

Organic News

Upcoming Programs

Saturday, August 5 – OHBAPalooza is a unique event that features an Organic Fair + Superb Education about horticulture and gardening. The location is at 50 Waugh Dr., Houston, TX, and cost is \$50 for members and \$75 for non-members. To register go to OHBAONLINE.ORG/REGISTER.

Sunday-Tuesday, August 6-8 – Southern Family Farmers & Food Systems Conference annual event jointly hosted by the Farm and Ranch Freedom Alliance, Small Producers Initiative at Texas State University, and Council for Healthy Food Systems.

Tuesday, August 8 – USDA Organic Market Development Grants are due. They must be entered online at grants.gov.

Thursday, August 31 – South Plains Organic Cotton/Peanut Tour near Seminole. The tour will start with registration at 8:00 am at the Gaines Co. Civic Building in Seminole at 402 NW 5th Street (Corner of NW 5th and NW Ave. D). The tour will leave at 8:45 am from the Civic Building and return around noon for a sponsored lunch. Two continuing education credits will be offered on the tour.

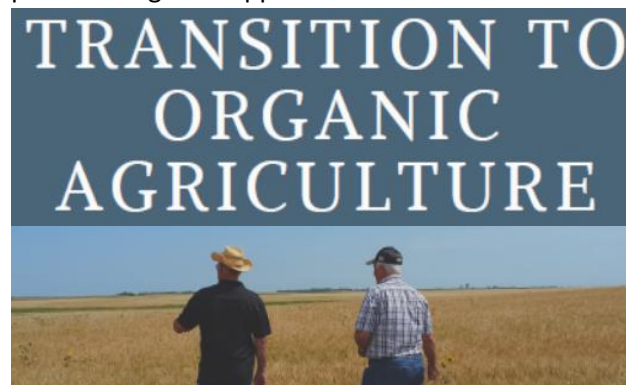
Tuesday, October 17 – Wednesday, October 18 – 2023 Organic Conference, Georgetown, Texas. All things growing organic or becoming organic! Contact: Kate Hajda, County Extension Horticulturist kate.hajda@ag.tamu.edu. Includes organic programs, tours, grower panels, meals and more!

Tuesday, October 24 - Thursday, October 26 – National Organic Standards Board meeting online. Not that interesting unless you have an issue that needs to be addressed!

Thursday, January 11, 2024 – Friday, January 12, 2024 – Organic Conference, Dallas Research and Extension Center. Contact: Dr. Joe Masabni, Extension Horticulturist

Transition to Organic Partnership Program (Texas TOPP)

You are going to be hearing a lot about the Texas TOPP program over the next several years. This program is designed to promote organic production, organic development, organic marketing, organic resources, etc. It will help to develop a vibrant and active organic workforce and promote organic support industries.



Anyone with an interest in organic production will be able to get more, better, and deeper information than ever before and if they decide to transition to organic, they will have someone to hold their hand through the process. Even better, we will be helping them so that they don't fall through the cracks!

Currently I am taking applications and hiring a new Program Coordinator for Texas TOPP and this person will be supporting all our Extension Organic Programming along with Texas TOPP. Organic is growing in TEXAS! If you have questions please give a call, email, or text....

Organic Cotton and Peanut Tour

Working with organic producers, specialists, and researchers, a great **Organic Tour** of both peanut and cotton production has been planned for **Thursday, August 31st** in the Seminole area. The tour will start with registration at 8:00 am at the Gaines Co. Civic Building in Seminole at 402 NW 5th Street (Corner of NW 5th and NW Ave. D). The tour will leave at 8:45 am from the Civic Building and return at 12:20 pm for a sponsored lunch. Two

continuing education credits for TDA Pesticide Licenses will be offered on the tour.



The first stop on the tour will be at the **Neil Froese Peanut Farm** just north of Seminole on CR 108 and CR 109 east of Hwy 62 north. At this organic peanut field, tour participants will discuss growing organic peanuts and production in 2023. Dr. John Cason, Texas A&M AgriLife Research Peanut Breeder will talk about a research variety trial in this field for organic peanuts. Dr. Joseph Burke is the new Extension Specialist and Researcher for Weed Science and Cropping Systems at Lubbock. Dr. Burke will talk about his program and plans for the South Plains. Bob Whitney, Extension Organic Specialist will discuss peanut seedling disease issues and research results along with organic peanut production issues.

