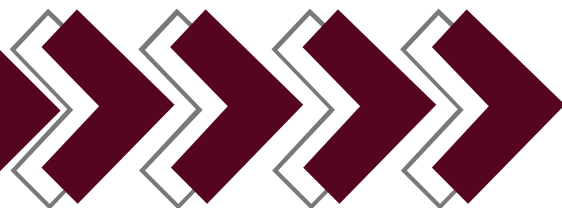


Zavala County- Agriculture and Natural Resources

October 2025 Newsletter



Welcome to this month's Agriculture and Natural Resources Newsletter! This publication aims to keep you informed about upcoming programs and provide valuable insights into agriculture and natural resource topics relevant to our area.

Please contact me if you have any questions.

Contact Information:

Leslie Dominguez
County Extension Agent- Agriculture
& Natural Resources
(830) 374-2883
leslie.dominguez@ag.tamu.edu



[https://agrilifeextension.tamu.edu/
counties/zavala-county/](https://agrilifeextension.tamu.edu/counties/zavala-county/)



Zavala County- Texas A&M AgriLife Extension

Inside This Issue:

- Upcoming Program Flyers
- Wildlife focused New World Screwworm Resource
- Tanglehead Guide
- October Gardening Tips
- Plant of the Month
- BQA Tips

Upcoming Programs:

- Private Water Well Screening (10/7/25)
- Virtual Water Well Program (10/8/25)
- Southwest Texas Soil Testing Campaign (10/15/25-10/30/25)
- Spinach BBQ Cook-Off (11/1/25)
- Farmer's Market (11/8/25)





*MULTI-COUNTY
WATER WELL SCREENING
ZAVALA COUNTY*

Have you tested your private water well?

Samples will be screened for: Fecal coliform bacteria,
nitrates, salinity, and hydrocarbons

Cost: \$15 per sample (Cash only)

Samples drop off date: October 7, 2025

Samples drop time: 8-9 AM

Drop off location: AgriLife Extension Office
221 N 1st Ave, Crystal City, TX

Samples can be submitted in clean plastic bottles

Let the pump operate ten minutes to an hour before taking the sample. Take the sample as close to the pump as possible.

*Questions?
830-374-2883
leslie.dominguez@ag.tamu.edu*

UNDERSTANDING AND CARING FOR YOUR WATER WELL

VIRTUAL EDUCATIONAL PROGRAM

HOSTED BY: ATASCOSA, DIMMIT, FRIO, LA SALLE, MCMULLEN AND ZAVALA COUNTIES

Date: October 8, 2025

Time: 5:30 PM

Location: Zoom

[https://agrilife.zoom.us/j/92155964434?
pwd=6hvtsOnJzDGXdlbbxwFvnzmRySpY0b.1](https://agrilife.zoom.us/j/92155964434?pwd=6hvtsOnJzDGXdlbbxwFvnzmRySpY0b.1)

Topics: Interpreting your results& how to care for your
water well

Speaker: Mr. Joel Pigg, Extension Program Specialist

Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Presents

Southwest Texas Soil Testing Campaign

Dimmit, Frio, Kinney, La Salle, Medina, Uvalde, and Zavala Counties

**LIMITED TIME
OFFER**

Price: (CASH ONLY)

Routine Analysis (R): \$8

R + Micronutrients: \$15

Sample Collection Period:

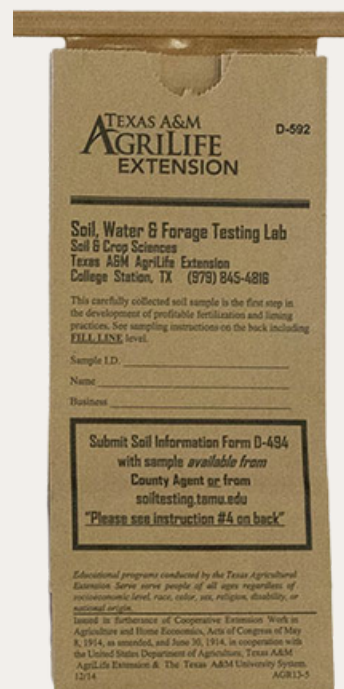
October 15- October 30, 2025

Pick Up/ Drop Off Location:

221 N 1st Ave, Crystal City, Tx 78839

Landowners may pick up soil sample bags, instructions, and forms at the County Extension Office. Landowners will need to take their samples back to the extension office for shipping.

