

# AGRICULTURE AND HORTICULTURE

## Newsletter

March / 2023

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## New Events Added

Spring is just around the corner. Are you ready? Check us out at:

[www.smith.agrilife.org](http://www.smith.agrilife.org)

[facebook.com/SmithCountyAgrilife](https://facebook.com/SmithCountyAgrilife)



Clint Perkins

SMITH COUNTY  
EXTENSION AGENT  
AGRICULTURE &  
NATURAL RESOURCES



Greg Grant

SMITH COUNTY  
EXTENSION AGENT  
HORTICULTURE



Anthony Brown

SMITH COUNTY  
EXTENSION AGENT  
AGRICULTURE &  
NATURAL RESOURCES

# Muddy Pond By: Clint Perkins

With the recent rains, many of our East Texas farm ponds are filling up or have become full. With that being said, muddy water is often a problem in farm ponds because it inhibits the growth of natural fish foods and is not aesthetically pleasing. In addition, the reduced visibility in muddy ponds limits the ability of sight-feeding predators, such as large-mouth bass, to feed on forage populations effectively.



The first step in clearing ponds is to inspect the watershed and shoreline for signs of erosion. Grass sod should be established on bare areas. Rocks or other rip-rap material should be placed on shorelines of larger ponds if eroded by wave action. Many ponds become temporarily muddy following heavy rains, but clearing usually occurs in a few days. Abundant bullhead catfish and/or common carp populations may also cause muddy conditions and should be eliminated. If heavy rainfall or undesirable fish are not causing muddy conditions, the cause is negatively charged clay particles being suspended in the water because they are so small. A good compound recommended for clearing ponds is agricultural limestone. Agricultural limestone is calcium carbonate, and the calcium carries two positive charges. The suspended clay is negatively charged. They attract like a magnet and become heavy then flocculates (settles out) to the bottom leaving the water clearer.

Early spring is a good time to start a management program for ponds and small lakes. If managed correctly, these ponds or lakes can be a source of recreation and food for your family. We need to look at some management tips to get started.

# Muddy Pond By: Clint Perkins

The first area to look at managing a farm pond is to know the alkalinity of the water. Liming is a critical step that is often overlooked by landowners. Just like pastures, ponds have an optimum alkalinity level that enhances fish growth by keeping the food chain in balance. When alkalinity dips below 20.3 parts per million, it is time to add agricultural limestone. Ponds in East Texas should be tested just like you test a hay meadow. It is very important to test before you begin a stocking program. Late winter to early spring is the best time to lime a pond. What lime source is needed? Agricultural limestone just like is used in pastures and hay fields is an adequate material for correcting water pH. DO NOT use hydrated lime as it can change the pH too quickly and cause a fish kill. If you have any questions, please contact Clint Perkins at the Smith County Extension Office at 903-590-2980



# Helping Bluebirds in East Texas :

By Greg Grant

Thanks to extensive ecosystem and habitat changes, the ever popular eastern bluebird (“the songbird of happiness”) was once considered doomed to extinction. Although their numbers are now stable in America, mostly thanks to artificial nest boxes, the devastating freeze of 2021 killed thousands in East Texas. Late winter is historically the time to either clean out existing bluebird nest boxes or install new ones to help them recover.

It’s important to know that bluebirds are country birds, not city dwellers. They prefer wide open spaces like pastures, golf courses, parks, vacant lots, and cemeteries; not neighborhoods and cities packed with people, houses, buildings, or trees. You can also put away the bird seed, because bluebirds are insect and berry eaters, not seed eaters. This means you need to lay off the insecticides and let your gardens go to the birds. Adults, as well as their young, all feed on insects during the growing season, supplemented by small berries during the winter. Some of the best berried plants for attracting bluebirds are possumhaw and other hollies, dogwoods, elderberry, Virginia creeper,



pokeweed/pokeberry, snailseed, red cedar, hackberry (sugarberry), wax myrtle, smilax, rattan vine, blueberries, and farkleberries/sparkleberries (huckleberries). If you don’t have these in your landscape, at least leave them on the edge of your property, a vacant lot, or your place in the country if you have one.

# Helping Bluebirds in East Texas : By Greg Grant

Bluebirds need food, shelter, and water year-round. They have the potential to raise up to three broods a year here. It's amusing to watch the parents trying to wean their first batch while starting a new nest and family. The grown children make quite a racket trying to attract their parents' attention with animated gestures saying, "Feed me. Feed me now!"

