuller, (1608-1661)

"When you drink the water, remember the spring."

-Chinese Proverb





Bad Bug in Town



COLLEGE STATION – Now that the holiday season has ended, Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service entomologists are urging travelers to beware of a new species of that may have been an unwelcome hitchhiker.

"We're working to raise awareness about the brown marmorated stink bug in Texas," said Bill Ree, AgriLife Extension ento-

mologist. "This pest is hitting some states hard. It's a great hitchhiker which is probably the main reason it has spread to so many states. Adults [pests] seeking overwintering sites tend to get in recreational vehicles, travel trailers, etc."

Ree said the pest can cause lasting foul smells in homes and

cause major damage to a wide variety of crops and plants. "So far, we've only had one confirmed in Texas, Ree said. "That single find last November at Corpus Christi was from a pest control operator investigating a stink bug infestation in a trailer that had been moved from Pennsylvania.

Continued on page 5

Profits in Berries continued...

Same thing was true for blueberries, until heat-tolerant varieties were developed, and these thrive and produce abundantly in East Texas' acidic well-drained soil.

Nesbitt said several varieties have been developed for commercial plantings and are very productive with relatively little care.

"Blackberries come into full production within two years of planting," he said.



"They bloom later in the spring and have a long harvest season that may last into the fall."

For free "how to" publications on everything from fruit to nuts, go to the

Fruit & Nut Resource provided by Texas A&M at:

<http://aggie-horticulture.tamu.edu/fruit-nut/>

Pruning Time Fast Approaching

January is a good time of the year to begin preparing seed beds, plant bare-root nursery stock, and to place you orders for seed catalogs. January and February are also great months to make applications of dormant oils on many fruit and nut tree species. Annual pruning keeps the harvest within reach, thins crowded branches, thus allowing more light to penetrate developing

fruit, and stimulates new growth for next year's crop. Peaches, plums and apricots need this annual pruning. The dormant season of winter is also the time to do any needed pruning of shade trees to correct major problems such as cleaning out dead wood, removing lower limbs and crowded branches to allow more light to reach the ground, and removing

hazardous branches which threaten property.



Upcoming Events around East Texas

2013 Annual East Texas Turfgrass Conference

Thursday, February 7,

Texas A&M AgriLife Research & Extension Center
Overton, Texas
Registration Starts at 8:00 a.m.

Reg fee: \$30.00/person @ the door

Checks payable to:
District 5 TCAAA

Approved For 5.0 TDA Pesticide CEU's
(3.0 General, 1.0 IPM, 1.0 L&R)

Forest Pest Seminar

February 8, 2013

Angelina County Extension Office
2201 S. Medford Dr.
Lufkin, Texas 75901
Cost is \$50 (meal and materials included)
Please RSVP by Tues, Feb 5 at 936.634.6414 x100

5 CEU's for TDA Private Applicator Holders
5 SAF Cat-1 CFEs and 5 Pro Logger Credits

East Texas Fruit & Vegetable Seminar

February 26

Convention Center
Tyler, TX.

Details forthcoming. This has always been a great place to learn about trends in the industry, learn methods to improve production and meet vendors catering to the needs of home gardeners and commercial growers alike.

Cold Weather Livestock Stewardship

Stockmen in Texas are not accustomed to sub-zero wind chills and neither are their livestock. A fifty degree temperature change in less than 24 hours is difficult to prepare for. As a result, stockmen need to go the extra mile while caring for livestock. Primary consideration should be given to the livestock at greatest risk—the old, newborns and those in thin condition.

With their winter haircoat and shelter from the north wind, most livestock can fare well. However, a wet haircoat provides little insulation against the cold. Animals in thin flesh and newborns have minimal fat



[insulation] under their skin and are especially vulnerable. Move livestock to easily accessible pastures that contain shelter from the wind (and precipitation if possible).

Adequate water intake is essential for survival during these times. Break and remove ice from troughs, allowing refilling with relatively warm water. If warranted, call livestock to fresh water with feed or hay.

If forage is in short supply or covered with snow/ice, provide enough hay for cattle, sheep and goats to eat their fill at least once a day. Forage digestion will generate heat, so if possible, feed livestock in the late afternoon to take advantage of this 'internal heat' during the colder nighttime temperatures.

Colic is a winter health concern for horse owners. Grazing horses are less susceptible than those kept in stalls. Feed extra long stem hay. Where feasible and possible, feed twice daily.

Adult horses will drink 10+ gallons of water daily. Maintaining water intake is a critical component



of colic avoidance and essential for proper digestive function. Exercise is also beneficial, whether it's a romp around the outside paddock or a 30 minute walk inside the barn.

Winter blizzards bring more than bone chilling temperatures. For livestock and wildlife stewards, the cold ushers in additional chores.

Like their domestic counterparts, songbirds, game birds, deer and other wildlife need food and water daily. A dry fall and winter has reduced the quantity and quality of food/forage available for wildlife and dried up some water sources..

So while you're out there tending to livestock, keep the ice broken and put out a little extra feed for the wild critters...



Bad Bug Continued...



The brown marmorated stink bug (*Halyomorpha halys*, right) can be distinguished from the brown (*Euschistus servus*, left) and bark (*Brochymena quadripustulata*, center) stink bugs by markings and the white bands at the joints of the antennae. (Note: These images not necessarily to scale.)

"That's why we want the public, pest control operators and those in the landscape industry to be aware that we really want to know about possible sites before they escalate as they have elsewhere."

Wizzie Brown, Austin urban entomologist, said the pest is originally from Asia, was spotted in Pennsylvania in 1998 and has spread from there.

"Since it's an invasive species, natural predators and parasites can't keep populations in check," she said. "It also seems that the pesticides we have do not do much to help manage the populations."

Dr. Charles Allen, entomologist at San Angelo, said populations in Pennsylvania, Delaware, Maryland, Virginia, West Virginia and other states have built up to high levels as they feed on apples, peaches and other fruits.

"We think this stink bug will feed on pecans in Texas," Allen said. "And will probably be a huge problem in grapes because just one or a few stink bugs can taint the flavor of a whole vat of wine."

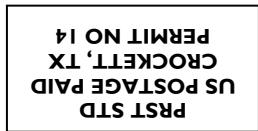
Allen said they also dine on tomatoes, peppers and a wide variety of other garden crops and ornamentals ...and they have entered homes by the thousands where they leave a foul odor.

The brown marmorated stink bug looks just like other stink bugs, but drab brown with black mottling and a distinctive pattern of alternating white and black triangles around the outside of the abdomen. If folks start noticing a new stink bug, one they haven't seen before, then the state wants to know about it.

Here's how to report it: samples should include the name and contact information of the sender, the location the bug was found, and the plant or place where it was found. Ree said specimens should be put in something like a pill bottle (preferably dead) and sent to Kira Metz, Minnie Belle Heep Building 216D, 2475 TAMU, College Station, TX 77843-2475. Metz is the U.S. Department of Agriculture domestic insect identifier headquartered on the Texas A&M campus at College Station.

Jo Smith

If you would rather receive an email version of our newsletter and other program information instead of a mailed copy—please call our office and request to be added to our email list.



Houston County Extension Office
716 Wells Street
Crockett, Texas 75835

TEXAS A&M AGRICULTURE EXTENSION

Houston County Extension Office

Phone: (936) 544-7502

Fax: (936) 544-5321

Email: jo.smith@ag.tamu.edu

Website: <http://houston.agrilife.org>

716 Wells Street

Crockett, Texas 75835

Hours: 8:00 am to 12:00 pm

1:00 pm to 4:30 pm

Improving Lives

Improving Lives