

Agriculture Newsletter

COLORADO COUNTY

MAY 2021

Potatoes: Harvesting Made Easy

Written by Nancy Galloway, Master Gardener

In past years I've grown potatoes in my garden the old-fashioned way. This labor intensive method was to: dig the holes, put in the seed potatoes, bury them, pray, then hopefully dig up what the moles chose not to consume.. As years went on and I became a gardener who was not afraid to try new ideas, I heard about an easier method for growing potatoes. After extensive research I decided to give it a try.

The method that I am referring to is to use hay as the growing medium. This method was first used by Ruth Stout, who was also aptly named the "No-Work Gardener". She would simply take her seed potatoes out and throw them around in her garden. Ruth would then toss loose hay over the them. Not much agronomy was used in her way of planting potatoes. My approach to my potato patch was similar to this in some ways but differed in the way that I used the hay.

I discovered a 4 step process that has worked for me for quiet a few years now and it even addresses the issue of certain pests that come along with this style of gardening.

Step #1- After you have found the spot for your potato patch, you can clear the weeds if you like but remember: the hay will do this for you. It's simply not necessary, but some gardeners cannot stand the thought of weeds in their gardens, however hidden they may be. This is now your potato patch plan so tweak it to suit your garden.

Step #2- Place your seed potatoes 12-15 inches apart on the ground.

Remember, You just lay them on the ground and do not bury them. 12-15 inches apart will allow plenty of room for the potatoes to grow and spread.

Step #3- Aged and weathered hay works best. It will be full of good things like mushroom remnants, and nutrients from decomposing. When it is in this somewhat decomposed condition it is also easier to work with. You want to peel the hay off the bale in bricks that are about 4 inches thick and lay them over the seed potatoes, (be sure to fully cover them). Depending on how wide the bricks of hay are, you may need to use a couple over one seed potato. You will need to maintain a 4 inch thick layer because as the potatoes grow, the layer will compost down over time. You will also need to put a layer at least 10 inches thick of loose hay on top of the bricks. This may need to be done again as the hay deteriorates over time. Don't worry that the vines will have trouble getting through, they will work their way up with no problem when they start to sprout.

Step #4- When your vines die off it is time to harvest! This is the easy part. All you have to do is uncover the potato vine from the hay. There is no guessing whether or not you have retrieved all of the potatoes, you can see them! Now, wasn't that easy!

One last note about pests. The abundance of earthworms that this method draws up will attract moles to the area. I have found that planting several Marigolds throughout the potato patch solves this problem. With snails and slugs I take a different approach using crushed egg shells or diatomaceous earth sprinkled under the hay and in it. All of these suggestions are all-natural organic suggestions.

As with other methods of gardening you need to modify this one to suit your needs and hopefully you will find success and just maybe a little less work. Happy gardening!

Multi County New Land Owner Program - Forage and Livestock Production

The third meeting for the 2021 series will take place on **Friday, May 21, 2021** at the Sandy Creek Ranch located in New Ulm, Texas. For this session preregistration is required, only those who preregister will be sent the directions. The goal of this session is to help landowners who want to establish or recover their pasture and hay meadows along with fertility and weed control options. Then look at options for overseeding pastures with winter forages, learn about the process and benefits. Lastly, we will cover livestock production by learning some tips and tricks to help you have a more successful herd. Two CEU (2 Gen) will be available for licensed pesticide applicators. On the day of the program registration will be from 1:00-1:30 pm with the program beginning at 1:30 pm and concluding by 5:00pm. To preregister please use the following link <https://washington.agrilife.org/ag/nlo/>

Beef Quality Assurance Tip - Cattle Flight Zones

An important concept of livestock handling is the animal's flight zone or personal space. The size of the flight zone varies depending on how accustomed the cattle are to their current surroundings, people, equipment etc. Properly utilizing an animal's natural flight zone can facilitate efficient, low-stress cattle movement. For more information on cattle flight zones check out information in the BQA Field Guide found at https://www.bqa.org/Media/BQA/Docs/bqa_field-_guide.pdf

Audio Updates for Growers - A message from Extension Entomologist, Dr. Dalton Ludwick

Last year, the Extension Entomology unit piloted a small program to assist growers with pest issues. We produce audio clips that are approximately 7-8 minute in length are produced for different geographical regions in the state of Texas. Growers that are subscribed to a texting service are notified each week during the growing season when clips are posted. At their leisure, growers can go to the link in the text and get tips and insight for insect and weed pests as well as growing conditions in their region.

