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Columbus Garden Club is getting ready for their annual plant sale that will be held Saturday, May 3 at Brookshire Brothers on Hwy. 71 in Columbus. Melba Castillo (third from left) is chairman of the event that will include a huge plant sale, bake sale, and drawing. Money from the drawing will go toward scholarships for local high school seniors contemplating majoring in a horticultural field in college. Columbus garden club is a non-profit organization dedicated to educating members of the community in growing plants, beautifying the community through pocket parks throughout the city, and encouraging businesses and homeowners to make Columbus beautiful. The event begins at 8:00 in the morning and lasts until plants are gone.

USDA To Begin Producer Survey

During the upcoming June Area Survey, the U.S. Department of Agriculture's National Agricultural Statistics Service (NASS) will be out and about accounting for approximately 1,400 square miles of land throughout the state.

and pigs and sheep and goats. As with all NASS surveys, information provided by respondents is confidential by law.

"NASS safeguards the confidentiality of all responses and

publishes only state- and national-level data, ensuring that no individual operation or producer can be identified," stated Abbe.

All reports are available on the NASS Web site at www.nass.usda.gov.

For more information on NASS surveys and reports, call the NASS Texas Field Office at 1-800-626-3142.

Fuel, Fertilizer Costs On Rise

As part of the nationwide survey, NASS representatives will be knocking on the doors of producers on selected land to collect information about their land uses and agricultural activities.

"The June Area Survey is one of the largest and most comprehensive surveys conducted each year by NASS," explained David Abbe, director of the NASS Texas Field Office.

"By providing an in-depth look at land uses and agricultural activities, the survey provides the most timely, accurate and useful information on the current condition of U.S. agriculture.

"Understanding that the information we gather is only as good as the source it comes from, we are counting on the most reliable, frontline source of information for this survey – the producers themselves," added Abbe.

During the first two weeks of June, NASS representatives will visit pre-determined areas of land in Texas and conduct personal interviews with the owners and operators of any farm or ranch on that land.

NASS will collect information on farm numbers, crop acreage, genetically modified crop acreage, grain stocks, livestock inventory, cash rents and land values and the value of sales.

The information from the June Area Survey will be used extensively by NASS in its ongoing survey and estimation programs.

The survey provides direct data, or is a critical component, for a host of NASS reports, including: the monthly crop production report, annual acreage report and inventory reports for cattle, hogs

Texas AgriLife Extension Service agents from across the state report that whether there was rain or no rain, the high price of nitrogen fertilizer and diesel fuel are a dark cloud on the horizon for many producers.

Many AgriLife Extension districts received rain, while others still suffered from dry and windy conditions.

The Coastal Bend, Far West, Southwest, South Plains and South districts saw little to no rain, endangering dryland crops, forcing row-crop producers to heavily irrigate and livestock producers to continue to provide supplemental feed to cattle.

"Grass is growing, calving continues and cattle working is in progress," said Mark Currie, AgriLife Extension agent in Polk County northwest of Beaumont.

"But producers are voicing much concern over costs of fertilizer, feed and fuel in relation to declining calf prices."

"Conditions continue to improve thanks to recent rains and cool temperatures," said Jason Byrd, AgriLife Extension agent in Lampasas County northwest of Austin.

"Many producers are struggling with fertilizer prices and availability."

"This week's rain has helped cotton farmers in preparation for this year's crop," said Ryan Martin, AgriLife Extension agent in Motley County northeast of Lubbock.

"Some producers have opted not to fertilize due to high fuel and fertilizer costs."

"We are getting rain," said Clint Perkins, AgriLife Extension agent in Wood County north of Tyler.

"Warm-season grasses are starting to green up, but high fertilizer prices have producers worried."

The following summaries were compiled by AgriLife Extension districts reporters this week.

Central
Most of the district received rain.

Pasture conditions improved and rapidly greened up. Some wheat rust was reported.

Also, some wheat and oat crops were pressured by stink bugs and leaf-footed bugs.

Coastal Bend
Lack of rainfall and warm weather allowed most row-crop farmers to plant.

However, in some counties there wasn't enough topsoil moisture to germinate crops.

Soil insects in corn and grain sorghum, coupled with high winds caused some stand loss.

The high cost of fertilizer continued to concern row crop and grass farmers.

Many cow-calf producers were choosing not to fertilize grazing pastures this year and were only lightly fertilizing hay meadows.

Cattle in some areas were still being supplemented due to short grass.

East
Thunderstorms brought up to 2 inches of rain.

Pasture planting and vegetable planting were under way in much of the reporting area, but some fields remained too wet to plant.

Cattle conditions were good to excellent, with less hay feeding as grass grows.

Spring calving was under way.

Fire blight has been noticed on some ornamental pear trees in Harrison County.

Sabine County received more than 20 inches of rain, which resulted in loss of livestock and fencing.

In San Augustine County, which was also hit by heavy flooding last week, pastureland in bottoms was still under water and several dams were being rebuilt.

South
Western parts of the region were still dry.

Cabbage, corn, wheat and cotton under irrigation progressed well.

Most dryland wheat and oats are likely to be a total loss this year.

Onion harvesting continued. Range and pastures made little progress, and livestock producers continued to provide supplemental feed.

The northern parts of the region reported small amounts of precipitation, and soil moisture was deemed sufficient at depths of 1, 2 and 3 feet.

Overall crops were doing well, though temperatures were low for this time of year.

South Plains
From 0.3 to 1.8 inches of rain fell.

However, high winds gusting from 46 to 50 miles per hour came the day after.

Soil moisture was short to very short.

Producers continued to pre-water, apply pre-emerge herbicides and prepare for planting of cotton.

Winter wheat was in poor to fair condition.

Irrigated wheat looked fair. The moisture that was received helped, but more is needed for good yields.

Pastures and ranges were in poor to fair condition.

Cattle were in fair to good condition with supplemental feeding continuing.

Southeast
The spring grasses were growing fast, and livestock were gaining weight.

Winter annuals continued to mature and reseed.

Bermuda grass and other warm-season grasses greened up, but there was little growth.

Light showers came late in the week, improving soil moisture.

Southwest
The region has had no rain yet this month.

The year-to-date cumulative rainfall at Uvalde is about 88 percent below the long-term average.

Pecan and oak trees produced lots of pollen this spring, probably as a result of excellent rains in 2007 through mid-summer.

Woody trees leafed out, but they will not have sustained growth without rain.

Texas bluebonnet and Indian paintbrush wildflowers, normally abundant at this time of the year, were scarce due to the drought.

Forage availability remained below average.

Ranchers provided heavy supplemental nutrition. The extremely dry soil required farmers to irrigate heavily or lose their crops.

Corn, sorghum, spring vegetables and cotton were making good progress under irrigation. Planting under dryland conditions was significantly less than usual.

Small grain production was predicted to be minimal and only where irrigation was possible. The cabbage and carrot harvest continued.

Onions and potatoes made good progress under heavy irrigation, and the potato harvest will soon start.

Cantaloupes and watermelons had good stands under heavy irrigation.

West Central
Temperatures continued to rise, with many counties getting rain.

Soil moisture improved. Producers began to plant early sorghum and plow fields for cotton.

Hay planting continued. Wheat and oat crops were beginning to head out.

Fertilizer and herbicide applications were in full swing. Range and pastures showed improvement.

Summer grasses and forbs began to green up as well.

Supplemental feeding of livestock continued. Livestock body conditions were improving.

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