

Agriculture/Horticulture Newsletter

March 2024

Multi County Wildlife Program April 23, 2024

Make plans to join us for the Multi-County Wildlife Program in Menard, April 23, 2024.

Topics will include:

Horned Lizards—Mark Mitchell, Mason Mountain TPWD

Feral Hogs—Mikayla Killam—AgriLife

Turkeys and Habitat—Meagan Clayton—AgriLife

Birding with Extension—Liz Tidwell—AgriLife

New Technology in Predator Calls—Gary Roberson—Burnham Brothers and *CARNIVORE TV*



In this issue:

- Multi County Wildlife Program
- Texas Panhandle Fires
- Multi County Landowner Series
- Ag Census Shows 17,700 Lost Farms
- Four Tips for Easier Mowing and Keeping Lawns Lush

Supplies Needed in Panhandle:

- Hay/Feed
- Cow Feed
- Wildlife Feed
- Salt Blocks
- Protein Tubs
- Fence Supplies
- Vet Supplies (vet wrap, antibiotics)

Texas Panhandle Wildfires: What You Need to Know

Firefighters in the Texas Panhandle are still trying to keep the largest wildfire in state history from spreading beyond the 1.1 million acres it has already incinerated as weather officials warned of dry, windy conditions. The Smokehouse Creek fire, beginning in Canadian, or Hemphill County, is now 87% contained in Hutchinson County.

The Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service is working through our Extension county agents and Disaster Assessment & Recovery Unit, DAR, to help the residents of the Texas Panhandle who sustained losses as a result of the wildfires beginning February 26, 2024

Wildfire Relief for the Texas Panhandle is being coordinated through a combination of local and state resources. Our agency will continue to make regular updates to the list of local agricultural resources and contacts below. Attached is the link to find information on how and where to donate:

https://agrilifeextension.tamu.edu/wp-content/uploads/2024/03/2024_EXT_PanhandleWildfireReliefResources_20240308_4pm.pdf

Multi County Landowner Program Series



Multi-County Program Series

There will be four educational opportunities in April for landowner's of all levels, with topics ranging from leasing, liability and law, to new and beginning landowner.

Programs will include:

- April 12**– Ex-Urban Landowner NRCS Training
- April 13**– New and Beginning Landowner Workshop
- April 23**– Owning Your Piece of Texas: Key Laws Texas Landowner's Need to Know
- April 24**– Rancher's Leasing Workshop

For more information and to register, visit: https://agrilifetoday.tamu.edu/2024/01/26/statewide-workshops-to-connect-new-rural-landowners-with-natural-resource-personnel/?fbclid=IwAR2i_Hg6-NFYlzX6tO1bBVvS_iKoB6yM8PFaIa1gFO9vBZzL7yOwLGpC4oE

OWNING YOUR PIECE OF TEXAS: KEY LAWS TEXAS LANDOWNERS NEED TO KNOW

April 23, 2024 - 9:00 - 4:00
Texas A&M AgriLife Research and Extension Center
7887 N US Hwy 87 North
San Angelo, TX
Registration \$75.00
7 Hours CE credit available for real estate agents

Speakers Include:
Tiffany Dowell Lashmet, Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Ag Law Specialist
Dr. Blake Bennett, Texas A&M AgriLife Extension District Economist
Kyle Weldon, Attorney
James D. Bradbury, PLLC
Stu Chaney, Attorney, Mars, Ellis & Hodge, LLP

Topics Include:
• Eminent domain
• Landowner liability
• Fence law
• Special use tax valuation
• and much more!

REGISTER HERE

bit.ly/OYPTSanAngelo

Chemical Weed and Brush Control Reference Guide—Updated

ERM-1466 Chemical Weed and Brush Control Reference Guide was updated in May of 2020 to include the most recent chemicals.

