



**TX Agriculturalist**  
Ashley Dahlke, farmer and owner of Graze Baking Co. is whipping up tasty treats using produce from the farm.



**Young Farmer Grant**  
Patricia is a pomegranate farmer in El Paso with hopes of making her community, and the world, a better place.



**TDA Updates**  
Harvest of the Month, Fun Fact Poster, GO TEXAN event, and more!



# TEXAS AGRICULTURE *Matters!*

Your monthly connection to the Texas Department of Agriculture.

Volume 2  
Issue 6  
June 2021



## Howdy Neighbors!

Welcome to the Texas Agriculture Matters newsletter, your monthly connection to the Texas Department of Agriculture.

Summer is in high gear in Texas and staff at TDA are making sure kids have access to meals. Did you know that research shows that school meals are the healthiest option? TDA Food and Nutrition also plays a role in helping schools serve appealing foods that highlight local Texas products.

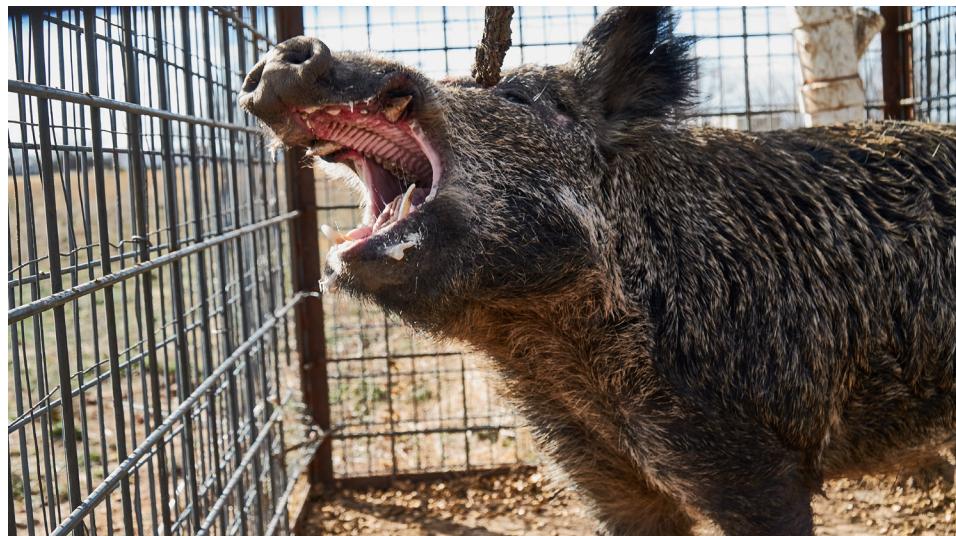
Our operations will continue to serve you and we have plenty of opportunities available. If you're a young farmer, want to learn how to control the feral hog population or need to read something that brings you joy, this newsletter will serve you well.

Remember friends,  
Texas Agriculture Matters!



Sid Miller  
Texas Agriculture Commissioner

## Stopping Feral Hogs: *Advancements offer a hopeful solution to Texas' hog problem*



The feral hog crisis has burdened farmers, ranchers and suburban families in Texas for decades. They run on every acre across the state it seems, but hogs tend to stick to bottom lands like rivers and creeks. Never far from dense protective cover, a feral hog's home range is less than 5,000 acres but can be up to 70,000 acres, [according to Wildlife](#)

[Biologist Rick Taylor.](#)

The rate of reproduction is almost immediate as females are capable of breeding around eight to 10 months of age, and a female can produce a litter size of up to ten or twelve young. Because mature boars usually roam alone, sows and their young will travel in groups together.

*...continued from page 1*



*Photo courtesy of Texas Parks & Wildlife*

These groups of feral hogs cause the most damage to land - rooting up crops, tearing down fences and even scaring families in suburban neighborhoods. Methods to control the feral hog population include trapping, snaring, shooting and the use of specially trained dogs. While these options provide some temporary relief, many people were left wondering what to do next, especially when left in the wake of expensive damages.