One reason East Texas has so many bluebirds is there are both open areas for foraging and nesting, and forested areas full of insects and berries. The margins of woods are great places for adult birds as they can partake of the many insects in the open areas and the shelter, shade, and fruit of the woodland areas. If you have a choice when placing a bluebird nesting box, however, always choose the most open area you can find. Those boxes placed near wooded areas generally house equally cute Carolina chickadees, tufted titmice, or flying squirrels. Make sure the nest boxes you put up can be opened so old nests can be removed between broods. Bluebirds like clean houses. Entrance holes should be exactly 1 ½ inches in diameter.

For more information about bluebirds in Texas visit [texasbluebirdsociety.org](http://texasbluebirdsociety.org).



# Do you want some gravy with your mashed potatoes ? By: Anthony Brown

On average each American consumes about 125 lbs. of potatoes or by-products from potatoes each year. Growing Irish potatoes in East Texas is simple and is not labor-intensive crop to maintain. Unlike most vegetables the edible part of the plant grows underground and is called a tuber not a root. After we eat potatoes with a meal, we sometimes become tired and sleepy, this is due to the high amounts of starch that potatoes contain, but they also provide good amounts of vitamins and minerals. Early spring and late fall are the best times for Irish potatoes to grow-- the days are warm, but the nights are cool. The two most common types are the red and white potatoes. Both types have different advantages that make them unique; the red potatoes can store longer, and the white variety will cook better. The different varieties that do well in Texas are:

- Red Flesh (Dark Red Norland)
- Red Lasorda
- Viking (White Flesh)
- Atlantic Gemchip
- Kennebec
- Superiod, (Yellow Flesh)
- Yukon Gold (Russet)
- Century Russet
- Norgold M
- Russet Norkatah



Irish potatoes like to be in full sun in well drained, and slightly acidic soils. When preparing your seedbed work the soil into beds about 10 – 12 inches high and rows about three feet apart. Fertilization is needed early while growing potatoes. It is recommended that fertilizer is applied before planting. Flatten the beds 6-8 inches high and 10-12 inches wide when applying fertilizer. With the corner of a hoe open a trench down the row about 4 inches deep on each side of the seedbed. Apply half of the fertilizer, depending on your soil test and fertilizer recommendation. The seed piece or (eye) will be planted in the middle row between the two trenches. Potatoes are not traditionally grown using a seed; however, pieces of the potato will start a new potato. This is normally called an eye.

# **Do you want some gravy with your mashed potatoes ? By: Anthony Brown**

**Depending on the potato size there can be several different eyes, and the potato can be cut up more than 4 or 5 times. Be sure and cut an eye out that is big and healthy to ensure that the potato will establish a good root system. Cut the potato about half the size of a hen's egg. Before planting, you should cut the eyes out and store them in a well-ventilated area so they can heal and not rot when they are planted in cold, wet, or very hot weather. Note, if we do experience a late frost some potatoes will die if the eye is rotten. Irrigation is very essential during the growing seasons so be sure to water the fertilizer in the soil especially in sandy soils. In the case we do not have an adequate amount of rainfall, when beginning irrigation, you may find small growth cracks and second growth. If rainfall is followed by hot weather, the rest period for developing strong healthy tubers can be broken, causing them to sprout in the soil. Too much moisture will enlarge the pores on the tuber which causes them to rot in storage easily. Tubers produce on a potato above the eye. Soil should be pulled over the plant as it grows. Gardeners that plant in soft mulch have a smoother and better shape than those grown in heavy mulch. Potatoes will begin to enlarge and bulge through the soil. You need to cover the potatoes up with soil about 8-10 inches to protect them and keep them from turning green and keeping the soil temperature low which will increase the yield and quality. Most of the time potatoes will produce a flower and on occasions will produce some fruit. However, the fruit is not edible, but bear the true seed of the potato plant.**

**The natural predators to Irish potatoes are flea beetle, Colorado potato beetle, aphids, wireworm, and leafhopper. Weed control and Sevin (insecticide) are good mechanical and chemical alternatives that will help control the infestation. You can also use BT-based insecticides, as well as Sulphur, because it contains fungicidal properties that also help control disease. To prevent disease in potatoes, it is recommended that you rotate where you plant no more than once in the same area during a three year time span. You can also use neem oil, Sulphur and other fungicides before or after planting to prevent the spread of diseases. Harvesting potatoes is easy--when you see the tops begin to die then they are ready for harvest. You have to dig them out so it's best to use a shovel or spade 8-10 inches away from the potatoes, dig underneath, lift up, and proceed to shake the soil off the potatoes. To make sure that they are ripe you can rub your thumb across the skin and if the skin peels easily, then they are not ready for harvest just yet. After harvest potatoes need to dry out, they need to be in a well ventilated area. Typically, potatoes are fully grown in 95-110 days. If you get a spring crop, you can also have a summer crop. If you have any questions on how to purchase potatoes or need further assistance in growing potatoes, please call your local County Extension Agent.**

