Hello, Northeast Ohio Counties!

Snow showers on Tax Day! In typical fashion, we are riding the weather rollercoaster once again this spring. However, as we know- it is way too early to panic!

We are receiving a lot of pre-registrations for the Joe Bodnar Memorial Northern Classic Steer & Heifer Show which will be held this Saturday at the Ashtabula County Fairgrounds. If you have some free time, stop by and see our youth show!

It won’t be long until we are in the fields!

Lee Beers & David Marrison
Extension Educators
Ag & Natural Resources
**Should I Continue Farming?**
By: Chris Zoller, Extension Educator, ANR for Tuscarawas County

**Introduction**
Given the low prices of many farm commodities and a price outlook that may not be positive in the near term, you may be considering exiting agriculture. Making a decision to sell part or your entire farm is not easy and brings with it a great deal of emotions. Farmers have told me they worry about being seen as a failure, the impact a sale will have on family and employees, or what they will do with their life after the sale. These are realistic concerns. It’s important that you don’t let emotions drive the decision-making process. Sometimes difficult business decisions must be made to preserve what is still left and plan for the future.

Finding someone you trust, who has good listening skills, and with whom you are comfortable discussing the details of your business, finances, goals, and options can be very helpful. That person may not have the answers to all of your questions, but if they are willing to listen, they can offer advice and suggest people who can help. Think of the following pages as a framework from which to begin the process of selling some or your whole farm.

**Evaluate**

**Financial situation** – What is the total amount of all debt obligations, to whom do you owe money, and how much is owed to each creditor? What is your net worth? Knowing the answers to these basic questions is important, regardless of your business or performance, and necessary to evaluate what and how many assets will need to sell.

**Goals/Needs** – Do you need to sell all or part of your assets? Can you retain assets to farm part-time? Is there another enterprise worth investigating? Does it make sense to relocate and start a new business? Are you at a stage in life where it’s best to retire and enjoy time with family, travel, or enjoy a hobby?

**Life after farming** – What skills do you possess? You are more than ‘just a farmer’ – you probably have skills and/or education as a mechanic, electrician, carpenter, mason, nutritionist, agronomist, etc. You have worked with livestock and machinery. You may have an advanced degree that you can put to use. You certainly have a great deal of practical, hands-on experience. Your experiences, training, education, and skills will help you focus on finding your next career. Maybe now is a time to take classes to increase your skills to enter a new career. Talk to neighbors, family, and friends to let them know you are looking for a job. State and county governments, as well as private companies, can assist you with identifying skills and job openings.
Decisions:
You and your business partners have agreed that a sale of assets is the best available option, but you don’t know where to begin. The following can help you get the process started, answer questions, and/or raise issues you might not have considered.

Begin with a current balance sheet. A balance sheet will provide you with a snapshot of your assets and liabilities at the time the inventories were recorded and values placed on them. The balance sheet will also show your current and non-current debt obligations.

Determine whether you will sell all of your assets or a portion. If only a portion, which ones? If you are going to focus on crop production, you may want to retain a tractor(s), tillage equipment, planter or drill, harvest equipment, etc.

If assets are listed as collateral for loans, start talking to lenders immediately about how to handle the sale, discharging the lien, and the use of sale proceeds.

Meet with a farm appraisal real-estate professional to determine a reasonable value for the acres and any real estate assets you plan to sell. Evaluate the advantages and disadvantages of a private sale, going through a realtor, or having a public auction. If you use a realtor or auctioneer, determine the cost, services provided, and what is expected of you. Talk to more than one real-estate professional, request references, and ask that terms discussed be in writing.

Help is available
Coming to and making a decision to exit farming is not easy and is filled with a great deal of emotions. There are people and agencies/organizations that can help, including:

- Family or close friends
- Clergy
- Licensed counselors
- Medical professionals
- Ohio State University Extension professionals. You can easily find the telephone number of any Extension office by clicking on: [https://extension.osu.edu/lao](https://extension.osu.edu/lao)
- National Suicide Prevention Hotline 1-800-273-8255
  - Online resources: [https://suicidepreventionlifeline.org](https://suicidepreventionlifeline.org)
- National Alliance on Mental Illness 1-800-950-NAMI (6264)
  - Online resources: [https://www.nami.org/](https://www.nami.org/)
- Many counties have professionals available for counseling
- Ohio Workforce Training: [http://www.ohio.gov/working/training/](http://www.ohio.gov/working/training/)
Will the projected sale income be enough to cover debt obligations? If not, what is the next plan of action? If the sale of livestock isn’t enough to pay your debts, what else needs to be included? Maybe it’s milking equipment, stalls, feed mixer. While it provides a one-time cash infusion, the sale of timber or minerals may provide extra income. The sale of real estate is an option. You may not want to sell all of your acreage, but maybe there are a few acres you could sell.