*Photo by Josie Musico*



*iStock*

According to recent reports, the feral hog population in Texas has swelled to over 2.6 million. Feral hogs cause an estimated \$500 million in damages, not just to farm and ranch land, but to urban areas, parks, golf courses. Feral hogs were even responsible for at least one human death in the last few years.

Texas Agriculture Commissioner Sid Miller announced an exciting new tool in the war against feral hogs with the release of a new hog contraceptive

bait entering the market this week. A new product called HogStop is being released with the goal of curbing the growth of the feral hog population in Texas over time.

"The feral hog problem has exploded into a crisis," said Commissioner Miller, "Texas farmers and ranchers need every tool they can get their hands on to stop these hogs. With this new product, we're one step an

TEXAS AGRICULTURE *Matters!*

TEXAS DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE  
COMMISSIONER SID MILLER

Produced by the Office of Communications  
Editor, Katlyn Gast

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## ABOUT COMMISSIONER SID MILLER

Sid Miller is an eighth generation farmer and rancher and the 12<sup>th</sup> Commissioner of Agriculture for the great State of Texas. Commissioner Miller has devoted his life to the agriculture industry, and supporting Texas producers and the communities they call home. He is a businessman, rancher, community leader, former ag teacher and former school board member. Commissioner Miller is a rodeo cowboy and holds 18 world championship titles. He is an honors graduate of Tarleton State University in Stephenville, where he received a Bachelor of Science in Vocational Agriculture Education.

closer to my goal of making feral hogs an endangered species in Texas."

HogStop is a mixture of natural feedstuffs that is fed to feral hogs to reduce the number of feral hogs on your farm or ranch. It acts as a male contraception on feral boar hogs. Sperm counts in feral boar hogs are reduced and hence fertility. Births of baby pigs are decreased and feral hog populations decrease over time. HogStop is not a poison that will kill the hogs. It should be fed in hog-specific feeders that are designed to keep out all other species.

"I am very excited about this new product, Hogstop," Miller said. "This could be a great new weapon in the war on feral hogs. It appears that unlike other hog baits, this is not a poison. Instead, it interrupts the reproduction of this animal over time, and therefore makes the product more humane.

A rider in the FY 2022- 23 Texas state budget will allow TDA to collaborate with Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service on an experimental use program evaluating the efficacy of warfarin as a feral hog control method. Under this pilot project, a warfarin-based pesticide product can be registered for use in the state provided it is approved by the federal EPA and meets the guidelines set forth by Texas A&M AgriLife for this project.

"We're looking forward to working with Texas A&M AgriLife to get this pilot project underway quickly," said Miller. "I appreciate legislators giving us the opportunity to evaluate a warfarin-based pesticide once and for all and hopefully getting one registered for use by farmers and ranchers as soon as we can."

Hogstop, or any other product that is available to help Texas farmers and ranchers curb the damage done by these feral hogs, is welcomed at the Texas Department of Agriculture."Hogstop is considered a 25 (b) pesticide by the EPA, and as such, does not have to be registered by TDA before use.

"Contraceptive baits like HogStop work to strike a blow against the exponential growth of the feral hog population in Texas," said Miller. "As we fight to find other ways to eradicate these pests, these kinds of products can knock down the numbers over a period of time." 

For more information about HogStop, visit their website at [www.hogstop.com](http://www.hogstop.com)



*Photo courtesy of Texas Parks & Wildlife*

## Hold on to Your HERITAGE



### WHAT IS THE FAMILY LAND HERITAGE PROGRAM?

The Family Land Heritage program recognizes and honors families who have owned and operated a continuous agricultural operation for 100 years or more.

### HOW DO I APPLY?

You can visit the Family Land Heritage website, [www.familylandheritage.com](http://www.familylandheritage.com), to download the application. Mail hard copies of the completed application, copies of supporting documents and photographs to TDA at the address below. Email digital copies of the completed application, copies of supporting documents and photographs to: [Justin.Rand@TexasAgriculture.gov](mailto:Justin.Rand@TexasAgriculture.gov).

