



Acreage Answers

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Please share *Acreage Answers* with your acreage neighbors. Call your local ISU Extension office to be placed on the mailing list for *Acreage Answers*.

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IOWA STATE UNIVERSITY
Cooperative Extension

BUZZING IN YOUR ATTIC

By Don R. Lewis,
ISU Extension Entomologist

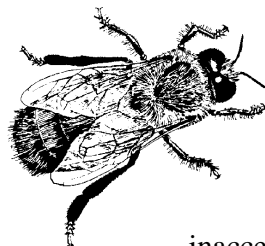
The large, black, pesky flies that show up in bedrooms and on windowsills from late fall through early spring are a common household pest. These flies are known as cluster flies, a name that describes their habit of clustering in large numbers inside attics. Their abundance varies from year to year, possibly in relation to the amount of rainfall through the summer.

Cluster flies do not reproduce indoors, and homeowners bothered by these pests do not need to fear the flies are "hatching" from a dead animal or other unpleasant material within the attic or walls. Casual observations of client reports suggest houses located on an exposed hilltop or high ground are most attractive to these migrating flies.

The flies cluster on the warm sides of buildings in late summer during the day. When the sun goes down and the temperatures cool, these flies crawl into the building through cracks under the eaves and around windows or through gaps in the siding.

Once inside and secured in a protected location, they remain in hibernation until warmed by heat from the furnace or the sun.

As the flies warm throughout the winter, and especially in the early spring, they come out of their cold temperature dormancy and begin sluggishly moving around. Their random crawling brings them into the house by way of electrical outlets, window pulley holes, and small openings around windows, moldings and baseboards.



Cluster flies in homes are difficult to control because they hibernate within inaccessible places.

Preventing attic flies is a job for the summer and fall. As much as possible, seal cracks and openings around the outside of the house, especially under the eaves, as you would for energy conservation.

Remember the problem varies greatly from year to year and is worse than average this year. The outdoor treatment with residual insecticides such as garden sprays labeled for exterior house treatment or cattle barn fly sprays is difficult and potentially messy. I would not routinely advise this treatment for most homeowners.



ISU EXTENSION AND USDA IN YOUR COUNTY

ISU Extension and USDA are cooperating to prepare this newsletter for you. Our goal is to provide informative articles specifically related to living on an acreage and to direct you to further resources that are available. Each issue will highlight different USDA programs available to assist with the management and development of acreages.

Our plan is to have six issues a year. We welcome your feedback. If you have suggestions for topics you would like to see in *Acreage Answers*, please contact your County Extension office.

Iowa State University Extension is an outreach of Iowa State University. Our purpose is to provide research-based information to the public. Each county has an office with hundreds of publications available for you on subjects such as food & nutrition, wildlife, parenting, pesticides, safety, agriculture, horticulture, and many more.

Field specialists are also available to answer questions directly, present programs, or help develop plans of action for your situation. Feel free to call the Extension office with any type of question. If we can't help you, we will direct you to the person who can.

Three USDA agencies are located in each county to serve producers and provide



USDA WHERE ARE YOU?

The location and phone numbers of the USDA offices can be found in your local phonebook. Look in the government section under

UNITED States Government

Agriculture, Department of

Farm Service Agency

Natural Resources Conservation Service

Rural Economic & Community Development

information. These sister agencies at times work together to administer federal farm and conservation programs at the local level.

The three agencies are the Farm Service Agency (FSA), the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), and Rural Development (RD)

The **Farm Service Agency (FSA)** administers federal farm programs, working with commodities such as corn and soybeans, but can also include mohair and honey to name a few. Other programs include the Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) and the annual farm program, known as Freedom To Farm.

FSA also administers the disaster programs approved by congress. Do you grow nontraditional crops? Report these acres and yields in case of losses due to weather-related causes.

Aerial photography is also available to landowners. FSA always has new programs that you may be eligible for. Watch your local paper for news releases about the programs or contact FSA to find out how you can be put on the mailing

list for a newsletter about all the programs available.

The **Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS)** provides information relating to soils, water, plants, air, and animals. Considering a building site, or a pond site? Contact NRCS for soil descriptions to determine if the site has potential.