The next stop will be at the **Theodore Wiebe Farm** south of Seminole on Hwy 385 to County Road 418 and down to the intersection with County Road 403. Tour participants will have a chance to talk about organic cotton and peanuts at the Wiebe Farm. Dr. Jane Dever and Dr. Carol Kelly, Texas A&M AgriLife Research Cotton Breeders will be on hand to discuss cotton production and breeding in 2023 with an emphasis on organic. Dr. Holly Davis, Field Development Manager for Certis Biologicals will discuss using biologicals in crops with an emphasis on potential pitfalls to organic systems.

Sponsors for the Organic Cotton and Peanut Tour include South Plains Compost, American Plant Food, Algrano Peanuts, Certis Biologicals, Kunafin “The Insectary”, IPG, Dragon Line Irrigation, Nature Safe, ViaTrac Fertilizer and Agrellus.

To participate in the Tour and to get an accurate head count for the meal please call Amanda (Gaines Co. Extension Office) at (432) 758-4006.

Legumes make a difference!

My office is at the Texas A&M AgriLife Research and Extension Center in Stephenville which provides me with lots of opportunities for research and demonstrations in crop and horticulture production.

That said 2022 was a very difficult year in the state of Texas and certainly in Central Texas at the Center. There were all kinds of experiments installed and unfortunately the drought and high temperatures prevented much of an evaluation or harvest. We use hand move pipe for irrigation and keeping up with irrigated plots was almost just



enough to keep plants growing and yields did suffer.

In the 2023 picture above you see a field that **was not irrigated in 2022**. The section of soybeans was planted very early in the spring in hopes of testing a few different treatments applied on the same variety. The section of peanuts was planted to evaluate the variety as a dryland peanut. No crop was planted on a large section in the middle, but it did grow up in weeds – sort of!

Dr. John Cason is one of our Research Scientists with a specialty in peanut breeding. He and his staff put in these two test areas of **legumes in 2022** and to say the least they were a disaster. The soybeans

(picture bottom) came up and did try to grow but the deer kept them eaten down till the drought took over. The peanuts were also eaten by deer, but the drought basically kept them from ever growing more than teacup size. We considered both areas a disaster and just plowed them under later in 2022.

Now, in **2023**, this whole field was planted to **Haygrazer as a cover crop** as you can see in the picture. Now that I have explained what was done in 2022 maybe you can see (thanks to Johnny for the drone picture) and understand what is going on in **2023**. The field has had no fertilizer of any kind this year or last year. What you see is strictly the residual soil fertility left by the attempt at growing **two kinds of legume crops in 2022**. What's the takeaway here? Pretty obvious that even when you don't think your legume crop is making a difference it is probably making a huge difference. If you want to know how much, just leave a planter width of legumes out when you plant the field. I bet you will see that strip all next year!



What varieties are organic farmers planting?

I get questioned sometimes about varieties to plant in organic agriculture. Farmers are some of the best experimenters of all time and they find things nobody else can! If you look at the USDA Integrity Database there is lots of great information available and depending on the organic certifier

there will be a good list of what organic growers are planting.

Now the hard part was getting all that information out of the database and into a format where you can see what they are planting. The list will not include every variety our many Texas organic growers' plant, but it will give you a pretty good idea. You can check out the list by going to <https://tinyurl.com/ypdxzcrm> plus I will have it at organic meetings to get grower input!

Temperature Extremes Can Affect Plant Varieties



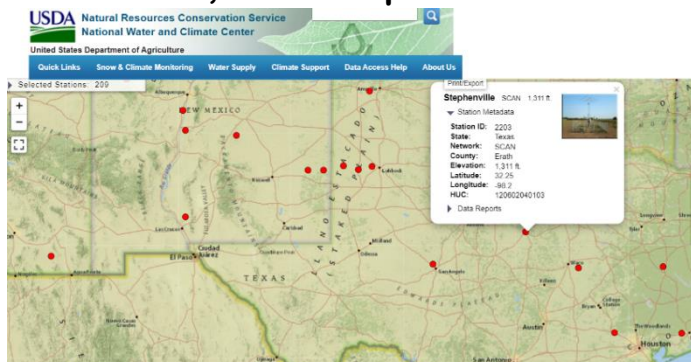
Normal rice pollination



Heat damaged pollination.

