

July 2020 • Volume 14, Issue 7

# RANCH RECORD

News for the Residents of Blackhorse Ranch



## Harvest Donated for CAM

BY STEPHANIE BAKER

These are some photos of harvest donated to CAM on behalf of the following school gardens we manage:

- Wells • Sampson • Walker • Warner • Danish • Swenke • A. Robison
- M. Robinson • Rennell • Andre

A grand total of over 400 pounds of organic fresh fruit and veggies including 142 pounds for red potatoes was distributed!

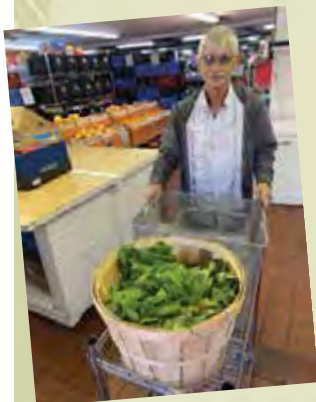
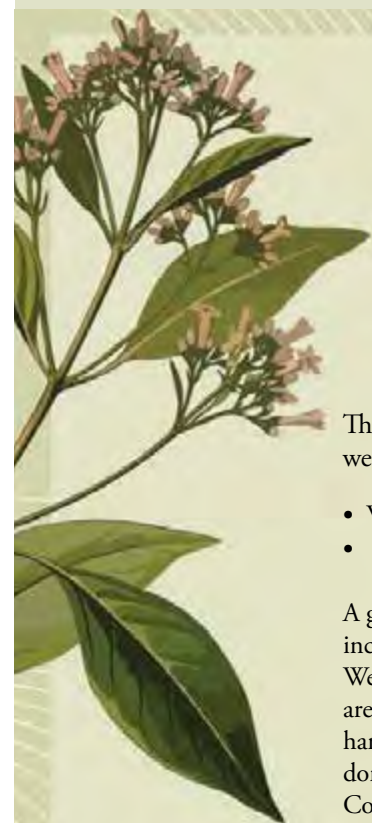
We would love any willing adults or parents with children who are interested in volunteering over the summer to water, weed and harvest. We are excited to see how much fresh good we can grow to donate from school gardens in CFISD!

Contact Stephanie through Facebook direct message or email please - [steph@readytogrowgardens.com](mailto:steph@readytogrowgardens.com)

You can follow Ready To Grow Gardens on social media so that parents and students can follow along with what's growing in their school garden, harvests, volunteer opportunities, plus fun summer ideas for at home!

- Facebook - @readytogrowgardens
- Instagram - @readytogrowgardens
- Twitter - @readytogrowgarden (no - s)
- YouTube - Ready to Grow Gardens - Garden Day look for our logo \*attached (there is a company with the same name in Florida)

*See More Photos on Page 2!*



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Cypress Ranch High School .....	281-373-2300

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*Continued from Cover*



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## GRACKLES

*They'll eat anything*

*By Cheryl Conley, TWRC Wildlife Center*



We've all been in parking lots where we feel we're being stalked by big black birds just waiting for us to drop a morsel of food. What are they? Ravens, Crows, Grackles? If you said Grackles, you'd be correct.

So how do you tell the difference? Ravens are very large and have a long wedge-shaped tail. They have a thick bill. Their throat looks a little shaggy if you're ever able to get close to one. Their call is deep. Crows are about the size of a chicken. They have smaller beaks and shorter tails that are squared off at the ends. They have a higher-pitched call than Ravens. Grackles are about the size of Robins. They are easily identifiable by their iridescent feathers mostly seen on their heads. They have golden eyes and their call has been compared to the sound of a rusty gate.

There are actually three types of Grackles—Great-tailed Grackle, Common Grackle and the Boat-tailed Grackle. The Common Grackle is found throughout North America, the Boat-tailed Grackle can be found in the southeastern states and the Great-tailed bird is found along the Texas border and into Mexico. What you are seeing in parking lots are mainly Common Grackles.