Your County Extension Agent will notify participants when results are ready to pick up.



Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service provides equal opportunities in its programs and employment to all persons, regardless of race, color, sex, religion, national origin, disability, age, genetic information, veteran status, sexual orientation, or gender identity. The Texas A&M University System, U.S. Department of Agriculture, and the County Commissioners Courts of Texas Cooperating.

**TEXAS A&M
AGRILIFE
EXTENSION**

SPINACH FESTIVAL

2025 SPINACH BBQ COOKOFF

SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 1, 2025 GATES OPEN AT 7AM!

📍 ZCJLSA SHOW BARN

1685 US-83, CRYSTAL CITY, TX 78839

Entry Fees:

- \$30 for adults per entry
- \$15 for youth per entry
- Pay on site. CASH OR CHECK

Adult Categories:

- Hot Spinach Dish
- Cold Spinach Dish
- Beef Fajita
- Chicken Quarters
- Salsa

Youth Categories:

- Spinach Dish
- Beef Fajita
- Salsa

Schedule of Events:

Gates Open: 7AM

Meat & Ingredient Inspection/Check-In: 8:00 AM

Salsa: 11:00 AM

Cold Spinach Dish: 1:00 PM

Hot Spinach Dish/Youth Spinach Dish: 2:00 PM

Chicken Quarters: 3:00 PM

Beef Fajita: 4:00 PM

Awards: 5:00 PM On Site

Cash & Custom Prizes

Awarded:

1st - 3rd Places per Category
3 Overall Winners for
Adults & Youth

ON SITE COOK OFF* *TRAILERS WELCOME

NO ELECTRICITY PROVIDED- GENERATORS WELCOME

BRING YOUR OWN CANOPIES, CHAIRS, WASHING STATIONS, ETC

Rules:



**For more information
contact:
Leslie Dominguez
830-374-2883**

Registration:



Proudly Sponsored By





This event is proudly sponsored by the City of Crystal City

ZAVALA COUNTY FARMER'S MARKET

DO YOU SELL...

- fresh produce
- canned/ pickled items
- home baked goods
- freeze dried or dehydrated products
- sourdough bread
- fresh eggs
- honey
- cheese
- raw milk
- soaps
- candles
- loofahs
- leather goods
- etc.



SIGN UP AS A VENDOR TODAY! VENDORS FROM SURROUNDING AREAS ARE INVITED!

APPLICATIONS WILL BE REVIEWED BY COMMITTEE, AND VENDOR WILL BE NOTIFIED BY EMAIL OR PHONE.

**FARMER'S MARKET IS SCHEDULED TO OCCUR ON
NOVEMBER 8, 2025 FROM 10 AM - 2 PM AT
DOWNTOWN CRYSTAL CITY, TX**

SIGN UP BEFORE OCTOBER 31, 2025; NO FEE

SCAN THE QR CODE TO SIGN UP!

OR

<https://forms.office.com/r/wt9eAJZVLN>

For more information please contact
Leslie Dominguez at 830-374-2883



AgriLife Extension publishes wildlife-focused New World screwworm resource

Digital fact sheet outlines monitoring and reporting strategies to protect wildlife
September 16, 2025 - by Sarah Fuller

The Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service has released a new fact sheet, “Wildlife Monitoring and Management for New World Screwworm,” to help Texans protect wildlife from the threat of this potentially devastating parasite.

