Making A Difference in Tarrant County

Congratulations!

Tarrant County Extension Agent - Commercial Horticulture Laura Miller, was the Texas State winner of the National Association of County Agricultural Agents 2014 Communication Award: Publication. Presenting award to Laura is Wade Hibler, TCAAA president.

Tarrant County Extension Agent-4H Cindy Bryant, received the Distinguished Service Award at the state level from TAE4-HA & national level from NAE4-HA.

Tarrant County Extension Agent-Family and Consumer Sciences Marian Ross, received the following awards:

Texas Extension Association of Family and Consumer Sciences – TEAFCS
- State Awards: Mary M. Wells Diversity Program Award and Human Development/Family Relationships Program Award

National Extension Association of Family and Consumer Sciences - NEAFCS
- Southern Region: 1st Place Human Development/Family Relationships Program Award
- National 3rd Place Winner – Human Development/Family Relationships Program Award
It’s not uncommon to purchase insurance and not really review the policy every year, unless you have a life changing event. What you purchased at the time was a good fit for you. Then perhaps you have a life changing event, purchase an additional insurance policy a couple of years later and in the end, you haven’t completed an inventory of what is and isn’t insured. So you may find yourself (and your family) either over insured in some areas and underinsured in others are.

Avoid insurance you don’t need. Extended warranties might be a good idea for your expensive technology, however, your small household appliances are not worthy of this type of insurance, because replacing with a brand new items might be more affordable than going through the process of a claim on your microwave. Check your policies for duplicate coverage. For example, you may have disability insurance at work and through a personal policy. Review the policy limits on both to ensure you aren’t paying for benefits that can’t be collected because you’ve exceeded the policy limits.

A few final reminders:

✓ Make sure you have insurance in all key areas for your situation: life, health, disability, homeowners and renters, automobile, personal liability, and professional liability and malpractice insurance.

✓ Read your insurance contracts carefully. Ask about provisions you don’t understand.

✓ Check your insurance companies’ financial rating to make sure that their financial status has weakened.

✓ Do you have family heirlooms or expensive jewelry? Check with your homeowners’ and/or renters’ policy to see if they have a rider for those types of addendums or riders and know what the dollar amount maximum coverage you are able to purchase.

✓ Insure you and your family to preserve peace of mind and future security. This could also be a legacy that you pass on to your children and their children.

On a side note, have you written your will? Seen it in the last 5 years? Is it updated? Signed? In a safe place where your executor/executrix knows where to find it? Prior military, do you have your DD214’s?

▶ Eat your veggies. You aren’t likely to forget this message! Getting adequate servings of vegetables, especially cruciferous ones like broccoli, cabbage and dark leafy greens. Try a kale salad or substitute collard greens for the tortilla in your next sandwich wrap. Broccoli stir-fry is also an excellent option for lunch or dinner.

▶ Be sweet on berries and cherries. Berries, especially dark ones like blackberries, blueberries and cherries are a rich source of anthocyanins and other flavonoids. Enjoy a handful of these benefits from fresh, frozen or dried berries and cherries.

▶ Get adequate omega-3 fatty acids. Seafood and fatty fish like salmon, bluefin tuna, sardines and herring are some of the best sources of omega-3 acids. Docosahexaenoic acid (DHA) in particular may help improve memory in young healthy adults. Based on current USDA recommendations, substitute fish (grill, bake or broil) for meat a couple of times each week to get a healthy dose. Be adventurous and try salmon tacos with red cabbage slaw, snack on sardines or enjoy seared tuna on salad greens for dinner.

▶ Work in walnuts. Well known for a positive impact on heart health, walnuts also may improve working memory. Snack on a handful of walnuts to satisfy mid-day hunger, and then to oatmeal or salad for crunch or mix them into a vegetable stir-fry for extra protein.

A few final reminders:

✓ Make sure you have insurance in all key areas for your situation: life, health, disability, homeowners and renters, automobile, personal liability, and professional liability and malpractice insurance.