Texas Department of Agriculture  
1700 N. Congress Ave.  
Austin, Texas 78701

Justin Rand 512.463.9885  
[Justin.Rand@TexasAgriculture.gov](mailto:Justin.Rand@TexasAgriculture.gov)

## ABOUT TDA

The Texas Legislature established the Texas Department of Agriculture (TDA) in 1907. The agency's key objectives are to promote production agriculture, consumer protection, economic development and healthy living. The agriculture commissioner oversees the agency and is elected every four years. The current commissioner, Sid Miller, was elected in 2014. TDA is a diversified state agency that provides value-added services through our regulatory and marketing and initiatives. TDA is headquartered in Austin and has five regional service offices, two sub-offices, three laboratories and five livestock export facilities.

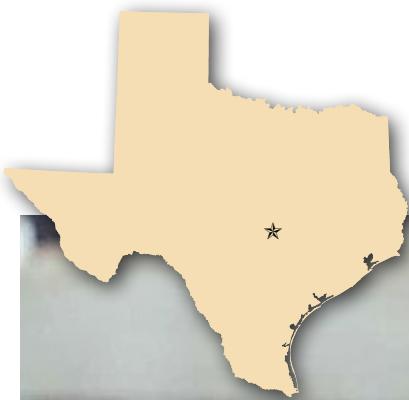
### Mission:

TDA's mission is to partner with all Texans to make Texas the nation's leader in agriculture, fortify our economy, empower rural communities, promote healthy lifestyles, and cultivate winning strategies for rural, suburban and urban Texas through exceptional service and the common threads of agriculture in our daily lives.

# TEXAS AGRICULTURALIST

*Ashley Dahlke, Graze Baking Co.*

McDade, Texas



It's 3:30am. Ashley opens the oven door and warm air floats into the kitchen. She's proofing and preparing the yeasted doughs for the market later that morning. Her days as a farmer and baker last close to 20 hours and usually includes a mix of

caring for the animals, mucking barns, and cleaning coops, watering gardens, baking, and packing orders.

Ashley Dahlke has been baking for almost 10 years, a passion

that started 4,000 miles away in North Pole, Alaska, although she didn't know it then, "it was just for something new and fun to do with a friend," says Ashley, "I never thought of it as a career change for me until moving to Austin." Today, she is a successful local baker and farmer in

McDade, Texas, providing delicious scratch made treats (for now) with hopes of creating Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) with bread, pastry and egg add-ons, and community garden.

Ashley wanted to study photography at the Art Institute, but when they moved to Texas, the culinary atmosphere and opportunities in Austin redirected her attention to her calling. "I dropped out of art school and poured myself into pastry," says Ashley. "I graduated from



Auguste Escoffier School of Culinary Arts and worked for multiple chefs in Austin before moving out of town and starting my own small business and farm."

Austin owns a distinct local food and brew scene that sticks to local produce and meats, and many chefs have strong relationships with nearby farmers. "I got inspired to start farming after working my way through the restaurant industry in Austin and seeing how much chefs relied on local produce and goods for their menu," said Ashley.

Her desire to learn more about farming led to visiting various local farms, orchards and eventually she and her husband gathered the gumption to buy 6.5 acres with a house 40 miles outside of Austin.

Ashley originally operated as the Cookie Farmer in 2019 and set up a small table outside of her friend's yoga studio and sold cookies, cakes, and cinnamon buns. She started adding on croissants, breads, specialty pastries and eggs, and to reflect who she was as a baker, she changed her business name to Graze Baking Co.

Ashely sets up shop at the Elgin Farmer's Market on Thursdays, from 4 to 7 pm, bringing eggs and veggies, and delicious scratch made pastries fresh out of the oven.



## WHAT ANIMALS CAN WE FIND ON THE HOMESTEAD RIGHT NOW?



"We have goats, chickens, geese, pot belly pigs, bees, a couple of cats and dogs. Our two Toulouse geese on our homestead that have the biggest personalities. They are an exceptionally large French breed and are extremely friendly."



## WHAT CROPS ARE YOU CURRENTLY GROWING?



"Tomatoes, carrots, onions, squash, peppers, watermelon, cantaloupe, peaches, oranges, raspberries, lots of herbs and flowers, strawberries, ground cherries and cucumbers."