This publication provides general suggestions for herbicides used to control brush and weeds on Texas rangelands. It also gives information on the levels of control expected. Visit the Agrilife Bookstore for the free download:

<https://agrilife.org/westtexasrangelands/files/2020/05/ERM-1466.pdf>

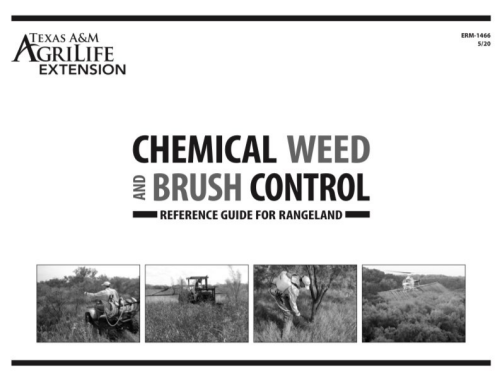


Figure 9. Mesquite tree showing lateral roots and branching taproot.

Educational programs of the Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service are open to all people without regard to race, color, sex, religion, national origin, age, disability, genetic information, or veteran status. The Texas A&M University System, U.S. Department of Agriculture, and the County Commissioners Courts of Texas Cooperating.

Ag Census Shows Texas Lost Over 17,700 Farms

Julie Tomascik, Editor, Farm Bureau



Texas farmland declined by more than 1.6 million acres with a loss of over 17,700 farms, according to the latest Census of Agriculture.

As of 2022, there were 125,417,325 acres of Texas land dedicated to farming and ranching compared to 127,036,184 five years ago.

Texas lost about 887 acres per day, according to ag census data.

And the number of farms decreased from 248,416 to 230,662.

It's a trend that U.S. agriculture follows. -

There are slightly more than 1.9 million farms in the U.S., down 142,000 or 7% from the previous survey.

"The downward trend of the number of farms in Texas and the U.S. has been taking place for decades," said Brant Wilbourn, Texas Farm Bureau associate director of Commodity and Regulatory Activities. "Rising costs, weather disasters, increased regulations and lack of available labor have made agricultural production difficult to remain economically sustainable."

It's a concern U.S. Secretary of Agriculture Tom Vilsack noted in his speech at the American Farm Bureau Federation last month.

"This survey is essentially telling us, asking us the critical question of whether as a country are we okay with losing that many farms," Vilsack said. "Are we okay with losing that much farmland, or is there a better way?"

In his speech, he encouraged farmers to consider generating additional revenue through climate-smart initiatives and bioproduct production, especially as the ag census notes many farmers rely on second incomes outside of the farm.

The average farm size, however, increased in both Texas and the U.S.

In Texas, the average farm size is 544 acres, up from 511 in 2017. In the U.S., the average farm size is 463 acres, an increase of about 23 acres.

"The increased farm size could be attributed to some consolidation within agriculture as some farmers left the industry over the last five years," Wilbourn said.

The number of new and beginning farmers has increased, which is encouraging news, Wilbourn noted. But the latest census results show the number of farmers over the age of 65 is outpacing younger farmers.

"Agriculture has endured this trend for many decades, but this data shows there's still interest in younger generations, and we're excited about the impact they'll make," Wilbourn said.

According to the ag census, the average U.S. farmer is 58.1 years old. In Texas, the average age is 59.9 years old.

There are 481,821 new and beginning farmers with five years of experience or less in the U.S. In Texas, that number is 59,856.

There were 245,585 male and 157,291 female farmers in Texas at the time the census was taken.

In the U.S., 1.2 million female farmers and ranchers accounted for 36% of all producers, and 57% of all farms had at least one female decision maker.

Commodity stats

U.S. farms and ranches produced \$543 billion in agricultural products, up from \$389 billion in 2017.

Texas remains the state with the most farms and is ranked third in total value of agricultural production behind California and Iowa at \$32.2 billion.

Texas remains a top producer of cattle, cotton, sheep, goats, horses, and dry hay, excluding alfalfa.

Texas cotton production accounts for 22% of the total U.S. cotton value of production, and cattle and calf production accounts for 17% of the total value of production.

The number of acres of most crops decreased on this census, which is likely due to the ongoing drought conditions Texas experienced during the survey period.

"These prolonged dry conditions have prevented planting of many acres across the state," Wilbourn said. "That's really drawn down total production when you combine it with decreased yields from the dry years."

Four Tips for Easier Mowing and Keeping Lawns Lush



Pablo Agustin Boeri, Ph.D., Turfgrass Specialist

As the weather starts to get warmer and homeowners are preparing their lawns for spring, many may be dreading the idea of mowing in the hot sun in the coming months.