✓ Read your insurance contracts carefully. Ask about provisions you don’t understand.

✓ Check your insurance companies’ financial rating to make sure that their financial status has weakened.

✓ Do you have family heirlooms or expensive jewelry? Check with your homeowners’ and/or renters’ policy to see if they have a rider for those types of addendums or riders and know what the dollar amount maximum coverage you are able to purchase.

✓ Insure you and your family to preserve peace of mind and future security. This could also be a legacy that you pass on to your children and their children.

On a side note, have you written your will? Seen it in the last 5 years? Is it updated? Signed? In a safe place where your executor/executrix knows where to find it? Prior military, do you have your DD214’s?

Reference: Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics
Fresh fruits and vegetables are available year round in most states across the US. due to the ability to transport and store foods. Although fresh fruits and veggies are available year round it is important to choose them at the peak of their freshness which is when they are season. Choosing produce that is in season will help in saving money and the produce will have the best quality and taste.

Quality is an important aspect when selecting fruits and vegetables. Fruits and vegetables should look healthy and smell fresh. Consumers should choose items with a good shape, color, and texture. Avoid bruised, damaged, decayed, or molded fruits and vegetables. These may carry harmful bacteria or viruses. Damaged fruits and vegetables will also spoil faster.

The guide below will help you select fresh fruits and vegetables in Texas:

### What’s in Season?

#### Fresh Texas Produce is Available All Year Long

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>January</th>
<th>February</th>
<th>March</th>
<th>April</th>
<th>May</th>
<th>June</th>
<th>July</th>
<th>August</th>
<th>September</th>
<th>October</th>
<th>November</th>
<th>December</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Beets</td>
<td>Beets</td>
<td>Beets</td>
<td>Beets</td>
<td>Beef</td>
<td>Beef</td>
<td>Beef</td>
<td>Beef</td>
<td>Beets</td>
<td>Beets</td>
<td>Beets</td>
<td>Beets</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Squash</td>
<td>Squash</td>
<td>Squash</td>
<td>Squash</td>
<td>Squash</td>
<td>Squash</td>
<td>Squash</td>
<td>Squash</td>
<td>Squash</td>
<td>Squash</td>
<td>Squash</td>
<td>Squash</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strawberries</td>
<td>Strawberries</td>
<td>Strawberries</td>
<td>Strawberries</td>
<td>Strawberries</td>
<td>Strawberries</td>
<td>Strawberries</td>
<td>Strawberries</td>
<td>Strawberries</td>
<td>Strawberries</td>
<td>Strawberries</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tomatoes</td>
<td>Tomatoes</td>
<td>Tomatoes</td>
<td>Tomatoes</td>
<td>Tomatoes</td>
<td>Tomatoes</td>
<td>Tomatoes</td>
<td>Tomatoes</td>
<td>Tomatoes</td>
<td>Tomatoes</td>
<td>Tomatoes</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Choosing Produce

1. **Healthy American Diet (HAD):**
   - Control diet, included more refined grains, full-fat dairy products, oil and butter to reflect current American dietary habits.

2. **Dietary Approaches to Stop Hypertension (DASH):**
   - Considered the “gold standard” heart-healthy diet, this eating plan featured vegetables, fruits and low-fat dairy and limited red meat and sweets.

3. **Beef in an Optimal Lean Diet (BOLD):**
   - Similar to the DASH diet (rich in vegetables, fruits, whole grains, nuts and beans) and protein amounts, but used lean beef (4 oz/day) as the primary protein source, whereas the DASH diet used primarily white meat and plant protein sources.

4. **Beef in an Optimal Lean Diet Plus (BOLD-PLUS):**
   - Similar to the BOLD diet, but with higher protein and lean beef intake (5.4 oz/day).

