

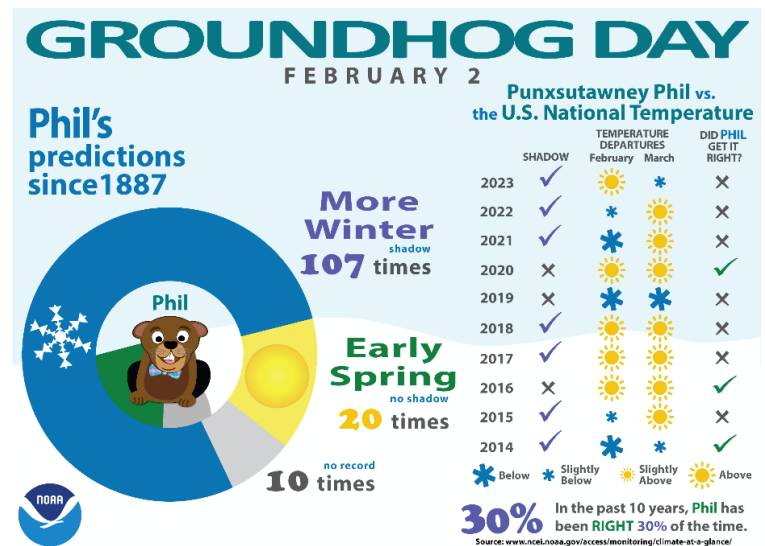
Southwest Michigan Field Crops Updates February 2024

Here are updates from the MSU Extension Field Crops team in Southwest Michigan. If you have any items you would like me to include in future email updates—whether events you want others to know about or topics you would like to have addressed—please send me an email or call the office.

And the Verdict Is...

Here we are, Groundhog Day, 2024. Punxsutawney Phil, the Seer of Seers, Sage of Sages, Prognosticator of Prognosticators, and Weather Prophet Extraordinary....did not see his shadow this morning, an event ushering in an early spring this year.

Interesting, mildly amusing— especially if you’ve seen the Inner Circle of men dressed up in top hats, bow ties and long, black coats talking to a large rodent—ranking right up there with the Farmer’s Almanac in its usefulness. Why do people care about this animal? What made someone think to observe a groundhog to predict future weather? Why not wait to see what he eats, or whether he scratches himself, or yawns, or starts mating, or any other number of behaviors? Read on for some trivial trivia about this event.



Groundhog Day is celebrated on February 2nd, halfway between the winter solstice and the vernal equinox. Though other cities have vied to host this event, Punxsutawney, a town of about 6,000 people in west-central Pennsylvania, has been the most widely known site since 1887. Some reports say the tradition began with the ancient Christian tradition of Candlemas where, [according to an old English song](#), “If Candlemas be fair and bright, / Come, Winter, have another flight. / If Candlemas brings clouds and rain, / Go, Winter, and come not again.” Europeans in the 1800’s added the idea of observing badgers and other similar local species to characterize the weather. In the U.S., groundhogs generally come out of hibernation in late February or early March, so it’s a bit cruel to force Phil to come out this early, but sometimes sacrifices must be made.

How accurate is the Seer? Of course, it is nigh impossible to predict the onset of spring for a region let alone the entire country. However, according to NOAA, Phil has been right about 30% of the time in the past decade based on U.S. temperature departures from normal in February and March. The more cynical among us will say that’s not bad compared with most meteorologists. I’m not going there, but suffice it to say that Phil’s prediction is merely entertaining at best.

Upcoming MSU Extension Programs

Field Crops Webinar Series

Field crop producers, consultants and agribusiness professionals are invited to participate in the [Field Crops Webinar Series](#), a series of eight online programs addressing field crop production and pest management offered by [Michigan State University Extension](#).

