


Issues in Agriculture

The Newsletter about Integrated Pest Management for the El Paso Valley

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ANNOUNCEMENTS

- You can download this and other IPM newsletters, check updates, and view upcoming events at the El Paso Texas A&M AgriLife Extension IPM website: <http://elp.tamu.edu/integrated-pest-management/>
- **Learning Opportunities** at <https://learn.extension.org/>: This website offers a great array of events to help you improve your knowledge and keep you up-to-date in areas of interest. For instance, tomorrow Friday, August 1 at 12:00 pm El Paso time, as part of the educational webinar series "**All Bugs Good and Bad**", Molly Keck, IPM Specialist Texas A&M AgriLife Extension, will discuss mosquitoes. Everyone is welcome to participate in the events listed at <https://learn.extension.org> as they match your interests. Please sign in with your Facebook, Twitter, or Gmail account to see what is new or get notifications of upcoming events.
- **Container gardening with herbs**. This training will be held at the El Paso Garden Center (3105 Grant Avenue, El Paso, TX 79930) on August 9, from 10:00 AM to noon. In addition, El Paso Nutrition Extension Agent, Inez Burcham, will conduct a cooking demonstration and recipe tasting using fresh herbs. The cost to attend this workshop is \$20. For more information call Denise Rodriguez at the Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service at (915) 860-2515 or email: droduiguez@tamu.edu
- **Gardening Educational Programs**: El Paso Master Gardeners have numerous presentations scheduled for the month of August. More information: <http://txmg.org/elpaso/events/>
- **The Community Collaborative Rain, Hail and Snow Network** (CoCoRaHS) is a grassroots volunteer network of backyard weather observers of all ages and backgrounds working together to measure and map precipitation (rain, hail, and snow) in their local communities. If you are interested in participating please contact Mike Hardiman at mike.hardiman@noaa.gov or (575) 589-4088.

COTTON:

Recent rains have helped with our soil moisture. This means we also need to keep our guard up to monitor incidence and development of cotton diseases such as Verticillium wilt, Fusarium wilt, cotton root rot, Southwestern cotton rust, and Alternaria leaf spot. Flooding in some areas of El Paso is expected and the maximum daily temperatures for the following three days will be in the mid to high 80s. For comparison, the average monthly maximum temperature for the month of July is 94.7°F at the El Paso International Airport (data from 1981 to 2010).

The cotton plants in the **Upland and Pima variety trials** and in the **plant stand density study** are developing normally. A field day will be conducted prior to harvest to tour these three demonstration plots. This will allow cotton farmers to make their own observations and draw their own conclusions.

I started capturing **bollworm** moths in my pheromone traps on July 8. They reached their peak numbers around July 15. Many farmers made insecticide applications against bollworms during that week; especially using Baythroid® XL.

Other Texas regions have reported high population levels of **fall armyworm**, but they are sparse in El Paso. I do not expect this situation to change in the near future.

Lygus bugs have been less abundant than in the previous two years. Last year in particular, many cotton growers in our region had to make insecticide applications to manage Lygus bugs that were occurring at damaging levels. Although Lygus populations have steadily increased in the last couple of weeks, I believe that any insecticide application against Lygus bugs from this moment forward would be a waste of resources. Current guidelines advise to stop monitoring Lygus bugs at cutout or 5 nodes above white flower (NAWF) because at that point most bolls are no longer susceptible to Lygus bug damage. In 2012, AgriLife cotton researchers R. B. Shrestha, M. N. Parajulee, and S. C. Carroll concluded that bolls are relatively safe at 28-30 mm diameter size (approximately two-week old bolls), with the caveat that cotton boll developmental rates may vary depending on the cultivar and crop management system.

PECAN:

Numbers of **pecan nut casebearer** (PNC) moths captured in pheromone traps have fluctuated since the second-generation peak observed around June 26. The third-generation PNC is underway. I would advise to continue monitoring third-generation PNC moths and nut damage by larvae, but AgriLife pest management guidelines, and our experience, indicate that third and fourth generations rarely threaten nut production.

Yellow pecan aphids were extremely abundant a month ago, but yellow pecan aphid populations in most orchards crashed more than two weeks ago and they remain at very low levels. Although **black pecan aphids** are also at very low population levels, they need to be monitored due to their potential for leaf damage and early defoliation.

Beneficial insects are abundant; especially lady beetles and green lacewings. These and other “friendly” bugs have built up larger population densities in alfalfa than in any other crop in our region.

SALT CEDAR BIOCONTROL PROGRAM:

I had been searching for the Subtropical Tamarisk Beetle (STB) in El Paso and Hudspeth Counties, TX since early April without much success. On May 20, I finally found a site southwest of Fort Hancock, next to the international border, with plants showing defoliation damage. Currently, the beetle is present at Indian Hot Springs (Hudspeth County) at relatively low levels. Following reports of beetle activity in Sunland Park, NM, I went there on July 24 and observed that every saltcedar plant was either partially or completely defoliated by the beetle! Larvae (in all instars or stages) outnumbered adults approximately 30 to 1. I visited all the surrounding areas. The large stands of reddish-brown saltcedar plants offered an impressive sight. The U.S. Section of the International Boundary and Water Commission (USIBWC) documented this beetle downstream of the Riverside dam adjacent to the Rio Bosque Wetlands Park near Socorro, Texas on July 23rd. Right now, STB is fairly common and active throughout El Paso and Hudspeth Counties. Saltcedar beetle populations are also strong in Southern New Mexico. It is interesting to see that most people perceive saltcedar biocontrol as a welcome development to mitigate the many negative effects this plant has on the environment and agricultural operations. However, bird lovers are concerned about the possible impact the

reduction of saltcedar stands may have on the endangered Southwestern Willow Flycatcher; which nests on saltcedar in the southern part of its geographical range. Fortunately, this bird species prefers nesting on plants other than saltcedar in its northern range. Certainly, weighing pros and cons of saltcedar biocontrol depends on the eye of the beholder: some people focus on the positive impacts of saltcedar plants such as pollen availability for honeybees and pollinators in general, soil erosion control, windbreaks, ornamental uses, nesting sites, shade and hiding places for wildlife, etc. Others who would like to see saltcedar plants either eradicated or present at low levels emphasize the facts that the genus *Tamarix* is currently classified as an invasive organism that has displaced native vegetation (especially cottonwood and willows) reaching up to 95-100% of the total trees in certain plant communities with obvious noxious effects on associated organisms. Negative impacts reported by researchers include the following aspects: native plant communities, wildlife, stream channel modification, water availability, soil salinity, wildfires, recreational usage, and agriculture. My observations from last year and during the ongoing season lead me to believe that this beetle species may not be noticeable in early or late spring, but from "hard to find" can quickly go to "extremely abundant" by the middle of summer. Current beetle abundance, at least in some locations, is in my opinion a great prognosis for coming years. Plant death does not occur as a result of the defoliation suffered in one season. It takes at least 3 to 5 years of continuous defoliation for the plants to deplete their energy reserves and eventually die.



Saltcedar plants appeared completely or partially defoliated in Sunland Park, NM on July 24, 2014. Similar conditions were observed in surrounding areas.

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