NRCS offers technical and financial assistance in each county for many conservation practices including; ponds, wildlife habitat, farmstead windbreaks, sediment basins, wetland establishment, and other erosion control methods. NRCS is your source for developing plans to solve all types of natural resource concerns.

Rural Development (RD) works to improve and develop communities by providing home ownership loans, home improvement loans and grants, and rental assistance for low-income families. Working with communities, RD provides community facility loans, water and sewer loans. By providing services for farmer owned cooperatives and business and industry loans, RD is the one to contact to help provide new opportunities and services to rural Iowa. ❖

GENERAL CONSERVATION RESERVE PROGRAM SIGN UP

By Beth Grabau, Dallas County FSA Office

The Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) is a voluntary program that offers annual rental payments and cost share assistance to establish long-term resource conservation covers on eligible land. Annual rental payments are made based on the agricultural rental value of the land and cost share assistance is provided in an amount equal to not more than 50 percent of the participant's costs in establishing approved covers.

The duration of the contracts is from 10 to 15 years. Sign up for CRP will begin January 18 and ends February 11, 2000.

Eligible land must be planted or considered planted to an agricultural commodity 2 of the 5 years from 1995 to 1999.

The land must also be considered one of the following: highly erodible, a cropped wetland, subject to scour erosion, be located in a national or state CRP conservation priority area, or be cropland associated with non-cropped wetlands.

Maximum CRP payment rate for each offer is calculated in advance, using the three predominant soil type of the land offered. Producers may offer land at that rate or a lower rate.

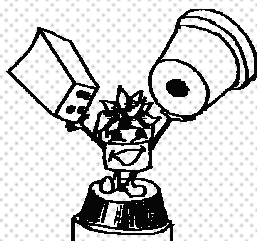
An eligible program participant must have owned the land for at least 12 months prior to the close of sign up; there are some exceptions.

All eligible offers will be evaluated and ranked using an Environmental Benefits Index (EBI) based on the environmental benefits expected to accrue if the land is enrolled in CRP. Decisions on the EBI cutoff will be made after the sign up 20 is concluded.

Offers are accepted only during the sign up period at local FSA offices. Contact these offices for more information. ❖

GARDENING IN JANUARY???

Starting garden flowers and vegetables at home can be fun. Many gardeners prefer to grow their own seedlings because they can grow the cultivars they want, when they want them. By starting seedlings early, indoors or in a cold frame, you can lengthen the growing season. Transplanting reduces some of the hazards (birds, insects, rains, and weed competition) common to seeds sown directly in the garden.



Success with growing transplants requires:

- ❖ Quality seed
- ❖ Disease-free growing medium
- ❖ Warm, moist conditions for seed germination
- ❖ Adequate light for vigorous growth
- ❖ A period of plant adjustment to outdoor conditions

Details and instructions on how to successfully grow and transplant your seedlings may be obtained from your local County Extension Office. The following publications will be helpful in making your decisions.

- Pm-607 *Suggested Vegetable Varieties*
- Pm-713f *Soils for Houseplants*
- Pm- 819 *Planting a Home Vegetable Garden*
- Pm- 874 *Starting Garden Transplants at Home* ❖

PRUNING TOOLS AND EQUIPMENT

By: Gary Peterson, ISU Extension Commercial Horticulture Specialist

Pruning is a very skilled labor-intensive operation. Because it affects appearance, crop levels and quality of produce, it is probably the most important cultural practice throughout the lifetime of the plant. Given the importance of the task, it is necessary to have the proper tools to make the pruner's job safe and efficient as well.

Hand shears, loppers and a saw still remain the standard and preferred pruning tools for most individuals, when sufficient labor is available. The type of tool used may vary on area and personal preference of the pruner.

Hand Shears

Some factors to consider in selecting hand pruning shears are the tool's durability, the construction material, the availability of replacement in the field, whether the blade can be replaced or resharpened, handle design and grip, whether the tool is for the right hand or left hand, and cost.



The *Felco* pruning shears are considered an industry standard. However there are many brands to choose from that are of top quality. Select brands and models that will

provide you the benefits you are looking for. Some specific features are: sap groove, cushion stop, adjustable blade setting, rotating lower handle to reduce blister, Teflon coated blades, ergonomically designed handles that are off centered to allow greater force per cut, aluminum, steel, etc.

