

**AG NOTES**  
By John Teague  
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**SCHOLARSHIP**

The Middle Tennessee Beef Producers, our local cattlemen and cattlemen association, sponsors a scholarship for county seniors who are going to college with a major in agriculture or a related field, or those who will attend a trade school with the same connection to agriculture.

The scholarship applications are available at all of the county high schools, either with the guidance counselors or with the agriculture science teachers or at the Extension office. These applications are due by close of business April 15, and they can be dropped off here at the Extension office or mailed to 2105 Midland Road, Shelbyville 37160. If you have any questions, contact me at 931-684-5971 or [jteague1@utk.edu](mailto:jteague1@utk.edu)

**MASTER BEE KEEPING SERIES**

I mentioned this program last week, and it has proven to be so popular I wanted to pass it on again. The UT Master Bee Keeper series is once again on the schedule. All of the details are on her website shown here. Registration is now open - the link is on Dr. Jennifer Tsuruda's website: <https://epp.tennessee.edu/masterbee> There will also be a post on the webpage for Entomology and Plant Pathology at [EPP's FB page](#)

Dr. Tsuruda is fairly new to our state, but has been a bee expert for some time in other states. We are glad to have her here in Tennessee.

All of the scheduled classes are the Basic class due to overwhelming demand. Advanced classes may be scheduled in the future but we need to make sure those starting out receive research-based information so they will be successful and ready for the Advanced class. Please note that the Basic class is a Master Beekeeping course and counts for Tennessee Ag Enhancement Program.

This is a direct registration process, so all questions and details should be directed to Dr. Tsuruda.

**SOIL TESTING**

The soil samples keep coming in. These folks are not guessing at their fertilizer needs and gambling on expensive N-P-K. They are able to determine liming needs, work on fine-tuning fertilizer budgets, and use money saved on weed control.

Smart money.

**WEATHER**

I hope that you are watching the weather forecasts for temperature predictions. I hope that you haven't jumped the gun as the old saying goes and planted too early.

This past week's weather just showed us who is boss, with sleet and freezing cold and harsh winds. I've had discussions with different ones about holding off on planting warm-season stuff, and I know that one or two of them probably went on and did it anyway.

Remember, the right season is not just based on air temperature, but also soil temperature. And a short warm-up won't do it with a rough cold spell like we just had.

Our average last frost day is around April 15 to April 19, depending on the data you read. Any way you look at it, we are still a bit early.

## FRUIT TREES

I got asked about apple tree varieties last week. I have a great reference, Dr. David Lockwood, our UT fruit and nut specialist. Here are his recommendations for apples and pears.

For apples, here are some disease resistant varieties that should do well in Tennessee: Crimson Crisp, Crimson Gold, Crimson Topaz, Galarina, GoldRush, Enterprise, Liberty, Querina, and WineCrisp. Of this group, he has grown Liberty and Freedom. Both are good, but Liberty is a personal favorite. He has tasted the others and they are good. Arkansas Black is an old variety that is not very disease prone and that will do well in Tennessee. It also keeps a long time, as does GoldRush.

In regards to apple rootstocks, MM111 is the most forgiving apple rootstock we have. It is a semi-dwarf, giving about 20% reduction in tree size. It is a freestanding, long-lived tree. It is resistant to woolly apple aphid, a problem in Tennessee, and tolerant to a fairly wide range of soil conditions. In regards to dwarf trees, the smaller the tree, the more intense the management must be. As a rule, dwarf trees need support by staking or trellising and irrigation since the root systems are more confined than with semi-dwarf trees.

His primary caution regarding pears is to select varieties having fireblight resistance. Bartlett, Bosc and Anjou are three of the more popular varieties of pears, but they should **NEVER** be planted in Tennessee due to their extreme fireblight susceptibility. Potential European pear varieties for Tennessee include Ayers, Moonglow, Seckel, Starking Delicious and Warren. Keiffer is an option if the fruit are to be used for preserves, but not for fresh consumption. If Asian pears are desired, look at 20<sup>th</sup> Century, Hosui, Kosui and Chojuro. Rootstock options for pears are limited. There are no dwarf rootstocks that he knows of. Usually, seedling or Pyrus callyana are used for full-sized trees and quince is sometimes used for a semi-dwarf tree.

## THE KIDS

Ford turned nine years old this week and we helped him celebrate. We also got to take in two ballgames. Hank played his usual center field position and he made some really good catches for outs and then threw runners out at second and third. Ford played the infield, made some great catches and got a good hit or two.

Piper is taking more riding lessons, and she was taught how to post on a Saddlebred being led by an instructor. It's good for her strength and balance. She loves riding and takes it seriously most of the time, except when she wants to be a little giggly!

Kids, they're something else!