

Issues in Agriculture

The Newsletter about Integrated Pest Management for the El Paso Valley

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Announcements

- **2011 Pecan Pest Management Workshop** at the Texas AgriLife Research Center, 1380 A&M Circle, El Paso, TX 79927 on Thursday, May 12, from 8:30 AM to 12:00 PM. Topics: pecan nut casebearer forecast and control (Dr. Mark Muegge), pecan aphids biology and control (Dr. Salvador Vitanza), leaf footed and stink bugs management (Bill Ree), squirrel damage to pecans and its management (Dr. Jaime Iglesias). For more information call (915) 860-2515. Three continuing education units will be provided to licensed pesticide applicators. Cost: \$25.
- **Tri State Arkansas-Louisiana-Mississippi Pecan Trade Show and Convention.** Bossier City, LA June 16-17, 2011. Contact: Stephen Norman at 318-448-3139.
- **Oklahoma Pecan Growers Conference.** Bartlesville, Oklahoma. June 26 – 28, 2011. Contact: Janice Landgraf at 580-795-7644.
- **Texas Pecan Growers Annual Conference and Trade show.** Frisco, TX July 10-13, 2011. Contact: TPGA at 979-846-3285.
- The NMSU Agricultural Science Center at **Clovis Annual Field Day** has been scheduled for August 11. Registration begins at 8:30 am. Lunch will be served. Information: (575) 985-2292.
- The Desert Valley 4H Shooting Sports invites you to the **Benefit Trap Shoot** on Saturday May 7, at El Paso Skeet and Trap Club, 9817 Alameda, Socorro, TX 79927. Registration at 8:00 AM, shooting at 9:00 AM. Fees: 5-person team: \$250. Youth team: \$50. Auction, games, and brisket lunch. Info: 490-7571 or 433-5431.

GENERAL SITUATION:

So far this year has been for the records! In February we broke both historical low and high temperatures. Record lows reached 0°F for three consecutive nights (Feb. 2-4) and produced a great deal of destruction of ornamental plants; especially palms, eucalyptus, oleanders, boxwoods, and non-native cacti. This calamity has been a boom for plant nurseries as people race to replace dead flora. In April, West Texas suffered great losses caused by wildfires and more than a million acres went up in flames throughout the state. The culprit: unusually dry weather coupled with strong winds following a cold winter. According to the Texas Forest Service wildfires have destroyed more than 1,100 buildings and 2.1 million acres of grass, bushes, and scrubland up to now, and this battle is not over yet. On its website, the Forest Service currently reports 9 major uncontained fires. On April 26, we experienced hurricane-strength winds with gusts peaking at 80-81 mph! Today, the KVIA-TV weather report stated: “Wind gusts of up to 91 mph have occurred at Aguirre Springs near Las Cruces with isolated gusts measured to almost 80 mph over east El Paso.” Just for reference, the Saffir-Simpson hurricane scale classifies winds of 74-95 mph as category one hurricane. As far as precipitation goes, we are heading to surpass the longest period with no rainfall in the last 60 years. Local water reservoirs are extremely low due to many years with persistently low precipitation and reduced snowfall accumulation in southern Colorado and along the Rio Grande basin in New Mexico. As if this news was not dire enough, the US Department of the Interior has just issued a long-term forecast of 8-14% decline in annual flows of the Colorado, Rio Grande, and San Joaquin rivers over the next four decades. Dwindling water supplies, in a region that holds one of the fastest population growths in the nation, point to an ever-increasing need for the use of water conservation technologies. An interesting discussion on irrigation water available for New Mexico and West Texas farmers was presented in El Paso Inc. (<http://www.elpasoinc.com/readArticle.aspx?issueid=335&xrec=6388>) in an article by David Crowder titled: “Gone to Texas: Dona Ana farmers watch water go by”.

COTTON:

Most growers are finishing planting their cotton fields. The majority of cotton varieties being planted at this time are upland cotton. Most Pima cotton has been planted already because it needs a longer growing season to reach full potential. I know that due to logistics, large acreage cotton farmers not always can wait for warm soil to plant their crop. As one farmer recently put it: “If I wait for the right soil temperature to plant, I will finish planting by June.” If you have to plant when the soil has not reached optimum conditions, consider

adding a fungicide treatment (at planting) to protect your crop from seedling diseases. The thrips complex is one of the earliest insect pests that affects cotton. Historically, they have not been a problem in El Paso, but just in case we need to monitor thrips abundance and damage level.

