

Issues in Agriculture

The Newsletter about Integrated Pest Management for the El Paso Valley

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Texas AgriLife Extension El Paso County: <http://elp.tamu.edu/> Pecan IPM Pipe: <http://pecan.ipmpipe.org/>

Announcements

- There will be an **IPM cotton turn row meeting** on Thursday July 7 at 9:00 AM at Mr. Ramon Tirres Farm on North Loop Dr., ½ mile west of intersection with Webb Road. We will discuss current pest conditions and upcoming pest management issues. This meeting is free of charge.
- **90th Annual Texas Pecan Growers Conference & Trade Show.** July 10-13, 2011. Embassy Suites, 7600 John Q. Hammons Drive, Frisco, TX 75034. Conference Registration Fees: (2 adults of same family only per registration) TPGA member registering prior to June 20 = \$75; TPGA member after June 20 = \$85; TPGA nonmember = \$100. For more information go to: http://www.tpga.org/downloads/conference_packet_2011_frisco.pdf or call: (979) 846-328.
- **Arizona Pecan Growers Association Annual Meeting.** September 16. Palo Verde Holiday Inn, Tucson, AZ, Contact Mike Kilby (520) 403-4613 or mkilby@calsmail.arizona.edu.
- The **2011-12 Master Gardener Calendar** is on sale now and covers July through December, 2011 as well as all of 2012. This beautiful calendar, with watercolor artwork by El Paso Master Gardener and local artist Marge Gianelli, is filled with gardening advice as well as tested recipes from El Paso Master Gardeners. The price is \$8.00 and all proceeds are used to fund Master Gardener community gardening projects. Calendars may be purchased at the following sites: Texas AgriLife Extension Service – El Paso office; El Paso Garden Center, 3105 Grant Ave.; and Master Gardener Information tables at El Paso area Farmers' Markets. Information: The El Paso Master Gardener Hotline (915) 566-1276 or Email: elpasomg@tamu.edu
- A very informative article about Dr. Gehnua Niu's research efforts on **landscape water conservation** can be found at <http://agrilife.org/today/2011/01/03/scientist-envisions-desert-gardens/> Dr. Niu is a scientist working at the El Paso AgriLife Researcher Center.

GENERAL SITUATION:

Maximum daily temperatures for last week have been above the 100's, with June 27 reaching 108°F!! While a large part of the country is dealing with floods, West Texas has been severely punished by an exceptionally dry season. Some call it "the worst drought in 40 years". The current drought is heading to break all-time historical records and has dramatically impacted Texas agriculture and ranching operations. Dr. Andy Vestal, *Extension Specialist and Director of Homeland Security and Emergency Management Programs* in College Station, informed us that 213 Texas counties (including El Paso and Hudspeth Counties) have been designated for **agriculture assistance** related to drought, excessive heat, high winds, and wildfires. This disaster designation makes farm operators eligible to be considered for assistance from the Farm Service Agency (FSA), provided eligibility requirements are met. This assistance includes FSA emergency loans and the Supplemental Revenue Assistance Payments (SURE) Program. Farmers in eligible counties have eight months from the date of a Secretarial disaster declaration to apply for emergency loan assistance. FSA will consider each emergency loan application on its own merits, taking into account the extent of production losses, security available, and repayment ability. SURE Program applications for 2011 crop losses will be accepted in 2012, when the 2011 farm revenue data required by statute becomes available. The USDA Farm Service Agency in El Paso can provide affected farmers with further information (11940 Don Haskins Dr., El Paso, TX 79936 – Phone: 915-857-0351).

COTTON:

Most cotton fields in our area have plants with 12-14 true leaves with good square retention and some fields are setting the first flowers. Some cotton fields have uneven plant stands while others look picture perfect. The two main pests to watch right now are the cotton fleahopper or Lygus bugs because of their damage potential to developing squares, but I have not found them occurring at above action thresholds. In fact, this has been, in my opinion, the season with the lowest pest pressure since 2006. However, pest population levels are building up. The same can be said for beneficial insects and spiders. Lady bugs, damsel bugs, pirate bugs, and big eyed bugs are increasing, but they are definitely less abundant than they were on this date last year. Cotton fields near alfalfa tend to have greater number of Lygus and beneficial insects. Cotton aphid levels are extremely low at this time.

