

# AG HAPPENINGS

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## Farley's Thoughts

Weather has always been top of mind during my lifetime, and today is no different. The lives of rural people who depend on crops or livestock to make a living can be sometimes like a roller coaster ride. This year is a prime example. After 2 of the wettest Mays in my lifetime, this year turned drier until the last few days of the month and the first week of June. It then turned too wet to plant row crops and a lot of cotton will be replanted that was planted the week of Memorial Day. I do refuse to complain when the grass, Sudan, and corn is green and growing. The bermudagrass has made a lot of progress in the last 10 days and hay cutters and balers really need to be running to get the crop in. Cattle are fat and slick and the market is much better than many analysts anticipated a few months ago.

I do have a burr under my saddle this spring. Wild hogs are running rampant. There is no doubt in my mind that  
*(continued on next page)*

## Bull Nettle - What is it?

Texas Bull Nettle, *Cnidoscolus texanus*, is one of 70+ spurge nettles



worldwide, a perennial from the plant family Euphorbiaceae, and also known as Bullnettle, Tread-softly, or Mala Mujer. Mala Mujer means 'bad woman' and said to come from a story about a guy getting drunk and his wife beating him with this plant! Another guy said that hell is a pit filled with Texas Bull nettle, and yet another called it Satan's Dandelion! I'm sure if the Devil has a bouquet, Bull Nettle would be in it. Do you have a nickname or personal encounter story to tell about this Texas native?

Typically here in West Central Texas we find bull nettle in sandy soils especially in fence rows where the sand is plentiful and deep. If you

happen to brush up against it the spines on this plant contain powerful histamines and folic acid and can be quite painful for a long period of time.

Control is not easy since you can see that the root is a large energy storing organ. Usually it take repeated applications of

*Farley's Thoughts continued:*

they are worse than they have ever been in my lifetime. The population is increasing at an alarming rate. Anyone who has a bermudagrass pasture, a wheat or oat crop that they took to harvest, a peanut crop, or a corn crop that is getting closer to harvest, knows what I am talking about. Hogs really rough up a pasture from their constant rooting. They can destroy a large part of a crop that makes something that they will eat. Once they find a crop to their liking, they can come in every night. On my own farm, I have made an extra effort to control them by trapping and hunting and it seems like a losing battle. I have trapped almost 300 since the first of the year and it doesn't seem to have put a dent in the population. One of the most devastating obstacles that a farmer or dairy producer can face is to have a good crop made and lose it to something that is out of his or her control.

One thing that hasn't changed is my love for the land and the people that work extremely hard to make a living off the land. Every year brings a different set of challenges and rewards. Every producer has to be more adaptable than ever to a never ending set of changing circumstances.

Now is the time to treat fire ants with something containing Extinguish for fire ants. Mid June is the time to treat lawns with a second application of preemergent for grassburrs. Now is a great time *(continued on next page)*

brush/weed control products to finally exhaust the energy supply and so kill the plant.

One good feature - the flowers are full of nectar and are a good honey source!!

## Drip Irrigation for Crops or Gardens

Occasionally we do get questions about using drip irrigation for crops or even gardens. Drip is relatively cheap and easy to install but it is the equipment to filter and deliver the water that can be very expensive. Then factor in the concern with buried drip or maybe drip on top of the ground and worries about damage to the drip lines and you can easily have expensive drip instead of cheap drip! Crop farmers find drip the way to go for perennial crops like pecans or grapes while it is harder to use for grass crops or cotton, but use is growing every year. A drip irrigation farmer has made 7 bales of cotton!

For gardeners there is no easier system for delivering water to the soil economically and easily. Garden systems simply require a filter for well water, a pressure regulator, a 1/2 inch poly main line where you then install connectors for the drip line. The actual drip line has built-in emitters every foot for the plants.

Every part in this system is plastic and inexpensive and can be added to with cheap connectors if needed. The rows can be several hundred feet long but most gardeners don't have over 50-75 foot rows making it easy to design, run and maintain.

Why go to the initial trouble when you can just run a \$20 sprinkler? Drip puts water on the soil and not the plant so less disease. Drip has almost no evaporation to wind or sunlight and you use less water. Also drip can be run while doing normal garden activities.



## Pecan Scab Control

Rain is a wonderful thing for all



*(Farley's Thoughts continued:)*

to spray a herbicide on perennial weeds like bull nettle and nightshade. They are much easier to control in the reproductive stage after they have bloomed out.

## BMR Corn Silage

What is BMR Corn Silage? Why even plant it?

BMR stands for Brown Midrib and for dairymen or silage growers it would indicate a silage crop that has a brown or darker colored leaf midrib and possibly a stem with brown color inside. Why would you plant it? Most livestock producers, especially dairymen but also fat cattle feedlots want to get more high quality forage into animals. High quality forages are usually cheaper than grain and have a more desirable effect on cattle performance than grain. BMR forages are more highly digestible by livestock and so animals can consume more of them and perform better, especially produce more milk!

