



Bangs Vaccinations

On-farm bangs vaccinations for Howard County producers will take place on March 14. Bangs vaccinations are for heifers aged 4-12 months. The animals need to be penned with working facilities. To register for this free program, call Dawson Bailey, CEA – Agriculture, at 870-845-7517.

Current Demonstrations

A Treated Vs. Untreated Lawn demonstration is taking place at the Extension Homemakers Educational Building. The lawn had henbit and spurweed scattered throughout. It was treated on January 5th with MSM Turf. An ongoing demo controlling Broom Sedge is still taking place on Aylett Road. The field by the road underwent a burndown with roundup last year. Following that was a controlled burn of the field. It was then planted with Red River Crabgrass. The producer's quality and quantity of forage greatly increased from the previous year. The drought last year took a toll on the growing season. For this reason, data was lacking from the demo. The back side of the field is having the same treatment this year.

The Howard County Extension office plans to start a Deer Repellant demo in March. The product that will be used will be available at the Hempstead County Farmers Association in Nashville. Updates and results from this demo will be posted on Facebook and in the newspaper.

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Forage Options and Planting Dates

Common Bermudagrass is a warm-season perennial. It is adapted statewide and can be very productive on well-drained sites. Common Bermudagrass will tolerate flooding, close grazing, and low soil fertility. Seed germinates when soil temperatures reach 65 degrees F. Bermudagrass seed is typically planted between May 1 and June 15. Seeding rates are 5 to 10 pounds per acre and should be planted at ¼ inch or less. The germination time ranges from 7 to 21 days.

Pearl millet is a warm season annual adapted statewide. It is somewhat drought tolerant but can be a nitrate accumulator. Its height at maturity can range from 3 to 6 feet. It is a bunch grass which means it grows in clumps. The best time to plant pearl millet is from May to June. The seeding rate is 15-20 pounds per acre if drilled and 20-25 pounds per acre if broadcast planted. It will germinate in 7 days from planting.



Crabgrass is a warm season annual that may be very productive under good management. Crabgrass will tolerate droughty or poorly drained sites but will not thrive under those conditions. Well-drained soil is preferred. The seeding date for crabgrass is from mid-April to early June. The soil temperatures need to be at least 50 degrees F. The recommended seeding rate for crabgrass is 2-4 pounds per acre. Up to 6 pounds per acre may give faster soil cover. Crabgrass seed can be broadcast on a prepared seedbed and covered by a roller or drilled to about ¼ inch deep. Crabgrass will germinate in 4 to 5 days. Under good conditions, the first grazing is

normally 40 days after seedling emergence.

Sudangrass and sorghum-sudangrass hybrids are warm-season annuals adapted to all of Arkansas. Sudangrass and sorghum-sudangrass hybrids are somewhat drought tolerant but may be high in prussic acid from drought stress. These grasses are also nitrate accumulators. In our area, they can be planted as early as May 1. The seeding rate for these grasses is 20-30 pounds per acre. Seeds should be planted to a depth of 1 to 1 ½ inches. Seeds will generally germinate in 10 days. Adequate germination will occur when the soil temperature ranges from 68-86 degrees F. **Horses should not graze or consume hay from sudangrass or sorghum-sudangrass pastures. Horses may contract cystitis syndrome disease from these forages.**

More forage options and fact sheets about forages can be found on our website at www.uada.edu.

Spring Pruning Tips

There are three questions you should be able to answer before you grab the pruning shears. First, why are you pruning? Second, when should you prune the specific plants you are growing? Third, how should the plant be pruned?

Timing is especially important when pruning flowering and fruiting plants. Generally, plants that bloom in spring should be pruned immediately after blooming and plants that bloom in the summer should be pruned before growth begins in late February. There are some exceptions to these rules so you must look up information for specific plants. Bigleaf hydrangeas, oakleaf hydrangeas, and gardenias all bloom in the summer but set flower buds at the end of summer into early fall. They should be pruned when the flowers begin to fade, but only prune if there is a need to.



March

- During the month of March, you should finish pruning grapes. Vines need to be tied to the trellis before the buds swell to prevent injury and crop loss.
- If summer pruning shrubs need pruning, March is the time to do so. These include crape myrtle, vitex, althea, buddleia, and summer blooming spirea. If you prune your crepe myrtles make sure to watch a demonstration video or read fact sheets to make sure you properly prune them.
- Stems of spring-blooming hydrangeas may look dead, but they contain buds for this spring's flowers. Do not trim these. You can tidy them up by removing small twiggy growth.
- Repeat-blooming roses can be pruned as the buds break dormancy.
- One-flowering roses should not be pruned yet. Wait until after they bloom to prune them and seal the open cuts with a drop or two of Elmer's glue to cover the cut.
- Thin out the older canes of climbing roses but leave the long, young branches. These will produce the best blossoms.

April

- Prune spring-flowering shrubs within 2 to 3 weeks after the last petals have dropped. They should be pruned near the ground to help rejuvenate growth and promote healthy flowering.

- Semi-woody perennials should be pruned in April to remove all the twiggy growth and cut out winter-damaged wood. These semi-woody perennials include butterfly bush, lavender, sage, artemisia, and careopsis.

May

- Azaleas need to be pruned when the blooms are finished. Older, overgrown azaleas respond well to severe pruning. This will result in denser plants with more blooms. They need fertilized after pruning.

Fact sheets about pruning can be found on our website at www.uada.edu.

Garden Prep

Vegetables need deep, well-drained soil with an adequate amount of organic matter. With proper moisture, good garden soil should not form a hard ball when squeezed in the hand. Instead, it should crumble easily.

Almost all garden soils can be improved by adding organic matter. Organic matter has many benefits including loosening tight clay, helping sand hold more water, making soil easier to dig in, and adding nutrients. Some of the common organic matter additives are plant materials, manure, compost, sawdust, and green manure. Plant materials may include leaves, straw, and grass clippings. This material should be worked into the soil several months before planting to allow time to decompose. This is usually done during the winter months. Manure should be incorporated into the soil well ahead of planting. Do not use fresh manure as it may damage plants and introduce diseases. Compost, consisting of decayed plant materials, can be worked into the soil before planting. Sawdust must be composted before adding it to the garden. If not, it will rob the soil's nitrogen and starve the plants. Green manure is rye or oats planted in the fall and plowed under in the spring. Do not add more than 4 inches of organic matter to the soil.



You should till the soil as deep as you can, at least 8 to 10 inches. This deep tilling will loosen the soil and let roots from the vegetables go deeper. Till when the soil is moist but not wet. Tilling wet soil may cause it to become rough. Before planting, rake the soil clean and level it. Remove any rocks, sticks, and other materials. Raised beds allow water to drain away from plant roots, provide furrows for irrigation, allow air into the soil, and help plants through periods of high rainfall. If you are planning a large enough garden, make your rows 36 inches apart. Some plants can be planted closer if space is a problem. Straight beds are not necessary. The rows should be pulled up into beds 8 to 10 inches high. Pack these beds or allow them to settle before planting. The tops of the beds need to be level and about 6 to 8 inches wide before planting.

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