

Agriculture/Horticulture Newsletter

February 2024

Texas Farm Ranch & Wildlife Expo February 29th-March 1st, 2024

Make plans to join us February 29th - March 1st, for this year's expo. Check out our educational seminars, earn continuing education credits, see 4-H & FFA agricultural mechanics projects, and visit the trade show with over 200 vendors. There's something for everyone, and best of all, it's all free to attend!

There will be a total of 15 CEUs, and 10 TREC credits offered.

Full Agenda & Flyer:

[2024 TFRWE Full Agendas.pdf](#)

[TFRWE CEU Flyers 2024.pdf](#)



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- Tight Hay Supplies in Texas
- Wildlife Seminar—Save the Date
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Back-to-back years of impacts from drought have left Texas hay supplies tight as cattle producers feed herds through the winter.

Hay supplies remain tight for Texas cattle producers, Jason Cleere, Ph.D., AgriLife Extension

David Anderson, Ph.D., AgriLife Extension economist and professor in the Department of Agricultural Economics, Bryan-College Station, said tight supplies and higher demand is driving prices upward. Anderson said Dec. 1 hay stocks were the third lowest on record behind 2022 and 2012, respectively.

Texas hay yields averaged 1.87 tons per acre in 2023 compared to 1.56 tons per acre in 2022, but tonnage was still below historic averages, he said. Producers had yielded 1.95 tons per acre on average since 2012.

The national price for round bales is \$102, but Cleere said grass hay bales in Texas have been selling for \$100-\$140, or \$200-\$280 per ton based on quality.

Anderson said Oklahoma hay stocks were up 97% compared to last year, while New Mexico, which produces mostly alfalfa, was up 25% and Kansas was down 12%.

“Prices are not as high as a year ago, but they are indicative of the tighter supplies and higher input costs,” Anderson said. “There are fewer cows to feed, but the costs to keep herds fed through winter after poor hay and grazing production has translated into tough decisions for some producers.”

Multi County Wildlife Program



Menard

Mark your calendars and make plans to come join us for the Multi County Wildlife Program April 23, 2024 in Menard.

Topics will include:

Horned Lizards—Mark Mitchell, Mason Mountain TPWD

Feral Hogs—John Tomecek—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*



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>

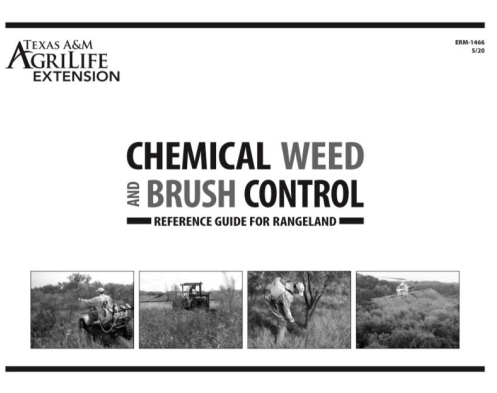


Figure 9. Mesquite tree showing lateral roots and branching taproot.

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.

- ⇒ With the EPA's Draft Herbicide Strategy released last summer, five major questions come to the forefront in an article published by Progressive Farmer.
- ⇒ The draft strategy, which was released last summer, represents the agency's attempt to become legally compliant with the Endangered Species Act (ESA) while still ensuring predictable herbicide access for growers. The strategy proposes a menu of mitigation measures intended to reduce off-target movement of agricultural herbicides and protect endangered and threatened species and their habitat from exposure. But many questions surround how the final proposal will be implemented and enforced.

1. What does Herbicide Strategy compliance look like?

"If I'm utilizing multiple chemistries on my farm, how complex is it going to be for me to remain compliant with the label?" asked Montoney-Crawford. "Probably increasingly complicated. We have a lot of questions on whether or not you're actually going to be able to do that."

2. Who's responsible for the mitigation measures?

Aaron Hager, associate professor of weed science at the University of Illinois, said that many of the mitigations outlined, such as establishing grass waterways, filter strips or contour farming, will require physical manipulation of farmland.