Involve an attorney. Contact one early and make them aware of your plans. There may be issues related to the sale you hadn’t considered (for example, say you plan to divide a parcel into building lots, there may be zoning or other regulations to follow and associated court filings).

Meet with your tax advisor/accountant. There are going to be tax implications from the sale of assets. How many dollars must be set aside to meet tax obligations or liabilities? A tax professional can help you implement strategies to minimize the tax bill. As a financial advisor once told me, the difference between tax avoidance and tax evasion is about seven years!

Summary
Arriving at the decision to sell will not be easy. Find someone with whom you can share your feelings and don’t see yourself as a failure. Talk to professionals, get answers to your questions, and make the best possible decisions. There are many people who can help you through this process!

Mud Control is Grazing Management
By Rory Lewandowski, OSU Extension Educator, Wayne County
Source: http://u.osu.edu/beef/2018/04/11/mud-control-is-grazing-management/

An unseasonably warm February led to mud management issues for many pasture-based livestock operations. Spring typically leads to our April showers and the “traditional” time of managing around mud. We just arrived in mud season a little earlier.

All this mud is an undesirable condition, from an animal performance, resource management and environmental perspective. Graziers need to have a mud control plan as part of a comprehensive grazing management system. Within a grazing system, mud does not just happen. Wet soils combined with livestock create mud.

How quickly mud is created depends upon the number of livestock in a given area, the weight of those livestock, the saturation level of the soil, the time of year, and the strength of the surface to support those livestock. A thick, vigorous growing sod with light livestock pressure is most able to resist creating mud, while a thin, dormant sod cover with even light to moderate livestock pressure is least able to resist creating mud.
The pressure livestock exert on a surface depends upon their weight and hoof area in contact with the surface. The chart below adapted from the University of Kentucky Extension Publication AEN-115, Appropriate All Weather Surfaces for Livestock, shows the amount of pressure applied by standing livestock in pounds per square inch:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source</th>
<th>Pressure (psi)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sheep</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cattle</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Horse</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UTV</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>50-ton dozer</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tractor</td>
<td>175</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Surprisingly, large livestock can exert more pressure than a 50-ton dozer because their weight is concentrated in a relatively small area.

When they walk, livestock can double the pressure applied to a surface because weight shifts from four feet to two feet.

This is important because our soils have a weight-bearing capacity. According to the University of Kentucky AEN-115 publication, soft clay or sandy loam has a capacity of 14 psi, firm clay 28 psi and dry clay 42 psi. Wet soils lose supporting strength. I could not find figures for sod cover, but it is reasonable to assume that adding a sod cover on top of these soils will increase the bearing capacity of the soil. The denser the sod, the more resistance it will have.

Walking through mud takes a toll on our livestock. Livestock require more energy in muddy conditions because mud reduces the insulating value of the hair coat and because walking in mud is strenuous. Livestock may actually eat less because of the effort required to get to feed and water in mud conditions. As a result, daily gains decline. Another adjacent chart in the University of Kentucky AEN-115 publication summarizes some of the effects of mud on cattle performance.

In addition to detrimental livestock effects, mud creates vulnerability to soil loss through erosion and water movement that is an environmental cost. When a pasture sod base is beat up and turned into mud, there is an economic cost associated with losing some grazing potential.
We can also think of situations where viewing mud and livestock creates a negative view of agriculture, what could be termed “social” loss. One practical tool to help graziers manage muddy periods and protect their pasture sod resources is the heavy use pad.

A heavy use pad provides a feeding area for livestock that minimizes mud creation and soil erosion. The “Cadillac” of heavy use pads is concrete, but for most grazing operations the use of geotextile cloth and stone is the more practical and economical choice. Geotextile fabric creates a porous barrier between the soil underneath the fabric and the rock on top of the fabric. The porous nature of the fabric allows water/moisture to pass through it while the rock on top of it remains in place to provide a firm surface.

