

News From Your County Agent
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Zavala County

The 2017 Zavala County Junior Livestock Show is now in the history books and a good sale indeed. Thanks to all of the generous donors, sponsors and buyers the sale netted over \$150,000.00 for the youth of Zavala County that participated in the three day event. Thanks to all of our supporters, volunteers and the participating youth that have support from family members. Congratulations to all of you for a job well done.

District 12 4-H Shooting Sports Postal League Announced

The District 12 4-H Shooting Sports Postal League is a huge success each year and we are excited to announce the 2017 event this week. The Postal League is designed to provide additional shooting sports opportunities for 4-H members across District 12, which includes Zavala County. The event includes Smallbore Rifle, Shotgun, Archery and Air Pistol. The term “Postal” simply refers to this event taking place locally within your area. Rifle and Air Pistol targets will be mailed from the District 12 office after the specific deadline. Participants in Archery and Shotgun events will provide their own Archery and Shotgun targets. All Rifle and Air Pistol targets must be mailed to the District office within the specified timeline, and submit scores.

Registration for these events will be administered through [4-H Connect](#). Select the “*D12 4-H Shooting Sports Postal League*” event. The registration period will begin February 1st and conclude on February 25, 2017. Coaches can register on the participant’s behalf. A registration fee of \$15.00 dollars will be charged per shooter per event. The shooting period will be between March 1st and April 9, 2017. All score/targets must be in the Zavala county office on or before April 11th. The Zavala County office must have all score/targets at the district office on or before April 18, 2017.

If you should have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact the Zavala County office of the Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service at 830-374-2883 or by e-mail at mj-valdez@tamu.edu or the District 12 Office at 956-968-5581 or via email at d124h@ag.tamu.edu. Good luck and happy shooting.

Houston Livestock Show Encourages Young Photographers to Compete

The Houston livestock show and rodeo is once again asking 4-H and FFA youth to participate in the 2017 HLSR Photography contest. This year exhibitors will take a photograph representative of the theme -“Wildlife”.

Photography entries are limited to subjects related to horticulture, flower arrangement, gardens, and landscapes. Photographs must be mounted on mat board or foam core Minimum size of the photograph is 8” x 10” regardless of orientation and use of mat and the maximum size is a 11” x 14” photo regardless of orientation and use of mat. A mat around the photograph is permitted; however, the total dimensions must be within the minimum and maximum sizes allowed.

The surface finish of the photograph is the choice of the exhibitor. Printing and mounting may be done professionally. Glass and framing are not permitted. Entries may be shipped to Angela Gutierrez to Houston Livestock Show & Rodeo, Three NRG Park, Houston, Texas 77054 and must arrive by 5:00 p.m., Tuesday, February 13, 2017. The awards for this contest are \$1,000.00 and a buckle for first place, a trophy and \$750.00 for second place, a trophy and \$500.00 for third and \$100.00 for 4th through 10th place. For more information about this contest and complete rules and entry forms go to the Houston Livestock Show and Rodeo web site at rules and entry form at <http://www.rodeohouston.com/Get-Involved/Exhibitors-Participants/Horticulture>. Or contact to contact the Zavala County office of the Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service at 830-374-2883 or by e-mail at mj-valdez@tamu.edu

Tip of the Week: Planning Your Spring Lawn Fertility Program

It's that time of year again – time to bring fertilizer spreaders out of winter storage and attend to the lawn. No doubt the most common landscape feature of most yards, big or small, is the lawn. Lawns sometimes get a bad environmental rap for the amount of water, fertilizer and pesticides that are applied to keep them green. However, lawns do provide important qualities. They eliminate soil erosion, reduce runoff and pollution, lower surface temperatures, muffle noise, reduce glare, and filter harmful pollutants from the air. Lawn grasses, like other living plants, consume carbon dioxide and release oxygen. Plus, lawns provide inexpensive recreational areas.

So where do you begin in planning for your spring lawn fertility program? Start with a soil test. A simple soil test will measure the pH of your soil, showing whether it is acidic or alkaline. A soil test will also measure the soil salinity and the amount and availability of nutrients a soil contains that your lawn needs to grow. Testing your soil so that you know how to improve it will increase your chances of success in having a lush green lawn this year. Soil testing kits and information are available from the Zavala County Office of the Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service at 221 North First Avenue in Crystal City or contact us at 830-374-2883 or by e-mail at mj-valdez@tamu.edu

Next determine what kind of turf or lawn you have because each grass variety has different fertilizer requirements. If you have a St. Augustine Grass lawn plan on 4-5 total pounds of nitrogen per thousand square feet, per year (or 3/4 pound per thousand if you have a predisposition for disease). On the other hand if you have a Bermuda Grass lawn you will need 5-6 total pounds of nitrogen per thousand square feet, per year (Bermuda loves nitrogen). Zoysia Grass lawns usually require about 3-4 total pounds of nitrogen per thousand square feet, per year (apply less during wet years).

Most soils in our area are low in nitrogen and potassium (represented by the first and third numbers on a bag of fertilizer). Phosphorus (the middle number on the bag) typically is high, especially in lawns that have a history of being fertilized with a complete fertilizer. There are many formulations of fertilizer on the market, and no one product is best. In the absence of a soil test, a general recommendation would be to use a product where the three numbers are in a 3-1-2 ratio or a 4-1-2 ratio. Generally, keep the first number (nitrogen) and the last number (potassium) close, and the middle number (phosphorus) low.

For slow, even growth, use a fertilizer containing nitrogen in a slow-release form. This is especially important for lawns on sandy soil. Organic fertilizers provide sources of slow release nutrients and

also help build up the soil.

How much fertilizer do you put out? Determine the area or square feet of the lawn. Multiply the length X width for each section of lawn, then add them together to get the total square feet. Write this down and keep it where you can refer to it in the future.

When to fertilize is always a big question. The first application of fertilizer in the spring should only be made after the grass has begun growing, which often is not until late next month (February to mid March). The reason for this is that grasses develop a stronger root system if allowed to green up without being forced into vigorous top growth by early nitrogen fertilization.

If you have crabgrass, grassburs and other warm season annual grassy weeds you might be able to stop the germination process by applying Dimension and Halts which are the most common pre-emergent herbicides sold to homeowners, but other types are also good. Each gives 100 to 110 days of control of germinating weeds. Info you are going to use a pre-emergent remember that timing is critical. You want your first application to be one to two weeks before the average date of the last killing freeze for our area which is usually February 27th.

This means you will make your first application in Zavala County around Valentine's Day and a second "booster" application 90 days later, in the first two weeks of May. These materials are safe around trees and shrubs, and they're safe for any type of lawn grass. Do not, however, use them on new turf until it has gone through its first winter. Remember: these are PRE-emergent herbicides. Once you can see the weeds growing, they will not be effective, nor will they control perennial weeds that come back from their roots.

Meanwhile you should be monitoring soil moisture during the winter, even though it may be brown, grass still needs to be watered periodically – not very often – but it needs to be kept out of drought stress. Dry lawns during a cold winter or hard freeze like the ones we have had this year can cause root injury in some lawn grass varieties. Providing adequate supplemental irrigation during the winter for spring green up is very important. If rainfall does not occur, then approximately 1.0 inch of supplemental irrigation water should be added to the lawn each week. Have a great week planning your spring fertility program. M.V. Note: The information given herein is for educational purposes only. Reference to commercial products or trade names is made with the understanding that no discrimination is intended to other similar products and no endorsement by the Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service is implied.

January 16-20, 2017.

