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Crunching Numbers

Number crunching is for accountants. Or bankers. Or statisticians. Or economists. And farmers...

It's not always what we prefer to be doing. Few producers would choose to evaluate data and pore over economic data if they can be doing something else. Even so, it's a necessary chore of the occupation that may become more important than ever as farm budgets tighten.

One great source of economic information for Kansas agricultural producers is the K-State Agricultural Economics website: www.agmanager.info. Trying to get a grasp on rental rates? Check out the Farm Management tab. You can find anything from historical publications on land values to rental agreements. Not to mention a whole host of decision making tools to assist you in rental and even land purchase decisions.

2016 crop production budgets got you concerned? It might be a good idea to compare your numbers w/ those of Kansas Farm Management Association members to see if there is tweaking that can be done. They are located under the Crops or Livestock tabs as well as the Farm Management section.

And what producer doesn't like a good policy discussion?! The page includes an entire page on policy issues including the last two Farm Bills as well as continued analysis comparing the 2014 Farm Bill choices and projected payments.

Check out www.agmanager.info and see what you might have been missing!

Watering Landscape Plants

Even with moisture of late, a quick check of trees and shrubs this fall can go a long ways towards continued survival in the future. Winter damage from a lack of soil moisture is an easily preventable, but often overlooked, factor contributing to tree/shrub mortality.

Landscape plants need deep watering where moisture reaches at least a foot in to the soil rather than surface watering. Surface roots can be killed when soil temperatures drop to 28 degrees F or below, meaning we need to rely on deeper rooting to provide winter moisture. Test soils using a metal rod, wooden dowel, electric fence post or something similar to check depth. Dry soil is much harder to push through than wet. If you meet resistance, it's time to water!

You can use buckets with a small hole drilled in the bottom, perforated soaker hoses, or lots of patience as you apply water with a hose or tank. Try to apply water to an area at least half way to the dripline (the dripline of the tree is outermost reach of the branches). Once you see surface runoff, reduce the flow, or build a berm with at least a 4-foot diameter around the base of the tree to allow the water to percolate down through the soil, instead of spreading out.

Deciduous AND evergreen trees can benefit from water this time of year. Make sure you check them both!