

News Column

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## WHEAT VARIETIES

You know it's dry when you can't even grow good wheat. While central Riley County produced some exceptional wheat yields this year, some fields in the south and north parts of the county couldn't even muster 20 bushel per acre yields.

It's frustrating when yields are low and prices are low too. That's the situation I was looking at when I prepared the budget for the 2018 wheat crop on our Phillips County farm. I wondered if I should even plant wheat when it didn't look like we could break even, even if we produced a better than average yield.

After mulling it over for a while, I finally decided to plant wheat last fall because we needed to rotate some fields out of corn and soybeans, primarily for weed control. I was also hoping the price would rise, and it looks like I may have gotten lucky in that respect.

I expect to see a few more acres planted to wheat this fall in Riley County now that the price has improved a bit. And, there will be those who would plant wheat anyway, knowing a good crop rotation will eventually pay off.

At our wheat plot tour at the end of May I asked Romulo Lollato, K-State's wheat production specialist, to list his top three varieties for Riley County. Without hesitation he listed SY Monument, Zenda, and WB Grainfield.

I was somewhat surprised that Grainfield made his top three, even though it has been near the top of my list for three or four years now. Grainfield was projected to be best west of here,

but has always performed well in our plots. It like it.

Grainfield has medium-late maturity and very good yield potential. I was concerned that its later maturity would hurt its yield this year when it got hot so soon, but it held on well in our county plot, yielding with the top six or seven varieties. In recent years, when the weather stayed cooler longer in the spring, it was one of the top yielding varieties.

SY Monument is an Agripro variety that has been popular the last couple of years. As with all varieties, yield is the reason for its popularity. Monument provides consistently high yields in multiple environments. It's not one that is great in a perfect year, then never performs well again. It should be a solid performer, even in a tough year.

Monument's list of strengths include good test weight, excellent overall leaf disease resistance, good grazing potential, and being highly consistent in multiple environments. It is listed as a good choice to plant after soybeans and that alone will get it a lot of acres in Riley County.

Zenda is a 2018 K-State release intended to replace Everest. Everest was an extremely popular variety that has run its course and needs to fall off our list of top varieties. Zenda is a medium-early, medium height variety that will do well wherever Everest was good. It is among the best for scab tolerance, making it the variety to plant behind corn.

There are many other good, or at least acceptable, varieties. Winterhawk never caught on big-time in this part of the state, but still has excellent yield potential if a producer is willing to apply a fungicide.

Bob Dole is a new variety that intrigues me. It has a good overall disease package, with good resistance to leaf rust, stripe rust, and scab. As you might guess from the name, it is targeted toward the central part of the state, with Riley County falling into the area where it

should perform best. One downfall though is that it has the potential to lodge with yields above 80 bushels per acre.

Speaking of lodging, 1863 is still a possibility. Here is another good variety that I haven't really pushed because of its tendency to lay down when it is set to produce a high yield. If you have it, I wouldn't be afraid to plant it (probably in a blend), but if you're buying new seed, then I'd go back to Romulo's top three – Grainfield, Monument, and Zenda.

If you have questions, you can reach me at the Riley County Extension Office at 785/537-6350. Or, you can send e-mail to [gmclure@ksu.edu](mailto:gmclure@ksu.edu).

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