Keys to
Agronomy
APR '26

In this issue:

A recent visit to a cattle operation had me thinking about alternative forage options for our area. This producer grows improved grasses under center pivots for cattle grazing, while using the dryland corners for native grasses such as bluestem to provide additional forage. It was a good reminder that there are several forage options producers can consider, depending on water availability, soil type, and management goals. With any grazable forage, proper stocking rates are critical. Stocking rate depends on both the quantity and quality of forage produced, as well as how efficiently livestock are able to utilize that forage. Matching forage production to livestock demand helps improve grazing efficiency and long-term stand health.

Bluestem- Bluestem is a warm-season bunchgrass that provides good forage, especially in early summer when managed with rotational grazing. Many bluestem species are native to our region, although some introduced varieties are also available. Bluestems are valued for their versatility, drought tolerance, and contribution to overall land productivity. Unlike some introduced grasses, native bluestems are less likely to become invasive, but management is still important. Preventing excessive seed production and maintaining proper grazing pressure helps protect stand quality and prevent unwanted spread.

Millet- Millet is a fast-growing summer annual forage that performs well under drought conditions and responds favorably to fertilizer and irrigation. Hybrid pearl millet is especially well-suited for sandy, acidic soils and can be an excellent grazing option during the summer months. To encourage regrowth, pearl millet should not be grazed below 4 to 6 inches from the base of the plant. Producers should also be aware that millet can accumulate nitrates during periods of drought stress. Forage testing is the best way to ensure nitrate levels are safe before allowing livestock to graze.

Sorghum-Sudan- Sorghum-sudan hybrids are another popular summer annual forage option. These plants typically grow 4 to 7 feet tall and produce finer stems than forage sorghum, making them more suitable for grazing. After the initial grazing, it is recommended to allow at least 24 inches of regrowth before turning livestock back in. Brown midrib (BMR) varieties are often preferred because they contain reduced lignin levels, which improves forage digestibility and animal performance. Like millet, sorghum-sudan can also accumulate nitrates during drought conditions, so producers should use caution and consider forage testing before grazing.

Alternative forages can provide flexibility in grazing systems, especially during dry years or when traditional pasture options are limited. Choosing the right forage for your operation depends on available resources, livestock needs, and management practices. Taking time to evaluate these options can help improve forage production and overall herd performance.

Contact Me!
Got an idea, question, or comment?

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Texas A&M AgriLife Extension

THE HOMEOWNERS HUB

This time of year, everything outside starts waking up from dormancy. We all want green grass, blooming flowers, and healthy trees, but spring weather in the Texas High Plains can act like a bad teenager—unpredictable, moody, and sometimes destructive.

Many of the calls I receive this time of year are about bare spots in lawns, trees that look like they are giving us the death glare, and weeds taking over flower beds. If you feel like giving up on being a plant parent, don't throw in the trowel just yet.

Bare or brown patches in the lawn can be caused by several things, but two common culprits are winter injury and grubs.

Winter kill happens when grass dies or goes dormant due to extreme cold, dehydration, or poor drainage. Sometimes the grass is simply slow to green up, but other times it may need some help recovering.

Helpful solutions include:

- Raking out thatch (dead or matted grass)
- Aerating compacted soil to improve oxygen flow to roots
- Taking a soil sample to check fertility needs
- Applying consistent irrigation

Grubs are beetle larvae that feed on grassroots, causing brown or dead patches in the lawn.

Before treating, make sure grubs are actually the problem. Measure off a 12-by-12-inch section along the edge of the damaged area and pour 1 gallon of water over it. Wait 5–10 minutes. If grubs are present, they should come to the surface.

If you find grubs, treatment may be necessary. If none appear, your issue is likely something else.

Trees Looking Brown or Declining

When trees start looking stressed, the first step is determining whether the problem is abiotic or biotic.

Abiotic damage is caused by environmental conditions that interfere with the tree's natural processes. These issues often affect entire plants or multiple plants across the landscape.

- Common examples include: Drought stress, Under/Overwatering, Sunscald, Poor soil conditions, Temperature extremes.

These problems can take years to show visible symptoms, making diagnosis more difficult.

Biotic damage is caused by living organisms such as fungi, bacteria, or insects. This type of damage is often irregular and non-uniform across the landscape.

- Examples include: Oak wilt, Emerald ash borer, Fungal diseases, and Insect infestations.

Correct identification is important before treatment decisions are made.

Weeds Taking Over

Weeds are strong competitors for water, nutrients, and sunlight. They will gladly rob your flowers and lawn of resources without feeling one ounce of sadness.