## CAN YOU EXPLAIN WHAT ORGANIC PRACTICES YOU USE?



"We never use any types of pesticides, ever. Pest control in the garden comes in the form of picking off harmful insects by hand or letting the chickens in – they can eat a lot of grasshoppers in one day. We make our own compost with elements we collect from our homestead and are in the process of getting setup

for worms so we can collect our own worm castings and help with additional composting. The animals are also treated holistically when possible, we are big on gut health and immune support for our herd, but antibiotics and modern medicine are definitely our friends."



## WHY DOES TEXAS AGRICULTURE MATTER TO YOU?



"Texas Agriculture matters to me because its a means of creating a sustainable future for myself, my family, and the community. Seeing the positive impact locally sourcing goods has had on farmers just in the past year has been very eye opening. During the pandemic we got as much meat, produce, honey, even soap from local producers as possible to support those who need it most; those who are working to make a difference on people's plates." 



*Click the arrows to view images of Graze Baking Co.*

## HOW TO FIND US

Follow Graze Baking Co. on Instagram @grazebakingco and on their website, [www.grazebakingco.com](http://www.grazebakingco.com)

## HARVEST OF THE MONTH

# PEACH

JUNE

Peaches are stone fruits. Stone fruits have large pits in their centers. Peaches are known by their yellow and red fuzzy skins. Peaches grow at their best from June through the end of August.

### STORAGE

- Peaches last around four days, possibly longer if you refrigerate them in a plastic bag.
- Do not wash peaches until ready to use.



### BENEFITS

Peaches are a rich provider of vitamin A, beta-carotene, and vitamin C. The peach's nutrients help maintain vision, a healthy nervous system, and healthy skin, bones and teeth.

#### Talking to Students about Vitamin A

Vitamin A has many functions, the most notable being its role in maintaining good vision.

### SELECTION

- A ripe peach will have a pleasingly sweet fragrance.
- Look for a creamy gold to yellow under color.
- The red or "blush" of a peach is an indication of variety, not ripeness.
- Peaches should be soft to the touch but not mushy.
- Don't squeeze peaches; they bruise easily.

### PREPARATION

- Wash peaches before eating or using them.
- To remove the stone, cut into the peach near the top until the tip of the knife hits the stone, then cut lengthwise around the stone.
- Gently hold both halves of the peach and twist in opposite directions to pull it apart.
- Put one side down and then loosen the stone from the peach flesh with a knife or your finger.

### TASTING TIP

Continue offering a variety of new foods for children to try.



This product was funded by USDA.  
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**COMMISSIONER SID MILLER**



The purpose of this program is to provide financial assistance in the form of dollar-for-dollar matching grant funds to young agricultural producers that are engaged or will be engaged in creating or expanding an agricultural business in Texas.

The Young Farmer Grant Program aims to:

- ★ Grow and support Texas agriculture
- ★ Help meet a financial need that is otherwise not met
- ★ Help grow an operation that also impacts the community

Past YFG recipient Rebecca Hume.  
Photo by Scott David Gordon, The Daily



# YOUNG FARMER GRANT Recipient

TEXAS DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE



## Patricia Escobedo

*Wonder Fruit Pomegranate*

Patricia Escobedo is a 2018 recipient of the Young Farmer Grant. She owns a pomegranate farm, Wonder Fruit, with her family in El Paso, Texas. For her, discovering and applying for the Young Farmer Grant came at a perfect time to expand their pomegranate orchard.

Patricia had high hopes for creating jobs within her community by growing the farm and generating more income for her family farm. Patricia was able to expand her pomegranate orchard from 550 trees to 800. She also installed an irrigation system for efficient watering, updated the water well system, and was able to purchase equipment needed to help her operation run smoother.

Her ultimate goal she wanted to achieve with the help of the Young Farmer Grant was to be one of the best pomegranate producers in the state. Serving Wonder Fruit pomegranates to every table and home in the region and providing one of the healthiest fruits on the planet to families is a passion of Patricia's.

We asked her if she had any advice for other young farmers and this is what she said, "Always go the extra mile and never doubt about your potential, your dreams

can become a reality if you work hard with positive attitude all the time. Educate yourself and be kind to other people and the earth." 