# THINGS TO DO IN

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# MARCH

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## **PLANT CARE:**

- Divide summer and fall-blooming perennials.
- Plant summer-blooming bulbs and tubers, such as crinums, cannas, daylilies, montbretia, hymenocallis, and lilies.
- Control weeds and refresh mulch in beds to retain moisture, moderate temperatures, and prevent weeds.
- After the danger of frost, set out tomato, pepper, and eggplant transplants and seed summer vegetables such as corn, beans, cucumbers, and squash. Rotate the planting position of the vegetable species from previous seasons to decrease disease likelihood.
- Begin planting summer bedding plants and perennial salvias after last frost (do not plant periwinkles until after Memorial Day).
- Allow spring and fall bulb foliage to die naturally in order to feed the bulb for next year. Don't cut off till after Mother's Day or yellow.
- Cut back frozen perennials, tropicals, and any freeze damage on shrubs.

## **FERTILIZE:**

- Apply 3:1:2 lawn fertilizer (15-5-10, 18-6-12 etc.) to annual bedding plants and vegetables.
- Do not fertilize lawns until mid-April when nights are warm and you've mowed the grass (not the weeds) several times.

## **PESTS:**

- Treat pests as they arise. Consider using proven organic or least toxic remedies for the health of your family and our earth, especially in the vegetable garden. Remember insects can be cured but diseases can only be prevented.
- Check crapemyrtles for bark scale and treat with a systemic insecticide when they first leaf out, but no later so as not to kill bees and pollinators.

## **ODDS & ENDS:**

- Canes of climbers should be secured.
  - Water gardens should be drained, cleaned, and replanted as needed.
  - Butterfly bushes (buddleia) should be cut back by  $\frac{3}{4}$ .
  - Apply pre-emergent herbicide ASAP for crabgrass, grassburs, and other annual summer weeds if they haven't already germinated.
  - Carefully apply broadleaf herbicide to weeds in lawn (weed and feed fertilizers are not very effective and not recommended).
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# Helpful Resources

## Horticulture

East Texas Gardening with Keith Hansen: [easttexasgardening.com](http://easttexasgardening.com)

Facebook Page: [facebook.com/easttexasgardening](https://facebook.com/easttexasgardening)

Greg Grant 's Blog: [arborgate.com/greg-ramblings](http://arborgate.com/greg-ramblings)

Facebook Page: [facebook.com/ggrantgardens](https://facebook.com/ggrantgardens)

Neil Sperry's Web Site: [neilsperry.com](http://neilsperry.com)

Facebook Page: [facebook.com/NeilSperryTexas](https://facebook.com/NeilSperryTexas)

Plant Answers: [plantanswers.com](http://plantanswers.com)

Texas Gardener Magazine: [texasgardener.com](http://texasgardener.com)

Facebook Page: [facebook.com/texasgardenermagazine](https://facebook.com/texasgardenermagazine)



## Agriculture

Ranch TV: <https://ranchtv.org>

Facebook Page: [facebook.com/ranchtv/](https://facebook.com/ranchtv/)

Texas A&M Wildlife and Fisheries Extension: <https://wfsc.tamu.edu>

Videos: <https://www.youtube.com/user/WFSCAgriLife>

Facebook Page: [facebook.com/wfscextension/](https://facebook.com/wfscextension/)

Texas A&M Natural Resources Institute: <https://nri.tamu.edu>

Facebook Page: [facebook.com/tamuNRI/](https://facebook.com/tamuNRI/)

Wild Pig Resources and Videos: <http://feralhogs.tamu.edu>



## University Based

Texas A&M Aggie Horticulture: [aggie-horticulture.tamu.edu](http://aggie-horticulture.tamu.edu)

Facebook Page: [facebook.com/aggiehorticulture](https://facebook.com/aggiehorticulture)

Integrated Pest Management: [ipm.tamu.edu](http://ipm.tamu.edu)