The theme for this year's series continues the "Two for the Price of One: Conversations in Row Crop Agriculture." Each session will feature two speakers giving short presentations and discussing various aspects of the topic in an informal talk-show/podcast format with plenty of opportunity for interaction with the audience. Participants will hear how to enhance their row crop production systems in the coming season and have an opportunity to ask questions of agricultural experts.

The live webinars will run on Monday evenings from 7 to 8 p.m. ET beginning Feb. 5 and ending March 25, 2024. Cost of registration is \$20 per person for the entire series. Those attending the live webinars will be eligible to earn one Michigan Department of Agriculture and Rural Development pesticide recertification (RUP) credit per session for application to one of the following categories: Private Core, Commercial Core or Field Crops. One continuing education unit (CEU) for certified crop advisers will also be available for each session.

Branch County Farmers Day

The Branch County Farmers Day will be held on Feb. 19 at the Branch Area Careers Center. There are two simultaneous but **separate** events, one being the Field Crops Educational Sessions with growers, stakeholders, specialists, and other industry professionals to network and learn more about relevant field crop issues.

Thanks to the Branch Area Careers Center, Ceres Solutions, and the Branch County Ag Council, the Field Crops Educational Sessions are **free**. Pre-registration is strongly encouraged and can be done online [here](#). Three (3) RUP and 3 CCA (1 SW, 1 PM, 0.5 CM, 0.5 PD) credits are available. For more information, contact the Branch County MSU Extension office at msue.branch@county.msu.edu or 517-279-4311 ext 0.

The other event held at the Branch County Farmers Day is the Pesticide Applicator Testing through the Michigan Department of Agriculture and Rural Development (MDARD), including mandatory pre-test training. More information regarding the Pesticide Applicator Testing, including registration, fees and schedule, can be found [here](#).

Michiana Irrigated Corn and Soybean Conference

Michigan State University Extension and Purdue University Extension will be cooperating for a conference addressing irrigated corn and soybean issues held at the Blue Gate Theatre in Shipshewana on Monday, February 26.

Due to generous support from the Michigan Soybean Committee and the Corn Marketing Program of Michigan, the conference cost is \$20 per person if registering by Feb. 18. Registrations after that date will be \$30 per person. Cancelled registrations after Feb. 18 will be subject to a \$20 cancellation fee. Four (4) Michigan RUP and 5 CCA (2 IPM, 1 NM, 1 CM, 1 SW) credits are available. See the agenda and register [here](#).

Questions regarding registration can be directed to the MSU St. Joseph County Extension office at msue.stjoseph@county.msu.edu or 269-467-5511.

Soil Fertility and Nutrient Management Training

Join [Michigan State University Extension](#) (MSU Extension) for one of two regional [Soil Fertility and Nutrient](#)

Management Trainings on Feb. 20 or Feb. 27, 2024. The Feb. 20 training will be held at the MSU Saginaw Valley Research and Extension Center in Frankenmuth, Michigan, and the Feb. 27 training will be held at the Allegan County Human Services Building in Allegan, Michigan.

The identical programs will focus on building a base level of information and will be most beneficial to farmers and agribusiness professionals just beginning their careers of crop/nutrient advising. It can still be a valuable refresher for experienced agronomists and knowledgeable farmers. Speakers will include Kurt Steinke, MSU soil fertility specialist, and other MSU Extension field crops educators. The topics being covered will be an overview and philosophy of soil fertility from Steinke; cation exchange capacity, soil pH and liming; essential nutrients and fertilizer (nitrogen, phosphorus, potassium and other micro/macro nutrients); how and why to soil and plant tissue testing; the latest MSU recommendations; and fertilizer economics. We plan for this to be a multi-year series with single-day trainings. Each year will build upon the previous year becoming more and more in-depth. You do not have to attend previous years to attend future years.

If we have low registration numbers by Feb. 13, we will cancel the Allegan location training. If this occurs and you are registered to attend, you will have the option to attend the Feb. 20 training in Frankenmuth in person or via Zoom, or you may receive a refund if one of the other options does not work for you. The cost of registration is \$50 per person and will include the 4R Soil Fertility Manual and all other handout materials and lunch. Participants are encouraged to register early to aid in the ordering of sufficient materials for all participants.