For more information on the grant and how to apply please visit our website, [www.texasagriculture.gov](http://www.texasagriculture.gov)

# Texas BLUEBERRY FESTIVAL

JUNE 12TH 2021



31ST ANNUAL

Downtown  
**NACOGDOCHES**  
TEXAS

PRESENTED BY  
**TIPTON Ford**  
Nacogdoches, TX

# TIERRA DEL SOL FARMS

## FARM PROFILE

This month's featured farm is Tierra del Sol Farms, located in a small valley next to the Rio Grande River in far West Texas.

A family-owned farm, Tierra del Sol opened for business in 1985 after the family bought 60 acres of land. From the start, the family used old-fashioned farming techniques to grow food for the farm animals, and all garden weeds were removed by hand. Tierra del Sol filled old ditches, fixed fences and started plowing land that had been left alone for years. They always did it with a strong focus on sustainability.

Today, Tierra del Sol farms with the same focus on sustainability, but on a bigger farm scale. They are raising lambs, goats, chickens and rabbits, and growing vegetables in the greenhouse. The proprietors at Tierra del Sol take pride in their commitment to hiring people from the nearby community and selling most of their products directly to farmers markets and restaurants in the El Paso area.



Sheep in a field at Tierra Del Sol Farm

### STATS

**Owner:**

**Founded:** 1985

**Location:** Fort Hancock, Texas

**Specialty:** Organic meat products



© Slawomir Fajer / Adobe Stock



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This product was funded by USDA. This institution is an equal opportunity provider.





School meals and the professionals who serve them are enjoying a well-deserved moment of appreciation and it goes beyond last month's School Lunch Hero Day. In addition to consistent access to nutrition, a scientific study revealed that school nutrition professionals provide children with their healthiest meals.

Research recently published in the Journal of the American Medical Association showed that school meals are the most nutritious

meals children consume when compared to foods from grocery stores, restaurants and other sources. In the 15 years between 2003 and 2018, school meals showed the biggest improvement in children's diet quality compared to other sources.

Anyone following changes in school nutrition could have anticipated this outcome. Every school meal meets strict federal nutrition standards that ensure it provides balanced nutrition. A school menu might feature a

baked chicken leg with barbecue sauce, brown rice, green beans, and a Texas apple, or whole-grain spaghetti with meat sauce, broccoli, peaches, and milk from a Texas dairy. Schools must also make these meals appealing to kids from kindergarten through high school.

The Texas Department Agriculture (TDA) supports their efforts through its administration of the National School Lunch and School Breakfast Programs in Texas. TDA's Food and Nutrition Division

works with nearly 1,200 school food authorities on everything from ensuring compliance with regulations to overseeing more than \$1.5 billion in federal reimbursements. TDA Food and Nutrition also plays a role in helping schools serve appealing foods that highlight local Texas products.

TDA has partnered with Education Service Centers to host Meal Appeal Universities in recent years and continues to provide other trainings on preparing high-quality meals that students enjoy eating. In addition, Agriculture Commissioner Sid Miller's Farm Fresh Initiative recognizes schools for serving local foods, teaching children about agriculture, and sharing stories about their efforts on social media. This fall, many schools will participate in TDA's Farm Fresh Challenge throughout October. They can pledge participation at [SquareMeals.org/FarmFreshChallenge](https://SquareMeals.org/FarmFreshChallenge).

These and other efforts work hand in hand to make Texas schools leaders in child nutrition. TDA Food and Nutrition will continue providing resources and support that help schools earn accolades from researchers and all Texans. Showing appreciation for our hard-working school nutrition professionals is as easy as encouraging children to eat a school meal and, when school cafeterias are open, parents can visit for a reasonably priced healthy meal. If that is not possible, a simple thank you goes a long way. 