3. Who will be liable?

"We're seeing this kind of shift in where liability is going to fall," Montoney-Crawford said. "Does it lie on the person who's actually making those applications on the farm, but doesn't have control over the land? Does it need to fall instead on the landowner, who may or may not be meeting those mitigations? And then particularly even more relevant is going to be what kind of documentation do you need?"

4. How will enforcement occur?

Montoney-Crawford explained that as co-regulators with EPA, the state departments of agriculture have been responsible for the enforcement of herbicide label requirements. Ensuring compliance and enforcing the Herbicide Strategy would greatly expand the states' roles, requiring more staff, funding and other resources.

5. When might the herbicide strategy go into effect?

It's been nearly six months since the Draft Herbicide Strategy was released. A Final Herbicide Strategy is expected by May 30. That's the date EPA agreed to when it settled the longstanding "megasuit" that covered more than 1,000 pesticide products and 35 active ingredients.



Full Article:

[Five Unanswered Questions About EPA's Herbicide Strategy \(dtnpf.com\)](https://www.dtnpf.com)

The Draft Herbicide Strategy can be found here: [Regulations.gov](https://www.regulations.gov)

When is the Proper Time to Prune Yard Trees?



Douglas F. Welsh, Professor and Extension Horticulturist

February To-Do List

Proper pruning enhances the beauty of almost any landscape tree and shrub, while improper pruning can ruin or greatly reduce its landscape potential.

Reasons for Pruning

- To train the plant
- To maintain plant health
- To improve the quality of flowers, fruit, foliage, or stems
- To restrict growth

Plan Approach to Pruning

The skilled pruner first removes all dead, broken, diseased or problem limbs by cutting them at the point of origin or back to a strong lateral branch or shoot. Often, removing this material opens the canopy sufficiently so that no further pruning is necessary. The next step in pruning is to make any training cuts needed. By cutting back lateral branches, the tree or shrub is trained to develop a desired shape, to fill in an open area caused by storm or wind damage or to keep it in bounds to fit a given area.

When to Prune

In general, the best time to prune most plants is during late winter or early spring before growth begins. The least desirable time is immediately after new growth develops in the spring. A great amount of food stored in roots and stems is used in developing new growth. This food should be replaced by new foliage before it is removed; if not, considerable dwarfing of the plant may occur. This is a common problem encountered in pruning. It also is advisable to limit the amount of pruning done late in summer as

new growth may be encouraged on some plants. This growth may not have sufficient time to harden off before cold weather arrives resulting in cold damage or winter kill. Prune plants damaged by storms or vandalism or ones with dead limbs as soon as possible to avoid additional insect and disease problems that may develop.

Pruning Equipment

To know and practice the rules of pruning is most important, but of equal importance is using the correct tools. Equipment can be limited to a few items if the proper ones are selected. Select tools that will do the job, keep a sharp edge, and are relatively easy to sharpen and handle.

Making Prune Cuts Correctly

When cutting back to an intersecting (lateral) branch, choose a branch that forms an angle of no more than 45 degrees with the branch to be removed. Also, the branch that you cut back to should have a diameter of at least half that of the branch to be removed. Make slanting cuts when removing limbs that grow upward; this prevents water from collecting in the cut and expedites healing.

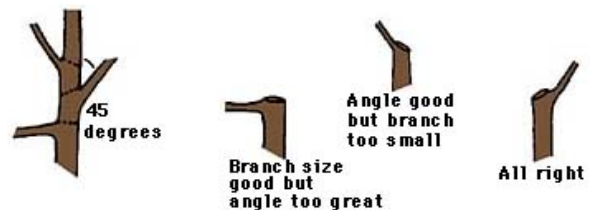


Figure 5. Pruning back to an intersecting lateral branch

To learn more about Proper Pruning Techniques, visit: [Follow Proper Pruning Techniques - Earth-Kind® Landscaping Earth-Kind® Landscaping \(tamu.edu\)](https://www.earth-kind.com/landscaping)

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