

Lancaster Farming

OPINION

Our Dust Bowl

In the Indiana University Press book, "Children of the Depression," editors Kathleen Thompson and Hilary Mac Austin provide a glimpse into how bad weather could be.

On page 15 of the introduction to the big, coffee table-size book, there's a rather somber photo of a father and sons who are trying to make their way through a dust storm in April 1936 in Cimmaron County, Okla. For about two years already in the mid-1930s, the Dust Bowl of the Great Plains came on the heels of the greatest economic depression in history.

In the photo, the farmer's house stands out as a mere shanty. Times were tough. And then came the Dust Bowl.

In 2002, we are living through almost the same kind of thing here in the Northeast. A recession that won't quit. A drought that won't quit, either.

In Lancaster County alone, one of many counties subject to a drought emergency situation, fields are parched. Many old-time producers have admitted to us they have never seen anything like this. Already we could be heading toward disaster — simply put, the rains are needed simply to keep wells from drying up. It may be too late to afford any kind of spring dry-up simply to plant crops. It has state legislators rethinking — and rewriting — state water plans.

We know that writing about how dry it is does little to bring rain. It can be a futile task, pointing out the severity of this drought, coming off of the driest and warmest year on record. But more, to protect the producer, is needed, along with stringent water conservation efforts that everyone should employ.

Insurance spokesperson Gene Gantz, in his article about producers managing crop risks, noted that crop insurance can manage a "possible wreck." Today, he noted, both the federal and state governments want producers to be protected with crop insurance. Catastrophic (CAT) insurance is free, but producers must enroll with an insurance agent to get it. However, the enrollment deadline for free CAT and other federal and state cost-share benefits is March 15. It's not too late.

We believe it's too risky not to sign up. Simply put, you don't want to live like that poor farmer and his sons did in the photograph in that book. We urge you to sign up for insurance with any one of a number of reliable agents — now.

❖ FARM CALENDAR ❖

- Saturday, March 2**
 Warren County Ag Day, Warren County Fairgrounds 4-H Center.
 Fellowship of Christian Farmers Outreach Luncheon, Wilhelm Ltd., Westminster, Md., 11:30 a.m.
 Northeast Regional Christmas Growers' Meeting and Trade Show, Genetti Lodge and Conference Center, Hazleton, 8 a.m.-3:30 p.m., (570) 325-2788.
- Sunday, March 3**
 NJVF Animal Hall of Fame, Hamilton Park Conference Center, Florham Park, N.J., (973) 379-1100.
- Monday, March 4**
 Northwest Pa. Cattlemen's Meeting, Mercer Extension Office.
 Philadelphia Flower Show, Pa. Convention Center.
 CIA Livestock Meeting, Ford City, 7 p.m.-9 p.m.
 Young Farmers Banquet, West Fallowfield Christian School, 6:30 p.m., (610) 593-8259.
- Tuesday, March 5**
 Comprehensive Herd Health Workshop, Lancaster Farm and Home Center.
 Northwest Pa. Grazing Conference, Dubois Ramada Inn, 8:30 a.m.-4 p.m. (814) 375-2125.
 Schuylkill County Regional Vegetable Growers Meeting, Extension Office, Pottsville, (570) 622-4225.

- Northwest Grazing Conference, Dubois Ramada Inn, 9 a.m.-4:30 p.m., (724) 837-1402.
 Bedford County Holstein Association Annual meeting, Loysburg, 7 p.m.
 Horse Pasture Short Course, Montgomery County 4-H Center, Creamery, 6:30 p.m.-9:30 p.m. Also March 5, 12, and 19, (610) 489-4315.
 Beef Quality Assurance Program, Franklin County Extension Office, Chambersburg, 7 p.m.-9 p.m., (717) 263-9226.
 Pesticide Update, Butler County, Cutler County Community College, Convention Center, 7:30-9:30 p.m.
 Northwest Pa. Cattlemen's Association Annual Meeting, Mercer County Extension Center, 7 p.m.
 Livestock, Dairy Farmer Workshop, Morrison's Cove Memorial Park, Martinsburg, 6:30 p.m.-7:45 p.m., (814) 472-7986.
 Ag Update, Fair Hill Activity Building, Fair Hill Fairgrounds, 9 a.m.-3:30 p.m.
- Wednesday, March 6**
 Southeast Vegetable Growers meeting, Heritage Restaurant, Franconia, (610) 489-4315.
 Pa. Grazing and Forage Conference, Holiday Inn, Grantville, also March 7, (717) 278-1158.
 Comprehensive Herd Health Workshop, New Franklin Ruritan Community Center.
 Beef Quality Assurance Program.