This summer we are working with a grower who has planted a Mycogen brand BMR Corn Silage. Our objective is to determine if the hybrid will grow well here, and if it can, does it yield well and then have much higher quality. So far the BMR variety is doing as well or better than our normal hybrids and is on track to produce a higher quality forage. We will be taking samples once it is ensiled to determine its overall

aspects of agriculture but too much of a good thing can be harmful too. Pecan scab disease needs wet, moist conditions to grow and lately pecan growers have had plenty of that in orchards. Pecan scab is a fungus disease that can overwinter in the stems and bark of pecan trees and especially in the old shucks and leaves that fall off of trees onto the orchard floor. To control scab growers have to use good management practices like keeping trees spaced apart to ensure air movement, planting resistant varieties, removing grown up fence rows, and much more.

Another best management practice is to apply fungicides on a 10 day to 2 week schedule. And if they apply fungicides to rotate the products they use from one chemical family to another. All fungus diseases on any crop can develop resistance to a fungicide chemical family if that chemical is used on a constant basis. Fungal organisms develop resistance when growers use the same chemicals over and over again, use too low a rate, spray on a non regular schedule or have poor coverage.

What can scab do? Pecan scab fungus invades and kills the shuck. Once that portion of the shuck dies it can no longer feed the kernel inside. This ultimately leads to lower kernel weight or even a cull kernel. In tests done in this area last year, fungicide sprayed pecans produced 25% heavier kernels and brought \$0.75 more per pound.

## Birds Eye View

For those of you looking to better your technology skills while gaining more knowledge about your land, there are countless apps on the market that allow producers to calculate acreages and distances of an area by using a satellite image of the field. If used correctly, these applications are extremely accurate and more efficient than using a measuring wheel and calculator. Most of these apps are available for both smart phones and tablets, allowing you to work from your office (AKA the pickup and/or recliner).



quality compared to other planted corn hybrids.

## Peanut Planting

Have you heard about peanut contract prices lately? If you haven't then you may be in for a surprise. After a couple of years of over supply on peanuts the US now finds itself needing peanuts both for domestic uses and for export. Grower group promotions and export incentives have both worked well to remove peanuts from warehouses. All this lead the major peanut shellers to offer some good peanut contracts at over \$500 per ton in some cases. Area growers have responded by planting more acres than we've seen in many years, making it seem like we're in the peanut business again.

Thoughts are that contract prices will continue to be good over the next few years leading many to reconsider their thoughts about growing peanuts.

## Guar Planting

Another crop we are continuing to plant is guar. Guar gum is used in the oil drilling industry and in the past has sold at a high price. The last couple of years the price has dropped as oil prices have dropped but it is a cheap and easy crop to grow and being a legume is a good rotation to most other crops. Currently price is 18 cents a pound and we have been able to grow 1000 lbs per acre. Not a lot of money but it is better than break even without a lot of risk.

I have downloaded and deleted countless map apps before I found Measure Map (free version). Measure Map is very user friendly which helps me figure acreage and distances on the go in a timely manner by simply aligning the reticle with the boundaries of the field and tapping on the reticle box. Make a mistake? There is an "Undo" and "Trashcan" at the bottom of the screen to start over. If you tap on a pen outside of the reticle, it will display GPS coordinates as well as the altitude. This technology is a fun and effective way to make your operation more efficient as well as get a Birdseye view of your farm. Here are a few helpful tips:

- Don't allow the app to access your location when not using the app (this will save battery life)
- Read the reviews before downloading the app
- Each app uses a different satellite service meaning some maps may be more up-to-date than others.

Matt Nowlin, *Lead Technologist*

## Tissue Sampling - Pecans, Cotton, even Hay?

How do you know if you need a soil sample or maybe a tissue sample? What is a tissue sample? Do I need both?

Most people are familiar with soil samples and we literally take hundreds every year. Soil samples are very important where we are growing any annual crop like cotton, wheat, sorghum, etc. And they are important if we are growing perennial crops like bermudagrass for hay, especially where we take multiple cuttings.

So what is a tissue sample? Tissue samples are usually leaves but can be other plant parts that are taken or pulled during the growing season. For instance, in pecans we would pull mature leaves from about the middle of the tree canopy. These leaves are taken from several trees to make up a sample to send in to the lab. These samples tell us if the plant is getting all the nutrients it needs from the soil and/or our fertilizer applications. Sometimes we can supply a nutrient in the soil and the soil properties keep it from being available to the plant. Or in the case of perennial plants like trees they may be getting nutrients from deeper down than the soil sample was taken. The tissue sample along with a soil sample is a great way to make decisions about crop fertility and know you are making a difference in crop yield. As with soil samples it is important to take tissue samples for several years to compare results from year to year.

