Kansas Corn Management Schools: One Down – Two to Go

The first of three sessions of the virtual Kansas Corn Management Schools were held a couple of weeks. Nutrient management and general corn management research were the first two sessions – with a lot more to come.

During the nutrient management presentation, KSU Soil Fertility Specialist Dr. Dorivar Ruiz-Diaz shared four years of results from work with a nitrification inhibitor at two different sites in eastern Kansas. Over those four years, one site had a statistically different response twice – five bushels per acre one year and sixteen another. A second site showed a statistically different response one time, to the tune of seven bushels per acre.

In other words, an ‘average’ response may not be all that great, but when it’s needed (specific soil/weather conditions), a nitrification inhibitor can certainly do exactly what they are intended to do: keep nitrogen in a form less likely to be lost. A second part of the study looking at soil nitrate levels confirmed this, even when yields were not statistically different.

He also talked about rescue treatments for potassium – and a whole lot more. If you’re looking for more research data relating to corn production, the next session will February 4, with weed control and planter technologies the focus. The final week will include a discussion of markets plus information on work being done by the Kansas Corn Growers Association.

Each (free) webinar starts at 7:00 p.m. with two presentations plus a question-and-answer session. Participants should pre-register for webinar links at https://kscorn.com/cornschool/.

Purchasing Fruit Trees – Peaches and Apricot Considerations

Apricot and peach flowers are probably the most vulnerable of any of our tree fruit species. Late frosts in these species often kill fruit buds, so while we can get the trees to survive, fruit production is typically not quite what we’d like to see. That doesn’t mean we don’t want to try to get something out of those peach or apricot trees, but it takes some management to do so.

Attempts have been made over time to plant later blooming varieties. The idea is bloom will occur after potentially damaging temperatures have passed. This idea usually has greater merit for peaches than it does for apricots. In peaches, there are varieties shown to be delayed blooming, but also with fruit bud hardiness – the ability to withstand late frosts better than other varieties. Varieties considered ‘late bloomers’ include China Pearl, Encore, Intrepid, and Risingstar, with Intrepid exhibiting excellent cold hardiness when in flower.

There are later blooming apricot varieties as well – Hungarian Rose, Tilton, Harlayne, and Harglow are examples. Past research out of Virginia Tech suggests the difference might be slight. Their research suggested a four-day maximum difference between early/late varieties.

In addition to varieties, look at location, too. Planting on a hill can allow cold air to drain to lower elevations. Micro-climates can affect damage, too (protected/in-town plantings may be warmer than exposed locations).

Last but not least, if your planting needs a little ‘extra help,’ consider heat sources under trees on cold nights. Heat lamps or charcoal briquettes can be used so long as they can be utilized safely.

Don’t discount planting peaches or apricots completely – but variety selection and planting location are big factors in having a fruit crop or not.