

Wheat price outlook remains anyone's guess

Weather problems in Texas and Oklahoma last week may have a negative effect on this year's southwestern wheat harvest, but two prime Midwestern grain states may well

exceed Department of Agriculture harvest estimates. The result leaves area growers uncertain about what prices they will receive when this year's better than aver-

age Morrow County crop hits the combine. Wet fields set back the beginning of harvest in the more important commercial centers of Texas wheat production last week, with heavy rains causing damage to

wheat stands in the Texas Panhandle. Drying winds should allow harvesting to begin soon, according to a North Pacific Grain Growers bulletin, but this year's harvest threatens to be short in the drought-ridden Lone Star

state. In neighboring Oklahoma, rain showers and scattered hail storms were reported last week, but overall the weather was beneficial to maturing and filling new hard crop winter wheat. The grain

growers' bulletin predicted that this year's harvest will be about 10 days late, due to a cold, tardy start to the growing season. However, in Kansas, the nation's biggest wheat producer, Wheat Improvement

Assn. officials are predicting a harvest of 345 million bushels—20 million more than the latest USDA estimate. Nebraska, another grain belt state, was also listed as a possibility for topping its USDA harvest estimate.

The Willamette Valley has had its share of wheat production problems this year, mainly from insects and disease. More than 40 inches of rainfall at the start of the season waterlogged many fields, getting growth of to a sluggish start, while winter temperatures failed to drop enough to kill aphids and other insect pests.

Valley wheat stands also faced septoria, yellow dwarf virus, stripe rust, and scattered outbreaks of damaging foot rot. Despite the setbacks, Oregon State University agronomists are predicting a normal yield for the Willamette Valley.

Recent wheat futures trading moved prices up with the news of unfavorable east European crop conditions, then down, with news of a bright outlook for the Chinese harvest, according to the grain growers' bulletin.

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Home-grown lettuce makes sense

The high price of lettuce should make even the most reluctant gardeners want to grow their own.

"Lettuce is well suited to succession planting, and if managed correctly, will give a ready supply through the summer," said Harold Kerr, Morrow County Extension Agent.

Leaf lettuce will give the most immediate results. It matures in 40 to 50 days. Recommended varieties include Prizehead, Salad Bowl, Grand Rapids, Slobolt and Ruby.

Head lettuce, also known as crisphead and iceberg, matures in 70-90 days. Recommended varieties include Ithaca, Calmaria, and for fall harvest, Calmar.

Butterhead type lettuces mature in 70-80 days. Varieties that do well in Oregon include Buttercrunch and White Boston. Cos and Romaine are the two recommended varieties of cos lettuce. They mature in 65-70 days.

Lettuce grows best in loose, moist soil that is fertilized at planting time. Kerr recommended using three cups of 16-16-16 fertilizer for an area 10 feet long by 10 feet wide.

Seeds should be planted about one-half inch deep and one inch apart, in rows spaced one foot apart. Plants should be thinned when the lettuce leaves are about one inch high, so that a space of about six inches exists between the plants.

Head lettuce plants should be thinned to about one foot apart. Kerr said it's all right to be "ruthless with thinning. If the plants are too close, you'll get poor results. Head lettuce will remain small or won't grow at all. Overcrowded leaf lettuce will only produce bitter outside leaves."

Care should be used in weeding lettuce, since the roots are few and close to the surface. Hoe between the rows by scratching the surface of the soil. Weeds close to the lettuce plants should be pulled by hand.

Lettuce requires regular watering, with the most crucial period of water need occurring when the heads begin to develop.

Should damage from insects take place, Kerr recommended using diazinon or rotenone, following label directions.

"To get a regular harvest, plant lettuce seeds every week or 10 days until the first of August," Kerr said.

During the hot weather, Kerr suggested planting the Salad Bowl, Ithaca, and Buttercrunch varieties.