



# Texas Agricultural Extension Service

The Texas A&M University System

## BRUSH COUNTRY HORTICULTURE

SEPTEMBER, 1996

VOL. 7, NO. 9

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### TEXAS FRUIT GROWERS -----

The Texas Fruit Growers Association will hold its 44th Annual Conference and Trade Show on September 30 and October 1 in College Station. Registration commences at 10:00 am on Monday, with the program starting at 1:00 pm—both on the third floor of the Rudder Conference Center on the campus of Texas A&M University.

Registration is \$40 for members, \$60 for non-members. The cost for Extension personnel was not stated on the registration form.

The program covers brambles, strawberries, peaches, some vegetables, and more about peaches. There's also a tour of King's Orchard at Plantersville, with additional tours of the facilities on campus and the Messina Hof Winery.

Call 409/846-3285 for more information or send registration to TFGA, P.O. Drawer CC, College Station, TX 77841.

Julian W. Sauls  
 Professor & Extension Horticulturist

### TEXAS PRODUCE CONVENTION -----

*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*

The Texas Produce Convention and Trade Show is meeting on South Padre Island September 18-21 at the Convention Center. This meeting includes Texas Citrus Mutual, Texas Vegetable Association and Texas Produce Association.

Pre-registration ended August 19, but registration is possible at the door—though some of the added amenities may not be available at the door. Call 210/584-1772 if you need more information.

Julian W. Sauls  
Professor & Extension Horticulturist

### **DELANEY CLAUSE -----**

As you know, the Delaney Clause has long been a thorn in the side for produce because it required a zero-risk for pesticide tolerances in or on foods. It was enacted at a time before scientific instrumentation had the capability of detecting ultra-low concentrations of pesticide residues, i.e., today's instruments and techniques can detect residue levels that could not be detected when the Delaney Clause became law.

The Food Quality Protection Act was signed into law on August 3 by President Clinton. It replaces the Delaney Clause zero-risk with a standard of "reasonable certainty of no harm". It also imposes a tenfold safety factor for infants and children.

In addition, the FQPA should help registrations for minor-use pesticides (virtually everything used on fruits and vegetables).

Julian W. Sauls  
Professor & Extension Horticulturist

### **NEW AGENTS -----**

Brad Abrameit is the new horticulturist in Hidalgo County, having started on August 1. Brad's training is mainly in ornamentals, specifically the nursery industry, having worked with Dr. Don Wilkerson for his Master's degree.

Francisco Escobedo is the new assistant agent in Kleberg County as of August 16, coming from TAMU-Kingsville.

Farron Sultemeier is the new assistant agent in Webb County, coming from Angelo State.

Johnna Patterson is the new IPM agent in Frio and Atascosa Counties as of August 26. She comes to us with a Master's degree from New Mexico State University.

While there is still a vacancy in Live Oak County, these new agents should bring the district back to near full staff.

Specialists here at Weslaco (and at Corpus and Uvalde) welcome these new personnel and look forward to becoming better acquainted at our annual district training and scheduling conference September 24-26.

Julian W. Sauls  
Professor & Extension Horticulturist

### **ELECTRONIC PEST CONTROL DEVICES -----**

I've recently had an inquiry from a pest management agent about electronic pest control devices. It may be worthwhile to broadcast the message again so that as many people as possible can hear it:

**ULTRASONIC AND SUBSONIC PEST CONTROL DEVICES HAVE NEVER BEEN PROVEN TO WORK!**

There, I feel better already. Let me explain a little more. Ultrasonic devices have been around for a long time. Their manufacturers claim, often with an almost religious fervor, that these invention produce sounds that are undetectable by the human ear, but which drive away pests without the use of any dangerous chemicals or side effects. Part of that claim is true--no harmful side effects (at least that we know of). Unfortunately there have never been proven effects against pests, either.

Reason? For one thing, ultrasonic sounds do not carry very far--not nearly as far as manufacturers claim. About half of ultrasonic energy is dissipated at 15 feet. None is detectable at 30 feet. Furthermore, objects placed in the way of ultrasound waves block the sound, creating shadows where pests are unaffected.

Secondly, there has never been any research that shows that these devices have the intended effect on pests. One recently marketed device known as ElectraCat was tested by Texas A&M University professor, Dr. Roger Gold, in 1990. Results showed no repellent or inhibitory effects on cockroaches. In fact, insects tended to cluster near the unit, apparently in response to the heat it generated.

The Texas Attorney General actually banned ElectraCat from sale in Texas as a result of this research; however such devices still abound on the market. The biggest seller for the QVC cable network in 1995 was an electronic "force field" device that sold 109,559 units that year. The device was guaranteed to drive rodents out of homes by "irritating the nervous systems" of the pests.

Unfortunately, inventors can develop new devices faster than they can be tested. Rarely do their manufacturers go through the expense and bother of having their units tested by an impartial researcher (Electra Cat was an exception).

Also, given their track record, historically, few researchers are interested in researching these devices. So if you're looking for data concerning a particular product, you will probably be disappointed--unless testimonials from enthusiastic users are enough to convince you.

If that's the case for you, I've got a sure fire, permanent solution for fire ants that I'd love to sell you.

Texas A&M University REC; 17360 Coit Road; Dallas, Texas 75252-6599;  
Ph. 214-952-9204 FAX 214-952-9632, Internet: m-merchant@tamu.edu

Mike Merchant, Ph.D.  
Extension Urban Entomologist

### **SOUTH TEXAS DROUGHT BRIEFING -----**

According to a letter from Director Carpenter's office, Senator Judith Zaffirini and other elected officials have organized briefings on drought relief for a number of south Texas counties over the next six weeks. The meetings include representatives from various state and federal agencies and from the Texas Agricultural Extension Service. These briefings are for city and county officials, public water supply managers and irrigation district officials, as well as growers and ranchers.

On September 9, the briefing will be in the Fire Station at Pleasanton at 10:00, then over to the Bee County College in Beeville at 2:00.

On September 16, the briefing is at the County Courthouse in George West at 10:00, the Civic Center in San Diego at 3:00 and the Research and Extension Center in Corpus Christi at 5:30.

September 25, its in the City Council Chambers in Laredo at 2:00.

September 30, try the Fort Ringgold Center in Rio Grande City at 2:00.

October 7 will be at UT-PA in Edinburg at 2:00.

October 14, try UT-Brownsville at 2:00.

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