Due to last year's success according to grower feedback, the program has expanded significantly. There will be two geographical regions in our area that are covered by the [IPM Audio Updates project](#). If you are in the Blacklands and Upper Gulf Coast, then please use this [link](#) if you are interested in subscribing to this weekly service during the growing season. Growers can unsubscribe via text if they decide they are not interested.

2021 Colorado County Crop Tour

I've had a fair number of questions about the status of our annual crop tour. Given the guidance on face to face programs that we have from AgriLife Extension we will be able to proceed with an in person tour for 2021. Be on the lookout for an announcement for our crop tour date for the month of June.

CFAP 2

USDA is implementing updates to the Coronavirus Food Assistance Program for producers of agricultural commodities marketed in 2020 who faced market disruptions due to COVID-19. This is part of a larger initiative to improve USDA pandemic assistance to producers. U.S. Secretary of Agriculture Tom Vilsack announced an expansion of the Coronavirus Food Assistance Program (CFAP) on March 24, 2021. CFAP updates include reopening of Coronavirus Food Assistance Program 2 (CFAP 2), additional payments for eligible cattle and row crop producers, and the processing of payments for certain applications filed as part of CFAP Additional Assistance. The original application period for CFAP 2 was September 21 through December 11, 2020. USDA reopened CFAP 2 signup for all eligible producers beginning April 5, 2021. A deadline for signup will be announced at a later date. For more information you can visit <https://www.farmers.gov/pandemic-assistance/cfap>



Mark Your Calendar

Our office will be closed on Monday, May 31st in observance of Memorial Day.



This Month:
ALL ABOUT
Dove/Waterfowl

FEATHERS, FURS, AND FARMING

A series of educational events designed to help all landowners diversify their operations and save more money and time by becoming better stewards of the land.

May 14, 2021

1:00-5:00 PM

\$20/Person

Weimar Civic Center

1754 IH-10
Weimar, TX 78962

Laramie Kettler
979-732-2082
Colorado County

Stacie Villarreal
979-865-2072
Austin County

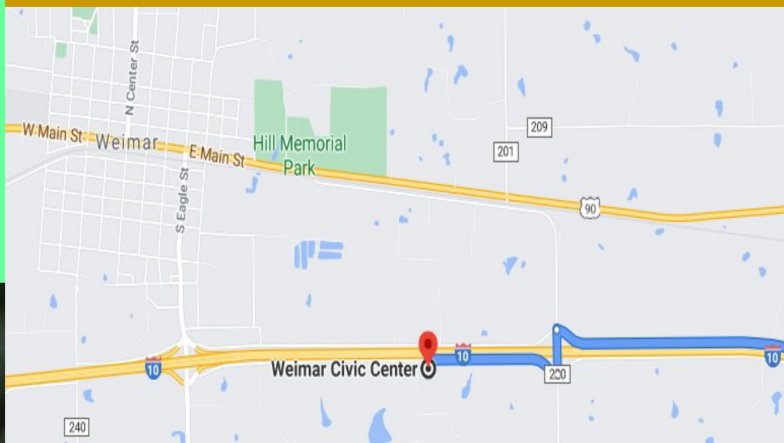
Mark Lange
979-732-3458
Austin/Colorado County

1 CEU - General

Dove: Ecology, History, and Hunting

Wetland and Waterfowl Management

Food Plots for Bird Hunters



*Educational programs of the Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service are open to all people without regard to race, color, religion, sex, national origin, age, disability, genetic information or veteran status.
The Texas A&M University System, U.S. Department of Agriculture, and the County Commissioners Courts of Texas Cooperating*

Please feel free to contact me if you have any questions.

Sincerely,



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Educational programs of the Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service are open to all people without regard to race, color, religion, sex, national origin, age, disability, genetic information, or veteran status. The Texas A&M University System, U.S. Department of Agriculture, and the County Commissioners Courts of Texas Cooperating. Individuals with disabilities who require an auxiliary aid, service or accommodation in order to participate in this meeting are encouraged to contact the County Extension Office at (979) 732-2082 ten (10) days prior to the meeting to determine how reasonable accommodations can be made.