Fast Fonz Facts January 2024 (from Chris DiFonzo, MSU Extension field crops entomologist)

Just a few informational doodads to note.

1) Updates to **Handy Bt Trait Table** and associated materials

** Visit: <https://www.texasinsects.org/bt-corn-trait-table.html>

** The field and sweet corn tables (plus associated tables of events, registration numbers, resistance citations) were updated for 2024. As always, you are welcome to print the table for your customers or use in educational guides. If you want to post on your web site, please link to the OVERALL trait table webpage, which is always up-to-date, instead of uploading a copy of the table.

2) FREE version of the 2024 MSU Field Crops Weed Guide by chapter, posted at: <https://www.canr.msu.edu/weeds/>

MSU Extension Master Gardener Program Update

Many are curious about what happened to the MSU Extension Master Gardener Program. We have changed the name of the MSU Extension Master Gardener training course to MSUE Foundations of Gardening (FOG) because it is also open to people who do not wish to become an MSU Extension Master Gardener (EMG). Those who pass the course can apply to become a volunteer and participate in a no-cost local MSU EMG Onboarding if they are interested in the program. Others can leave with a FOG certificate and not pursue the MSU EMG Program.

More information on FOG can be found at:

- <https://www.canr.msu.edu/courses/foundations-of-gardening>
- <https://www.canr.msu.edu/news/register-now-for-msu-extension-s-online-foundations-of-gardening-course>

Still have questions? Email us:

Foundations of Gardening Course: MSUE.FOG@msu.edu

MSU Extension Master Gardener Program: MSUE.MG@msu.edu

Local Job Opportunities 2024

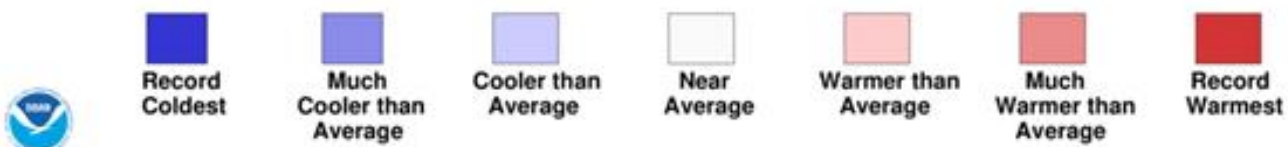
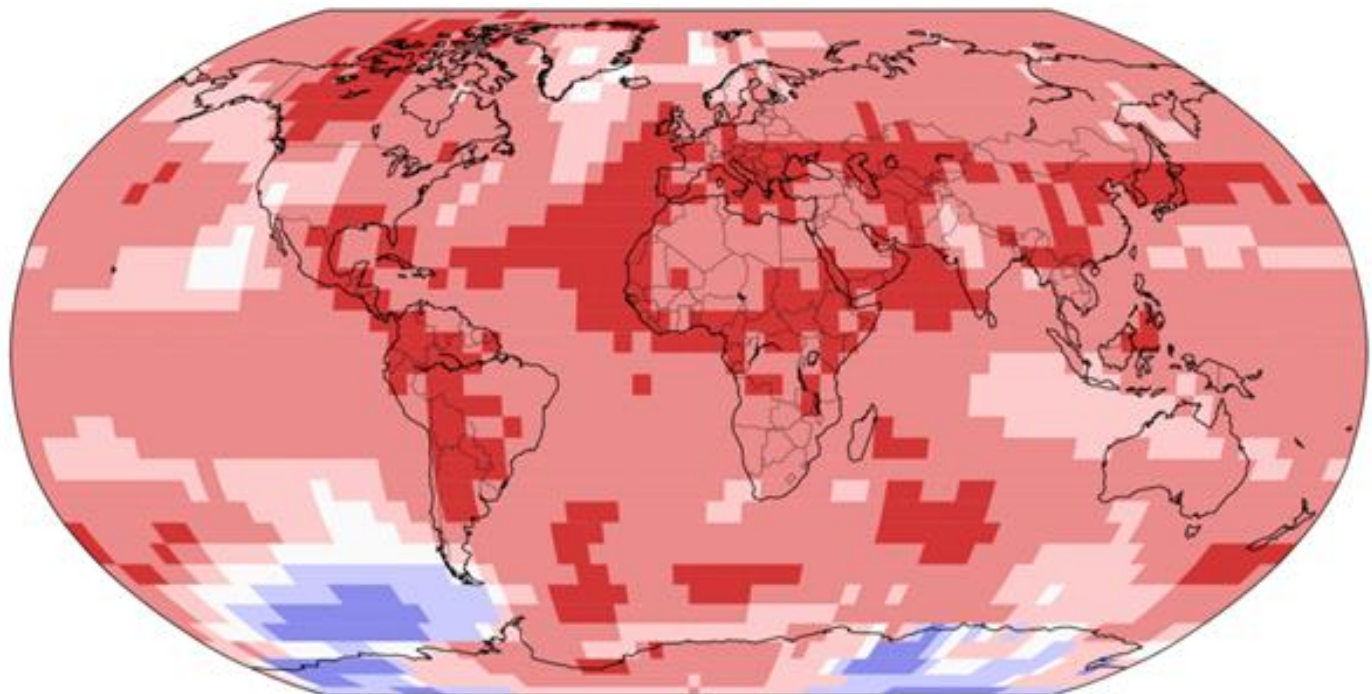
Field Inspector