However, turfgrass mowing doesn't have to be as tedious and exhausting as many may think. There are practices to make mowing quicker and easier to keep lawns looking lush with less work.

Tip one: The right mower matters

The kind of mower you use can make or break your mowing habits. The sharper you keep your blades, the quicker and easier it will be to cut your grass.

Boeri said if you let your blades get too dull, your turfgrass will be damaged. This can cause grass to be cut at uneven lengths, which makes mowing more tedious.

Autonomous mowers or robot mowers have been gaining popularity due to various benefits, such as reduced labor, energy consumption and gas emissions compared with traditional, gasoline-powered mowers.

"Robot mowers have small blades that only need to be changed every month or two to keep them sharp," Boeri said. "Which is nothing compared to the larger task of changing a rotary mower's blade."

Tip two: Reducing mowing

Once the temperatures start to increase, mowing can be a daunting task to many homeowners, especially if their yard doesn't get much shade. Boeri said there are practices you can take to reduce the amount of mowing without making your yard look overgrown.

"If you irrigate too much and use more than the recommended amount of fertilizer, your grass will grow too quickly and you will have to mow more often to avoid scalping the turf," Boeri said. To learn how much water your specific yard needs, AgriLife Extension offers the WaterMyYard program, which will send you weekly watering advice specific to your irrigation systems and lawn.

If you choose to use a nitrogen-based fertilizer for your grass, Boeri said it should be kept at a minimum for less frequent mowing.

"It's better to use a fertilizer that will release slowly," he said, "If you use a quick-release fertilizer, your grass will grow significantly in a shorter amount of time and can be hard to keep

up with."

If you want to avoid mowing in the summer, you can maintain irrigation at a minimum and let your grass go dormant. Check the drought tolerance of your turfgrass and the soil conditions before doing so. Boeri warned that if you are concerned with the color of your grass, your lawn will look brown if you let it go into dormancy.

Tip three: Select the right turfgrass

How often homeowners need to mow is also dependent on the kind of grass they have. Some grasses have slower vertical growth rates than others, which can produce greener looking lawns with less maintenance.

"If you're looking into picking a new turfgrass, buffalograss is a native grass that can be left unmowed," he said. "Species like Bermuda grass tend to recover faster than other turfgrasses from scalping damage."

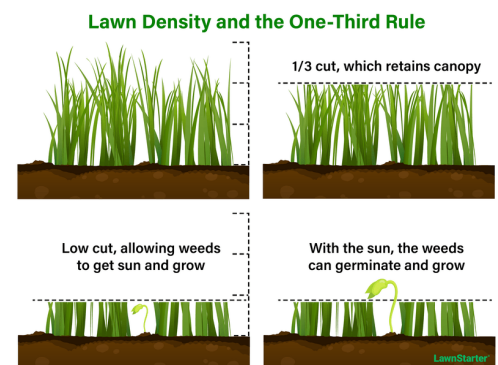
Boeri said ProVista, a St. Augustine grass variety, is also a good low-maintenance breed of turfgrass. This variety has a gene that makes the grass denser and lower to the ground, requiring less mowing than other grass varieties.

Tip four: Don't cut your grass too low

One of the most important things to remember when taking care of your lawn is to follow the recommended mowing height. Boeri compares the practice of mowing your lawn to pruning a plant.

"We need to follow proper maintenance practices and to make sure we aren't reducing the grass's ability to deal with stressors such as drought," he said.

Boeri said the general rule is to mow less than one third of the leaf each time you mow. It's important for homeowners to be wary of the height of their turfgrass and the frequency of mowing to ensure lawns are kept happy and healthy.



Lisa Brown
CEA-ANR—Menard County
325.396.4787
lbrown@ag.tamu.edu

Sarita Short
CEA-ANR-MucCulloch County
325.597.1295
sarita.short@ag.tamu.edu

Morgan Runyan
CEA-ANR-Coke County
325.453.2461
morgan.runyan@ag.tamu.edu

Brook Nervig
CEA-ANR-Concho County
325.732.4304
brook.nervig@ag.tamu.edu

Educational programs of the Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service are open to all people without regard to race, color, sex, religion, national origin, age, disability, genetic information, or veteran status. The Texas A&M University System, U.S. Department of Agriculture, and the County Commissioners Courts of Texas Cooperating.