

CROP SCHOOLS SOON

Days are slowly getting longer. Temperatures often change quickly and soon growers will be busy planting crops instead of pushing snow. Below I share a few educational opportunities that are designed to help growers have another successful cropping season.

Our annual Cache Crops School will begin at 9 am on Tuesday, February 9 in Room 1970 at the WEST BATC campus, 1410 North 1000 West in Logan. This is a change from our typical meeting place at the main BATC campus on 600 West. If you go to the main campus you will find lots of serious BATC students, but no farmers or ranchers.

Topics to be covered at our crops school include methods of weed and insect control, fertility efficiencies, risk management considerations, reclaiming or improving pastures and updates on cereal crop diseases. Presenters will be specialists from Utah State University, University of Idaho and USDA-ARS. Bob Fotheringham, Cache County Water Manager, will also lead a discussion on the benefits of a Water Conservancy District in Cache County. This seminar is co-sponsored by USU Extension, Intermountain Farmers Association and Valley Wide Co-op. IFA and Valley Wide will again provide a delicious meal for all participants. Three Continuing Education Credits are available for individuals with a current Pesticide Applicators License.

One week later, at the same location, beginning at 10 a.m. growers are invited to participate in an Oil-seed Crops seminar co-sponsored by USU Extension and Mountain States Oilseeds. This seminar is always enlightening, especially for those growing safflower. There will be no cost for registration, and a great meal will be provided, compliments of Mountain States Oilseeds. This meeting always ends with some exceptional door prizes. Interested growers can also anticipate entering into a signed contract with Mountain States Oilseeds, if they are so inclined.

Local farmers have found that safflower can provide reasonable economic returns and can be a great option in crop rotations. Because of its long taproot, safflower has the ability to extract moisture deep in the soil profile. Most safflower is grown on dryland farms following wheat. An increasing number of irrigated acres are also being planted, especially when irrigation water is projected to be short for the growing season. Most safflower raised in this area is used for the birdseed market, though an increasing percentage is processed for the oleic and linoleic oil produced. Safflower meal is also proving to be useful in dairy, livestock and poultry rations. If all goes as planned, the transport of locally grown safflower to American Falls, Idaho will be eliminated as safflower will be cleaned and processed at the mill in Weston, Idaho. That's great news for local growers, and a compliment to the progressive thinking of Mountain States Oilseeds.

On the following Tuesday, February 23, and also in Room 1970 at the west BATC campus, growers are invited to a unique "Soil Health Workshop". This seminar begins at 9 am and ends at 3:30 pm, though we anticipate a lot of lively discussion after the prepared presentations are concluded.

Last September, supervisors from our northern Utah Conservation Districts travelled to Bismarck, North Dakota to learn first-hand about all the new excitement surrounding soil health. What the District

Supervisors saw was so profound that they, in cooperation with NRCS, USU Extension and Utah Department of Agriculture and Food teamed up to bring this information to Utah growers. Two leading national experts will join with two progressive local growers to share their successes and suggestions on how to improve net farm profits while simultaneously building soil health. There is no cost for attendance but an RSVP is requested (753-5616 or 752-6263) since a meal will be provided. This seminar will be repeated the following days in Weber and Sevier Counties.

Finally, the Annual Diversified Agriculture Conference will be held at the Viridian Event Center in West Jordan, Utah on February 17-18. This conference focuses on non- traditional agriculture, including recreation, tourism, direct marketing, farmer's markets, etc. The seminar will include workshops for those who are deciding what they might want to do with their little farms and to develop their own business plans. Cost is \$30 per day or \$50 for both days. For a closer look at conference details go to <http://diverseag.org>.

Clark Israelsen
Utah State University Extension Agriculture Agent
Cache County