The first step in constructing a geotextile heavy use pad is to pick a site that has some reasonably good drainage. Level the area and remove the topsoil. Lay out the geotextile fabric, taking care to avoid wrinkles. If the pad is larger than a single width of the fabric, make sure that there is approximately 2 feet of overlap in the succeeding passes. Next, apply a layer of rock on top of the fabric, taking care not to rip or wrinkle the fabric. Generally, a four- to six-inch base layer of number 4 crushed limestone rock is laid on top of the fabric, followed by a 2- to 3-inch cover of a finer cover of dense grade aggregate or road mix. Depending upon your budget, some pads may also incorporate gravel paver grids that help to reduce the volume of surface rock loss during scraping and cleaning of the pad.

**Camp Whitewood Seeking a Facility Manager**

Camp Whitewood is seeking a Facility Manager to help us build on nearly 80 years of providing excellent service and programming to the region. The Facility Manager is responsible for all aspects of maintenance and upkeep for Camp Whitewood’s facilities and 237 acre campus including updating and improving structures and systems. Full position description at [http://4hcampwhitewood.com/employment-opportunities](http://4hcampwhitewood.com/employment-opportunities). To apply, email resume and letter of interest explaining specifically how your experience matches the job qualifications to Hudak.65@osu.edu or send to 7983 S. Wiswell Rd. Windsor, OH 44099. Applications will be accepted through Wednesday April 25, 2018.

**2nd Annual Lyme Disease Symposium to be held on May 5, 2018 in Andover, Ohio**

The 2nd Annual Multidisciplinary Lyme Disease Symposium will be held on Saturday, May 5, 2018, from 9:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. at the Veterans Memorial Performing Arts Center at Pymatuning Valley Schools located at 5571 US Route 6 West, Andover, Ohio. This event is being sponsored by the Northeast Ohio Lyme Foundation a non-profit organization created to help those battling Lyme disease as well as other tick-borne illnesses. Community members are invited to attend this event which will be full of education and awareness.
Tickets for this event are $20 per registrant and are available on-line until April 30. After this time, tickets may be purchased at the door but will not include a lunch. Lunch will be catered from Panera Bread but requires a 5 day advanced order. Tickets can be purchased at: https://neohiolymefoundation.eventbrite.com

**Beekeepers to Meet on April 21 in Jefferson, Ohio**

The Ashtabula County Beekeepers Association will be meeting on Saturday, April 21, 2018 at the Ashtabula County Extension Office located at 39 Wall Street in Jefferson, Ohio. There will be a Pot Luck Dinner at Noon followed by the general meeting at 1:00 p.m. Please bring a dish/dessert to share. The annual auction and election of offices will also be held. The educational topic will be Open discussion - please bring your questions. The next meeting of the Association will be held on May 19, 2018. Additional information can be obtained by calling Sharon at 440-576-8818.

**100th Meridian: East-West Divide Between Moist and Arid Parts of U.S. May be Shifting**

By Lamont-Doherty Earth Observatory, Columbia University

In 1878, the American geologist and explorer John Wesley Powell drew an invisible line in the dirt - a very long line. It was the 100th meridian west, the longitude he identified as the boundary between the humid eastern United States and the arid Western plains. Running south to north, the meridian cuts northward through the eastern states of Mexico, and on to Texas, Oklahoma, Kansas, Nebraska, the Dakotas, and the Canadian province of Manitoba on its way to the pole. Powell, best known for exploring the Grand Canyon and other parts of the West, was wary of large-scale settlement in that often harsh region, and tried convincing Congress to lay out water- and land-management districts crossing state lines to deal with environmental constraints. Western political leaders hated the idea - they feared this might limit development, and their own power - and it never went anywhere. It was not the first time that politicians would ignore the advice of scientists.

