

## Issues in Agriculture

*The Newsletter about Integrated Pest Management for the El Paso Valley*

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## ANNOUNCEMENTS

- Due to ever-increasing costs of sending this newsletter using the postal mail, the IPM newsletter will be delivered through email only. Please provide us with your email address.
- The **2014 El Paso Pecan Pest Management Workshop** will be conducted at the Texas AgriLife Research Center, 1380 A&M Circle, El Paso, TX 79927 on Wednesday, May 7, from 8:30 AM to noon. Topics: Pecan nut casebearer management and pests that may threaten El Paso pecans; presented by Bill Ree. Blackmargined and black pecan aphids; presented by Dr. Mark Muegge. Pecan emerging issues; presented by Dr. Jaime Iglesias. Contact: Dr. Salvador Vitanza (915) 860-2515. Three continuing education units will be provided to licensed pesticide applicators.
- **Flora Fest:** "Go Wild, Grow Native!" This celebration starts with a presentation on native plants on Friday night (April 25<sup>th</sup>, 7:00PM) at the Undergraduate Learning Center (UGLC-UTEP), Room 116, followed by a sale of native plants on Saturday and Sunday at the corner of University Ave. and Wiggins Road. Sale proceeds benefit the Chihuahuan Desert Gardens at the Centennial Museum.
- **Agriculture Business Workshop** is a free event on April 26<sup>th</sup> (8:00 AM - 5:00 PM) at the Texas A&M AgriLife Research Center Program is geared towards Military Veterans, Active Duty Military, small ranchers and farmers, women interested in Agri-Business or the beginning farmer or rancher. Topics will include: business startup, plan development, farming and ranching with disabilities, and financial funding for agriculture enterprises. Registration can be completed online at <http://txagrability.tamu.edu/>. Information: Erin Polosi. Phone (979) 847-6185, Email [empolosi@ag.tamu.edu](mailto:empolosi@ag.tamu.edu).
- **Gardening 101 Workshop Series:** All workshops are free of charge and will be held at the Multipurpose Center on 9301 Viscount. On May 9<sup>th</sup>, the topic of discussion will be plant propagation techniques. Information: Denise Rodriguez Texas A&M AgriLife Extension (915) 860-2515.
- **Texas Pecan Growers Association Annual Conference & Trade Show:** July 13-16, 2014. Embassy Suites, San Marcos, TX. Contact TPGA, 979-846-3285 or [pecans@tpga.org](mailto:pecans@tpga.org)
- El Paso Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service can now be visited on **Facebook**. Please connect with us and "like us" at: <https://www.facebook.com/pages/Texas-AM-Agrilife-Extension-El-Paso/323505147775231>. You can also visit the El Paso Texas A&M AgriLife **website** for updates and events: <http://elp.tamu.edu/>

### IPM-RELATED AWARENESS CAMPAIGNS IN APRIL:

- **Invasive Pest and Disease Awareness Month** (<http://tinyurl.com/lov579r>). Due to increased globalization and international travel, invasive pests often arrive on cargo ships or with returning travelers. You can take the following precautions to help reduce the spread of invasive pests and plants:

Only use local firewood. Before leaving a work or recreational site, look for and clean any insects or seeds that might be attached to your equipment, boots, gear, truck bed, tires, and harvesting equipment. Always declare any plant material brought in from travel abroad. Buy Local. Avoid using invasive plant species in your landscaping projects. Do not plant seeds of invasive plants in wildlife food plots.

- **National Pest Management Month.** This observance has been celebrated for more than 30 years by the National Pest Management Association. It honors the professional pest control industry for playing a key role in protecting both health and property from significant pest-borne threats. <http://tinyurl.com/k62mp7a>.
- The week of April 20-26 has been designated **Bed Bug Awareness Week** by the Professional Pest Management Alliance <http://www.pestworld.org/>. At Texas A&M AgriLife Extension “*Insects in the City*”, you will find a wealth of information on bed bug prevention and control. <http://tinyurl.com/mcvgxcv>
- **National Pecan Month** (<http://www.ilovepecans.org/april-is-national-pecan-month/>). Congratulations to everyone involved in the pecan industry! The National Pecan Shellers Association has been announcing April as the National Pecan Month. They promote pecans as snacks, highlight its positive effects on human health, and provide creative recipes that include pecan nuts.

### **IMPORTANT NEWS RELEASE:**

On April 7, the USDA announced Sign-Up Date for **Farmer and Rancher Disaster Assistance Programs**. The Livestock Indemnity Program (LIP) and the Livestock Forage Disaster Program (LFP) will provide payments to eligible producers for livestock deaths and grazing losses that have occurred since the expiration of the livestock disaster assistance programs in 2011, and including calendar years 2012, 2013, and 2014. Enrollment begins on April 15 for producers with losses covered by the Emergency Assistance for Livestock, Honeybees, and Farm-Raised Fish Program (ELAP) and the Tree Assistance Program (TAP).

