

Springing to Life!

By Erin Oleksiuk, District Technician, Coke County SWCD

We may be in for an early spring in Coke county. Ranchers have reported grass greening up in pastures and residents are beginning to notice iris, bluebonnets, and hyacinth blooming in flowerbeds. It doesn't matter if you are a county bumpkin or a city mouse, plant knowledge is important.

Our native plants can provide excellent forage and habitat for livestock and wildlife. Some vegetation may not be edible by larger animals but provide seeds to birds. There are plants that are an excellent food source for deer, antelope, sheep, and goats but are ignored by cattle. Others are poisonous to livestock but palatable by deer at certain times of the year. Some plants seem so prickly and thorny that they must serve no purpose, but most vegetation will serve some animals in some way. For example, Tasajillo are spiny plants that no one wants to run across but birds will eat the small, red tunas and it can provide hiding cover for quail.

Knowing what is growing on your property is important for many reasons; aggressive vegetation will take over an area or poisonous plants being dangerous around pets and children. Maximilian sunflowers and whitebrush are both very aggressive. Even though the Maximilian boasts a pretty, yellow flower and the whitebrush is very fragrant, they can take over an area quickly. Locoweed, jimson weed, and floglove plants are poisonous to both humans and livestock and are readily found in our area.

Some natives prefer certain soil types, giving us clues to what else might be able to thrive in that area, aiding landowners in reseedling and planting.

Not only will plant identification give you greater insight to the plants around you but it is also a fun hobby to enjoy. George Clendenin, local rangeland management specialist, published a new book titled, Common Rangeland Plants of West Central Texas. This book should be a staple for all landowners; filled with excellent photographs, descriptions, livestock and wildlife values, and history.

These new books are available for purchase at the Coke County Soil and Water Conservation District located at 214 E. 7th Street in Robert Lee. FREE Poisonous Plants: Guide to Prevention and Treatment pamphlets are also available in the office.

Watch for slow moving vehicles on Coke County roadways

Spring is one of the busiest times in agriculture, and more farm equipment can be found on Coke County roads as planting season begins.

"Spring brings more farm activity, and that means more slow moving vehicles on the roadways," John Ross Copeland,



Coke County Championship is Coming Back! Daylene Knight addresses the Board of Trustees for the Bronte Independent School Board regarding the possible move to 6 Man football at their regular meeting Thursday evening, March 9, 2017. Several members of the public addressed the Board, along with BISD Athletic Director Rocky Rawls, on this subject. Following a lengthy open discussion considering all aspects, expenses and consequences of the change, the Board voted unanimously to drop down to 6 Man classification beginning 2018-2019 school year. Members of the BISD Board of Trustees are Shane Kelton, Ashley Braswell, David McWright, Jodie Arrott, John Seales and Blake Braswell.

president, said. "Farmers are moving equipment to the field and ranchers are hauling livestock to different pastures."

Farm equipment moves slower than other vehicles on the road, which is why John Ross urges motorists to drive safely.

Due to the size of farm equipment and the narrowness of many rural roads, tractors, combines, plows and planters often have difficulty moving to the side or shoulder of the road.

"Drivers should use caution when coming around a sharp turn or topping a steep hill because they can come upon slow moving vehicles like farm equipment," John Ross said. "Farmers and ranchers should also do their part to share the roadways."

Data from the Texas Department of Transportation (TxDOT) shows accidents involving farm equipment on rural roads has slightly increased from 197 accidents in 2011 to 233 in 2015.

"We know our equipment moves slowly, but we ask other motorists to be patient," John Ross said. "We all want to get home safely and that takes all of us sharing the road together."

Each March, the American Farm Bureau Federation (AFBF), through a coordinated effort with the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH) Ag Center, holds an Ag Safety Awareness Program (ASAP) to raise awareness for the most important health and safety challenges faced by agriculture.

The theme of the safety awareness program is "Get Out of My Space".

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Step 3

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Step 4

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Step 5

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For more information, contact Melinda McCutchen at (325) 473-8863 or Morgan Brigham at (325) 277-9210 or everythingcokecounty@gmail.com.

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