*Photo by Addie Boyles/Austin American Statesman*



*Photo by Addie Boyles/Austin American Statesman*

## TEXAS OLIVES



### DID YOU KNOW?

★  
**Olives are the 5th largest Texas perennial fruit crop.**

★  
**Texas has more than 4,000 acres of olive orchards.**

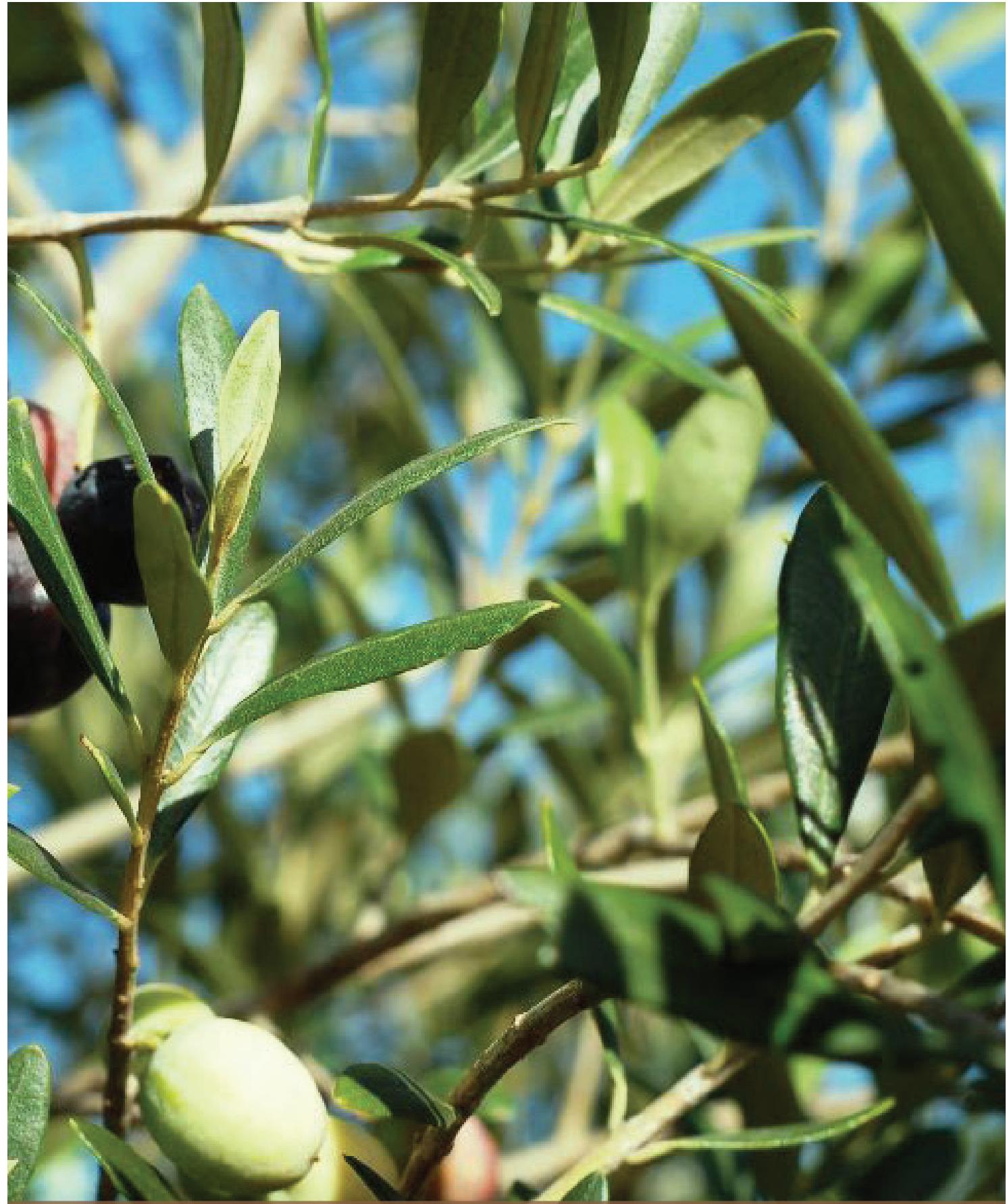
★  
**Green and black olives are the same olive, the difference is the age (maturity) of the olive.**



**GO TEXAN.**



TEXAS DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE



CULTURE ★ COMMISSIONER SID MILLER

JOIN A TEXASIZED MOVEMENT



GO TEXAN.<sup>®</sup>

FIND THE MARK  
*that matters*

TEXAS DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE  
COMMISSIONER SID MILLER

## WHAT does it mean?

When you see the mark, you know the product or place has been proudly certified as authentically Texan.