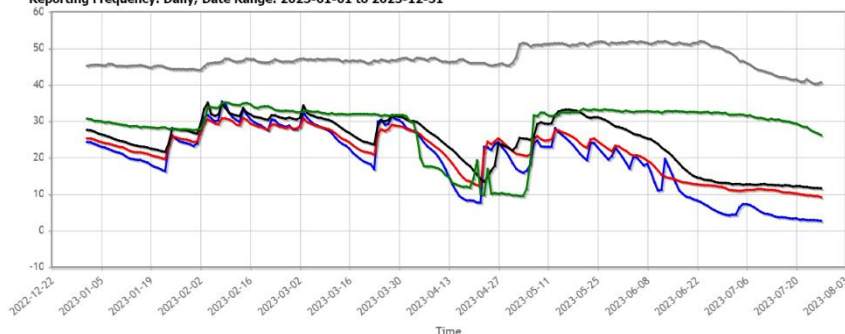
Temperature is considered a primary factor affecting the rate of plant development, and I think every farmer knows that. Every year we are seeing extremes in daytime temperatures but more importantly we are seeing a tightening of the difference between daytime and nighttime temperatures. It does not cool off as quickly or as much at night so that the spread between day and night is smaller such that the average temperature is higher. **What does this mean?** First it can mean that varieties are not as productive as they once were. In rice, breeders are working on new rice varieties that can handle higher temperatures both day and night. We are working on the same thing in corn varieties. If you notice that grain fill is different, blanks are more prominent or yields are down it could be temperature, even nighttime temperatures!

Temperatures, Rainfall, Soil Moisture, Soil Temperatures



You might not realize it but there is a lot of information available to you through the NRCS weather stations located in many parts of the state. There is a lot of information on these sites which can be useful for planning, planting, or scheduling field operations.

Stephenville (2203) Texas SCAN Site - 1311 ft
Reporting Frequency: Daily; Date Range: 2023-01-01 to 2023-12-31



The above chart is just one example of many available on these sites. This is for Stephenville and shows the soil moisture from January to August 2023. The lines show the different soil moistures at different depths and for some reason the 20" (grey) is not working. But notice the rains in late winter bring up all moisture levels but especially the 40" depth and it stayed at 30% moisture until recently. Just drive around Central Texas and you can see we are burning up. How do you get to a station close by? Just go here: <https://tinyurl.com/34c7a8hv> You will be at the **NRCS Texas Dashboard** and click on the **SCAN** tab.

- Soil Moisture Percent -2in (pct)
- Soil Moisture Percent -4in (pct)
- Soil Moisture Percent -8in (pct)
- Soil Moisture Percent -20in (pct)
- Soil Moisture Percent -40in (pct)



"Hi-A" Corn Varieties

These Hi-A corn hybrids are bred **non-GMO** and are a new type of corn that contains high-anthocyanin and high-antioxidant content (Hi-A corn) in their kernels, stalks, and other plant tissues. Hi-A corn kernels are tender and sweeter than field corn but contain less sugar than sweet corn. The Hi-A corn hybrids TAMZ102 and TAMZ104 were developed and selected for adaptation to the environments in southern United States by TAMU corn breeder **Dr. Wenwei Xu** and new varieties are being developed this year. Being non-GMO, they can

be used in both conventional and organic crop systems and they are earworm and disease tolerant and/or resistant. Thanks to **Southern SARE** for funding this **Hi-A Corn project**.

Why Hi-A? Breeders are looking for ways to introduce animal and human health benefits into the foods we eat without sacrificing grain quality. In an **organic animal feeding system**, Hi-A corn could be beneficial both as a grain and as a silage, preventing inflammation from low levels of disease. We are experimenting with these varieties in several locations and have had Extension meetings where folks even got to eat some fresh ears. Fresh ears of the Hi-A corn still in the husks are ready to eat after being cooked in a microwave oven for 5-minutes. I love it and it's healthy too!