Field Notes
July 13, 2012
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The big story this week is rain – too much of it and at the wrong time in southwest Louisiana, but welcomed in much of the rest of the state.

At right is a view from my truck of our verification field in Vermilion parish taken around 8:15 Tuesday morning. The rain gauge had been knocked over so we did not get a reading of the previous week.

In Cameron parish we dumped 8.16 inches and it was raining when we left. In Allen parish we dumped 6.98 inches while it was raining.

When I got to Concordia we dumped 1.8 inches. The week before we totaled the rainfall to date and it was 1.6 inches. The farmer there had stopped the pumps that morning after having pumped continuously trying to keep up with demand in rice and soybeans.

This brought harvest to a screeching halt in the southwest area.

At left is a photograph sent to me by B. D. Fontenot. I forwarded it to Dr. Groth who identified the disease as Black Kernel. It is a fairly common fungal disease generally regarded as a minor problem. For some reason this year there is quite a bit showing up and the rainy weather will probably make it worse. I noticed some in our field in Cameron parish but it was scattered and much lighter than shown in these panicles.

It should not be confused with Kernel Smut which also causes black kernels. The smut fungus actually invades the grain and replaces it becoming visible when it begins to ooze out between the hulls. Black Kernel attacks from the outside and covers the grain completely.

Dr. Groth said he has seen False Smut too. This one causes the development of very conspicuous greenish masses in the panicle. They change from greenish to bright orange with maturity.

Below are two photographs of a couple of very similar weeds. I know it is well past the normal time for discussion of weeds or weed control, but it came up because I got a phone call about lack of control of Redstem that had been treated with Londax. The first question I asked was whether the plant was Redstem or Toothcup (also known as Rotala) because in my experience Redstem is much easier to control than Toothcup.

The two plants are closely related and very similar in appearnce. Both are succulent, have reddish stems, have opposite leaves in two planes, and produce purplish flowers in the leaf axils (where the leaf joins the stem). The easiest difference to see is the difference in the base of the leaves. Redstem has leaves that appear to surround the stem or at least bases that expand and meet at the stem. Toothcup has more traditional appearing leaves that have a distinct petiole (the stalk that supports the leaf).