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### DENGUE FEVER -----

I am sure by now that everyone is aware of the outbreak of dengue fever in Mexico and the first cases in the LRGV. This is of entomological concern because this disease is vectored by mosquitoes and the only method of battling the disease is to control the vector. The primary vectors are *Aedes* (genus) mosquitoes, especially *Aedes aegypti*. This mosquito is considered a small-container breeder (it lays eggs in small containers), a behavior that likely derived from breeding in tree holes and other natural 'containers' in response to opportunities provided by man. Eggs are laid singly on the sides of the 'container' at or near the water line and will complete development and hatch if they are flooded after four days. If no additional rain occurs, the eggs can withstand desiccation for up to a year and will still hatch when flooded. All of this leads to the recommendation for removal or drainage of artificial containers (empty cans, old tires, vases in cemeteries, etc.) to help reduce the mosquito population. This obviously is of benefit only in reducing the population in the near future (hatching to adult takes 10 - 14 days) and has no impact on adults (adult females probably live a couple of weeks in the heat of the summer but can live much longer with abundant food and cooler temperatures). The only method to significantly reduce the adult population is to treat with insecticides.

As a side note, it is interesting (to me anyway) that none of the reports I have

seen or read have mentioned that *Aedes aegypti* is known as the yellow fever mosquito. This is probably because most people today are not familiar with yellow fever. The lack of experience with yellow fever is a testimony to the effectiveness of disease control through vector control and the contribution of pesticides to human health.

Stormy Sparks  
Associate Professor & Extension Entomologist

#### **LEAFROLLER ----**

A couple of weeks ago I received reports on damage by 'worms' on careless weed. My first thought was of beet armyworm, but in examining plants I found it was a leafroller (which one I do not know). This leafroller has apparently switched over to eating bougainvillea in the last week. Some of the experiment station employees in the ornamentals lab got several calls on this while we were at scheduling. The cause of the damage is easily diagnosed by the presence of curled or rolled-up leaves with a light colored caterpillar inside. These caterpillars are quite active when disturbed. If the population is light and only a few plants are involved, hand removal of curled leaves is a good solution. If insecticidal control becomes necessary, B.t. products (Dipel, etc.) are the safest and will provide control. Coverage (high volume, good pressure) is essential because of the leaf rolling behavior, and control will not occur overnight.

Stormy Sparks  
Associate Professor & Extension Entomologist

#### **HORTICULTURE AND HEALTH -----**

A study by Ishwarlal Jihal won the "Young Investigator Award" of the American Heart Association recently. His work showed that Vitamin C is 95 percent effective in preventing the oxidation of low-density lipoprotein (LDL is the bad form of cholesterol), thus reducing plaque formation. Too, Beta-carotene (a form of Vitamin A) and Vitamin E were shown to be 90 and 45 percent effective, respectively, in preventing LDL oxidation.

This was reported without further references in Citrus Segments of the Citrus Industry magazine (September, 1995, p. 11) by Nancy Hardy.

The importance of this finding—consume more citrus to reduce the risk of heart disease

Julian W. Sauls

Professor & Extension Horticulturist

### LEAF-FOOTED BUGS -----

I have seen and heard about some heavy populations of leaf-footed bugs on a variety of plants (including a sago palm in my yard). These bugs are related to stink bugs (have piercing-sucking mouthparts) and are easily identified by "flat" hind legs (looks like a small leaf) with a white strip across the back and both hind legs. If insecticides are needed, they should be easy to control with most insecticides and selection will depend on the situation (i.e. if in pecans, select something relatively safe like Sevin®).

Stormy Sparks  
Associate Professor & Extension Entomologist

### CITRUS MATURITY -----

Many home citrus growers do not understand maturity of citrus fruits, erroneously believing that citrus does not mature to good eating quality until it loses its green color. In fact, citrus invariably reaches maturity while the peel is still quite green. With the exception of limes, packinghouses operate degreening rooms during the early season to remove the green color from the peel, thereby causing the fruit to exhibit the orange or yellow color that consumers associate with mature citrus.