Now, 140 years later, scientists are looking again at the 100th meridian. In two just-published papers, they examine how it has played out in history so far, and what the future may hold. They confirm that the divide has turned out to be very real, as reflected by population and agriculture on opposite sides. They say also that the line appears to be slowly moving eastward, due to climate change. They say it will almost certainly continue shifting in coming decades, expanding the arid climate of the western plains into what we think of as the Midwest. The implications for farming and other pursuits could be huge.
One can literally step over the meridian line on foot, but the boundary it represents is more gradual. In 1890, Powell wrote, "Passing from east to west across this belt a wonderful transformation is observed. On the east a luxuriant growth of grass is seen, and the gaudy flowers of the order Compositae make the prairie landscape beautiful. Passing westward, species after species of luxuriant grass and brilliant flowering plants disappear; the ground gradually becomes naked, with bunch grasses here and there; now and then a thorny cactus is seen, and the yucca plant thrusts out its sharp bayonets." Today, his description would only partly apply; the "luxuriant grass" of the eastern prairie was long ago plowed under for corn, wheat and other crops, leaving only scraps of the original landscape. The scrubby growth of the thinly populated far western plains remains more intact.

"Powell talked eloquently about the 100th meridian, and this concept of a boundary line has stayed with us down to the current day," said Richard Seager, a climate scientist at Columbia University's Lamont-Doherty Earth Observatory and lead author of the two papers. "We wanted to ask whether there really is such a divide, and whether it's influenced human settlement." He calls the studies an example of "psychogeography"—the examination of how environment affects human decisions. The papers appear in the current edition of the journal Earth Interactions.

While the climate divide is not literally a visible line, it is about the closest thing around, easily seen on maps. Due to global-scale wind patterns, to the west of this longitude, rainfall drops off sharply. East of the line, it picks up sharply. Powell noted correctly that the western plains are dry in part because they lie in the rain shadow of the Rocky Mountains, which rake off almost all the moisture blowing in from the Pacific Ocean. Seager’s team identifies two other factors. In winter, Atlantic storms bring plenty of moisture into the eastern plains and Southeast, but don't make it far enough to moisten the western plains. In summer, moisture from the Gulf of Mexico moves northward, but that also curves eastward, again providing the East with plenty of precipitation, while the West gets cheated. Seager says there is only one other such major straight-line climate divide on the global map: the one separating the Sahara Desert from the rest of Africa, also due to cutoffs of prevailing oceanic winds.
In the United States, the effects show up in obvious ways. To the west, population density drops sharply. There are fewer homes, commercial facilities and roads. Farms are fewer, but bigger, reflecting the economics of less water and thus lower productivity. To the east, 70 percent of the crop is moisture-loving corn; to the west, aridity-resistant wheat is dominant.

Now, the researchers say, warming climate appears to be pushing the divide east. In the northern plains, rainfall has not changed much, but temperatures are going up, increasing evaporation from the soil. Further south, concurrent shifts in wind patterns are in fact causing less rain to fall. Either way, this tends to push western aridity eastward. Data collected since about 1980 suggests that the statistical divide between humid and arid has now shifted closer to the 98th meridian, some 140 miles east. (In Texas, this would move it roughly from Abilene to Fort Worth.) Seager says year-to-year weather variations may blur the data, and in any case the changes are still too small and gradual to yet affect land use over wide areas. But he is confident that aridity will perceptibly move eastward during the 21st century, and eventually effect large-scale changes.

Seager predicts that as drying progresses, farms further and further east will have to consolidate and become larger in order to remain viable. Unless farmers turn to irrigation or otherwise adapt, they will have to turn from corn to wheat or some other more suitable crop. Large expanses of cropland may fail altogether, and have to be converted to western-style grazing range. Water supplies could become a problem for urban areas.

Some historians say it could be argued that white settlement beyond the meridian influenced everything from the end of slavery (plantations could not expand beyond the line, weakening the South) to the development of modern firearms (settlers with single-shot muskets couldn't compete with native peoples' rapid-fire arrow attacks, until they became the first, best customers for new Colt repeating revolvers and rifles). The meridian itself is still registered in the popular imagination by historical roadside signs; books such Wallace Stegner's "Beyond the Hundredth Meridian"; and the Canadian rock hit "At the Hundredth Meridian." "It's a reminder that climate really matters, then as it does today," said Seager.

**Good Agricultural Practices Training Workshop Slated for April 25 in Burton, Ohio**

Good Agricultural Practices, or GAPs, for fruit and vegetable production will be the focus of this three-hour training. The workshop will be held on April 25, 2018 from 9:00 a.m. – 12 noon at the Ohio State University Extension, Geauga County office, located at 14269 Claridon-Troy Road, Burton, OH 44021.
The Produce Safety Educational Course will cover good agricultural practices or ‘GAPs”, which help reduce the risk of on-farm produce contamination. Attendees will receive a certificate of participation. Attending the OSU GAPs class does not equate to being GAPs Certified. Topics will include Worker Training, Health and Hygiene; Manure and Compost Handling; Domestic and Wild Animals; and Recordkeeping.