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Now Is The Time
 By Leon Ressler
 Lancaster County Extension Director

To Prune Backyard Fruit Trees

Dr. Tim Elkner, extension horticulture agent in Lancaster, shares the following tips on pruning your fruit trees.

The primary purpose of pruning young fruit trees is to develop a framework for maximum fruit production later in the tree's life. Once that's accomplished, pruning focuses on increasing light penetration into the tree, removing less productive wood, and maintaining the crown of the tree in an efficient, stable form.

There are two general types of pruning cuts employed — heading cuts, which are used to reduce or maintain tree size; and thinning cuts, which are used to remove entire branches. Visualize a tree as seen from above without its leaves. Branches radiate from the trunk much like the spokes of a wheel. To allow the sunlight needed for proper fruit development and coloration to enter the center of the tree and to make harvest easier, some of these "spokes" may need to be thinned out.

Consider these items as you work around the spokes or "scaffold" branches of a tree. First, remove suckers or watersprouts, which are those vigorous non-fruiting shoots that often appear at the base of grafted trees or in crotches and sites of

previous pruning cuts. Then remove or head back to healthy side branches any stubs or broken branches that will invite insect and disease problems. Third, remove downward-growing branches since they develop few fruit buds and only serve to shade more productive branches. Next head back or remove the less productive of two rubbing branches since rubbing injury invites problems. Finally, remove any interior branches that are of low productivity. These branches are also shading more productive branches below them.

Backyard fruit trees are rarely overpruned. The inexperienced backyard orchardist is often timid about making cuts. As long as pruning is not accomplished by topping or shearing the tree, it will almost always benefit the tree's growth and production.

Many people ask if it is necessary to coat cuts made during pruning trees in the yard. Prior to the mid-1970s, it was standard practice to coat all pruning wounds with an asphalt-based paint or dressing. These materials have since fallen out of favor after research proved they do not prevent decay in wood, and in some cases actually stall the wound response and protect wood-rotting fungi. In short, make the proper pruning cut and let the tree handle the rest.

For Students To Explore Careers In Ag Sciences

Teenagers making career choices often must look past the glitz of "glamor" careers to choose what's best for them. To help in this process, Penn State's College of Agricultural Sciences offers prospective students its ninth annual Open House from 8 a.m.-4:30 p.m. on Saturday, March 23 in the Agricultural Sciences and Industries (ASI) Building on the University Park campus.

"The world of careers and employment can be confusing," said Marianne Fivek, assistant professor of agricultural and extension education and undergraduate recruitment coordinator. "Sometimes the best choices aren't immediately obvious, especially to a high school student who hasn't settled on clear career goals. Our open house highlights opportunities in the agricultural sciences in an informal, relaxed setting where students can get personal attention. It's also an opportunity for families to visit with deans, professors and current students.

"About 60 faculty, staff, and students from the college will be there to answer questions about the agricultural sciences, and about university life," she said. "Representatives from the Ag Advocates student organization and the Ag Student Council also will attend."

Attendees can learn about careers in agricultural and related fields and the college's 18 undergraduate majors, including turfgrass science, food science, landscape design, agricultural business management, agricultural, and biological engineering and environmental resource management. The event will begin with an informational fair at 8 a.m., followed by a general session at 9 a.m. and academic advising sessions at 10 a.m.

Exhibits will highlight academic departments, student organizations, ROTC, housing, and food services and other aspects of university life. A special luncheon and advising session for students who already have started their education at a Penn State location other than University Park will be held at noon in 101 ASI Building. An information session for minority students also will be held at noon in 107 ASI.

