



Texas Agricultural Extension Service

The Texas A&M University System

BRUSH COUNTRY HORTICULTURE

JULY, 1995

VOL. 6, NO. 7

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TEXAS A&M HORTICULTURE HEAD -----

Dr. Samuel Cotner has been named head of the Horticulture Department of Texas A&M University, effective May 1, succeeding Dr. Dan Lineberger who stepped down last September to concentrate on other horticultural activities within the department.

Sam is well-known in South Texas and the Valley through his work as Extension Vegetable Specialist and more recently as Associate Department Head—Extension.

Julian W. Sauls
Professor & Extension Horticulturist

HANDWARMERS FOR CITRUS -----

Most hunters are aware of the benefits of handwarmers during those cold

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

vigils in a blind. A group of Florida researchers used handwarmers under tree wraps in a study of their effectiveness in protecting young citrus trees from freezing. Two of the studies were in freeze chambers, a third occurred in the field.

Wraps and wraps plus handwarmers resulted in improved tree survival in one-night and two-night simulated freezes, with the effectiveness of handwarmers being somewhat less on the second night of the two-night simulated freeze.

In the field, the handwarmers raised temperature under the wrap by 3.5°C (6.3°F) during the first night of a mild freeze, but was comparable to the wrap alone on the second night.

While the handwarmers do appear to be effective in protecting wrapped young citrus trees from freezing, their commercial use appears limited, especially since their effectiveness drops over time. However, they do appear well-suited to use in limited situations such as particularly valuable specimens and for homeowner citrus trees.

Julian W. Sauls
Professor & Extension Horticulturist

PECAN CONFERENCE -----

Just a reminder that the 74th Annual Texas Pecan Growers Association Conference & Trade Show is July 9-12 at the Holiday Inn Centre in Odessa. It's probably too late to obtain tickets to some of the special events, but registration for the educational program can be paid at-the-door.

For those who have never attended, you might be interested in the display of pecans which are entered in the State Pecan Show. These entries started out in county shows, then to the three regional shows, with the best of the best making the state show held during the Texas Pecan Growers Conference.

Julian W. Sauls
Professor & Extension Horticulturist

HAIL CANNON -----

Several years ago, I heard about a "hail cannon" that prevents crop damage by stopping the formation of hail stones. Efforts to find out more about such a device caused some of my Extension colleagues and clientele to question my sanity and personal habits. To the disbelievers, I recommend an article by Jean D. Aylsworth in the June, 1995, issue of American Fruit Grower, pages 15-16.

Basically, the anti-hail cannon uses acetylene to shoot cations into the atmosphere at sonic speed, which creates shock waves that interfere with the

crystallization of ice, thereby resulting in rain or sheet, but not hail. It covers a circular area of about 0.3 mile radius, roughly 200 acres.

For further information, Ms. Jeanne Le Pellée of Ollivier, Inc. has offices in San Antonio—phone 800/309-7876 or 800/573-6878.

Julian W. Sauls
Professor & Extension Horticulturist

OTHER PNC INFORMATION -----

According to Bill Ree's Texas Pecan Pest Management Newsletter of May 30, 1995, the Pecan Nut Casebearer Pheromone Study is working well across Texas, with significant catches in some sites.

The best information for the Weslaco site is that there were no captures and only minor activity was observed. The suspicion is that casebearer activity in the Valley is naturally quite low or that casebearer has been significantly impacted by the cotton boll weevil eradication program in the Valley, or both.

Julian W. Sauls
Professor & Extension Horticulturist

SQUASH LEAF CURL VIRUS ON WATERMELON ----

This virus, which is transmitted by whiteflies, is again showing up on the tail end of the spring watermelon crop, again in association with an increase in whitefly populations. I suspect strongly that it was present in a field in Frio county that I recently looked at, which is a lot further north than what we knew from previous observations.

With this in mind, you need to remind growers that in order to control this disease in future watermelon crops, they need to plow under their crop when they are finished with it and to control volunteers.

Tom Isakeit
Assistant Professor & Extension Plant Pathologist

AVOID PESTS TO AVOID PROBLEMS -----

Like my grandfather used to say, if you see trouble coming try to avoid it if you can. Conditions this spring have been rough for growing vegetables, what with high whitefly populations, drought, etc. and fall is shaping up to be another rough ride too.

