

David G. Hallauer
Meadowlark Extension District Agent
Crops & Soils/Horticulture

Know Your Costs

I had the opportunity to read a very interesting article from Tina Barrett, Executive Director of Nebraska Farm Business, Inc. last week called 5 Resolutions for Farm Finances in 2016 (full text here: <http://cropwatch.unl.edu/5-resolutions-farm-finances-2016> - it's worth 10 minutes of your time and she says it a lot better than I!). It summarized nicely what KSU, UNL, and many other land grant institution and other agricultural economists are encouraging producers to think about as we look ahead to another production cycle. Most all agree that margins will be tighter in the future. For how long? It's anyone's guess!

What we do know is farm expenses will require a thorough evaluation moving forward. To that end, news columns through February will periodically share research information to help you make production decisions. For example, the 2015 Kansas Field Research Report from KSU recently reported results from a study on late season nitrogen applications to soybeans showing that late season N applications did not statistically increase soybean yields at either Rossville (45 bushel/A yield) or Topeka (56 bushel/A yield). We'll try on a regular basis to share research like this to help you make economic decisions for your operation.

Let's hope this economic cycle isn't as gloomy as it sounds right now. If it is, try to use it as an opportunity to thoroughly evaluate all facets of your crop production enterprise. Barrett states: "Those producers who are prepared to balance the tight rope of controlling ALL costs through these upcoming tough years and are prepared to take advantage of opportunities to make money when they present themselves are the one who will be in business in 10 years." . Now is the time to prepare to be in business a decade from now!

Soil Health Workshop – RSVP Reminder

Don't forget to get signed up for the Soil Health Meeting scheduled for Friday, January 8th beginning at 9:00 a.m. (8:30 Registration). RSVP's are due by Monday, January 4th to the Nemaha County Conservation District Office at 785-336-2186, Extension 110. For a full flyer, check out the Crops & Soils link at www.meadowlark.k-state.edu . Hope you can attend!

Wildlife Benefits – to Christmas Trees!

Yep - you read the title correctly! There IS life for Christmas trees after Christmas!

Trees can be used to benefit birds (and your landscape!) by propping it up in the corner of your deck or tying it to a deciduous tree in the landscape. Just spread some birdseed nearby or place next to a bird feeder. Birds will benefit from having escape cover nearby when hawks or cats threaten, and the dense boughs reduce the wind chill on a cold night. If you get some cardinals or blue jays attracted, you add color, too!

Fish habitat can be improved by sinking your Christmas tree in a pond where the branches provide substrate for water plants to grow, and cover for minnows and other forms of small aquatic life. Larger fish are drawn by the shade and the presence of prey, improving fishing! Simply tie the base to a cinder block with a short, stout rope, and toss it in (get permission first!!).

Who knew what you used to leave to be hauled away could have such wildlife value!