Families and students can visit college facilities and explore the campus through tours that will include food science laboratories, animal science facilities, and the School of Forest Resources. A panel discussion on internships, careers and international experiences in agriculture is scheduled in 101 ASI at 1:15 p.m.

After the open house, families can visit the University Creamery, the Penn State Bookstore, the Penn State University Libraries, and the Palmer Museum of Art. Penn State Housing and Food Services will offer special meal deals for lunch and dinner. The event is open to all prospective college students and their families.

To register for the open house or for more information, visit the World Wide Web at <http://www.cas.psu.edu>, contact the Office for Undergraduate Education at (814) 865-7521, or send e-mail to Marianne Fivek at mafivek@psu.edu.

Quote Of The Week:

"I have learned that success is to be measured not so much by the position that one has reached in life as by the obstacles which one has overcome while trying to succeed."

— Booker T. Washington

THE BIBLE SPEAKS
 BY LAWRENCE W. ALTHOUSE

THE POWER

Background Scripture:
 Romans 1.
Devotional Reading:
 Psalms 34:1-8.

When, some 20 years after the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, Paul wrote a letter to the church at Rome, he was at the apex of his missionary endeavor. He has traveled throughout Asia Minor preaching the gospel and establishing churches, as well as collecting a fund for the needy Christians of Jerusalem.

Probably, while waiting in Corinth for an opportunity to take these funds to Jerusalem, Paul writes this epistle as a letter of introduction, for he hopes to stop in Rome on his way to making a missionary journey to Spain. This letter, Romans, would prove to be his longest, weightiest, and most influential of all his epistles.

Paul realizes that the Christians in Rome, as adherents to a very minor religious movement, probably feel weak and insignificant in the midst of all the weighty trappings of Roman government and culture.

Probably nowhere else in the world is power exalted and worshiped as in Rome. He knows that there must be times when Christians there are tempted to hide their faith in embarrassment and powerlessness.

Embarrassed Christians

Can you identify with that temptation? Are there times when you are embarrassed to be identified as a Christian, a follower of Jesus Christ who died on a cross in seeming failure?

If you are not so tempted, it may be because the Christianity you practice is a vapid accommodation to the world in which you live. Let's face it, if we teach, preach, and live the Good News of Jesus Christ, we are, more often than not, regarded as weaklings and dreamers. To teach forgiveness, to preach reconciliation and work for peace is seen by the world as the weakness of Christianity.

A young man is about to depart for a summer job in a Northwest logging camp. His home congregation is concerned for him, knowing that as a Christian in this rough, profane environment he will be subjected to intense pressures. When he returns home at the end of the summer, they want to know how his fellow workers reacted to his Christian commitment and he replied: "No problem — they never suspected a thing!"

I suggest that many of us are like that young man: by the lives that we live in an unsympathetic society, no one would suspect that we are followers of Jesus Christ. Too often, we may act as if we are ashamed of the gospel. Incognito Christians are not Christians.

Gospel Dynamite
 Paul, however, tells the Roman

Christians: "For I am not ashamed of the gospel: it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who has faith..." (1:16). That which appears to the outside world as weakness is really the invincible power of God. (See 1 Cor. 1:26-29; 2 Cor. 12:5; 13:4).

"Dynamis," the Greek word which our Bibles translate as "power," is suggestive of our words "dynamite" and "dynamic." In the New Testament, dynamis is used to designate a mighty work, a miracle performed by God's omnipotence.

So the good news of Jesus Christ is not weakness, but something dynamic, virtually dynamite, for it has the power to do what no earthly power can accomplish — salvation! No king, prime minister, president, military general, system of government, theory of economics, technology, political ideology, or anything else in this world can provide us with permanent salvation — an eternal right relationship with God. But the gospel of Jesus Christ can. Everything else provides us with only a temporary rescue.

The man on the cross was and is the most powerful man who ever lived. Those who follow in his footsteps, do so, not in humiliating weakness, but in that which is the greatest power in the world.

So let us join with Paul in proclaiming: "I am not ashamed of the gospel: it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who has faith..." And may that power be in you and with you.

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