Contact the Geauga County Extension Office to reserve your spot by calling (440) 834-4656. Registration is $25 per person, payable by cash or check, with checks made out to “Ohio State University Extension.”

**Women & Chainsaws - Operating Chainsaws Safely Class to be held in Jefferson, Ohio**

OSU Extension’s Women in Agriculture Program in Ashtabula County invites women to the “Women & Chainsaws- Operating Chainsaws Safely” workshop on April 28 from 9:30–11:30 a.m. at the Ashtabula County Extension office in Jefferson, Ohio.

This class will feature Lee Beers (Extension Educator in Trumbull County) who will teach the basics of chainsaws. Chainsaws are a vital “tool” for farms. Learn the basics of handling, operating and maintaining chainsaw. Learn the safety equipment which should be used and learn the basics of felling and bucking a tree. Be safe as you and your family cut firewood and maintain your property lines. Safety gear raffle will be included.

Cost for the class is $15/person. Pre-registration is requested by April 20th to ensure minimum numbers. We will be outside for demonstrations, so please dress according. Please complete the following registration form and return to OSU Extension – Ashtabula County, 39 Wall Street, Jefferson, Ohio. Make checks payable to OSU Extension. Call the Ashtabula County Extension office at 440-576-9008 for more details. A registration flyer can also be obtained at: [http://go.osu.edu/ne-events](http://go.osu.edu/ne-events).

**Joe Bodnar Memorial Northern Classic Steer & Heifer Show to be held on Saturday, April 21**

The Ashtabula County Cattlemen’s Association will be sponsoring the 21st Annual Joe Bodnar Memorial Northern Classic Steer & Heifer Jackpot Show on Saturday, April 21 at the Ashtabula County Fairgrounds in Jefferson, Ohio. This good old fashion jackpot show will start promptly at noon.

The show is open to all youth under the age of 21 and will begin promptly at noon. An entry fee of $35 per head is required. A $5 discount is being given for any entry received prior to April 13, 2018. Cash prizes will be awarded to individual class winners and to the Champion Steer, Reserve Champion Steer,
Champion Heifer, and Reserve Champion Heifer. In addition to the open show, a Showmanship class and an Ashtabula County Class will be held. A registration flyer can be found at: http://go.osu.edu/ne-events. More information about this program can be obtained by calling the Ashtabula County Extension office at 440-576-9008

**Ashtabula County Agricultural Scholarship Applications Deadline is May 1**

OSU Extension and the Ashtabula County Agricultural Scholarship Committee are pleased to announce that applications are now being accepted for a minimum of fourteen scholarships for the 2018-2019 school year to Ashtabula County students enrolled in either an accredited full four year college or an accredited two year technical institute. Both graduate and undergraduate students are encouraged to apply for the scholarships which they meet the eligibility requirements. The scholarships are for a one year period. A student may apply and be awarded a scholarship in three years from the scholarship fund.

Application forms with complete instructions for applying are now available and can be received by stopping in at the Ashtabula County Extension Office or by calling 440-576-9008. Applications can be accessed at: http://go.osu.edu/agscholarship. The application deadline is May 1 and no late applications will be considered. More information can also be obtained by emailing ashtabulacountyagscholarship@gmail.com

**Hydrangea School to be Held on April 26, 2018**

The Ashtabula County Extension office is pleased to be offering a Hydrangea School on Thursday, April 26, 2018 at the Ashtabula County Extension Office located at 39 Wall Street in Jefferson, Ohio from 6:30 to 8:30 p.m. Join OSU Extension Educator Eric Barrett to discover the world of hydrangeas. Learn about types, care, pruning and bloom times. You’ll receive a quick reference chart to take to the garden center and a hydrangea plant to take home. The registration fee for this workshop is $30 per person. Please make checks payable to OSU Extension. Registration includes handouts, light refreshments and a hydrangea plant to take home for your landscape. Please mail completed registration form to OSU Extension, 39 Wall Street, Jefferson, Ohio 44047. Due to space limitations, this program will be limited to the first 50 registrants. First come, first served basis. For questions, please call 440-576-9008. A registration flyer can also be obtained at: flyer can be found at: http://go.osu.edu/ne-events.
David’s Weekly News Column
For Publication in the Jefferson Gazette on April 18 & Ashtabula County Star Beacon on April 22

Hello, Ashtabula County! It is hard to believe that we are half-way through April. The rollercoaster weather ride continues and the prediction of a delayed planting season might come to fruition. However, I am still hopeful that our weather mellows once we hit May so our farmers can get their crops planted in a timely manner.