Bayer is looking to fill field inspector spots in the Vicksburg, Athens and Sturgis areas for the summer. Applicants must be at least 18 years old, have a driver's license and their own vehicle, and be able to work in conditions typical of a corn field in the summer (heat, humidity, rain, mud, etc.). Employment will be June through mid-August. The pay rate is \$17/hour plus mileage reimbursement. A typical day goes from ~6 am until early afternoon with one weekend day during peak pollination. Daily tasks would include helping with pivot inspections and data collection such as field health and phenotypic checks. You will be provided a phone to complete your daily tasks. Bayer will provide training and have plenty of resources to help. Contact Madison Hire at 269-535-5236 with questions.

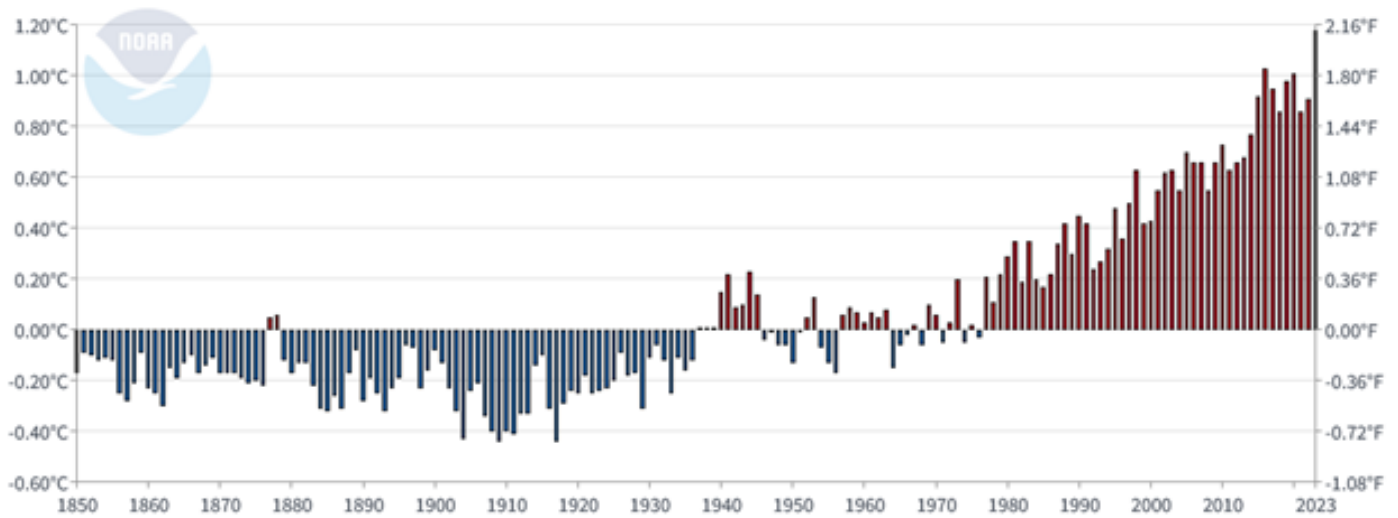
