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Mobile Apps for Ag

The personal communication device you hold in your hand (maybe you're reading this column on it!!) has more computing power than most computers a decade ago. The ability of smart phone and tablet technology to provide information at our fingertips is greater than ever.

How do you sort through all the apps they offer? You can't just visit your app store and try them all out! The weather is too nice and the to-do list too long for that! To help you whittle down your list, KSU Crop Production Specialist Dr. Ignacio Ciampitti has begun updating his app list (available at: https://webapp.agron.ksu.edu/agr_social/eu_issue.throck?eu_id=75). You can check out his picks in a nine week series on the KSU e-Update website at: https://webapp.agron.ksu.edu/agr_social/eu.throck.

What apps will you not do without? I have two area and distance calculators helpful for measuring plot and field sites – Fields Area Measure and Distance and Area. A third that I rely on a fair bit is the ID Weeds app from the University of Missouri. If you're willing to share your favorite, e-mail me at dhallae@ksu.edu. I'm always interested in new ones! If you have a need for an app, let me know that as well. Maybe our 'list' will include one. If not, we'll find one, because after all, there's an app for that!

Wheat Disease Update

Mild temperatures lately have fueled concern about the possibility of disease pressure for our wheat crop. As expected, reports from Texas and Oklahoma already show low levels of stripe and leaf rust in spots. Since our disease outbreaks are typically preceded by disease presence to the south, these findings could be significant.

While there is no need for any treatment now, producers should keep an eye on disease development. Mild temperatures, adequate moisture, and disease to the south over the next six weeks could spell trouble, increasing our need for disease scouting in late March and early April.

Know Your Soil Temperature

Air temperature or a date on the calendar are not good indicators for determining when to plant vegetables. There's too much day to day and year to year variability associated with them. Instead, consider the use of a soil thermometer.

Planting in to soils that are too cool result in rotting seeds and the refusal of transplants to take hold and grow. Knowing the appropriate soil temperature in which to plant is a great first step towards ensuring the success of your planting. Do so using a metal soil thermometer. Temperatures should be taken to a depth of two and a half inches at about 10 to 11 a.m. to avoid the effects of cold overnight or warm mid-afternoon temperature fluctuations. Get a consistent reading for four to five days in a row before planting, and make sure a cold snap is not predicted.

Peas can do well at 40 degree soil temperatures and radishes at 45 degrees. Tomatoes, sweet corn, and beans like it better at 55-60 degrees. For a full list of temperature conditions for good germination, check out the Alabama Cooperative Extension System publication entitled "Soil Temperature Conditions for Vegetable Seed Germination" found at <http://www.aces.edu/pubs/docs/A/ANR-1061/ANR-1061.pdf> or from your District Office.