This is the time of year when my phone rings and rings with the following question: “What is a fair price to rent farm ground?” In fact, I would say that this is the number one question that I receive year in and year out. Of course, this should not be a surprise as the last Census of Agriculture reported that 45.8% or almost 50,000 acres of the 109,000 acres of crops grown each year in Ashtabula County are grown on ground which is rented.

So, what is a fair price to rent farm ground?” This question does not have an easy answer, as a number of factors have an impact on rental prices. These factors include land productivity, location, site characteristics, previous cropping history, landlord and tenant relationship, and supply and demand.

I think the major factor is the overall productivity of the ground. The productivity is impacted by soil type, soil drainage, topography, soil pH and nutrient load. Land rents are usually lower for those situations in which the tenant farmer will need to add significant lime and fertilizer to the soil to make it productive. The wetter the field, the lower the rent. Any field that is systematically tiled for water removal will be more attractive for rental.

Ultimately, the land rental price will be determined by the number of farmers who are willing to rent the land. The more farmers interested in the land for agricultural use, the higher the land rent. In some situations, it will be difficult for a landowner to find a tenant to farm the ground.

My first suggestion to any landowner who calls is to determine what the annual land ownership costs are for the acreage they wish to rent. This annual ownership cost will most likely include the amount paid for property taxes, insurance, mortgage interest expense, and the expected rate of return on their investment.
For instance, using the annual tax statement from the Auditor’s office, a landowner can determine the amount of rent which is needed just to cover the property tax. As an example, the property tax for one of my 12 acre hay fields in New Lyme Township was $153 for the past year. This means I would need $12.75 per acre just to cover the tax. I would then need to calculate all my other costs of ownership and add it to the property tax figure. By doing this, I will know the minimum land rental which is needed. It is important to push a pencil to the numbers as in the previous year, the property tax for this hay field was $24.18 per acre.

The landowner should also consider the extra things a tenant might do such as weed control on non-tillable acres, fence repair, brush hogging, cutting firewood, snow removal and other tasks that have value to the landlord. Services like these may allow a tenant to pay a discounted rental rate.

So, what is land currently renting for in our county? The National Agricultural Statistics Service (NASS) conducts a formal survey each year and the average annual rental rate reported for 2017 was $70.50 per acre. Remember this is just an average and it fluctuates each year. In fact, just five years ago, the average reported by NASS was $41 per acre.

In addition to the formal survey, we informally survey land owners and farmers each year. Our data points to a range of land rent from $0 per acre to over $125 per acre per year. That folks is a huge range and the rent received depends greatly on the characteristics mentioned previously. It should be remembered that this is only a range and each landowner and tenant should negotiate on a field by field basis.

To help farmers and landowners with their land rental discussions, I have authored a factsheet with can be accessed at: go.osu.edu/landrent-ashtabula. This website also includes web links and information about land rental and sample lease agreements. This information can also be obtained by calling the Ashtabula County Extension office at 440-576-9008.

To close, I would like to share a quote from James H. Douglas, Jr. who stated, “Our deep respect for the land and its harvest is the legacy of generations of farmers who put food on our tables, preserved our landscape, and inspired us with a powerful work ethic.” Have a good and safe day.
Lee’s Monthly News Column

Hello Trumbull County! We’ve been into spring officially for a little over three weeks now, but it really hasn’t felt much different than the two seasons preceding it. The forecast for a cold and wet spring has been pretty spot on so I am hoping that the forecast for a warm and dry summer holds true. When it warms up to about 70 on Friday it is going to feel downright tropical!