For those who would like to visit the three tests being conducted and make your own comparisons, I will post detailed driving directions in subsequent newsletters. Just in case that you are able to find the tests using coordinates, I will provide them here. Even without a GPS unit, you can easily find any point on a map by having the coordinates and using Google Earth; which can be downloaded for free. A field day will be organized prior to harvest. Yield estimates and other plant parameters will be presented at that time.

The 2011 **Pima cotton variety trial** was planted on April 19 at Mr. Ramon Tirres Jr. Farm on North Loop near Clint. It contains the following six varieties: PHY802, PHY805, Cobalt, DP340, DP357, and Hazera. The PhytoGen varieties PHY802 and PHY805 (Dow Agro) are the first released commercial Pima varieties with Roundup Ready® Flex technology. Location: 31°32'38.60" N - 106°10'45.03" W.

The 2011 **upland cotton variety trial** was planted on April 27 at Dr. Harvey Hilley Jr. Farm in Acala. This test contains 17 varieties: DP 164 B2RF, PHY 499 WRF, DP 1044 B2RF, ST 4288 B2F, DP 1048 B2RF, PHY 565 WRF, FM 2484 B2F, DP 1133 B2RF, PHY 367 WRF, DP 1137 B2RF, ST 5288 B2F, FM 1740 B2F, FM 9170 B2F, DP 1050 B2RF, FM 1880 B2F, PHY 375 WRF, and FM 9160 B2F. I will post detailed directions to visit these tests if you want to make your own comparisons. A field day will be organized prior to harvest. Location: 31°20'03.12" N - 105°55'56.04" W.



The efficacy of the fungicide **flutriafol for the control of Texas cotton root rot** will be evaluated in our region. A flutriafol test was planted on April 27 at Mr. Scott Roosevelt Farm near McNary, Ranch Rd. 2217 to evaluate its effectiveness at three rates. Drs. Thomas Isakeit and David Drake lead this research effort in collaboration with Drs. Jaime Iglesias and Salvador Vitanza. Last year, this disease was very damaging to cotton and alfalfa fields, and to a minor extent to some pecan orchards. Texas cotton root rot is considered an emerging issue and has caught our farmer's attention. Research trials evaluating flutriafol in cotton throughout Texas have shown promising results, but more efficacy and residue data need to be generated prior to obtaining approval for this specific use. Location: 31°10'36.60" N - 105°45'46.10" W.

PECAN:

Last year was supposedly an "off year" in regards to pecan crop load. However, most orchards had a good load. This year, it seems that many orchards will have a decent load too. Let's hope that this means that the traditional peaks and valleys in nut load are getting smoother. Apparently, the record low temperatures experienced in early February did not result in any visible damage to pecan trees.

By now, everybody should have their pecan nut casebearer (PNC) pheromone traps in place and be diligent about monitoring them daily or at least every other day. According to Dr. Mark Muegge, the first significant flight of PNC moths was recorded on April 23 in Fort Stockton, Balmorhea, and Garden City. Bill Ree also reports early PNC activity. He mentions that in Comanche County and the Ennis area (north of Dallas) moths have been collected two weeks earlier than usual. No PNC moth has been captured in El Paso and Hudspeth Counties yet. You can follow the real time moth capture data and a prediction map of PNC egg lay at <http://pecan.ipmpipe.org>. This same website has a wealth of pecan IPM information including a list of chemical products for PNC control. Remember that the first significant PNC flight will be a strong indicator as when we should start scouting for egg lay or nut entry. Attempts to control moths may result in more insecticide applications than if the management goal is focused on controlling small larvae before they enter the nutlets. The abundance of PNC eggs (2 or more eggs per 310 nut clusters) will determine whether or not insecticide applications would be required. It is always prudent to mark nut clusters that have PNC eggs to evaluate insecticide efficacy after application.

Please, do not miss the 2011 Pecan Pest Management Workshop at the AgriLife Research Center. The flyer that we mailed out recently incorrectly says "Wednesday" instead of "Thursday" as the day for the educational event. Fortunately it had the right date (May 12) and hopefully will not create too much confusion. I apologize for that mishap.