

Ag enrollment decreasing

By ANN RAMSBOTTOM

In keeping with the national trend, Texas A&M University's College of Agriculture has experienced a steady decline in enrollment since 1977. Nevertheless, a recent U.S. Department of Agriculture manpower assessment has predicted a shortage of trained agriculture professionals by 1985.

Statistics compiled by the college indicate that student enrollment peaked at 5,491 in 1977. Present enrollment is 4,823.

"Despite an increase in sophomore and graduate level students, there has been a drastic drop in the number of freshmen," said Dr. Dwayne Suter, associate dean of agriculture. "Two-thirds of the drop has been due to the recent change in admission standards.

"We don't support the changing of admissions requirements," Suter said. "We have lost a number of potential students who would otherwise have been active in agriculture."

Dr. H.O. Kunkel, dean of agriculture, attributes the four percent national decline to the negative image of agriculture and the current state of the economy.

"There exists a myth that all the college of agriculture does is prepare farmers," Kunkel said. "Only 15 percent of the college's graduates return to careers in production agriculture."

"If only people would listen," Kunkel said. "There are more doors open than people realize — agriculture industry, agri-business and finance, agriculture research and others."

A study of career opportunities based on placement and recruitment data as well as personal interviews with agribusinessmen and graduate students is currently underway in the college.



Fewer job opportunities, low prices for commodities and continually escalating production costs have made it difficult for some rural families to finance a college education.

Perhaps one of the most significant factors contributing to agriculture's negative image is the depressed economy, said Dr. Harold Franke, associate professor of animal science.

However, a recent report from the college predicts that agriculture will eventually go through a positive phase and will become an attractive field.

Production agriculture has suffered bad times in the past, but the economic pendulum has eventually swung the other way.

"We predict a 15 to 20 percent shortage in students to fill ag-related positions by 1985," Suter said. "If the nationwide enrollment decline continues, there could be a serious manpower shortage by 1990."

But the University is working to stimulate student enrollment.

Through the college's Development Council subcommittee on public relations, a major campaign is being launched. Their goal is to change the college's image by making it a training ground for professionals.

The excellent facilities and the construction of new facilities such as the new meats lab and the new pavillion have also been influential in attracting students.

"The buildings are a big plus and attract a lot of students," Suter said.

The College of Agriculture has also been effective in promoting enrollment through scholarships.

The graduate program in the college is the largest in the University, with 27 percent of Texas A&M's total graduate enrollment. Not only does the department rank high on a university level but also boasts having the largest graduate program in agriculture in the nation.

Enrollment in the College of Agriculture peaked in 1977 and has since been declining

There could be a serious manpower shortage in agriculture by 1990

"Today many students completing their undergraduate work have little experience in the field they're pursuing," Franke said. "The students feel a need for additional training. Some don't have the work experience and others just lack confidence."

Perhaps the lack of experience is due in part to the emphasis change in agriculture.

Native trees best for landscapes

By SHELLEE BRATTON

If indeed the same type of trees are being used over and over again for landscaping in Bryan and College Station, there is a good reason for this. These trees are either natives or foreign imports which are especially suited for the climate and soil conditions of this area.

There are three basic problems to consider when landscaping in this area, said Alice Jack, a horticulture professor at Texas A&M and horticultural consultant for the Texas edition of Southern Living magazine.

"First, we have very heavy clay soils in this area which are slightly alkaline," Jack said. "Plants which do well in alkaline soils should be planted here."



Another problem of this area is that it is susceptible to drought.

"Few plants can survive our dry periods — such as we had this summer — without the addition of water," Jack said.

Finally, she said, the city water is very salty — it has a pH of about 8.3 or 8.4 — so any plants selected for this area must have a fair amount of salt tolerance.

Another horticulture professor at Texas A&M, Dr. John Kelly, said native plants and certain introduced species are so widely used for landscaping in Bryan and College Station mainly because of their ability to adapt to drought and poor soil.

One of the most popular native landscape trees in this area is the Live Oak.

This tree, one of the most common on the Texas A&M Campus, is a fairly disease-resistant species.



Another favorite native is the Shumard Oak which has green leaves in the summer and colorful red leaves in the Fall.

Two other types of large trees that can be used successfully in landscaping are the Cedar Elm and the Winged Elm. Both of these are natives, do fairly well under adverse conditions, and have low maintenance costs.

Some shrubs that Kelly said would be suitable for the Bryan and College Station area are Senecia and St. Andrews Cross, which are both native. Senecia has a grayish-blue foliage and pink flowers which bloom intermittently after rain. It is very drought tolerant. St. Andrews Cross has yellow flowers which bloom in the summer.

Vines also may be utilized in landscaping. Kelly said the most important thing to keep in mind when choosing vines for landscaping is that they must be controllable to avoid the possibility of them becoming pests. Two good examples of some controllable native vines are Evergreen Honeysuckle, which is red with a bluish-green leaf, and Carolina Jasmine, which has yellow blossoms.