Grackles are not picky eaters. They'll eat bugs, berries, seeds and just about anything else they can find. They'll wade in water in search of small fish and will even eat leeches off of the legs of turtles. They steal worms from robins, raid the nests of other birds and will even kill and eat other birds. Of course, we all know that they love French fries, cookies and anything else that is dropped in a parking lot or in a trash bin.

Grackles practice a strange behavior known as anting. This involves rubbing ants on their bodies. No one knows exactly why they do this but some scientists believe the ants secrete an acid that kills feather mites. Others believe it has something to do with shedding feathers or molting.

Just like their eating habits, grackles are not very particular when it comes to where they build their nests. Some live and nest in colonies as large as 200 breeding pairs. A female can lay from 4 to 7 eggs in a single season.

Right now, we're in baby bird season. Some birds that are brought to us for care should have been left where they were. If you find a baby bird, please give us a call and let us help you determine if the bird needs help or not. Our website also has some great information on a number of topics. [www.twrcwildlifecenter.org](http://www.twrcwildlifecenter.org) 713.468.8972

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## CYPRESS/TOMBALL DEMOCRATS

The Cypress-Tomball Democrats will hold its next virtual monthly meeting Tuesday, July 21, 2020. There is a meet and greet at 6:45 p.m. The general meeting begins at 7:00 p.m. For the access ZOOM access code, email [cytomdemocrats@gmail.com](mailto:cytomdemocrats@gmail.com).

The speaker will be Nick Lampson. Lampson earned his B.A. and M.A. from Lamar University in 1968 and 1974, respectively. His professional experience includes his work in real estate management, as a small business owner, and as a high school science teacher. Lampson has previously represented Texas in the US House.

All are welcome to attend and to join this growing club, which meets on the third Tuesday of every month.

For more information & access to the ZOOM Virtual meeting, contact Undrai Fizer at [cytomdemocrats@gmail.com](mailto:cytomdemocrats@gmail.com), or visit the club's Facebook page.



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may need. We hope to see you all there.





## Mealybugs

Mealybugs are pests of landscape plants and houseplants. Outdoors, they are often active during times of warm, dry weather, but can be a problem indoors at any time of year. Infestations usually start at the base of stems and then spread from there as populations increase.

Mealybugs are a type of unarmored scale insect. They are sexually dimorphic, with males and females looking different. Males have wings and can fly while females remain wingless throughout their life. Immature (nymphs) and female mealybugs are oval, soft-bodied and covered with a white waxy powder.

These insects have piercing-sucking mouthparts which is used to penetrate plant tissue to suck out juices. Feeding by mealybugs can lead to yellowing or wilting of the plant and distortion of the leaves. With larger infestations, the insects may cause stunted growth, premature leaf drop or plant death. Mealybugs excrete honeydew, which is a sweet, sticky substance on which a fungus called sooty mold can grow. Sooty mold can indirectly harm plants by blocking sunlight from reaching plant surfaces and reducing photosynthesis.

### Tips for mealybug management:

- Conserve beneficial insects; there are many insects that feed on or parasitize mealybugs
  - To help conserve beneficial insects, use other methods to manage pests before choosing a pesticide.
- \*\*Use high pressure water sprays to dislodge the insects from the plant
- \*\*Insecticidal soap
- \*\*Horticultural oils

- \*\*Other insecticides labeled for mealybug control (look for active ingredients such as azadirachtin, pyrethrum, pyrethrins). Read and follow all label instructions.

- For severely infested plants, it may be best to throw the plant away and buy a new one

\*\*If treating houseplants, move plants outside during treatment then move back inside once treatment has dried.

For more information or help with identification, contact Wizzie Brown, Texas AgriLife Extension Service Program Specialist at 512.854.9600. Check out my blog at [www.urban-ipm.blogspot.com](http://www.urban-ipm.blogspot.com)

This work is supported by Crops Protection and Pest Management Competitive Grants Program [grant no. 2017-70006-27188 /project accession no. 1013905] from the USDA National Institute of Food and Agriculture.

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# RANCH RECORD

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