Source: Texas A&M Agrilife Extension Service

---


Driving around Texas in the summertime, Crape myrtles are sure to catch your eye with their bright-colored flowers when many plants look tired and wilted. Crape myrtles are widely planted all over North Texas and generally get the job done, earning their good reputation for being an excellent landscape choice for full sun in a wide variety of soils and situations. Texas plantsman Greg Grant once said that a crape myrtle does everything but mow the lawn for you.

No plant is completely without its problems, and lately there has been trouble brewing for one of our favorite plants, Crape Myrtles. Back in 2004, Dr. Mike Merchant, a Texas Urban Entomologist at the Texas A&M AgLife Research and Education Center in north Dallas, received an inquiry from a landscape maintenance company concerning an unusual pest insect on crape myrtles. It was exceptionally difficult to control, and it is an insect that is not under the auspices of the entomology department in Richardson. Initially this insect was identified as an Eriococcid scale (Hemiptera: Eriococcidae), most likely the azalea bark scale, Eriococcus wangii.

Azalea bark scale has been a common pest on azalea in North Texas for years, but it had never before been found on crape myrtle. In fact, with the notable exception of the ubiquitous crape myrtle scale, Aulacaspis yahillii, which pretty much only feeds on crape myrtles, the mighty myrtle is generally regarded as a problem free landscape plant.

The Crape Myrtle Bark scale continues to be a problem in Dallas and Collin Counties with populations rising and falling over the next few years.

In 2010, Dr. Merchant heard about a very similar species of scale that feeds on crape myrtle in China and Japan and submitted scale samples to Dr. Dug Miller, a systematic taxonomist for scale insects with the USDA in Washington, DC. He concluded that it was very likely that this scale insect is an Eriococcus sp. tegerospermy, the scale previously known only from Asia.

The first out of state report came from Ardmore, OK in 2011, but it wasn’t until August of 2012 that I found it in Tarrant County, when I visited a small commercial nursery in Arlington at the owners’ request. Where there were three scales, there would always be another. In October 2012, I received some e-mail photographs of the scale from a homeowner in Hurst. A few days after that I spotted the scale on a crape myrtle at the corner of Sprinville and Weatherfield streets in downtown Fort Worth. At this date, no Tarrant County crape myrtle should be considered out of range. In fact, the traveling scale has now been reported in New Orleans and Shreveport, LA, Little Rock, AR and several sites in Tennessee.

Once a pest is identified, and the “what is this causing all this sooty mold?” question has been answered, most people want to know what they should do about it. One possible answer is nothing. Crape myrtle has yet to be an identified natural pest in North Texas and there are no records this pest present. Lady beetles seem to be the most significant natural enemy of the scale. In fact, at one time the lady beetles feeding on scale became so abundant in the Crape Myrtle Trials of Kinney that researchers (see next paragraph) had a hard time finding infested trees for insecticide trials, though that is certainly not true in 2014.

Those who wish the scale to be glad that in 2008 Dr. Merchant’s lab received funding from the Texas Nursery and Landscape Association to evaluate different insecticide treatments for this scale. In addition to testing some newer neonicotinoid insecticides, they looked at application methods such as trunk injection vs. interior cinctures vs. sprays. Of the neonicotinoids, acetamiprid, imidacloprid and dinofuran, and imidacloprid, are available to consumers as “Merit” or Bayer Advanced™ Garden Tree and Shrub Insect Control, and as “Spectracide” Insect Killer Plus. Applied as a drench treatment to the plant root zone, these products provide significant control of this scale, although additional work needs to be done concerning the longevity of control and consumer satisfaction with use of these products.

It is possible that these insecticides are already being used by homeowners and landscape maintenance companies to control Crape Myrtle aphid, so it is also quite possible that along with the lady beetle, insecticide applications have been keeping this pest in check.

