



# Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service

HAMILTON COUNTY

## HAMILTON COUNTY AG/NR NEWSLETTER

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## Upcoming Programs

### **DISTRICT 8 FARM & RANCH SEMINAR**

DECEMBER 8, 2022 7:30 am to 4:00 pm

Program will be presented at multiple Extension Offices

You can also attend virtually

See the flyer below for information

### **CENTRAL TEXAS IRRIGATION SUMMIT & TRADE SHOW**

December 13, 2022 8:30 am to 4:00 pm

DeLeon City Auditorium

For more information contact

the Comanche County Extension Office at 325-3569-2539

2 CEU's and 2 DOPA Credits Offered

Follow us on

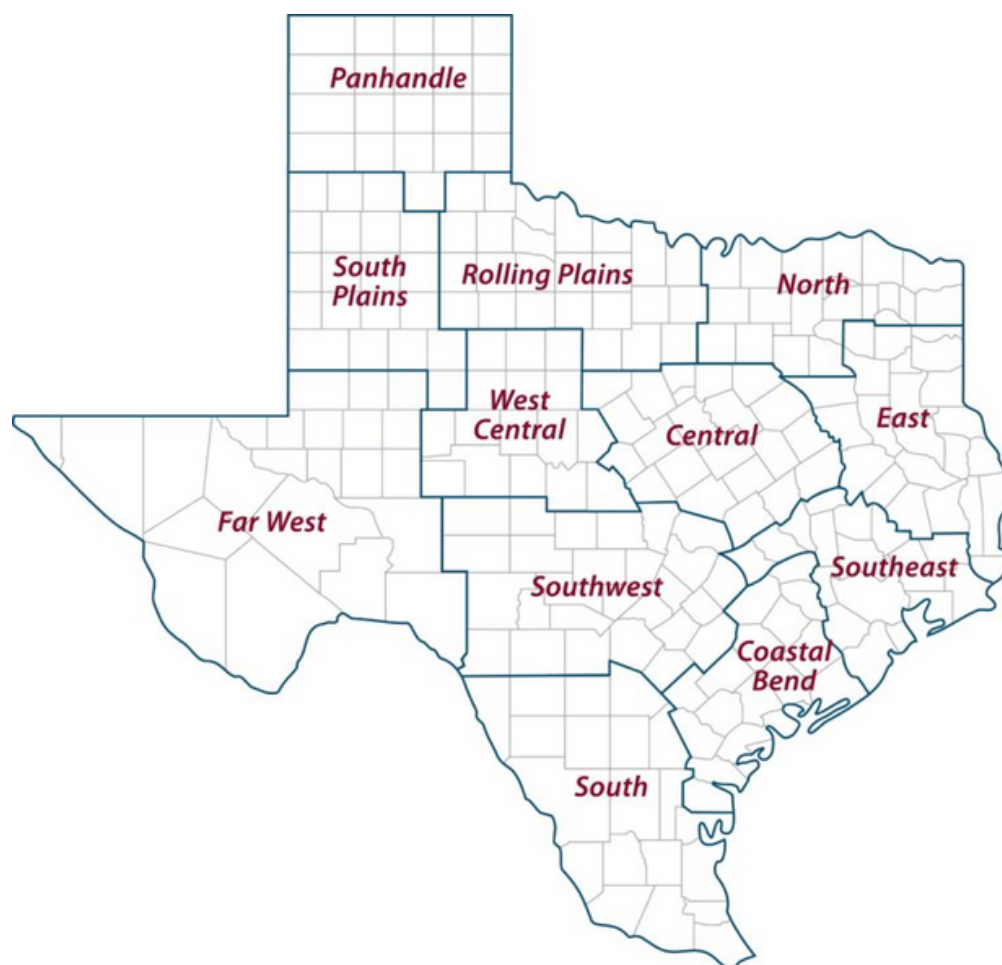


@HamiltonCountyExtension

# **Texas Crop and Weather Report for November 22, 2022**

## **CENTRAL**

Soil moisture was short and overall range and pasture conditions were very poor. Overall crop conditions were 75% poor and livestock conditions were 70% poor. An early hard frost killed most summer grasses, making it necessary for most livestock producers to start feeding hay. Producers were also dealing with short hay supplies and high feed prices. Stock tanks and river flows remained low, with annual precipitation only about two-thirds of normal. Livestock were in fair to poor condition and being supplemented heavily.



## Prevent the spread of invasive pests and diseases by not moving firewood

COLLEGE STATION, Texas – Texas A&M Forest Service urges all Texans, and especially outdoor enthusiasts, to help reduce the spread of oak wilt and invasive insects by taking preventive measures and being knowledgeable when collecting and purchasing firewood.

As Texans travel for hunting or camping trips, they may unknowingly be bringing deadly, invasive pests and diseases along through firewood.