Developed by experts from AgriLife Extension, Texas A&M Natural Resources Institute and Texas Parks and Wildlife Department, the science-based resource provides rural and urban Texans with the information to monitor for and report possible infestations in free-ranging wildlife.

Protect Texas wildlife

Learn how to spot and report New World screwworm in free-ranging wildlife. This new AgriLife Extension fact sheet gives Texans the steps and education they need to act quickly.

[View the fact sheet](#)



Wildlife are a cherished natural resource and play vital roles in our ecosystem health,” said Marcus Blum, Ph.D., AgriLife Extension statewide wildlife specialist and assistant professor in the Texas A&M College of Agriculture and Life Sciences Department of Rangeland, Wildlife and Fisheries Management. “Texas is home to more than 100 mammal species that are at risk if the fly reestablishes itself here. This fact sheet was designed to help Texans play an important part in their protection.”

Blum, the publication’s primary author, said that in addition to iconic mammals such as white-tailed deer, mule deer and black bear, other warm-blooded wildlife, like birds, are also vulnerable.

Link to the Wildlife Monitoring and Management for New World Screwworm:
<https://agrilifeextension.tamu.edu/wp-content/uploads/2025/09/RWFM-PU-432-Wildlife-Monitoring-and-Management-for-New-World-Screwworm.pdf>

The Texas Rangeland Plant Identification Guide: Tanglehead

StacyL.Hines, Ph.D.*

The Texas Rangeland Plant Identification Guide provides information needed to start developing a rangeland habitat management plan. The first three steps are:

- Step 1:** Identify the plant.
- Step 2:** Understand the plant's value or risk.
- Step 3:** Follow science-driven management recommendations.

TANGLEHEAD DISTRIBUTION

Tanglehead (*Heteropogon contortus*) is found throughout most South and far Western Texas counties in portions of the Trans-Pecos, Edwards Plateau, South Texas Plains, and Gulf Prairies and Marshes ecoregions (Tjelmeland, 2011). Throughout its range, tanglehead occurs in a variety of soil types, including sandy, clay loams, and rocky soils (Grass et al., 2016; Mata et al., 2018; Tjelmeland, 2011; Walther et al., 2021; Wester et al., 2018).

The distribution and abundance of tanglehead have increased over the past 30 years, especially in the Coastal Sand Plains ecoregion in South Texas. One South Texas rangeland experienced a 200 percent increase in tanglehead cover over a 4-year period, with the highest increase occurring during the driest months on record from 2011 to 2013 (Wester et al., 2018).

Increased tanglehead abundance in the Coastal Sand Plains has been associated with the reduction and elimination of livestock grazing (Bielfelt & Litt, 2016; Walther et al., 2021; Wester et al., 2018). The increase has also been associated with abundant rainfall during tanglehead's peak flowering season between July and September (Wester et al., 2018).



Step 1: Identify the Plant

Tanglehead is a perennial bunchgrass that is typically 1 to 3 feet tall but may reach up to 5 feet in optimal growing conditions (Fig. 1). The leaves are about ¼ inch wide and are 4 to 12 inches long. Spring re-growth is lemon lime (Fig. 2).

Pull the leaf back from the stem and look on the interior of the leaf collar for the ligule, where a thin membrane with short hairs can be seen (Fig. 3).

The inflorescence, or seed head, looks like a dark-colored, twisted tangle. Hence, the common name "tanglehead." The color of the inflorescence is dark purple to red brown (Fig. 4).



Figure 1. A tanglehead plant with new leaf growth emerging.



Figure 2. Tanglehead spring re-growth.

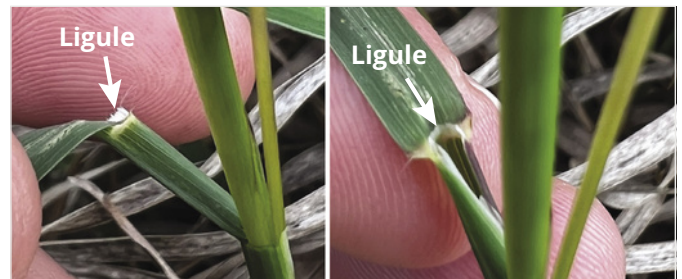


Figure 3. A close-up of the tanglehead ligule and inflorescence.



