

## Acreage reply

- Q. Anyone know an average radius a bat will go from its home to find food? We have an awful mosquito problem, and I'm thinking of putting up a bat house to attract some bats. How far away from my house can I put it and still radically reduce the mosquito population?
- A. Varies somewhat by species. Some on the order of hundreds of yards, some much less. Having a bat house near a clearing, or even better near an open body of water (stream, pond, etc) will help attract bats. Be sure your bat house has a variety of roosting slit thicknesses; this will increase the odds of your bat house being occupied by the bats in your area. Some people have reported success mounting the bat house on

their house. Most instructions tell you to mount the bat house on the south side of the structure (wall, tree, etc) and make sure it's in the sun for all or part of the day. Female bats (and young) prefer very warm conditions for roosting.

By all means, please try to install a bat house; encourage your neighbors to do the same. Place it between 10 and 20 feet above the ground, with a clear, unobstructed opening underneath. They are marvelous, interesting creatures as worthy as our feathered friends who receive much more attention.

Q. When I grade our road with my tractor and 3pt grader blade, I end up with ripples. How can I get rid of these?

A. There are several ways to smooth a gravel or rock road. Look at these sugges-

tions to see if they may work for you.

*Suggestion A:* Use a landscape rake in a similar fashion about once every other month or so. Two passes up each side (rake angled in) and one pass down the middle to re-spread the mounded gravel. No ripple problems.

*Suggestion B:* Something that may work better to flatten a gravel drive is a grid of steel or hardwood that is weighted down with junk that you drag behind you to level the gravel out.

*Suggestion C:* Use a box scraper. This does a good job of keeping ripples out of the road, but does not allow you to move the gravel back onto the road from the edges. One pass with an angled grader blade, then another pass with the box scraper gives excellent results. (DJ)

## Acreage Insights



## Native prairie preservation

Native pastures of the upper Midwest are primarily warm season grasses. The three most common and popular of the warm season grasses found in eastern Nebraska are switchgrass, indiagrass and big bluestem grass. A native pasture is defined as land that has never been plowed. In Lancaster County, we have an estimated 20,000 acres of native grasses commonly called prairie grass. Pastures seeded to native warm-season grasses can be an integral part of the forage resource. However, poor management and overgrazing often results in pastures producing only 50% of their potential. A shortage of good summer forage is probably the most conspicuous management problem in eastern Nebraska. Restoration is any management practice that returns these pastures to high range condition without seeding. Preservation is stand maintenance.

Restoration and maintenance of native, warm-season pastures is dependent on sound ecological management. Grazing and/or haying management and prescribed burning practices should be components of any management scheme. The use of herbicides to stimulate plant succession should be considered as a short-term initial treatment rather than a maintenance practice. Mismanagement of these tools can result in stand deterioration and this can occur much faster than restoration. However, with good management, native grasslands can be used for hay production, livestock grazing, wildlife habitat, watershed or an ornamental prairie planting. (WS)

## United States using less water



Newly released statistics on water use by the U.S. Geological Survey

(USGS) show that the nation is using less water—402 billion gallons less per day (bgd) for all uses. This is two percent less than in 1990 and nearly 10 percent less than in 1980, despite a continuous increase in population over that same time period.

Freshwater per-capita use also decreased for 1995. Total per-capita use was 1,280 gallons per day (gal/d), compared to 1,340 gal/d in 1990. The USGS has compiled and reported national water-use statistics once every five years since 1950. After continual increases in the nation's total use of surface and ground water for the years reported from 1950 to 1980, water use declined and has remained fairly constant since the mid-1980s, according to the USGS report.

The nation is clearly using surface and groundwater resources more efficiently. Enhanced citizen awareness of the value of water and conservation

programs in many communities across the country have helped to cut water use in spite of continued population growth. Improved irrigation techniques and more efficient use of water by industry have contributed to reduced water use as well.

Long-term concerns remain about the quality of available water, however. With increased

*The USGS water use report, searchable by county and watershed, along with an expanded section on trends, is available on the World Wide Web at <http://www.water.usgs.gov/public/watuse/>*

demands for water for in-stream uses such as river-based recreation, aesthetic enjoyment and fish and wildlife habitat, the overall competition for good quality water will continue to increase, according to Robert Hirsch, USGS chief hydrologist.

Irrigation is the top freshwater use category—134 bgd in

1995. When fresh and saline water are combined, more water continues to be withdrawn for thermoelectric power generation (190 bgd, of which 58 bgd is saline) than for any other category.

In a state-by-state comparison, California accounts for the largest total water use (46 bgd), followed by Texas, Illinois and Florida. Two dozen states and Puerto Rico had less water withdrawn during 1995 than during 1990.

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Single copies of the 71 page report (with numerous tables, charts, and diagrams of source, use, and disposition of water), published as Estimated use of water in the United States in 1995, (USGS Circular 1200) are available free upon request to USGS Information Services, Box 25286, Denver Federal Center, Denver, CO, 80225; or telefax requests to 303-202-4693. Please be sure to specify USGS Circular 1200. (TD)

## Reduce orchard woes

Care for the home orchard doesn't stop when the harvest ends. A critical part of the pest control program remains the fall orchard cleanup.

Cleaning up fallen fruits and leaves eliminates many insect pests and disease organisms that would otherwise overwinter in the orchard and be on hand to cause problems next year. It's a critical part of any effort to reduce pest problems.

It's not strictly a fall chore. Fruits that drop at any time during the growing season and diseased leaves that fall should be cleaned up as soon as possible. And twigs and branches infected with fire blight should

be pruned in winter. But the major cleanup occurs in the fall after the harvest is over and trees have lost their leaves.

A fall cleanup can reduce the incidence of fungal diseases such as apple scab. It can also reduce the pressure on trees by pests such as apple maggot by reducing the overwintering population of insects.

A fall cleanup probably will not eliminate the need to use pesticides to control these



problems, but it should help make chemical controls more effective. (DJ)

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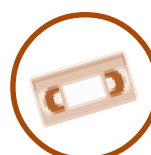
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