One of our best weapons in this on going battle with insects and disease is information about the particular pests that we know we will be facing. A case in point would be whitefly. We know that whitefly populations will be at overwhelming

numbers once cotton fields are being defoliated and that no matter how much spraying we do there will always be more whiteflies available to replace the ones we just destroyed. A management strategy might be to delay planting until after this population peak has occurred and then to plant our fall vegetable crops. Not only would we miss out on direct damage from high numbers of whiteflies feeding on the crops, but several of our fall vegetable crops will benefit from being at less risk from whitefly vectored virus diseases.

Some good sources of information about vegetable production and vegetable pests would be the following:

Vegetable Growers Handbook, 2nd edition, Texas Agricultural Extension Service contact Frank Dainello at (409) 845-7341

Texas Plant Disease Handbook, Texas Agricultural Extension Service, contact Jerral Johnson at (409) 845-8032.

Texas Guide for Controlling Insects on Commercial Vegetable Crops, Publication B-1305 .

Lynn Brandenberger
Associate Professor & Extension Vegetable Specialist

SWEETPOTATO WHITEFLY -----

Sweetpotato whitefly has been building throughout the Valley the last several weeks. It has/will become a problem for agriculture, horticulture, and more. I got a call this week from a jogger who had run in a 5 K race and complained that everyone had difficulty breathing because of the whiteflies. The adult movement is generally heaviest in the morning and decreases as the winds pick up. The populations will likely continue to increase until we get a good heavy rain across the Valley and/or defoliate cotton. The adult movement peaks every year when we defoliate cotton. We may also see a large increase as cotton fields are plowed out once the insurance situation is cleared up. Homeowners with susceptible plants face a tough struggle to keep their plants semi-healthy until whitefly populations drop off in the fall. The only products available which will do much good are insecticidal soaps and horticultural oils. Both of these will require repeated applications and both can easily cause phytotoxicity. If you suggest these products to anyone, make sure you warn them of the possibility of damaging their plants. In a related issue, I would definitely recommend delaying fall gardens of preferred hosts until after cotton season.

Stormy Sparks
Assistant Professor & Extension Entomologist

NEW FEDERAL LABELS FOR PYRETHROIDS -----

Commercial vegetable producers should be aware that some of the newer pyrethroids have been receiving full federal labels on a variety of crops. Examples

include Baythroid on carrots, peppers, radishes and tomatoes, and Karate on broccoli, cabbage, lettuce, onions, tomatoes and peanuts. The Karate label also includes sorghum midge on grain sorghum (we just received a section 18 for Asana for this same use). Overall, it appears that EPA is finally releasing the pyrethroids for expanded label request, so this whole picture could change rapidly.

Stormy Sparks
Assistant Professor & Extension Entomologist

BEET ARMYWORM AND FALL ARMYWORM -----

By now I am sure everyone knows of the beet armyworm problems in Texas (they have been found as far north as the Lubbock area). A problem many people are probably confusing with this is the fall armyworm. The fall armyworm larvae looks somewhat similar, but is more likely to be a problem in grass crops (corn, sorghum, pastures). The fall armyworm got its start in the corn crop in Mexico (and most likely the LRGV, but the acreage in Mexico is much larger) and can easily spread up the state. We had a similar experience with this pest 5 or 6 years ago.

Stormy Sparks
Assistant Professor & Extension Entomologist

HICKORY SHUCKWORM -----

Hickory shuckworm usually starts in the Valley and other deep South Texas counties during the latter half of July. The result of shuckworm damage is blackening of the shuck, but the end result is a pecan nut with just a shriveled, blackened mess inside at harvest.

The pecan shell hardens starting on one end and hardening progresses to the opposite end. When the shell has hardened halfway down its length, that's the time to spray for control, using the material suggested in the "Homeowner's Fruit and Nut Spray Schedule"

To check the progress of shell hardening, use a pocketknife to cut the pecan into quarters lengthwise—when one quarter cut encounters hard shell, it'll be just a few days until the middle cut encounters hard shell.

Julian W. Sauls
Professor & Extension Horticulturist

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