Legal maturity is the point at which juice content and sugars and acids in the juice achieve the minima allowed by law for Texas citrus to be sold in commercial channels. Currently, Marrs oranges and some navel oranges have achieved legal maturity, with shipments of the former starting about two weeks ago. Grapefruit will likely start passing maturity tests in the next week or two.

From the standpoint of eating quality, legal maturity may be a little too early for your taste. Consequently, the surest way to determine citrus maturity is to pick a fruit and eat it. If your taste buds are satisfied, then the fruit is mature.

As a guideline, Marrs reach maturity about mid-September, navels soon after, grapefruit about mid-October, most satsumas and tangerines (except Dancy) in September, and Valencias in early February. There's too many other varieties and types to list here.

Naturally, all citrus will become juicier and sweeter the longer it stays on the tree (within its season—navel oranges and many satsumas and tangerines begin to dry out about Christmas or soon thereafter).

Julian W. Sauls  
Professor & Extension Horticulturist

**CARELESS WEED -----**

Scientists at the University of Florida have found a fungal organism in Gainesville, FL, that apparently is rather effective in controlling pigweed (that's what the southeastern folks call careless weed). The fungus has been tested and is patented, with availability to producers awaiting the success of the patent holders in finding a suitable partner to formulate the end product.

The fungus apparently is limited to the genus *Amaranthus*, which also includes some plants grown as ornamentals.

Julian W. Sauls  
Professor & Extension Horticulturist

**PECAN HARVEST -----**

A number of pecan trees in the Valley have already started dropping, so it won't be long before the nuts achieve good eating quality. Freshly-opened pecans usually have a greenish taste and usually have a fairly high moisture content. Normally, it takes a couple of weeks of "curing" at ambient temperatures to dry the kernel to good quality and taste.

Even if the weather remains dry, it is best to gather the nuts every few days rather than let them lay on the ground indefinitely. Put them in burlap or mesh sacks and hang them in the barn or garage to cure.

To expedite harvest, old-fashioned cane poles (as in fishing pole) or lengths of PVC pipe can be used to rap the limbs and knock the nuts loose. Otherwise, just wait for wind and nature to put the nuts on the ground.

Julian W. Sauls  
Professor & Extension Horticulturist

**1995 PECAN CROP ESTIMATE -----**

The official U.S.D.A. estimate of the 1995 pecan crop is in, though the initial estimate will be subject to periodic revision through the season. At present, the estimate calls for 248 million pounds, which is roughly 25 percent over that a year ago. Moreover, this estimate is very close to that of some industry estimates.

The Texas crop is estimated at 60 million pounds, up 50 percent from last year, but about 11 percent under the industry's estimate. The composition of this crop is 20 million pounds of natives and 40 million pounds of improved varieties.

Because the California almond crop is less than half of last year's, it would seem that quality pecans should command excellent prices this season. Moreover,

the Mexican crop is reportedly off and some areas of the Southeast have experienced weather-related production problems.

Julian W. Sauls  
Professor & Extension Horticulturist

#### **LOTS OF JOBS FOR MASTER GARDENERS -----**

I know it's a bad habit that I have, but I always tend to hang onto a lot of older "out of date" publications. One of these just happens to be the now "out of date" Master Gardener Handbook that was updated this past spring. This version has a chapter titled Master Gardeners which lists about 50 different jobs that Master Gardeners have tackled. Master Gardeners have done everything from creating and maintaining demonstration gardens to translating Extension gardening publications into the Cambodian language. What I'm getting at is that Master Gardeners can do just about any thing in the realm of urban horticulture and that their potential is only limited by our imaginations. If you would like to receive a copy of this "out of date" chapter, let me know and we'll be glad to send it to you.

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