

TEXAS COOPERATIVE EXTENSION  
SOUTHERN BLACKLANDS  
**PEST MANAGEMENT NEWS**  
WILLIAMSON AND MILAM COUNTIES

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Dale A. Mott  
EA-IPM  
3151 S.E. InnerLoop  
Suite A  
Georgetown, TX 78626  
Office Phone: 512/943-3300  
FAX: 512/943-3301  
Internet Address: <http://williamson-tx.tamu.edu/>  
<http://www.tpma.org>  
E-mail: d-mott@tamu.edu

## GENERAL SITUATION

In general, the corn and grain sorghum crops are getting off to a good start. Most fields have good to excellent stands and insect pressure has been relatively light. However, some fields have more than normal weed pressure due to all the rainfall from last winter to early spring. Most cotton has been planted and coming up to a stand. Wheat is rapidly developing, with many fields with higher yield potential having been recently sprayed for rust. Yield potential for wheat appears somewhat variable, with producers expecting below average to average fields.

## USEFUL WEBSITES

Williamson County Extension Home  
<http://williamson-tx.tamu.edu>

Texas A&M Department of Entomology  
<http://insects.tamu.edu>

Texas Pest Management Association  
[www.tpma.org](http://www.tpma.org)

Focus on Entomology - Crop Protection Guides geared to the High Plains of Texas  
<http://lubbock.tamu.edu/focus>

The majority of the producers across the Southern Blacklands planted their corn between one to three weeks later than desired because of wet weather that lasted through mid-March. However, it appears to be catching up in size and doesn't look that far behind at this point. Thus far there has been limited acreage affected by insects. The most significant damage that I am currently aware of is a field that had been damaged by chinch bugs.

This field was planted in February, following cotton, and chinch bug populations were high that significant stand loss occurred.

In addition to chinch bugs, cutworms have and are still causing some stand loss to fields of corn, however, loss has been minimal considering how grew-up in weeds many fields were at or just prior to planting. White grubs and wireworm problems have also been minimal this season.

Many producers are getting the weeds cleaned-up in fields as the wind permits which is extremely important to limit competition and stress to the young, developing crop, in order for it to maintain as much yield potential as possible.

Most of the corn is getting large enough in size that it could be affected by strong winds that could blow the corn over (wind-whipping) if the roots are not adequately developed. Due to the relatively high moisture content in the soil as most of the grain crop was being planted, it would not be surprising to see the planting trenches split open or have hard "side-walls" in the seed trench which will prevent the roots from adequately developing. If these problems begin to occur before the next rain, one can try to "throw-up" some soil around the base of the plants to help brace them from flopping in the wind so much. Then when the next rain comes the brace roots will have extra soil to develop into. The lack of adequately developing brace roots can also cause the plants to look an unhealthy, yellowish color.

## USEFUL WEBSITES

The majority of the cotton crop has been planted and most has or is in the process of emerging. Some fields of cotton will need a rainfall before coming up to a full stand. There has been some fields I have recently inspected where the majority of the cotton was up to a stand but some of the remaining seed was soft when lightly squeezed with either a very small sprout or no sprout at all.

The bottom line with these seeds are this, if the seed has not sprouted (does not have radicle sticking out) and is in dry soil, even if it has absorbed moisture, it is still likely to be viable. However, if the seed is sitting in dry soil and has sprouted, most likely the seed is not viable.

So before making decisions about re-planting, be sure to check for how much seed is still likely viable.

Thrips and aphids are the two early season pests of cotton that growers across the Southern Blacklands generally have to contend with each year. Thrips are narrow, straw-colored insects about 1/15 inch long. They often infest the small, folded leaves in and around the terminal of the cotton plant and may attack young leaves, leaf buds, and very small squares. Thrips damage can cause a silvering of the lower leaf surface, deformed or blackened leaves, terminal loss, and square loss. Thrips damage often causes the

leaves of cotton to curl up or cup. If cool, wet conditions persist in fields, heavy thrips pressure can result in delayed fruiting and crop maturing.

Treatments for thrips should be made when thrips are readily observed on plants and slight terminal leaf curling is evident. In addition Insecticidal control is rarely justified once plants have reached the 7 true leaf stage. A partial list of insecticides for thrips include: Address 75S @ 2 to 4 oz./ac., Address 90S @ 1.67 to 3.2 oz./ac., Orthene 90S @ 1.67 to 3.2 oz./ac., Orthene 97 @ 1.5 to 3 oz./ac., Bidrin 8E at 1 gal./60 acs., dimethoate 4E at 1/3 to 1/2 pt./ac., dimethoate 5E at 3.2 to 6.4 oz./ac., Monitor 4E at 3.2 oz./ac., and methyl parathion 4E at 1 gal./16 to 32 acres.

There are two species of aphids that we generally see on cotton plants each year; the cotton aphid and the cowpea aphid. Cotton aphids range from light yellow to dark green to almost black. The immature stage looks like the adult stage, only smaller, cowpea aphids are shiny black with white patches on the legs and are common on seedling plants. Aphid infestations can occur from plant emergence to open boll. Aphids are usually found on the under sides of leaves, on stems, in terminals and sometimes on fruit. Heavy and prolonged infestations can cause leaves to curl downward and older leaves to turn yellow and shed.

Natural control by unfavorable weather, predators, parasites and pathogens can be effective in holding populations below damaging levels. Sometimes aphid numbers increase to moderate or heavy levels and then decline for no apparent reason.

**Management and decision making.** Although high populations can develop prior to bloom, most economically damaging infestations develop later in the season during the blooming period. Fields should be scouted twice per week since rapid increases in aphid numbers can occur in a short time. A total of 60 leaves divided between the top, middle and lower portion of the plant should be sampled from plants across the field to determine infestation levels. **Insecticidal control of cotton aphids should be delayed until infestations exceed 50 aphids per leaf.**

Refer to the latest Cotton Aphid Task Force Suggestions for further management information. These are available at the county Extension office.

## **PECAN MANAGEMENT**

### **Pecan Management Field Day**

The Williamson County Office of the Texas Cooperative Extension and the Williamson County Pecan Task Force is hosting a **Pecan Management Field Day**. The Field Day will be **held Wednesday, May 4 at 6:00 p.m. at Garden House Nursery & Pecan Orchard** (3310 N. Main, Taylor, TX 76574) on the East Side of Hwy. 95 in Taylor.

**The program will feature Dr. Larry Stein, State Pecan Specialist.** He will discuss General Pecan Management Practices including Fertility, Insect and Disease Management, Thinning and Pruning, Discussion on a New Variety “Waco”, and Adopted Varieties.

This program will be very informative to anyone who has pecan trees on their property, or if you have been thinking about planting one or more trees. Dr. Stein’s presentation will be of value to commercial pecan producers as well as homeowners who only have or want a tree or two in their backyard.