Weather Update

Weather

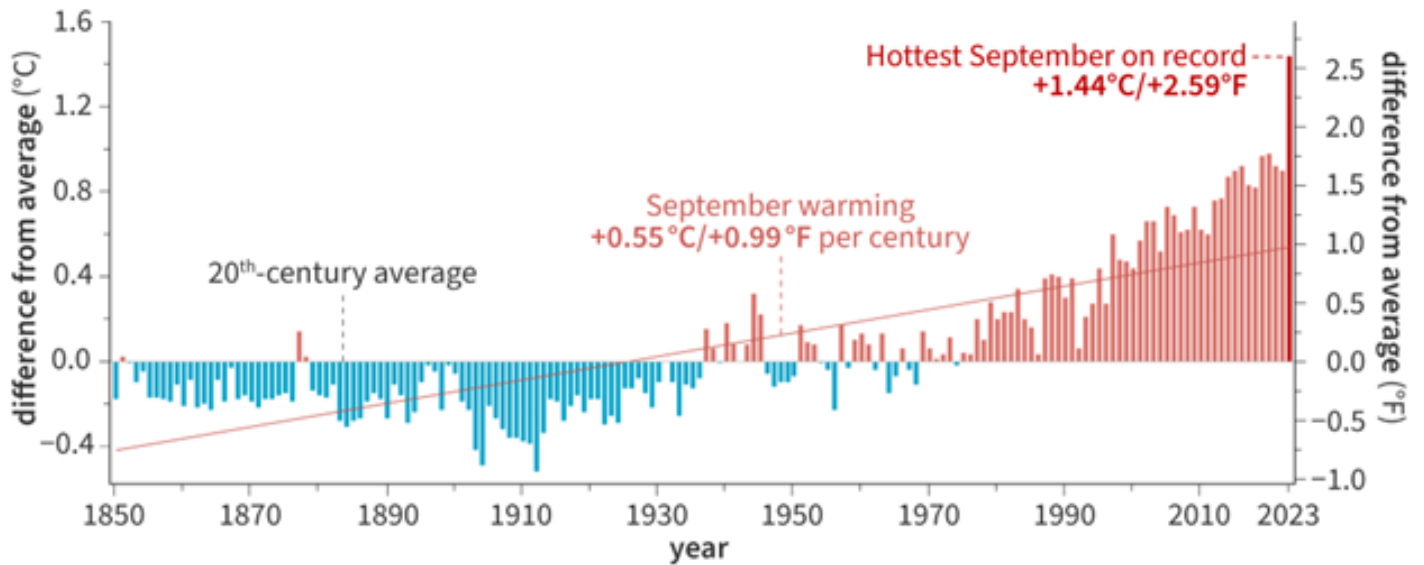
The annual climate analyses have been completed and, as expected, 2023 was found to be the warmest on record globally since reporting began in 1850. September was particularly warm at 2.6°F above average (1850 to 2023). Aside from the cold snap in the middle of January, winter so far in southwest and south-central Michigan has been 4-6 degrees warmer than normal due to higher daily temps and particularly to higher daily minimum temperatures. According to current predictions, the strong El Niño that has been impacting the Upper Midwest will decrease in strength and turn to neutral by mid-spring. The 6-10 and 8-14 day outlooks both call for very strong chances of above-normal temperatures through the second week of February.