There’s no doubt that this sap sucking insect is stressing the plants, but the cause of most plant owner stress may be plant appearance. Dr. Jim Robbin in Arkansas has documented smaller flower clusters on infected trees vs. those of healthy trees. The black ooze on the honey black-sooty mold that is produced by the scale excreta is also unsightly. As with many scale insects, dead bodies can remain on the plant for some time even after they have been killed with a systemic insecticide. They look a bit like chaff from a recently burned plant. One recommendation for heavily infested plants is to wash the trunk and reachable limbs with a soft brush and mild solution of dishwashing soap. This will remove many of the scales and egg masses and much of the black sooty mold.

There is a great deal we still don’t know about managing this pest, but there is absolutely no doubt that the crape myrtle is a valuable part of our North Texas landscapes. Keep an eye out for scale, but don’t forget that more Crape Murder is committed by men (and women) with loppers than insects with sucking mouth parts.

References to products or services do not imply endorsements. Readers are encouraged to call the Horticulture department for specific advice.
Carbon Footprint is defined as:
The total amount of gases that trap heat in our atmosphere, produced to directly and indirectly support human activities, usually expressed in equivalent tons of carbon dioxide (CO₂). CO₂ is the chemical symbol for carbon dioxide.

In other words, when you drive a car the engine burns fuel which creates a certain amount of CO₂, depending on its fuel consumption and the driving distance. When you heat your house with oil, gas or coal, then you also generate CO₂. Even if you heat your house with electricity, the generation of the electrical power may also have emitted a certain amount of CO₂. When you buy food and goods, the production of the food and goods also emitted some quantities of CO₂ (source is: http://timeforchange.org/what-is-a-carbon-footprint-definition)

Here are some ways to reduce your carbon footprint:

- Reduce your dependency on using automobiles or fossil fuel burning motorized vehicles by walking, riding your bike or by carpooling with a coworker or colleague.
- If your kids are meeting friends at a local hangout, how about one parent drop all of the kids at the destination and the other parent pick up the kids from the destination and return them home, thereby reducing the number of vehicles on the road at any given time.
- Recycling of products can also help reduce our carbon footprint because it helps reduce the amount of waste that needs to be disposed. Waste disposal also creates greenhouse gases.

Using mass transit systems, hybrid vehicles for travelling and other energy efficient appliances is another way to assist with reducing our carbon footprint.

If you are looking for an experiment to reinforce this information Google 2010 National Youth Science Day Experiment titled 4-H₂O. This is an experiment I have conducted for many Tarrant County youth.
A preschooler’s world is full of excitement as he moves from one activity to another. Filled with giggles and enthusiasm, it is a world to be explored, with each experience providing an opportunity for growth and development. During the ages from 2 to 5, a child’s visual abilities continue to fine-tune and develop. Stacking blocks, playing ball, and coloring are excellent activities to promote the development of visual skills. Such activities also help develop eye-hand coordination, fine motor skills, and visual perception, all of which are important for future school success.

The eyes and brain work together to produce vision. Light enters the eye, focuses on the retina, and sends an image through the optic nerve to the brain. Several factors can affect this process, resulting in reduced visual acuity.

Sometimes, people confuse the conditions commonly known as cross-eye and lazy eye. The medical term for cross-eye is strabismus. It is a condition in which the child cannot align both eyes simultaneously under normal conditions. In this condition, one or both eyes may turn in, out, up, or down. The turn of the eye may be constant or intermittent. Because the condition has a physical manifestation, parents notice and seek an evaluation by an ophthalmologist.

Lazy eye (medically known as amblyopia) refers to a situation in which the vision is reduced because the eye and brain are not working together properly. Typically, the brain is favoring the nerve signal from one eye over the other. While it can accompany strabismus, it sometimes does not. Because the eye structure is normal, this condition is sometimes overlooked.

Pediatric ophthalmic examinations can identify a variety of visual conditions, enabling the child to receive the proper treatment during the critical developmental stages. So, as you schedule your child’s medical check-up, don’t forget to schedule his vision examination as well.

Sources: National Eye Institute
NH-American Optometric Association