

SUMMER 2022

# AgReview

Mason County Agriculture Newsletter

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## Beginners Guide to Harvesting Rainwater

With ongoing droughts across much of the state, rainwater harvesting is something nearly every Texan can do to make the most of the moisture they get.

“Even after the much-needed rainfall we recently received in late May and June, much of Texas is still under varying levels of drought from ‘severe’ to ‘exceptional’,” said Allison Watkins, Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service horticulturist for the Concho Valley.

Many homeowners erroneously think that if they live in an area with little rainfall, it’s not worth trying to catch for use later.

“Infrequent rainfall is exactly the reason to harvest rainwater,” Watkins said.

Rainwater harvesting is one way homeowners can invest in their landscape and continue to garden during drought while also protecting valuable water resources.

“Plants love rainwater and catching when it does come, to use later when it’s hot and dry, will really help plants survive and thrive in a yard or garden,”

she said.

### **What you need**

- A way to collect rain — a roof is ideal.
- A method to direct the water, such as a rain gutter and downspout.
- Something to store the water in. The container can be a rain barrel, a food-grade barrel or even a large, clean trash can.
- A way for water to reach the container — a pipe, pvc tube or rain chain.

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## **Texas A&M Forest Service Urges Texans to Prevent Wildfires**

This Fourth of July, Texas A&M Forest Service encourages Texans to be mindful of activities that may start a wildfire. The start of summer is marked by vacations, outdoor activities like camping and grilling, and celebrating holidays with family and friends. Many of these may involve activities that could lead to sparking a wildfire.

Between 2017 and 2021, Texas A&M Forest Service responded to 3,682 wildfires burning 1.4 million acres. Almost half of these wildfires occurred during the summer months, where the majority were caused by humans and their activities.

In Texas, nine out of 10 wildfires are human-caused and completely preventable. The most common causes of wildfire ignitions during the summer months are debris burning and equipment use, which includes parking in dry grass and dragging trailer chains.

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# Texas Hay Season Looks Bleak

The 2022 Texas hay production outlook appears in doubt due to high fertilizer prices and widespread drought, said Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service experts.

Joe Paschal, Ph.D., AgriLife Extension livestock specialist, Corpus Christi, and Vanessa Corriher-Olson, Ph.D., AgriLife Extension forage specialist, Overton, said dry weather, high temperatures and reduced inputs like fertilizer have inhibited warm-season grass production across much of Texas. Hay quantity and quality are down, while the cost to produce bales is up, and weather forecasts do not look favorable.

Pockets of the state have received decent moisture, they said, but high fertilizer prices have discouraged hay producers from making applications. As a result, hay baled was expected to be of lower quality.

Paschal said prices for supplemental feed like range cubes and hay have continued to increase. Range cubes reached \$400 per ton, while round bales were starting to fetch \$75-\$80. For weeks, AgriLife Extension agents have reported \$80-plus bales in extremely dry areas of the state.



Some cattle producers around the state have been culling their herds deeper to reduce stocking rates and “mouths to feed,” Paschal said. But many more face declining grazing, tightening hay supplies and below-average bale production this season.

“People are baling, but it looks like this hay season could be one cutting, maybe two,” he said. “There is hay being fed now, so the hay situation could be tough.”

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# Drought and Trees Explained

Only midway through June, Texas has already seen extreme heat and very little rain, with the trend predicted to continue.

The anticipation of drought can bring many thoughts to mind from water shortages to increased wildfire risk. But what do drought conditions mean for our trees?

Drought is defined by a relatively long duration with substantially below-normal precipitation, usually occurring over a large area, and Texas is no stranger to drought. According to the U.S. Drought Monitor, in 2011, one of the state's worst drought years, more than 80% of Texas experienced exceptional drought conditions. This drought killed an estimated 300 million trees, 5.6 million being urban shade trees.



According to experts at Texas A&M Forest Service, tree fatalities occur during a drought because drought is a significant stress to trees.

## What can stress a tree?

“A stress is anything that reduces the capacity of the tree to function efficiently and grow vigorously,” said Karl Flocke, Texas A&M Forest Service woodland ecologist. “Stresses are things that can affect growth, nutrient uptake, the ability of the tree to photosynthesize and ultimately the ability of the tree to defend itself against environmental conditions and pathogens.

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Texas A&M AgriLife Extension

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## Upcoming Events

**PRIVATE PESTICIDE APPLICATOR TRAINING**  
**MASON | TBA**

**TEXAS A&M BEEF CATTLE SHORT COURSE**  
**COLLEGE STATION | AUGUST 1-3, 2022**

**TEXAS SHEEP & GOAT EXPO**  
**SAN ANGELO | AUGUST 19-20, 2022**

**OWNING YOUR PIECE OF TEXAS**  
**FREDERICKSBURG | SEPTEMBER 12, 2022**

**RANCHERS LEASING WORKSHOP**  
**KERRVILLE | SEPTEMBER 13, 2022**

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