In 2023, global surface temperature was 2.12°F above the 20th-century average. This ranks as the highest global temperature in the period 1850–2023, beating the next warmest year (2016) by a record-setting margin of 0.27°F. The 10 warmest years since 1850 have all occurred in the past decade.

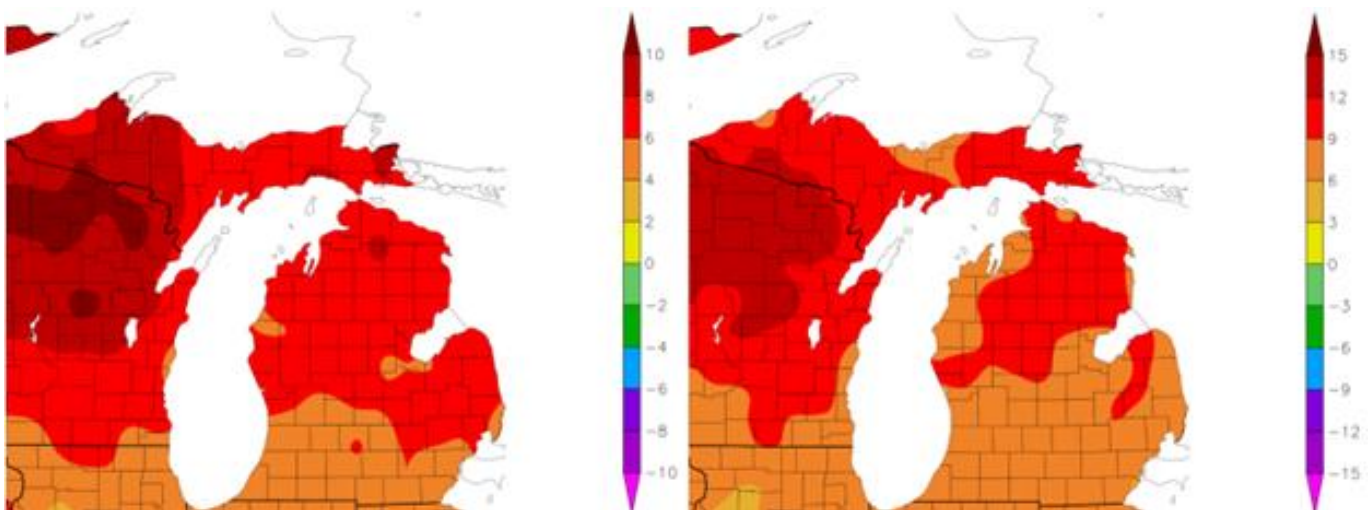


Global January-December land and ocean temperature anomalies.