Mr. Saul Cortes, *Field Unit Manager at the El Paso/Trans Pecos Zone* of the **Texas Bollweevil**

Eradication Foundation, Inc. (TBEF) reports that 31,278.5 acres were planted in El Paso and Hudspeth Counties (1,015 fields). Of those, 10,817 acres correspond to Bt varieties and 20,461.5 acres to non-Bt cotton. These figures reflect an increase of 2,643.5 acres compared to last year's cotton acreage.

Dr. Mark Muegge and I are looking for a cotton field to conduct **research on stink bug damage and sampling methodologies**. Please let me know if you have detected moderate to high stink bug levels in your fields and would allow us to do this research project in your farm.

Heat Units: According to data from CottonHeatUnits.com and using April 25 as planting date, we have accumulated 1,260 heat units up to June 29. <http://www.cottonheatunits.com/> is a user friendly website that makes it convenient to calculate heat units based on your exact planting date and average temperatures for El Paso. This site provides forecasts for the heat units that may be accumulated in the next 7 days. You can also access <http://texaset.tamu.edu/> to obtain weather data and heat units from seven local weather stations.

Degree Days: DD-60s required for cotton development.

Event	DD-60s from Planting
Emergence (stand establishment)	45-130
Appearance of first square	440-530
Appearance of first flowers	780-900
Peak Blooming	1350-1500
First open boll	1650-1850
Defoliation	1900-2600

PECAN:

Insecticide applications have been made for **black pecan aphid** control in El Paso Upper Valley. Black and yellow aphid levels in the Lower Valley remain extremely low.

I have not caught pecan nut casebearer (PNC) moths in my traps yet, but pecan growers in the Lower Valley have started to catch second generation PNC moths. Mr. Steve Ivey, at San Lorenzo Farm (on Alameda Road between Clint and Fabens) reported a capture of 7 moths in 22 traps during the last 4 days. Be aware that PNC look-alikes have been caught lately in large numbers. Inexperienced scouts may be confused by these other moth species. So far, second generation PNC moths do not appear to be abundant, but we need to be vigilant of the possibility that egg counts may occur above threshold (2 eggs per 310 nut clusters). You can follow the moth capture data in "real time" and see a prediction map of PNC egg lay at <http://pecan.ipmpipe.org>.

Pecan Squirrels: Mr. Craig Ivey has found, in his orchard, a squirrel species different than the already familiar rock squirrel. It was identified as the **Eastern Fox Squirrel** by Dr. Jennifer K. Frey, of Frey Biological Research. Dr. Jaime Iglesias will conduct a survey to determine distribution and abundance of this new species.

PEST ALERT:

The **Brown Marmorated Stink Bug** (BMSB), *Halyomorpha halys*, has been making headlines due to its overwhelming abundance and damage to vegetables, orchards, and vineyards. The BMSB invasion is a serious threat to agriculture and it may even drive up food prices. It was first found in Allentown, Pennsylvania in October 2001, but it may have been present there since 1996. It is now found in 33 states. Luckily, Texas or its contiguous states are not on that list yet. Plants affected include peaches, cherry, apricot, mulberry, blueberry, raspberry, ficus, persimmon, plums, apples, grapes, corn, squash, tomatoes, peppers, soybeans, beans, and woody ornamentals. For a complete plant hosts list see <http://tinyurl.com/3vrj6lm>. Cotton and pecan are among the hosts, but damage to these crops has not been reported yet. It is likely that cotton and pecan will be damaged in the future. A 2010 USDA risk assessment concluded:

"It is assumed that BMSB could cause some level of economic damage for any host plant grown for commercial purposes, although the exact impact is currently unknown." Control, by using pesticides or established natural enemies, has been very difficult, but a promising egg parasitoid may be the key to defeat this difficult pest. This is a tiny (about the size of the comma in this sentence), non-stinging wasp in the genus *Trissolcus*. Preliminary tests have shown up to 80% control of the BMSB by this wasp. *Trissolcus* is being studied in the Louis A. Stearns Laboratory (USDA) in Newark, DE, but cannot be released just yet for fears that it might affect beneficial stink bug species. In depth information on the BMSB can be found at <http://tinyurl.com/43vgv39>. If you suspect the presence of the BMSB, please capture them and contact me as soon as possible.

