

Bluestem Breezes
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Mobile Apps for Agriculture

I absolutely love efficiency. Technological advances allow us increased opportunities every day to become more efficient, in every area of our lives.

Take a look around you right now. Are you drinking coffee near a coffee maker that has your coffee steaming hot by the time you wake up? Are you reading this column online through a laptop or computer screen? Or, are you reading this on your cell phone? How will you check the weather forecast today? On the radio, television, newspaper, or your smart phone?

As our world continues to change and new methods to “simplify” (yes, I added quotes for a reason) our life are developed, we must change with the times. I know, this is “easier said than done” for some of us!

As more Apps are developed for our smart phones, I hope you’re finding that there are more Apps developed for agriculture. K-State’s Crop Specialist Ignacio A. Ciampitti developed a list of useful ag Apps.

Before reading through the list, remember that brand names appearing in this publication are for product identification purposes only. No endorsement is intended, nor is criticism implied of similar products not mentioned. Here begins Dr. Ciampitti’s Mobile Apps information:

“There are several Apps that companies and public institutions have developed with the unique goal of increasing product exposure, reaching broad and progressive audiences, and improving effectiveness in communicating news, educational materials, and support tools. Without doubt, Extension is changing and the audience is evolving. During the winter meetings we’ve had this year, we have seen more and more people using smartphones and tablets for checking email, news, weather, grain price information, and more.

During the past year, I have been investigating and evaluating the wide variety of available Apps for agricultural purposes. Most of the Apps presented in this article are free to download. Before paying for any App, please check online reviews or consult with any specialist working with that App in order to understand the benefits in using it and how it can assist you in your daily farming operations. As a general rule, an App needs to be “easy to use” and “intuitive.” Most Apps do not come with a user guide or a manual. Take all these points into consideration before downloading and using Apps.

I’ve created a subjective classification with the goal of dividing Apps by their different uses and purposes.

1) ID Apps

The Apps under this category are primarily utilized for identification purposes. This category can be sub-divided into different topics: weeds, insects, diseases, nutrients.

Weeds ID – These Apps can help identify a weed, or search for weeds by name, region, or appearance. The ID Weeds (University of Missouri) and/or Weedalert.com are both very good for weed ID purposes.

Insects ID – The Aphid Scout is an App from the University of Nebraska-Lincoln that helps visualize aphid infestations at the leaf level (0, 10, 25, 50, and 100%). The Pestbook App from DuPont offers a variety of pictures for different pests and beneficials that can assist in ID purposes.

Diseases ID – This category highlights Apps specific for diseases either in a single crop, such as the Soy Diseases App (South Dakota State University), or for multiple crops, such as the Crop Diseases App (GRDC, Grains Research & Development Corporation), which presents information for wheat, barley, oat, triticale, and canola, among several other crops. The IPM toolkit (University of Wisconsin) is broader than disease ID alone. It also includes a list of Extension activities such as meetings, publications, videos, and news (highly recommended!).

Nutrient ID – This section highlights Apps for nutrient deficiency ID purposes. Within this category, the Crop Nutrient Deficiency Photo Gallery App from the International Plant Nutrition Institute is worth downloading for \$5. The K Gallery App (International Potash Institute) presents only potassium deficiency pictures for multiple crops.”

Additional mobile apps will be included in next week’s column. For Dr. Ciampitti’s complete mobile apps list, visit the Extension Office (215 Kansas, Courthouse, Alma; kamayer@ksu.edu; 765-3821). For Bluestem Breezes archives, check out wabaunsee.ksu.edu.