

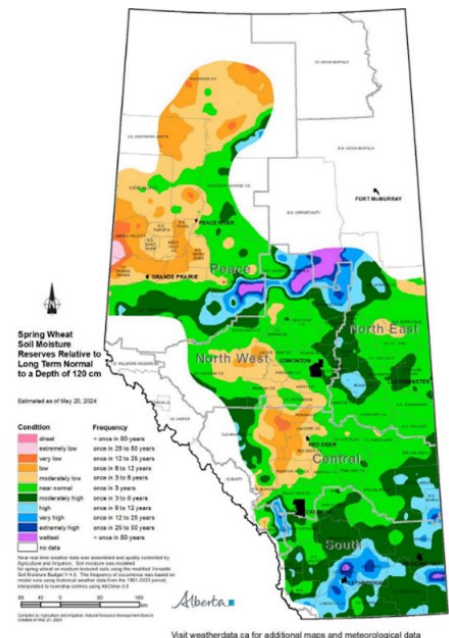
Between the Rows

MAY 30, 2024

What a Difference a Year Makes

Local soil moisture levels have improved dramatically over 2023. Last year at this time soil moisture reserves were at a once in 50 years low, now we are at a once in every 3-6 years low, and this does not even consider the moisture we are receiving right now as I type this on Wednesday May 29. In my May 30, 2023, edition of "Between the Rows" I posted an article about the current moisture situation, and how we had received less than 10mm of rain in that month. Before today's rain the Fort Vermilion weather station data shows we have received over 4x that, 41.4mm. We have also had double the rain for April this year. Last year it was so bad that I also mentioned the smoke in the air and how it was helping to reduce the drying out of the top inch of soil and hoping that June, normally our wettest month of the year, would bring rain. Well, June was not wet at all last year, and we had to wait until July. So other than a general sense of optimism, what else does May showers bring us? Since this rain is falling in the middle of seeding, some of our fields will be later than others, weed control timing will be critical and the prospect of crop diseases increases. But for now, let's just enjoy the rain, laugh at the Agronomist scouting fields in the mud and take a bit of a break until the fields dry out a bit.

Farming is Fun 3



Seeding and Spraying Update

Seeding and Spraying Update

Seeding in the North Peace has progressed well this year. As of the May 21, 2024, Alberta Crop Report 71% of the Peace was seeded. Since this accounts for the entire Peace and the South Peace started earlier, I believe we are probably closer to 67%. The 5-year average for the Peace is only 44%, so we are well ahead of that. Most of the pea, wheat and canola

acres are in the ground, with barley and organic crops lagging.

Little in-crop spraying has been done, however most pre-burn applications are done. But as soon as the fields dry out from this rain application windows will be opening. Early seeded peas and wheat will be close to proper timing by the



D-Day Anniversary

D-Day 80th Anniversary Next Week

Next week is the 80th anniversary of D-Day, the invasion of the beaches of Normandy that began the liberation of Western Europe from Nazi Germany. In the next few editions of BTR, I am going to touch on this subject since it was a momentous event in our history and I feel it important to keep the memories of these events alive as we lose more and more of the actual participants to time.

Today we tend to think of victory on D-Day as a forgone conclusion. Of course, we'll just drive some landing boats up on the shore, climb the cliffs and beat the Nazi's back to Berlin, right. If you go back before D-Day and examine the situation on the ground, victory was not a forgone conclusion.

Amphibious landings on an enemy defended shore is a difficult military manoeuvre, even more so in 1944. In WW I, the allies did an amphibious landing at

Gallipoli, and while they were successful at getting onto the beach, they suffered tremendous losses and eventually had to abandon the whole campaign. Losses were so large that to this day "Anzac Day" is memorialized in Australia and New Zealand to commemorate their soldier's sacrifice. For us Canadians, the disaster at Dieppe showed that invading a fortified port would not work. Canadians should always remember those lost there. Even Operation Torch, the invasion of North Africa by the Americans, while eventually a success, was a cluster of mistakes and confusion, such that if it wasn't opposed by a half-hearted Vichy French defence, would have failed. But the Allies learned from these operations, they had to. Failure at Normandy would be a disaster that would make Gallipoli look like a walk in the park.



Weed of the Week: Flixweed

The spring of 2024 has been very good for flixweed. For whatever environmental, agronomical or astronomical reasons, flixweed really took off this spring. Normally a weed just found in marginal and waste areas it found itself in the mainstream of fields this summer and sometimes in astronomical numbers.

Flixweed, *Descurainia sophia*, is a member of the Brassicaceae family same as canola. Flixweed has been a weed problem going back to the tillage and summer fallow era. It can act as an annual, winter annual or biennial. The outbreak this spring is most likely the

winter annual form, given its rapid growth this spring. This fits in nicely when you consider how late our fall and October 21 was the first low temperature below -10C. It is a prolific seed producer and many of those seed germinated in the fall to form rosettes that overwintered.

Flixweed most likely came over from Europe as it was first identified by the Romans and called tansy mustard. This leads to a discussion about the difference between Grey Tansy Mustard (*Descurainia pinnata*) and Flixweed. The leaves and general vege-

Tansy Mustard and Flixweed Fruits



tative growth of the two are very similar, however flixweed pods are long and thin (like really bad canola pods) while grey tansy mustard pods are shorter and fatter.



**Flixweed:
Weed of
the Week**

**Farming is
Fun**