Figure 4. The tanglehead inflorescence, or seed head, looks like a dark-colored twisted tangle.

*Assistant Professor and Rangeland Habitat Management Specialist

Native Status

Most resources classify tanglehead as a native species (Grass et al., 2016; Mata et al., 2018; Walther et al., 2021; Wester et al., 2018). It is one of the oldest documented grass species, with a confirmed presence in the Sonoran Desert more than 12,000 years ago (Grass et al., 2016). In South Texas, tanglehead was classified as a native invasive grass due to the formation of monocultures that have been documented since the 1990s (Tjelmeland, 2011; Wester et al., 2018).

STEP 2: Understand the Plant's Value and Risk

Livestock

Value: Tanglehead is good, palatable forage for cattle and horses during the growing season. After a prescribed burn, new growth is 16 percent crude protein but diminishes to 4 to 6 percent 3 months later (Wester et al., 2018). Sheep may consume tanglehead leaves, but it is considered a low-value forage for sheep (Grass et al., 2016).

Risk: Tanglehead provides a low value to livestock when mature (Tjelmeland, 2011; Walther et al., 2021). The awns, or long "hairs" on the seeds, are sharp and may penetrate livestock's soft tissues located externally or within the digestive system.



Wildlife

Value: Tanglehead can provide nesting cover for wild turkeys and bobwhite quails, as well as fawning cover for white-tailed deer.

Risk: In South Texas, tanglehead may form monocultures, which reduces wildlife diversity. For example, bobwhite quail density decreased in stands with 30 to 40 percent tanglehead coverage (Wester et al., 2018).



STEP 3: Science-Driven Management

Management options for tanglehead vary by ecological region. In Central and West Texas, tanglehead is considered a desired range plant that decreases under heavier livestock grazing pressure. Tanglehead grazing intensity must be monitored to maintain healthy stands on Central and West Texas rangelands (Tjelmeland, 2011).

In the South Texas Coastal Sand Plains, tanglehead may form monocultures, decreasing species diversity (Bielfelt & Litt, 2016; Grass et al., 2016; Tjelmeland, 2011; Wester et al., 2018). Treatment within the tanglehead monoculture can reduce tanglehead density and increase species diversity.

An effective long-term management strategy is fall or winter patch burning, followed by a heavy stocking rate after tanglehead greens up (Tjelmeland, 2011; Walther

et al., 2021). Remove livestock when grazing intensity on other desired grasses exceeds 25 percent.

If livestock are not available, treat individual tanglehead plants with the herbicide imazapyr (Wester et al., 2018). For longer-term control, combination treatments are recommended. Discing in late May or a summer burn followed by an herbicide application—either imazapyr or pendimethalin—can reduce density for 2 to 2½ years (Grass et al., 2016; Wester et al., 2018).

If other invasive grasses are present within the tanglehead monoculture, such as old world bluestems, discing or burning may increase their abundance.

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FOR MORE INFORMATION

Visit the Range Decisions tool: <https://ccag.tamu.edu/extension/rangeland-habitat-management/>.

