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U.S. PECAN CROP -----

The USDA has revised the total U.S. pecan crop estimate to 239 million pounds, down from the initial forecast of 248 million. Even so, this estimate still shows some 40 million pounds over the 1994 crop.

For Texas, the estimate remained unchanged at 60 million pounds—40 million pounds of varieties and 20 million pounds of natives. That's 20 million pounds over the 1994 crop.

Julian W. Sauls
Professor & Extension Horticulturist

TEXAS CITRUS CROP DOWN -----

The Texas citrus crop estimate was revised by the USDA in early December—and the new forecast reflects what many in the industry have been saying about lower production. The grapefruit volume was reduced from an initial 200,000 tons to 176,000 tons—10,000 tons lower than last year's production.

The early orange estimate was reduced from an initial 43,000 tons to 38,250 tons—some 2,125 tons below last season's crop. The Valencia estimate was reduced

from 9,000 tons to 6,375 tons—still considerably above last year's 4,462-ton Valencia crop. Because the Valencia crop estimate is still rather optimistic, the total Texas orange crop is currently about the same as last year.

Julian W. Sauls
Professor & Extension Horticulturist

HORTICULTURAL INSTITUTE -----

The 50th Annual Horticultural Institute of the Rio Grande Valley Horticultural Society will be held Tuesday morning, January 23, at the Texas A&M University Agricultural Research and Extension Center's Hoblitzelle Auditorium.

The Fruits Section includes a historical perspective of the fruit industry by Norman Maxwell, mutual concern between Florida and Texas citrus by Robert Rouse and Robert Turley, the tristeza threat to Texas citrus by Mani Skaria, and citrus water management by yours truly.

The Ornamental Section includes topics on landscaping, herbs, a historical perspective and a research review, while the Vegetable Section will feature IPM, bifenthrin resistance in whiteflies, sweet corn and celery improvement and a historical perspective of vegetable breeding.

Following the three concurrent sessions, the Plenary Session will feature Charlie Rankin to recall the last half-century of the Society and Valley horticulture, followed by Diane Smith of TDA on the Future of Texas Horticultural Products.

The meeting will conclude with presentation of the Potts Award, a short business meeting and lunch (\$5.00 cost) at 12:45.

Julian W. Sauls
Professor & Extension Horticulturist

OTHER COMING EVENTS -----

There will be a sprayer calibration training program at the Hoblitzelle Auditorium of the Texas A&M University Agricultural Research and Extension Center on Wednesday, January 17, starting at 8:00 am. Call Brad Cowan, Hidalgo County Extension Agricultural Agent, for details (210/383-1026).

The annual Pecan Orchard Management Shortcourse is scheduled for January 22-26 on the Texas A&M University campus at College Station. It is a complete short course in pecan orchard management—starting with site selection and going on from there. As such, it is as useful for those contemplating going into the pecan orchard business as it is for veteran growers who need to brush up on orchard management practices and procedures. Contact Ms. Jacque Hand at 409/845-8904 (Fax 409/845-2519).

Extension programs serve people of all ages regardless of socioeconomic level, race, color, sex, religion, disability or national origin.

The Texas A&M University System, U.S. Department of Agriculture, and the County Commissioners Courts of Texas Cooperating

Registration is \$150. The registration fee for Extension and research personnel is \$25.

The annual Mid Year Meeting of Texas Citrus Mutual is scheduled for March 29 at the Texas A&M University-Kingsville Citrus Center in Weslaco. Call TCM for more details (210/584-1772).

Julian W. Sauls
Professor & Extension Horticulturist

REVISED WEED CONTROL GUIDE AVAILABLE-----

You and I both know that one of the most asked questions that we receive from producers is what to use for weed control on different crops. The latest revision of "Weed Control in Vegetable, Fruit and Nut Crops" is now available from Ag Communications. The Extension publication number is B-5022 and it will be available through the normal Ag Communications process and also will be available on A&M's computer network.