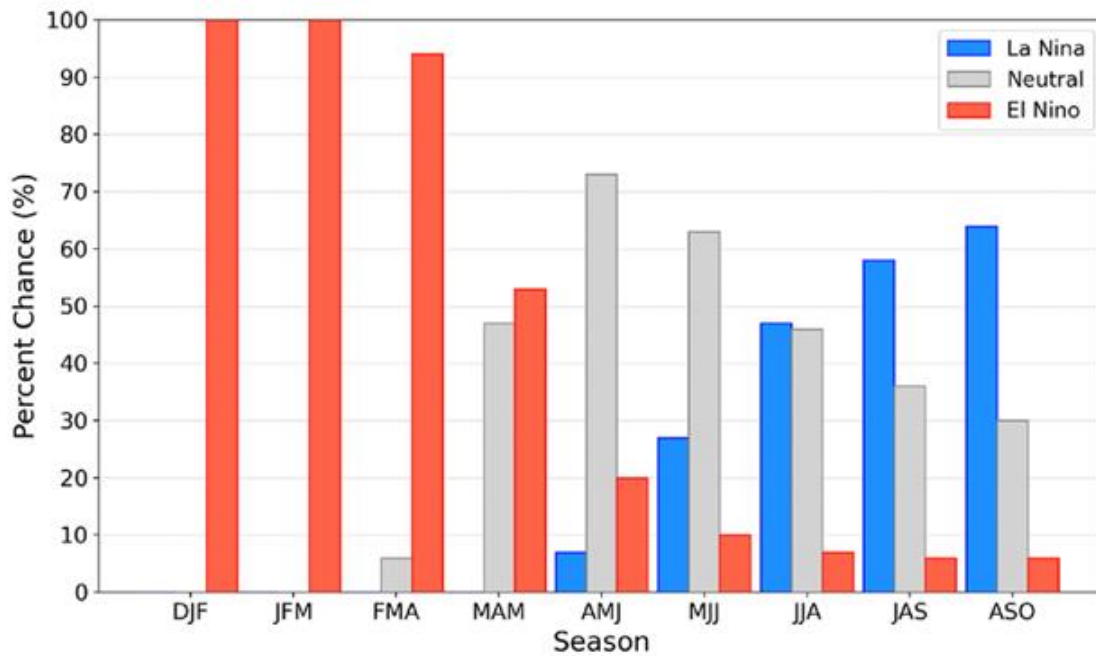


September temperature compared to the 20th-century average from 1850 to 2023.

Septembers have grown warmer at a rate of nearly 1°F per century over the modern temperature record. NOAA Climate.gov graph, based on data from NOAA National Centers for Environmental Information.

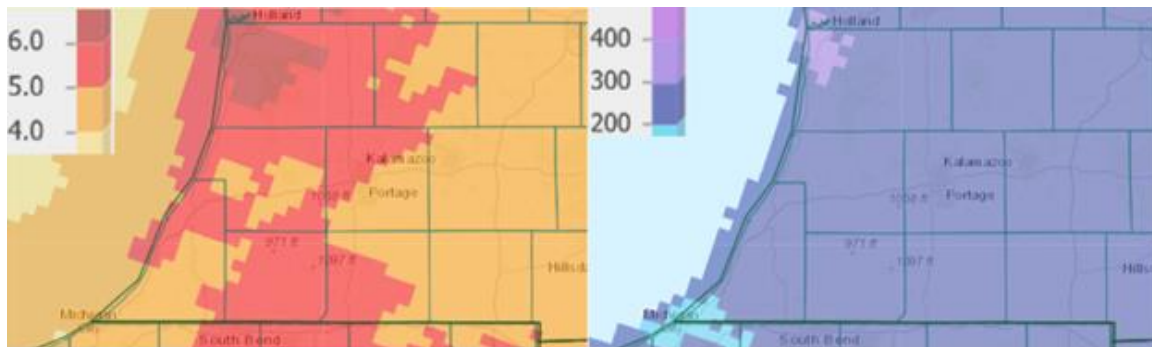


Temperature departure from normal (left) and departure from normal average minimum temperature for the past 60 days.

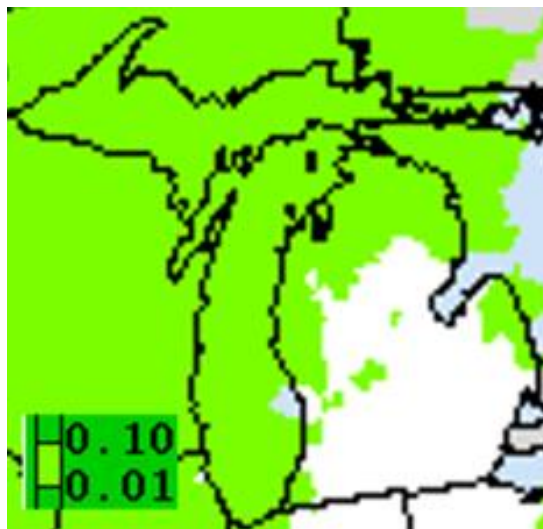


Official ENSO probabilities issued January 11 by NOAA.