“Many devastating, tree-killing pests present in Texas forests live and breed inside firewood,” said Demian Gomez, Texas A&M Forest Service Regional Forest Health Coordinator. “Some wood borers, such as the invasive emerald ash borer and redbay ambrosia beetle, have already caused devastating impacts, practically wiping out entire tree species from some regions of the country.”

The emerald ash borer, present in North Texas, has killed millions of ash trees across the eastern U.S. The redbay ambrosia beetle continues to spread west, killing redbay and sassafras trees along the way. Similarly, native pathogens such as oak wilt, have killed oak trees in Central Texas in epidemic proportions.

Each of these forest pests cause severe ecological and economic impacts over time. While they can spread on their own, accidental transport by humans is one of the main ways they can move greater distances, sometimes quickly jumping state and county lines. Firewood is one of the main ways many of these pests are moved, regardless of how seasoned or old the firewood is. Even wood that looks clean and healthy may still have insect eggs or fungal spores that can start new infestations.

“We can limit the spread of invasive tree pests,” said Gomez. “The best rule of thumb is to burn the firewood close to where it’s bought or picked up. Moving firewood can easily introduce insects and diseases to new areas, particularly during hunting and camping seasons.”

For diseases like oak wilt, this is critical. Transporting and storing infected wood from red oaks can spread oak wilt fungal spores to previously uninfected neighborhoods and properties. Because live oaks tend to grow in large, dense groups, oak wilt spreads quickly, and one infected tree can lead to large patches of dead and dying trees.

While firewood is an important commodity in the fall and winter, Texans can help prevent the spread of these pests and diseases by purchasing, collecting, and burning firewood locally.





# Texas Christmas tree industry expecting tree-mendous year

It looks like the Texas Christmas tree sales will be getting a boost this year, said a Texas A&M AgriLife expert and others associated with the industry.

Fred Raley, tree improvement coordinator with the Texas A&M Forest Service, is among those anticipating an increase in Christmas tree purchases in Texas, and elsewhere, this year.

“Since COVID, there have been far fewer family gatherings around the Christmas holidays,” he said. “As a result, there has been an increased desire for families to get together — and to have a Christmas tree as a centerpiece of that gathering. Even with COVID still around and CDC guidelines in place, the desire — and demand — is still there.”

But not just any Christmas tree, Raley said. There will be a much greater demand for live Christmas trees, as many people consider them the quintessential symbol of the holidays.

“People like to select their own Christmas tree, and there are many locations throughout the state where they can choose their tree and have it cut,” he said. “For many families, there is nothing like choosing your own tree and having the smell and feel of a live Christmas tree. It’s part of a Rockwellian view of a family Christmas that many people seem to be wanting to continue or recapture.”

He also noted that almost all artificial Christmas trees are imported, and live trees have the benefit of being entirely biodegradable.

## Texas Christmas tree production and pricing

According to the Texas Christmas Tree Growers Association, TCTGA, there are 175 Christmas tree farms in Texas producing some 200,000 trees annually on about 2,500 acres statewide.



This year, the live Christmas tree industry in Texas has had its challenges from drought to rising production input costs, but TCTGA executive secretary Stan Reed said he does not expect to see any drastic price increases on Texas-grown trees.

“Prices will vary depending on the size and type of tree and may be a little higher than last year,” he said. “But generally, there should be no big price increases. However, where you may find higher prices is for those trees that are grown out of state and then brought into Texas, as they will have additional costs associated with transportation.”



## Christmas Trees

Spring Creek Growers, a family operation in southwestern Montgomery County, grows and harvests Virginia pine and Leyland cypress trees for the Christmas season on about 30 acres. It offers choose-and-cut, pre-cut and live trees.

Bob Jones, co-owner of Spring Creek Growers with wife Carla, said the drought did not significantly affect production this year. We have about 12,000 trees on site,” he said. “And because we irrigate, there was no real impact on production from the drought, but we did have additional water costs from the irrigation.”

Jones also noted the increase in costs over the past year for herbicides and other chemical inputs such as fertilizer. “Our chemical input costs generally went up about 15% across the board and the cost of fertilizer has doubled,” he said. “But we are doing what we can to continue to make our live trees affordable, even if that takes away from our profit margin.”

Jones said trees grown at his farm will likely have a 5-6% increase over last year, while trees brought in from out of state to his operation will have higher price increases.

“We bring in some Frasier pines and nobles from out of state to give the consumers more variety,” he said. “These trees will likely cost 10-12% more this year, due to higher input costs combined with the rising cost of transportation.”

Jones said based on the number of phone calls and emails Spring Creek Growers has received to date, he expects this year to be a very strong one for consumers to purchase live trees.