## WHERE do you find it?

Look for the mark anywhere you shop, from local farmer's markets to national retail chains.

Support Texas.

Want to learn more?  
[gotexan.org](http://gotexan.org)

#GOTEXAN





GO TEXAN.<sup>®</sup>

# Shop GO TEXAN Today!

**S**hop the new GO TEXAN online retail store today and find your favorite GO TEXAN partner products. You'll find a variety of items, including wind chimes, soaps, decadent chocolates, pecans and many more Texified products sure to please anyone!

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Visit [shop.gotexan.org](http://shop.gotexan.org) today. 



## NEW PARTNERS!

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- ★ [Landon Winery Greenville](#)
- ★ [Bello Tallow](#)
- ★ [Xtragrow, LLC](#)
- ★ [Neau USA Inc.](#)
- ★ [Birds of Passage Brewing Company](#)
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- ★ [El Huisache Nursery](#)
- ★ [Bebo Distributing Company, LLC](#)
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- ★ [Texas Wine and Grape Growers Association](#)
- ★ [Reds Bar B Que](#)
- ★ [Dublin Chamber of Commerce](#)
- ★ [Yuckalife](#)
- ★ [Raven's Wing Coffee Company](#)
- ★ [Vinovium](#)
- ★ [Slab BBQ, LLC](#)
- ★ [Texas Best Meats](#)
- ★ [Fresh Pressed Coffee Company](#)  
Warehouse and Farms
- ★ [Duchman Family Wineries](#)
- ★ [Williams Food Co.](#)
- ★ [Barking Bad Bakery](#)

TO VIEW PICTURES OF THE ONLINE MARKET, CLICK THE LEFT AND RIGHT ARROWS

## Did You Know?

**TDA recognizes** the importance of each Texas commodity and serves commodity boards by facilitating meetings and ensuring compliance with Chapter 41 of the Agriculture Code.

**TDA inspects** beehives for fireants, but bee production is regulated by the Texas Apiary Inspection Service. The Department of Health and Human Services regulates the sale of honey.

**TDA's Small Town Environment Program** (STEP) supports community development projects that encourage local volunteers to become involved with restoring their community's infrastructure.



## Texas Ag Stats:

- ★ There are over 2,500 honeybee farms in Texas that are home to over 210,000 bees!
- ★ In Texas, 97,648 acres of vegetables were harvested in 2017.
- ★ Cut flowers and flower greens generated \$2,371,896 in 2017.
- ★ Texas is home to 800 blackberry and dewberry farms.
- ★ Over 4 million acres of cotton was harvested in Texas in 2017.

## Recipe of the Month

### Tangy Tomato Slices

Dala Burk | Wise County

*This simple yet flavorful dish brings back summer memories for Burk, who has been enjoying this recipe for 40 years. Enjoy the slices on their own or tucked into a warm biscuit for a best-ever tomato sandwich.*

#### Ingredients

6 tomatoes, thinly sliced  
1 onion, thinly sliced  
1 cup olive oil  
1/3 cup vinegar  
1/4 cup chopped fresh parsley  
3 tablespoons chopped fresh basil  
1 tablespoon sugar  
1 teaspoon salt  
1/2 teaspoon pepper  
1/2 teaspoon dry mustard  
1/2 teaspoon garlic powder

#### Directions

1. Layer tomato and onion slices in a 9-by-13-inch baking dish and set aside.
2. In a small bowl, whisk together remaining ingredients. Pour over tomatoes and onion, using a spatula to spread herbs evenly. Cover and chill 4–5 hours before serving.



# Your thoughts on

*the cyber attack that rocked JBS foods...*



NYPOST.COM  
World's largest meat processor JBS Foods hit by cyberattack

Tweet



Kenneth Bullard  
Dont put all your eggs in one basket!  
Small farmers will always be there for you, shop local!

Caleb Eaton  
Foreign based hackers hacking a foreign-owned packer  
and the cowman is still gonna get chingaleday!

Lisa Davis  
All the more reason to support local suppliers here in Texas. We can do this!

Garry Crockett  
I guess it will keep them from manually doing things



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## Tell Us... who is your local farmer or rancher?



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