



Agriculture and Natural Resources Newsletter

Happy belated New Year to everyone! I will be sending you a quarterly newsletter this year that will hopefully have information that will benefit you. It will be a combination of livestock, forestry, lawn and garden information. So hopefully you will find information that you are interested in. If you have topics you would like included in the newsletter please give me a call and I will be happy to include information on that topic in the newsletter.



Feeding Moldy Hay

This past summer and falls wet weather conditions have resulted in poor hay quality for winter feeding. If you harvested or bought rain damaged hay this year chances are the nutritional value of your hay is lower than it normally would be. You may also want to be aware of the possibility of moldy hay.

Horses are generally the most sensitive to mold; it can cause respiratory problems for them. Cattle can generally tolerate a little mold without problems. However some mold may cause mitotic abortion or aspergillosis.

Mold makes hay less palatable, which may result in lower intake or greater animal refusal of hay. Livestock being fed moldy hay should be watched carefully for mycotoxin symptoms such as the following:

- Feed refusal or reduced intake

- Reduced nutrient absorption
 - Diarrhea and intestinal irritation
 - Lethargy and increased morbidity

Cold Injury to Plants

Unlike animals that escape to safety when the temperatures drop, plants have to withstand whatever comes their way. The cold temperatures can cause future damage to our plants. Some symptoms of cold damage may not even be seen until the hot summer weather.

Plants have to prepare themselves for colder temperature by reducing the amount of free water (xylem) and food (phloem) carrying vessels. If plants don't reduce the amount of free water, ice forms between the plants cells. The ice draws water from the cells themselves, causing the cells to weaken or collapse.

If the phloem is injured, fewer nutrients will be carried to the roots which may stunt the plants growth. If the xylem is injured, less water will be provided to the branches and leaves.

Plants that had little time to prepare themselves for the cold will be more severely injured than those that cooled more slowly. Weakened plants may seem to emerge from dormancy and flower just fine, but once the plant uses up its resources symptoms may appear.

Symptoms may be worse in the hot summer. The foliage needs extra water during the hot weather to help keep the plant cool. In a cold injured plant, not enough water and nutrients can make it past the injured areas to

replace this water. Such damage may appear in branches here and there.

Begin checking for cold damage this spring. Examine trunks, branches and limbs for cold damage. Remove the affected branches and limbs. Nothing can be done for split trunks. Prune the dead wood back to healthy areas once leafing has occurred. This will not only improve the looks of the plant, but also keep out insects and diseases.

Be aware of cold damage, but don't blame everything on it. Damage can also be caused by herbicide or fertilizer damage.



Newton County Master Gardeners

The Master Gardener Volunteer program is a great way to gain horticultural expertise at a low cost, meet other avid gardeners, share gardening experiences, get connected to the community, and belong to a well-respected and educational organization.

Individuals are trained and certified in consumer horticulture and related areas. In exchange for 40 hours of educational training, individuals are required to return 40 hours of volunteer service within one year of their training. This service should help **county Extension offices** with horticulture projects that benefit their local communities.

After the first year, volunteers are required to return 20 hours of volunteer service and to attend 12 hours of educational training to remain certified as Master Gardeners.

Continuing education is offered to encourage long-term commitments. Most certified Master Gardeners serve five to seven years. The Master Gardener approach helps the local Extension office reach a broader audience than is possible with only one or two agents. It also provides the local office a way to serve the public and, at the same time, develop a supportive clientele group. Volunteers help extend the educational arm of the university to the public by providing horticultural information based on university research and recommendations.

If you are interested in becoming a Master Gardener in Newton County please contact Leanne McGee at 601-635-2267 by February 1, 2010.



Master Cattle Producer Self-Study Training Online

The Mississippi Master Cattle Producer Program is a comprehensive training in major beef cattle production topic areas. An Internet-based self-study version of the Mississippi Master Cattle Producer Program is available for online completion below. The self-study course is open to any producer interested in learning more at their own pace about improving production on their beef cattle operations.