I went out this morning (Tuesday) to check the soil temperature. It was still 36.1°F, or not much above freezing. For those of you looking at your calendar for planting oats, peas, or any other cold weather crop you might as well throw that calendar in the recycling pile. The soil needs to warm up ten degrees for cold season crops, and an additional five degrees to plant corn and soybeans. Soil is a giant thermal sink, and it will take several days of warm weather to see those temperatures start to climb higher.

Though, right now it doesn’t matter if the soil is 100 degrees, because most fields are way too wet for tillage or planting. Lower and poorly drained fields still have standing water from our most recent rain and snow. The cold, wet weather is going to push back planting (gardens and fields alike) a few weeks this year. When conditions are favorable for planting it’s going to be a mad dash to get everything in the ground. I have been thinking a lot lately about a quote my mother has hanging in her home by James Whitcomb Riley – “It is no use to grumble and complain; It’s just as cheap and easy to rejoice; When God sorts out the weather and sends rain - Why, rain’s my choice.” We can’t control the weather, and stressing out about it won’t make a bit of difference (but I’ll probably still complain a bit).

Although not ideal weather, it does present an opportunity for home gardeners to slow down and develop a plan for your garden or lawn. Now is the time of year when some folks start to stockpile fertilizer, seeds, pesticides, and more in anticipation of planting weather. In my role, I work with a lot with farmers and gardeners to interpret soil test results for their property. I can provide targeted recommendations that will ensure plenty of nutrients for whatever they want to plant, while keeping in mind the need to protect our environment, namely by not overusing chemicals. The recommendations I can provide are based on research trials conducted by numerous universities throughout the country.

I was a little disappointed to see several local chain retailers advertising generalized fertilizer rates of “6-8 Bags/Acre” or “13 Bags/Acre”. While this ratio may be right for some property, the only way to determine the fertilizer needed for your lawn, garden, field, nursery, or containers is to have a soil test. If a bag of 19-19-19 fertilizer costs $21 and you only need 1 bag instead of 8, as the store may blindly recommend, you can do the math on how much money you can save yourself. Take my advice- don’t guess, soil test. If you want to have your soil tested we offer the kits for sale in our office, or many ag retailers also sell the kits. They generally run $9 to $25 apiece.
The Trumbull County Master Gardeners will be kicking off their Wednesdays in the Gardens series for 2018 on April 18 at 6:00pm with a great presentation on Straw Bale Gardening. If you ever wanted to know how to get started with this great gardening practice for small (or large) spaces, you don’t want to miss this event. The Master Gardeners will be back on May 2 with a program dedicated to growing, maintaining, and pruning roses. This program series will continue every other week throughout the spring and summer. As always, the Wednesdays in the Gardens events are free, are always at 6:00pm, and will be held rain or shine at the Trumbull County Ag and Family Education Center at 520 West Main St., Cortland, OH 44410.

Do you want to learn more incorporating native plants into your landscape and how to keep invasive species out of your lawn, garden, or woodlot? The Trumbull County Master Gardeners will be hosting Robin Christensen on April 19 from 10:00am-12:00noon at the Trumbull County Ag and Family Education Center where she will discuss how to increase the number of natives in your garden while keeping the invasives out. Robin is the Extension Educator for Ag and Natural Resources in Portage County, and was formerly the caretaker for a 1,000+ acre preserve in Michigan. She has worked extensively with native and invasive species throughout the Midwest. This program is open to everyone and cost for this event is $15/person.

For more information about farming, gardening, the Master Gardener program, or any other program, call the OSU Trumbull County Extension Office at 330-638-6783 or visit trumbull.osu.edu. Don’t forget to check out and “Like” OSU Extension Trumbull County’s Facebook page for current programs and up to date information.

**Upcoming Extension Program Dates**

The following programs have been scheduled for Northeast Ohio farmers. Complete registration flyers can be found at: [http://ashtabula.osu.edu/program-areas/agriculture-and-natural-resources/upcoming-educational-programs-deadlines](http://ashtabula.osu.edu/program-areas/agriculture-and-natural-resources/upcoming-educational-programs-deadlines)