October Gardening Tips with Dr. Larry Stein

- October through November is an excellent time to purchase bulbs while you still have a good selection in the garden center. They may be planted at any time with the exception of tulips and hyacinth.
- Plant bulbs in well prepared beds so the base of the bulb is at a depth that is three times the diameter of the bulb. In sandy soil, set slightly deeper and in clay soil less deeply.
- Be on the lookout for turf diseases and treat accordingly. Remember to reduce water frequency as temperatures begin to cool. Also, now is good time to “winterize” your lawn with a fertilizer like 19-5-9.
- Container ornamental trees and shrubs can be planted if there is good soil moisture. If exceedingly dry, one may want to wait for fall rains.
- Prime time to plant cool season crops; transplants best on cole crops, but spinach performs the greatest when direct seeded
- Start collecting leaves for the compost pile. Be sure to have extra soil available so that each 6-inch layer of leaves may be covered with several inches of soil. Always wet the layer of leaves thoroughly before adding the soil. Add about one pound of complete lawn or garden fertilizer to each layer of leaves to provide the necessary nitrogen for decomposition.
- Plant of the month is “Marimum”, better known as the large flowering marigolds. Mums, chrysanthemums, are typically used as flowers for All Souls and All Saints Day, but these large, flowered marigolds usually perform much better. Select plants with flower buds, but not open flowers, such as plants will usually outperform those already in bloom.
- October is a good time to reduce the insect and disease potential in next year’s garden. Clean up the garden, removing all annuals that have completed their life cycle. Remove tops of all herbaceous perennials that have finished flowering or as soon as frost has killed the leaves.
- Now is prime time to scatter wildflower seed; remember to put them in sunny locations. Also, since wildflowers could technically be called weeds, you will have to remove other weeds from around them in order for them to get established.



Plant of the Month

Leatherstem, Sangre de Drago

Jatropha dioica Cerv.

Euphorbiaceae (Spurge family)

Plant Description:

Leatherstem is an erect, perennial, shrubby plant with simple, linear leaves. It is a member of the spurge family (Euphorbiaceae). The stems are quite rubbery and flexible, thus the name Leatherstem. It can form colonies up to 6 ft or 1.8 m across with underground runners (i.e., rhizomes). The plant's sap is clear to yellowish until exposed to air when it turns blood red, thus the name Sangre de Drago. Leatherstem ranges from 1 to 3 ft or 0.3 to 0.9 m tall. Leaves have entire margins, rounded apices, and glabrous surfaces. Though the leaves are typically unlobed, there may be some leaves with 3 shallow lobes. Flowers are small and white to pink, appearing in clusters along the stem. Blooming occurs from April to June. Seeds are gray-brown, spherical, and formed in a leathery capsule. There are two varieties of Leatherstem, var. *dioica*, and var. *graminea*. These varieties differ slightly and may hybridize. *Jatropha dioica* var. *dioica* tends to have oblanceolate to narrowly obovate leaves, distinct sepals, and pinkish-white petals. *Jatropha dioica* var. *graminea* tends to have linear to spatulate leaves and white petals.

Habitat:

Leatherstem grows on gravelly bluffs, hillsides, and ravine slopes of the South Texas Plains, the Edwards Plateau, and Trans-Pecos areas. It also grows south into Mexico. It has a very high heat tolerance.

Toxic Agent:

Leatherstem is poisonous to sheep and goats. The major toxic agents are phorbol esters, which severely irritate the stomach lining. A limited number of feeding experiments by the Texas Agricultural Experiment Station found that Leatherstem was toxic but not fatal to a sheep fed 2 percent of its body weight of green leaves. Seeds were fatal to a lamb at 3 percent of its body weight in the three doses over 12 days. A goat fed 3.7 percent of its body weight of Leatherstem leaves developed progressive anemia and died.



Plant Characteristics:

Flower Color: Pink, White

Fruit Type: Fruit/Berry

Duration: Perennial

Stem Texture:

Hairless/Smooth

Growth Habit: Shrub (Woody)

Season: Warm

TEXAS BEEF QUALITY ASSURANCE



BQA TIPS

Understanding Hay Probes: Tools for Accurate Forage Testing

October 1, 2025
Emily Lochner

Hay probes should be used when collecting samples to determine hay quality.

Hay probes come in two main types, push type probes that are manually pushed into the bale or drill type probes that require a drill to collect a core sample. There are variations in design and ease of use within both styles, so a little research before purchasing is valuable.

Well-designed push type probes are generally much quicker and easier to use than drill type probes. However, because of back issues or other reasons drill type probes might be a better option for some producers.