Hopefully, you already applied a pre-emergent herbicide earlier this season. If not—or if weeds are escaping—you may need a post-emergent herbicide to regain control.

Treating weeds early helps protect the health of your lawn and flower beds and reduces bigger problems later.

One of the biggest issues I see in lawns, trees, and gardens is inconsistent watering. Surprisingly, this causes more problems than many insects or diseases. Just as important as consistency is knowing how much water you are actually applying. A simple way to test this is by placing a small can like a Vienna sausage or cat food can in your sprinkler zone. Run your system for a set amount of time, then measure the collected water.

Spring yard problems can be frustrating, but many are manageable with a little observation and the right approach. Before giving up on your lawn or landscape, take time to diagnose the issue first. A healthy yard often starts with simple fixes and consistent care.

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VECTOR CLASSES

TEXAS A&M AGRILIFE EXTENSION

2026 VECTOR MANAGEMENT CEU PROGRAM

$50 Registration Fee Required

Pesticide CEU's Offered:

- 5 Agricultural
- 5 Structural
- 5 Animal Control CE's
- 5 Registered Sanitation
- 5 Code Enforcement

Lubbock, TX

May 5, 2026

8am - 3pm

Texas A&M AgriLife Research & Extension Center

1102 E FM 1294
Lubbock, TX 79403

azelis

GULF SOUTH VECTOR

TARGET SPECIALTY PRODUCTS

VESERIS

INFORMATION:

This is a recertification program that will educate personnel in cities and municipalities in the field of vector abatement on mosquitoes, ticks, flies, fleas & bugs, control tactics, trap usage, surveillance, virus testing, and vector borne diseases.

REGISTRATION REQUIRED

LUNCH PROVIDED

Registration is OPEN!
Aim your phone's camera at the QR code above for more information.

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TEXAS A&M AGRILIFE EXTENSION

SCOUT SCHOOL

South Plains Field Scout School

Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Center Lubbock

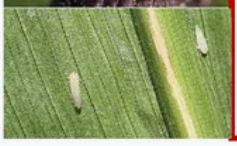
May 29, 2026

TPMA Texas Pest Management Association
PO Box 16523, Lubbock, Texas 79490

3 TDA CEUs





8:30-9:00 am. **Registration**

9:00-10:15 am. **Cotton Agronomy & Pest**

Dr. Suhas Vyavhare, Dr. Ken Lege, Blayne Reed

10:15-10:40 am. **Break / Hands on Cotton Plant Mapping**

High Plains IPM Team

10:40-12:00 pm. **Corn and Sorghum Agronomy & Pest**

Blayne Reed, Dr. Tyler Gilreath

12:00-1:10 pm. **Lunch (on your own)**

1:10-1:45 pm. **Scouting for Plant Diseases**

Dr. Ken Obasa

1:45 – 2:10 pm. **Weed, Herbicide Damage, & Deficiency Scouting**

John Thobe

2:10-2:25 pm **Break / Hands on Cotton Plant Mapping**

High Plains IPM Team

2:25-2:45 pm. **Beneficial Arthropod ID**

Dr. Suhas Vyavhare

2:45- 3:15 pm. **Peanut Scouting 101**

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The Texas A&M AgriLife Extension High Plains IPM Team

Blayne Reed, Program Specialist III-IPM Mid-High Plains & Upper Rolling Plains / John Thobe, Program Specialist I—IPM West Plains / Dr. Suhas Vyavhe, Extension Entomologist – Lubbock / Dr. Tyler Gilreath, District Entomologist-Amarillo / Keegan McCollum, Program Specialist I—IPM, Sandy Lands IPM / Dr. Ken Obasa, Pathologist-Amarillo / Dr. Ken Lege, Cotton Agronomist-Lubbock

USDA NIFA
United States Department of Agriculture
National Institute of Food and Agriculture

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TEXAS A&M AGRILIFE EXTENSION

Save the Date

May 8: Plains Cotton Growers Meeting (Lubbock)

May 22: Plains Cotton Growers Meeting (Lubbock)

May 29: Field Scout School (Lubbock)

June 5: Scout School (Bakers Farm, Morton)

June 12: Scout School (Levelland)

July 1-2: Soils Camp (Olton)

July 2: Soil Stewards (Olton)

July 7-9: Water Well Quality Testing (all counties)

July 23: Rainwater Harvesting (Littlefield)

July 30: Bamert Tour (Muleshoe)

Stay tuned to social media and newsletters for more events

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