**21st Annual Joe Bodnar Memorial Northern Classic Steer & Heifer Show**
Saturday, April 21, 2018

**Hydrangea Workshop**
Thursday, April 26, 2018

**Women & Chainsaws – Women in Agriculture Program**
April 28, 2018
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>David Marrison</strong></th>
<th><strong>Lee Beers</strong></th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ashtabula County Extension Office</td>
<td>Trumbull County Extension Office</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>39 Wall Street</td>
<td>520 West Main Street</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jefferson, OH 44047</td>
<td>Cortland, OH 44410</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>440-576-9008</td>
<td>330-638-6783</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><a href="mailto:marrison.2@osu.edu">marrison.2@osu.edu</a></td>
<td><a href="mailto:beers.66@osu.edu">beers.66@osu.edu</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ashtabula.osu.edu</td>
<td>trumbull.osu.edu</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
OSU Good Agricultural Practices (GAPs) Training

Wednesday, April 25, 2018
9 A.M. – 12 Noon
Geauga County Extension Office
14269 Claridon-Troy Road
Burton, OH 44021

Produce Safety Educational Course:
Covers good agricultural practices or ‘GAPs’, which help reduce the risk of on-farm produce contamination.
Attendees will receive a certificate of participation. Attending the OSU GAPs class does not equate to being GAPs Certified.

Topics Include:
- Worker Training, Health & Hygiene
- Manure and Compost Handling
- Domestic and Wild Animals
- Recordkeeping

Fee:
$25.00 per person

Sponsors:
- The Ohio Dept. of Ag Specialty Crop Block Grant Program
- Ohio Agricultural Research and Development Center
- Ohio State University Geauga County Extension

For more information contact:
OSU Extension Office – 440-834-4656
geauga.osu.edu

REGISTRATION REQUIRED: Please RSVP by April 20, 2018 if you plan to attend. Registration Fee is $25 per person. Make checks payable to The Ohio State University Extension. Mail this registration form and payment to the Geauga County OSU Extension Office, P.O. Box 387, Burton, OH 44021.

How many will be attending __________
Name(s) ___________________________________________________________
Phone: ___________________________ Email: ___________________________

OSU Extension, Geauga County
P.O. Box 387, 14269 Claridon Troy
Burton, OH 44021
Phone – 440-834-4656/Fax – 440-834-0087
geauga.osu.edu

CFAES provides research and related educational programs to clientele on a nondiscriminatory basis. For More information: http://go.osu.edu/cfaesdiversity.
OSU Extension’s Women in Agriculture Program invites women to the “Women & Chainsaws - Operating Chainsaws Safely” workshop on April 28 at the Ashtabula County Extension office in Jefferson, Ohio. This class will feature Lee Beers (Extension Educator in Trumbull County) who will teach the basics of chainsaws. Chainsaws are a vital “tool” for farms. Learn the basics of handling, operating and maintaining chainsaw. Learn the safety equipment which should be used and learn the basics of felling and bucking a tree. Be safe as you and your family cut firewood and maintain your property lines. Safety gear raffle will be included.

Pre-registration is requested by April 20th to ensure minimum numbers. Cost for the class is $15/person. We will be outside for demonstrations, so please dress according. Please complete the following registration form and return to OSU Extension – Ashtabula County, 39 Wall Street, Jefferson, Ohio. Make checks payable to OSU Extension. Call 440-576-9008 for more details.

Name(s): ____________________________________________
Phone & ____________________________________________
Address: ___________________________________________
Email: _____________________________________________
Number attending/amount enclosed: ___________________
Join OSU Extension Educator Eric Barrett to discover the world of hydrangeas. Learn about types, care, pruning and bloom times. You’ll receive a quick reference chart to take to the garden center and a hydrangea plant to take home.

Thursday, April 26, 2018 at the Ashtabula County Extension Office from 6:30 to 8:30 p.m.

REGISTRATION INFORMATION. Registration includes the program, light refreshments, and handouts. Please mail completed registration form to OSU Extension, 39 Wall Street, Jefferson, Ohio 44047. Due to space limitations, this program will be limited to the first 50 registrants. First come, first served basis.

Name: ____________________________

Address: ________________________________________

Email: ________________________________________ Phone: ____________________________

Registration includes handouts and a hydrangea plant to take home for your landscape.

$30 per person to register $__________ Total Enclosed $__________

Please make checks payable to OSU Extension. For questions, please call 440-576-9008.

OHIO STATE UNIVERSITY EXTENSION

THE OHIO STATE UNIVERSITY

COLLEGE OF FOOD, AGRICULTURAL, AND ENVIRONMENTAL SCIENCES

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