Insect Answers and Information: [citybugs.tamu.edu](http://citybugs.tamu.edu)

Disease Diagnostic Laboratory: [plantclinic.tamu.edu](http://plantclinic.tamu.edu)

Turf and Grass Care: [aggieturf.tamu.edu](http://aggieturf.tamu.edu)

Texas A&M Forestry Service: [tfsweb@tamu.edu](mailto:tfsweb@tamu.edu)

Soil Testing Information: [Soiltesting.tamu.edu](http://Soiltesting.tamu.edu)



## Gardens

SFA Garden in Nacogdoches: [sfagardens.sfasu.edu](http://sfagardens.sfasu.edu)

The Garden at Texas A&M: [gardens.tamu.edu](http://gardens.tamu.edu)

# Vegetable Garden Planting Guide

for the Tyler Area

	JAN	FEB	MAR	APR	MAY	JUN	JUL	AUG	SEP	OCT	NOV	DEC
ASPARAGUS (Crowns)												
BASIL *												
BEANS, BUSH & POLE												
BEEFS												
BROCCOLI *												
BRUSSEL SPROUTS *												
CABBAGE *												
CANTALOUPE (Muskmelon)												
CARROTS												
CAULIFLOWER *												
CHARD, SWISS												
CILANTRO												
COLLARDS/KALE *												
CORN, SWEET												
CUCUMBER												
DILL												
EGGPLANT *												
GARLIC (Cloves)												
LETTUCE (leaf)												
MUSTARD												
OKRA												
ONION (sets)												
PARSLEY *												
PEAS, ENGLISH/SNOW												
PEAS, SOUTHERN												
PEPPERS *												
POTATO, IRISH (Tubers)												
POTATO, SWEET (slips)												
PUMPKIN												
RADISH												
ROSEMARY*												
SPINACH												
SQUASH, SUMMER												
SQUASH, WINTER												
TOMATOES *												
TURNIPS												
WATERMELON												

\* = TRANSPLANTS

Plant seed unless otherwise noted

By: Greg Grant, Smith County Extension Agent- August 2021



# 2023 VECTOR MANAGEMENT CEU PROGRAM

# TEXAS A&M AGRI LIFE EXTENSION



## TYLER, TX

APRIL 5, 2023

Smith County Extension Office  
1517 West Front St #116  
Tyler, TX 75702  
8am - 3pm

**\$40**

Registration Fee  
Required



## INFORMATION:

This program is designed to educate personnel in cities and municipalities that are in the field of vector abatement or are working on setting up a vector management program.

The recertification program will educate on mosquitoes, ticks, flies, fleas & bugs, control tactics, trap usage, surveillance, virus testing, and mosquito control.

### Pesticide CEU's Offered:

- **5 Agricultural**
- **5 Structural**
- **5 Animal Control CE's**
- **5 Registered Sanitation**
- **5 Code Enforcement**

Lunch Provided

Register at: <https://tinyurl.com/TylerVectorCEU>

Or aim your phone's camera at the QR code above.

For more information, call 254-974-9447

# TRI COUNTY

# BEEF & FORAGE WORKSHOP

PRESENTED BY CHEROKEE, RUSK & SMITH COUNTIES

## APRIL 28, 2023

Cherokee County Expo

611 SE Loop 456 | Jacksonville, TX

3 TDA CEU CREDITS (1 IPM & 2 GENERAL)

REGISTRATION \$10

PLEASE RSVP BY APRIL 24TH TO

903.683.5416

SPONSORED BY THE FOLLOWING:



TEXAS A&M  
**AGRI**LIFE  
EXTENSION

### 9:00am

Reproductive Management of your Cow Herd

Dr. Perry, Associate Research Professor - Beef Cattle Reproductive Physiology

### 10:00am

Herbicide Result Demonstration Review (1 IPM)

Clint Perkins, CEA Smith County

### 11:00am

Farm Pond Weed Management (1 General)

Garrett Stampert, Pond Management Program Specialist, Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service

### 12:00pm - LUNCH

### 12:30pm

Using Drones for Herbicide Applications (1 General)

Darren Rozell, Rozell Sprayer Manufacturing

### 1:30pm - ADJOURN

Persons with disabilities needing accommodations for effective participation in the meeting should contact Cherokee County AgriLife Extension office at least a week in advance of the meeting or event to request mobility, visual, hearing or other assistance.