**LIP** provides compensation to eligible livestock producers that have suffered livestock death losses in excess of normal mortality due to adverse weather. Eligible livestock includes beef cattle, dairy cattle, bison, poultry, sheep, swine, horses, and other livestock.

**LFP** provides compensation to eligible livestock producers that have suffered grazing losses due to drought or fire on publicly managed land.

**ELAP** provides emergency assistance to eligible producers of livestock, honeybees and farm-raised fish that have losses due to disease, adverse weather, or other conditions, such as blizzards and wildfires.

**TAP** provides financial assistance to qualifying orchardists and nursery tree growers to replant or rehabilitate eligible trees, bushes and vines damaged by natural disasters.

Information on the types of records necessary can be provided by our local FSA county offices. For more information, producers may review the 2014 Farm Bill Fact Sheet, ELAP, and TAP fact sheets online, or visit any local FSA office or USDA Service Center. More information at: <http://tinyurl.com/mtp5ovk>

### **COTTON:**

**Acreage in far west Texas and southern New Mexico:** There seems to be substantially greater cultivated acreage, with fields ready to be planted, than at this time of the year in 2013. Let’s hope that the surface irrigation water available will be released on a timely manner and in sufficient amounts to obtain a good crop this year. According to the NMSU cotton newsletter Volume 5, Number 1, the upland cotton intention in New Mexico for 2014 is 42,000 acres which is 7.2% increase over 2013 planted acreage.

I am in the process of establishing the **pima and upland variety trials**. I have contacted seed companies and Cooperators and hopefully soon we will start evaluating varieties and plant stand densities.

**Soil temperatures for cotton planting:** According to AgriLife cotton agronomists Randy Boman and Robert Lemon: “*The optimum planting target is to have a 10-day average soil temperature of 65°F at the 8-inch depth. If poor quality seed is planted, then 70°F may be a better target. At a minimum, soil temperatures in the seed and root zone should exceed 60°F and the 5-day forecast for daytime maximum temperatures should exceed 80°F. Additionally, nighttime minimum temperatures should be forecast to be above 50°F for the following 5 days.*”

Currently, our soil temperatures, at the 8-inch depth, have been in the high 50s, our 5-day forecast of maximum daily air temperature is between the high 70s to low/mid 80s, and our daily lows hover around the high 50s. When planting in cold, moist soil, slower plant development and greater incidence of seedling diseases should be expected. This may also result in poor plant stand, long “skips”, and lower yields. For practical reasons, sometimes the cotton grower is forced to start planting

a little earlier than recommended because of the length of time needed to complete their large acreage. Currently, very little cotton has been planted in El Paso and Hudspeth Counties and most fields are waiting for the right conditions.



## PECAN:

Many pecan orchards are receiving flood irrigation at this moment. Initially, I wanted to begin monitoring



pecan nut casebearer (PNC) in the second week of April by using PNC pheromone traps, but I had to delay placing these traps due to the strong winds and the inordinate amount of dust carried by recent dust storms; which can quickly reduce the efficacy of the “sticky boards” in the traps. On April 15, I placed a total of 10 traps in the El Paso lower valley pecan orchards. Half of these traps contain Mexican strain lures and half are provisioned with standard lures. Using both types of commercially available PNC pheromone lures will allow us a greater degree of precision to determine when the first generation moths start flying. It is advisable to avoid using the two types

of lures in a single trap because then it is not possible to know which lure is more effective. The type of pheromone trap you use is not important, as long as you place it early and at an accessible location even during flood irrigation. Every pecan grower in our area knows the “hot spots” where historically he or she detects the first PNC moths and in the greatest abundance. Dr. Jaime Iglesias will soon distribute a donation of PNC pheromone traps/lures to Mexican colleagues and pecan growers to monitor and aid PNC management. Assisting PNC control in the Mexican orchards in close proximity to the international border may consequently reduce pest pressure on American orchards.