All hand shears can be holstered in sheath, attached to the belt, when not in use, to prevent accidental injury when walking to and from the pruning site.

Lopping Shears

While two-handled lopping shears can vary based on the durability and construction of their cutting blade, a primary consideration in choice is the handle length and construction material.

Shorter handled models are generally more popular for light pruning such as vine pruning because of weight considerations, less length is needed for reach, and cutting thickness is usually less than in other types of pruning.

Handles are available in wood, metal design, or fiberglass. Wood is less expensive, but also less durable. It can warp or break, but is often lighter in weight than other types of handles, so is less fatiguing to hold and use.

Look for lopping shears that have the features you are

interested in. The following features are available: forged steel blades and hooks; hollow ground blades; rubber bumpers; various handle lengths; various handle materials; replaceable handles; firm gripping blades; compound action, etc. A leather holster also is available for most models.

Pruning is done at different times of the years depending on the type of plant.



If you need more information the following publications are available from your County Extension Office:

- PM 1133 *Pruning Forest Trees*
- PM 1304 *Pruning Shade & Flowering Trees*
- PM 780 *Pruning & Training Fruit Trees*
- RG 501 *Pruning Raspberries*
- RG 502 *Pruning Grapevines*
- SUL 5 *Pruning Trees and Shrubs.*




Trees, Shrubs, Ornamentals, and Prairies



I would like to have a windbreak over there. I wonder if the birds would like this kind of bush? I think the area in the back would look nice with prairie grass and wildflowers.

Have you ever heard yourself saying something like this? If so, ISU Extension has the ICN program you have been waiting for!

On Tuesday, February 15, 2000, 7:00 p.m. to 9:00 p.m. an ICN will be presented with acreage owners in mind and will focus on trees, shrubs, ornamentals, and prairies.

 Paul Wray, ISU Extension Forester, will discuss windbreak design and species selection.

Mark Vitosh, ISU Extension Forester, will cover general tree care and pruning.

Richard Jauron, ISU Extension Program Specialist, will talk about ornamentals and shrubs that attract wildlife.

Turfgrass, prairies, and wildflowers will be covered by Richard Pope, ISU Extension Program Specialist.

Participants are encouraged to bring their questions for the presenters.

The locations of ICN Rooms in Central Iowa are:

- Des Moines Area Community College in Boone
- Adel-DeSoto-Minburn High School
- Guthrie Center High School
- Des Moines Area Community College at Newton
- Winterset High School
- Indianola Community Schools Administration Building
- Area Education Agency in Marshalltown
- National Guard Armory in Jefferson
- Des Moines Area Community College Urban Campus located at 1100 7th Street, Des Moines
- Scheman Building in Ames.

The registration fee is \$6 for individuals (\$8 for couples) if registered by February 9.

After that date the fee is \$8 for individuals (\$10 for couples). The fee will cover publications and materials for the program.

Call your county office for more information and to pre-register. Space is limited. ❖



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Cooperative Extension Service, Iowa State University of Science and Technology, and the United States Department of Agriculture cooperating.

WHY KEEP RECORDS?

By Steve Johnson, ISU Extension Farm & Agriculture Business Management Specialist

One of the least favorite activities for many of us is record keeping. Yet, complete and accurate records are essential to manage and operate a small business or prepare tax reports. Records can help you:

- Monitor the progress of your business
- Prepare financial statements
- Identify sources of income
- Determine profitability
- Track deductible and non-deductible expenses
- Prepare your income tax returns
- Support items reported on your tax returns

The law does not require the specific type of records you keep, so choose the type of record keeping system that works best for you. Make sure that income and expense categories are clearly identified for each individual tax year.

Documents and receipts related to these categories should be maintained in a safe place for at least 3 years after you file your taxes. Most businesses file taxes using the calendar year, so establishing your record keeping system in January is critical. If you have more than one business, you should keep an accurate set of records for each. Many small businesses have several enterprises that make up that business. Consider developing a record keeping system that allows you to track income and expense items for each enterprise.

Iowa State University Extension Offices have a variety of resources available related to record keeping, and farm/family financial management. Lenders and income tax preparers are also a good source for advice on record keeping systems that work best for business and income tax purposes. ❖

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