Lynn Brandenberger
Associate Professor & Extension Vegetable Specialist

VALLEY VEGETABLE ACTIVITY -----

The Valley is gearing up for spring planting season for melons and other warm-season vegetables, but has also started harvesting cool-season crops. Harvest season for carrots, spinach, cabbage and other cool-season vegetables is under way. In addition, Valley producers are still harvesting some fall planted warm-season crops such as tomato and pepper since we haven't had a killing frost as of yet.

Lynn Brandenberger
Associate Professor & Extension Vegetable Specialist

FIRING -----

Citrus trees in the last month have variously exhibited the condition known as "firing" in which all of the young leaves on a shoot suddenly wilt, roll up lengthwise, turn greyish green in color and then drop from the tree. Often, the petiole and petiole wing remain attached to the shoot, with only the leaf blade dropping off. Too, the condition is not necessarily uniform around the tree canopy, being more concentrated in the northwest quadrant of the canopy. In some cases, Asian citrus leafminer damage appears to be associated with the shoots that "fired", although this is not always true.

Basically, the leaves that exhibit "firing" are on the most recent growth flush which emerged since about September. These leaves were not fully mature and hardened at the time of arrival of a couple of dry "northers" in late November. The low humidity and strong winds which accompanied these cold fronts quickly desiccated the immature leaves of the last growth flush, causing the appearance of "firing".

Essentially, these leaves exhibit the severe wilting symptoms of extreme drought

while the mature, hardened leaves show no apparent ill effects from the dry cold fronts. In the case of a severe drouth, the immature leaves would wilt first, followed by wilting of the older, hardened leaves on the tree—and such wilting would be uniform around the tree canopy.

This condition is a little debilitating, but the tree will quickly recover with the spring growth flush so that production and growth next season will not be measurably affected.

Julian W. Sauls
Professor & Extension Horticulturist

SLIME MOLDS ON ORNAMENTALS -----

Occasionally, I receive reports of slimy, colorful masses growing on various vegetation. These masses later dry and easily crumble to a fine powder. These are slime molds, which are fungi that belong to the class Myxomycetes. These fungi are not pathogenic to the plants on which they occur. Their appearance on plants is usually transient, their actual damage is aesthetic. A large amount on turf could cause stress by blocking light from the leaves, however.

These fungi feed on decomposing organic matter or on other microbes and live in habitats that have continuous moisture. In their vegetative phase (the plasmodium), they exhibit an amoeba-like behavior. The plasmodium can move to areas that are more favorable for its growth. Under unfavorable growing conditions, such as low temperature or lack of water, the plasmodium dries out and becomes dormant. A reproductive stage is also present. The plasmodium will develop fruiting bodies in which spores are produced. The fruiting bodies of the slime mold that I have seen on turf in south Texas are small (1-2 mm diameter), gray to white spheres found on leaf blades.

In addition to the presence of slime molds on shaded turf and underneath ground covers, they can occur in more unusual locations, such as on exposed branches of trees. In these places, they can be mistaken for the fruiting bodies of wood decay fungi. Slime molds can be distinguished from these pathogens by their fragile structure (i.e. they are easily washed or scraped off the surface) and their lack of differentiated structures, particularly pores or gills.

There are no specific chemical control recommendations for slime molds. On turf, they can be removed with a stream of water or by raking. Fungicides labelled for turf will usually inhibit these fungi, but their presence should not be the primary reason for wanting to apply a fungicide.

Thomas Isakeit
Assistant Professor & Extension Plant Pathologist

HORTICULTURE AND YOUR HEALTH -----

According to a Harvard University study of 47,000 men over a 6-year period, those who averaged at least 10 weekly servings of tomato-based foods were 45 percent less

likely to develop prostate cancer, while those eating only four to seven weekly servings had a 20 percent reduction in the rate of prostate cancer. Spaghetti sauce and pizza which includes layers of tomato sauce were the most commonly consumed form of tomato-based foods, though tomato juice and raw tomatoes were also popular.

Although no details were presented in the Associated Press story by Paul Recer, of 46 fruits and vegetables studied, only tomato-based foods and strawberries seemed to have a protective effect against prostate cancer.

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