The Master Cattle Producer program consists of training modules in eight beef cattle production subject areas. These eight training modules are listed below. Beef cattle producers enrolled in the Master Cattle Producer program will

complete about 20-24 hours of training which includes the following:

1. Beef Cattle Nutrition
2. Forage Systems
3. Beef Cattle Reproduction
4. Breeding and Genetics
5. Economics and Marketing
6. Herd Health and Handling
7. Beef End Product
8. Beef Quality Assurance

Cogongrass

Cogongrass is one of the most invasive weeds in MS and it will soon be flowering. It can produce as many as 200 flower heads per square meter in a dense infestation. Cogongrass is the most noticeable when it is in full bloom therefore it is important to prevent seed production and dispersal. To do this it should be treated after green up and before flowering is complete.

Cogongrass flower heads are cylindrical in shape that can be from two to eight inches long and 0.5 to 1 inch wide. The flower head is made up of several hundred tiny florets, each with the potential to produce a seed. From start to finish, the period of flowering to seed production generally last from 4-6 weeks. It can begin to bloom as early as February or March. It may also bloom after mowing, fire, herbicide applications or other disturbances.

The seeds may be dispersed by many different methods such as wind, animals, humans, storms and equipment. Generally wind dispersed seeds will travel less than 100 feet, however they may be dispersed farther by a storm.

The use of herbicides in the spring is your best method for control. The two herbicides most commonly used are glyphosate and imazapyr. Always read and follow the instructions on the labels for the appropriate application rates.

Lawn & Garden Tips

January - February

When it's wet, cold and dark for 14 hours a day, gardening is not generally a high priority, BUT plants still need some attention. Leaves must be removed (mulch mowed or raked up) from the grass. Deciduous trees (oak, maple, cypress) and summer blooming shrubs (roses, crepe myrtles, hydrangea) should be pruned. Bare-rooted or container grown fruit and nut trees can be planted. The weather is perfect for moving plants that need to be relocated in your landscape. And finally, seeds for summer flowers or vegetable gardens can be ordered.

March – Vegetables and Herbs

March is the time to start all spring garden plants. Plant tomato, pepper, cucumber, cantaloupe and eggplant seeds in individual cells or cups. Keep them moist (not wet) and warm until the seeds germinate. After the plants are visible, keep them in as much light as possible. The end of March signals warmer soil temperatures and the end of winter. Cool soil does not promote root development; so don't be in too much of a hurry to set out your precious warm season crops. The first

week in April is a much better time for setting out these vegetable transplants.

Bulbs

The spring blooming bulbs will show their full color in mid to late March. Seventy-five percent of the spring performing bulbs planted in Mississippi are: daffodils, hyacinth and iris. If you have trouble getting your flowering bulbs to come back year after year, then here are a few suggestions that should increase your success. First, check the amount of sunlight. The planting site must get at least six hours of morning, afternoon or constant dappled light after the surrounding trees have leafed out. The bulbs must have light for their leaves so they can replenish the energy and nutrients needed to bloom next spring. Secondly, the bulbs need water while growing, but absolutely must have good drainage throughout the year. Sandy-loam is the ideal soil for bulbs. Plant the bulbs shallowly and then top with several more inches of topsoil then mulch. The bulbs will grow up through the topsoil and develop healthy roots in the good organic material. The third trick to getting loads of blooms is to fertilize every fall/winter. Use a complete N-P-K fertilizer such as 10-10-20 bulb booster. If you have waited too late to apply the granular fertilizer, then use a water-soluble type that can reach the roots quickly. Do not tie, twist, bend down, braid or pin the foliage after blooming. The foliage needs time to regain energy for the bulb. If your foliage looks ragged then it may be a lack of one of the key elements: sunlight, water or nutrients. You can cut the foliage or cover it with mulch when the leaves turn yellow. It's time to divide when the flowers get small and few in numbers.

In order to create graceful drifts, try planting just a few different kinds of one type of bulb in large "S" or "C" shaped beds. For indoor vase arrangements, cut the flowers when they are still in bud form or slightly opened.

Its Tax Time

Tax season is fast approaching. The MSU Extension Service has a great publication on Timber Tax. If you would like a copy of this publication, please call the Extension office and request Publication 2307.



Dates to remember –

- County Livestock Show & Sale – Jan. 23
- District Livestock Shows – Feb. 1-4
- Dixie National Feb. 5 – 11
- Forestry Board Meeting – Feb. 23
- Forestry Association Meeting – March 11
- Cattlemens Association Meeting – March 25



I hope that 2010 is a great year for everyone! If you would like more information on any of the subjects discussed in the newsletter please contact me at 601-635-2267.

Sincerely,

Leanne McGee
Newton County
Extension Agent