**PNC damaging pecan shoots:** Most pecan growers and consultants are very familiar with the pest management practices aimed at detecting PNC moths in late April to early May, monitoring egg lay, detecting first significant nut entry, using action thresholds, etc. However, apparently not everybody is aware that PNC can also damage shoots during the spring season. For the past four years, I have noticed

this damage, especially in young trees. Yesterday, I went to visit a one-year old orchard near Socorro, which had many shoots damaged by PNC larvae. Once the damage is done, there are no many options to control this pest because the larvae are protected inside the tunnels and a “revenge application” would not accomplish much. As a result of this damage, pecan plants lose their apical dominance and produce



undesired branches. The plants are not at the risk of dying, but this damage creates additional labor costs by having to prune and retrain damaged trees later on. In this regard, Bill Ree, Extension Program Specialist at Texas A&M University AgriLife, recommends the application of either Confirm® (tebufenozide) or Intrepid® (methoxyfenozide) at bud break. He recalled an instance in the early 1990s when a pecan nursery in DeWitt County was suffering similar damage by the pecan bud moth, *Gretchena bolliana*. Confirm, at a rate of 8 oz, was used at that time with great success. We are planning to conduct field trials next year to refine control recommendations. In the publication “*Controlling the Pecan Nut Casebearer*” authored by Allen Knutson and Bill Ree, they state the following: “*Many third- and, if present, fourth-generation larvae do not feed, but crawl to the base of a dormant bud*

*where they build a tough, silken cocoon in which to spend the winter. In spring, these immature larvae leave their cocoons and feed by tunneling into shoots. Full-grown larvae pupate in shoot tunnels or in bark crevices. Moths from these overwintering larvae lay first-generation eggs on nutlets.*”

**NOTE:** In my previous newsletter, I summarized several presentations given at the Western Pecan Growers Conference in Las Cruces. I tried to be as accurate and true to their content. I did not intend to provide endorsement; especially considering the difference in recommendations emanating from different university systems. For instance NMSU recommended action threshold for black pecan aphid is one aphid per compound leaf, while Texas A&M AgriLife has it at three black pecan aphids per compound leaf.

### **POMEGRANATE:**

There is significantly less leaf curling and leaf distortion in the young growth than in previous years. In 2013, we believed to have identified the culprit of this symptom: the pomegranate leaf curl mite. This mite resembles an almost microscopic little “sausage” It hides in the tight leaf curls at the edge of the leaves where miticides have a hard time reaching it. Leaf curl mites are usually associated with a fast-moving predatory mite that keeps the leaf curl mite population levels under control. Dr. Mark Muegge, AgriLife Associate Professor and Extension Entomologist, thinks that this mite is a temporary problem. He said: “*It seems like our pomes experience the curled leaves every year, but if we just leave it alone, the trees tend to grow out of it. I believe that the leaf curl mite population levels build up first, causing leaves to curl, and then over time, the predatory mites come in and knock the leaf curl mites out. It is my opinion that the leaf curl mite does not cause any loss in fruit quality or yield*”. I recently checked many pomegranate leaves and could find neither the pomegranate leaf curl mite nor the predatory mites. They could be out there, but at extremely low levels. Field research is needed to determine if this mite affects

yield and best control tactics available. Pomegranate is one of the alternative crops for agricultural diversification that could be used in El Paso region because it has a high salt tolerance and does well in marginal soils. Although pomegranate plants have been established in El Paso for many decades, they have not been utilized as a commercial crop until very recently. Consumption of pomegranates offers many health benefits. Additionally, its current prices, appealing plant architecture, and showy flowers make it a very promising plant for production of fresh fruits, juice, seed oil, or as ornamental.



Leaf curling in pomegranate plants. Tornillo, 4/10/14

**SALTCEDAR BIOCONTROL PROGRAM:** On April 10, Dr. Sarah N. Zukoff, Assistant Professor of

Larger Tamarisk Beetle in Clark County, KS. 4/10/14. Photo by Sarah Zukoff



Entomology at the Kansas State University Southwest Research and Extension Center, reported that the saltcedar tamarisk beetle is abundant and active in Clark County, KS. The beetle species there is the Larger Tamarisk Beetle, *Diorhabda carinata*, with a past hybridization with the Mediterranean Tamarisk Beetle, *Diorhabda elongata*. A few days later, Dr. Zukoff mentioned that they just had two freezing nights and the beetle survival was iffy. She reported: “Apparently, the beetles have not gone back under the debris, but instead they have remained on the trees and are moving very, very slowly”. Tamarisk beetles are active in north Texas too. I am not surprised about not seeing beetles active at this time of the year in the El Paso area. In 2013, they appeared in late April to early May. I suspect the differences among regions, may correspond to the beetle species composition. Locally, we have the Subtropical Tamarisk beetle, *Diorhabda sublineata*. Hopefully, this beetle will come back strong this year and saltcedar plants will continue to deplete their energy reserves leading to their eventual death or reduction in population levels. In ideal conditions, it may take between 3

to 5 years of significant sustained damage for the saltcedar plant to die. In general, the saltcedar plants look healthy and green with few dry branches.

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- West Texas Pecan Association
- Ag Market Resources
- El Paso Pest Management Association
- Texas Pest Management Association
- Valley Gin Company, Tornillo

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