Texas A&M AgriLife Extension provides equal opportunities in its programs and employment to all persons, regardless of race, color, sex, religion, national origin, disability, age, genetic information, veteran status, sexual orientation, or gender identity. The Texas A&M University System, U.S. Department of Agriculture, and the County Commissioners Courts of Texas Cooperating.

# PRIVATE APPLICATOR TRAINING

Friday, May 12, 2023

First United Methodist Church

204 Hwy 31 West Chandler, Texas 75758

8:30 am to 12:00 pm

An opportunity to obtain the required training for Private Applicators. ***Training only, testing will not be offered during this training.*** The Texas Department of Agriculture no longer offers paper exams. ***Testing procedures will be explained during the training.***

Training is required for all Private Applicators. Study materials are available for purchase for \$50 including the Private Applicator General Manual, the Texas Department of Agriculture's Laws and Regulations Manual, and all the handouts/worksheets needed for this training. These materials can be purchased ahead of the class for review or the day of the training. A \$10 Registration fee will be charged for a total of \$60.00 for this training course. **Cash, Credit Card, or check** made payable to the Livestock and Forage Committee.

Contact:

\*To register for Training and/or to purchase study materials call  
(903) 590-2980

Anyone needing special assistance at an Extension program should contact the Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Office at (903) 590-2980 at least one week prior to the program or event.



## Wildlife Management Programs

# Controlling Feral Swine

### Topics:

- \* Biology & History of Feral Hogs
- \* Basic Trapping Systems
- \* Trapping Lease Program
- \* How can you Help

**\*\* Speakers:** Derrick Banks, PVAMU Wildlife management Specialist

Jacob Dykes Phd. Assistant Professor/ Wildlife Specialist  
Brandon Sagraves Wildlife Management Biologist

**Workshop Location:** Smith Co. Extension Office 1517 West Front Street Suite 116 Tyler,  
Texas 75702 (Cotton Belt Bld.)

**\*\*Registration Limit: First 50 Participants\*\*** Registration begins at 8:30am

03/10/23  
Friday

Lunch will be provided  
Please RSVP by: March  
7, 2023  
Contact 903-590-2980 or  
903-763-2924

Time:  
9:00am  
-  
1:00pm

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION: CEA Anthony Brown Smith County CEP Agent Office: 903-590-2980 Email: acbrown@pvamu.edu  
CEA Kasey Curtin Wood County CEP Agent - Office: 903-763-2924 Email: klcurtin@pvamu.edu

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# 2023 Master Gardeners Library Lecture Series

Please join us at 11:30 a.m. at the  
Tyler Public Library Taylor Auditorium  
201 S. College Avenue, Tyler, Texas  
*Lectures are free and open to the public*

### January 20

Dr. Andrew King, "Something old, Something new:  
Exciting new plants from one of Texas' oldest nurseries"  
Andrew King, a fourth generation East Texas nursery professional, will share many exciting new annuals, perennials, shrubs and trees for the East Texas garden. In addition to introducing the plants, Andrew will share stories and tips about each species that will aid gardeners in their quest to get the most out of their landscape."

### February 17

Andie Rathbone, "Prep Now for a Beautiful Garden Later"  
Learn from a Smith County Master Gardener what you can do in our colder winter months to ensure a beautiful garden when spring arrives.

### March 17

Elizabeth Waldrop, "The Physic: Gardens that Heal, Gardens that Harm"  
A Smith County Master Gardener gives an exploration of Physic Gardens, natural medicine both ancient and modern, and the plants that have been panacea and poison through time".

### April 21

Katy Barone, "No-till Garden for Small Spaces"  
A Smith County Master Gardener shows how to transform that small space into something beautiful with little effort.

### May 19

Dr David Creech, "Japanese Maples, Azaleas, Camellias and More-How Many Varieties Are Enough?"  
For over 35 years, SFA Gardens has been a collectors' garden acquiring as wide a range of plant materials as possible with a backbone of unusual trees and shrubs. The diversity of special collections and cultivars adapted to the Gulf Coast is part of the mission to educate, entertain and enlighten visitors and students to the wonders of adventuresome gardening in East Texas.



For more information contact: 903-590-2994  
<https://txmg.org/smith/events/>  
follow us on Facebook



# TEXAS NURSERY & LANDSCAPE ASSOCIATION – LANDSCAPE GUIDE



**\$ 15.00 each  
accept cash  
or check**

**AVAILABLE AT THE TEXAS A&M  
AGRILIFE EXTENSION OFFICE**

**1517 W FRONT ST. SUITE 116  
TYLER, TEXAS 75702**