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Of the smaller trees that can be used for landscaping, Kelly suggested the Texas Persimmon, the Crapemyrtle and the Texas Mountain Laurel. The Texas Persimmon is very attractive and has outstanding bark characteristics. The Texas Mountain Laurel has a bluish flower, and later, an attractive fruit appears. It has an extremely sweet fragrance. The Crapemyrtle also has outstanding bark characteristics, plus the benefit of blooming during the hot part of the summer. If the flowers are pruned when they die, the tree will rebloom.

Both the Texas Mountain Laurel and the Texas Persimmon are native, but the Crapemyrtle is an introduced species that does very well in this area because it is drought resistant. There is a strain of Crapemyrtle that is resistant to Powdery Mildew, and there is also a dwarf variety. The two trees on either side of the Ross statue in front of the Academic building are Crapemyrtles.



The Crapemyrtle is not the only non-native tree that adapts well to the climate and soil conditions of Bryan-College Station. Jack said both the Chinese Pistachio and the Mimosa can be grown in this area. The Chinese Pistachio Tree has excellent fall leaf color.

The Mimosa has feathery flowers and blooms within two years of planting. The Mimosa, however, is short-lived because it is susceptible to a disease called Mimosa Wilt. Because of this disease, the Mimosa lives an average of eight to ten years, but fortunately they are easy to replace since they are so fast-growing.



Jack said that when landscaping a yard, it is necessary to take the style of the house or building on the yard into consideration.

For example, if the house were spanish style, Mountain Laurel, Texas Sage, and Mesquite, would be good choices that would complement the house.

Besides contributing to the appearance of a home or yard, trees and plants moderate the temperature by acting as wind-breaks and sun shades. They also increase property value, and sufficient numbers of them can purify the air.



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Controversy brews over ag chemical

By ROBERT LEMON

In the past few years controversy has been brewing over the widely used agricultural chemical, 2,4,5-T, including claims and denials that it may be harmful to humans.

Two,4,5-T is one of a group of chemicals called phenoxy herbicides. It is capable of selectively killing many broad-

leaf weeds while leaving grasses, evergreens and other plants relatively unharmed. Homeowners often apply such chemicals to their lawns to control broad-leaf weeds like dandelions, but the major use of 2,4,5-T has been on forest and range land.

"The controversy over 2,4,5-T started during the Vietnam War," said Dr. Morris G. Merkle, professor of soil and crop sciences at Texas A&M University.

"A mixture of 2,4,5-T and 2,4-D went into a compound known as Agent Orange, which was used to defoliate jungles," Merkle said.

Some Vietnam veterans claim that they have developed cancer and nervous disorders because of exposure to the defoliant. Eight women in Oregon attributed miscarriages to the spraying of nearby forests with 2,4,5-T.



Merkle doubts the validity of these reports.

"I was exposed to 2,4,5-T for three years while working with the United States Department of Agriculture and I haven't developed any side effects, he said.

He said that to date nobody has proven there is a correlation between exposure to the herbicide and nervous disorders. He also said that ranchers have been using the herbicide to control brush since 1948 and he can't recall any reports of abnormal abortions in cattle.

"The main problem with 2,4,5-T is not the herbicide itself, but the dioxin that's present," Merkle said.

Dioxin is an unavoidable contaminant formed during the production of 2,4,5-T. It is one of the most toxic substances known to man.

"The best advice I can give is that you should always use common sense when working with any kind of pesticide," Merkle said. "Always read the label before applying any herbicide and follow the safety precautions."

Merkle said that a study by the Council for Agriculture Science and Technology contended that 2,4,5-T and other phenoxy herbicides are not toxic to man or animals under normal conditions.

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Bugs are insects,
 insects not bugs

By JANE NORTH

So you thought a bug was just any creepy crawly thing you spray or stomp with your foot. To the entomologist, however, all bugs are insects — but not all insects are bugs.

Confused? Here are some facts that might set you straight.

Insects are included in the phylum Arthropoda. The class Hexapoda or Insecta is made up of insects with six legs. There are 28 insect orders, and only one order, Hemiptera, can be considered as bugs. Insects in this order are called true bugs to distinguish them from what the layman would call bugs.

True bugs include bed bugs, stink bugs, squash bugs and cotton fleahoppers. They also include assassin bugs, chinch bugs and giant water bugs, the largest of which is 2.5 inches long.

"To the layman, all crawlies are bugs," Dr. Horace Burke of the entomology department said.

True bugs have three body parts: the head, thorax and abdomen. Attached to the thorax, the middle section of the body, are three pairs of legs.

True bugs have a front and a back pair of wings and a beak-like mouth with piercing and sucking characteristics protruding from the head.

Quite a few of these bugs bite, Burke said, but mostly they feed on plants or prey on other insects.