“We had a banner year last year and expect to have another really good year this year,” he said. “People choose a live tree for Christmas so they can have variety from year to year instead of pulling out and putting up same artificial tree every year. They also enjoy coming to the farm and choosing their own tree. In that regard, we provide more than just Christmas trees, we provide a complete experience for the family.”





# Christmas Trees

## Christmas tree popularity

The most widely grown live Christmas tree species in Texas are the Virginia pine, Leyland cypress, Afghan pine and Arizona cypress.

Raley said the best-selling and most popular live Christmas tree species is the Virginia pine. because it grows well throughout the state. “Virginia pine trees were selected by the Texas Christmas Tree Growers Association for their survivability, growth and form,” he said. “They are also favored for their ability to grow across the state, which is crucial in Texas as more than 90% of all forested land is privately owned.”

However, he said, there has been an increased interest in other tree species, particularly the Afghan pine. “Afghan pines grow well in Central Texas, and that’s the area from where most of the increased consumer interest has come,” he said. “But there has also been growing interest in other species as live Christmas tree selections.”

Raley said the Tree Improvement Program is working with industry and growers to provide seeds and technical assistance in finding additional tree species that may be grown successfully in the state and offer consumers even more options when selecting their live Christmas tree.

Reed said for those wanting to buy a live Christmas tree, his best advice is to shop early.

“If you wait until the second or third week of December to buy, you’ll have a limited selection of Christmas tree types and sizes,” he said. “It’s best to buy early. If you properly water and maintain your live tree, it will easily last through Christmas.”



# DISTRICT 8 FARM & RANCH SEMINAR



Date: **Thursday, December 8th**

**See next page for location options**

Time: **Registration - 7:00am**

**Program begins @ 7:30 am Concludes @ 4:00 pm**

## 8 hrs of Pesticide CEU's Offered

A multi-county Farm and Ranch Seminar for farmers and ranchers conducted by the Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service in District 8 is scheduled December 8, 2022. The District 8 Farm and Ranch Seminar will be offered at numerous locations across Central Texas.

Private Applicators License holders must obtain 15 hours of CEUs every five years to renew/recertify their license; including two hours of Laws and Regulations, two hours of Integrated Pest Management (IPM), and any mix of these and General hours to equal the required 15 hours of CEUs. Licensed commercial and non-commercial applicators are required to recertify every year by obtaining five continuing education credits with one credit each from two of the following categories: laws and regulations, integrated pest management or drift minimization.

The December 8th seminar will provide participants with the opportunity to receive up to eight (8) CEUs. Of the eight (8) hours, three (3) hours will be in General, two (2) hours in IPM, two (2) hours in Laws and Regulations and one (1) hour in Drift.

Licensed commercial and non-commercial applicators will be able to obtain their required five hours within the first five hours of the program.

Program registration cost is \$60.00,  
Persons interested in attending one of these programs  
on December 8 can register by contacting  
the Extension office at the location you plan to attend.  
Phone numbers listed on next page.  
Or by signing up for the virtual presentation.



Call the Extension Office of the location you will be attending.

Participating RSVP Counties Phone Number	
Bell	254-933-5305
Bosque	254-435-2331
Comanche	325-356-2539
Coryell	254-865-2414
Ellis	972-825-5175
Erath	254-965-1460
Freestone	903-389-3436
Hill	254-582-4022
Johnson	817-556-6370
Limestone	254-729-5314
McLennan	254-757-5180
Navarro	903-654-3075
Robertson	979-828-4270
Williamson	512-943-3300

To Register for Virtual Attendance visit the following link:



<https://www.eventbrite.com/e/district-8-farm-and-ranch-virtual-seminar-tickets-431239748697>

Individuals with disabilities requiring an auxiliary aid or special accommodations in order to participate in this program are asked to contact the location you will be attending to determine how reasonable accommodations may be met.

*The members of Texas A&M AgriLife will provide equal opportunities in programs and activities, education, and employment to all persons regardless of race, color, sex, religion, national origin, age, disability, genetic information, veteran status, sexual orientation or gender identity and will strive to achieve full and equal employment opportunity throughout Texas A&M AgriLife.*

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

# Central Texas Irrigation Summit & Trade Show

Tuesday, December 13, 2022

Deleon City Auditorium

Trade Show opening at 8:30 AM

Welcome at 8:50 AM

Presentations will begin at 9:00 AM

## Topics Covered:

New Irrigation Technology for Central Texas Producers

Irrigation Research

Pivot Safety

Managing Salinity and Poor Water Quality

Chemigation

Irrigation for Forage Production

This will be a great opportunity to learn the latest in irrigation technology and visit with businesses and dealers that can help you with your irrigation needs.

2 CEU's and 2 DOPA Credits Offered

**Lunch will be provided by our great local sponsors.**

For more information contact the Comanche County Extension office at 325-356-2539.