Precipitation in south-central and southwest Michigan has been above-normal so far this winter with 2-4 inches more water-equivalent precipitation in January alone. The precipitation forecast for the coming week is pretty straightforward: no rain predicted until late next week. The 6-10 and 8-14 day outlooks both call for slightly above-normal chances of precipitation.

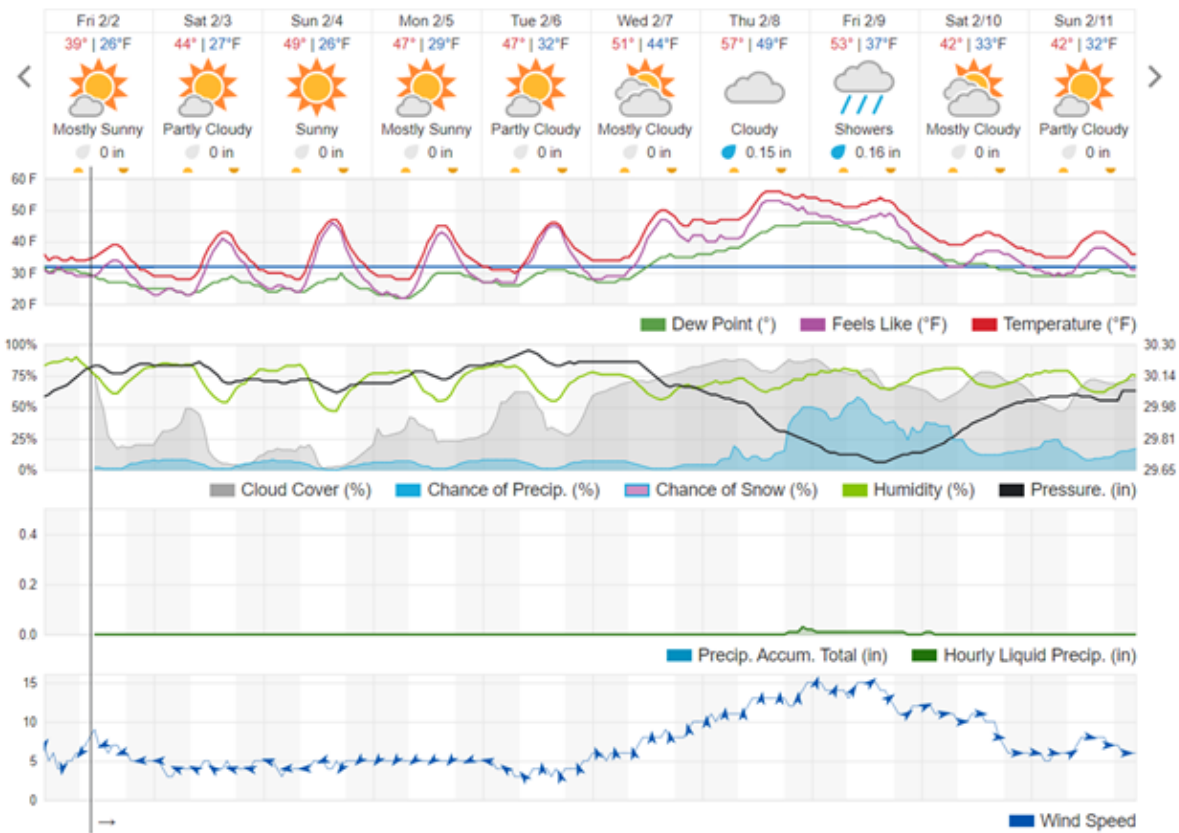


Precipitation totals (left) and percent of normal (right) for the past 30 days as of February 1.

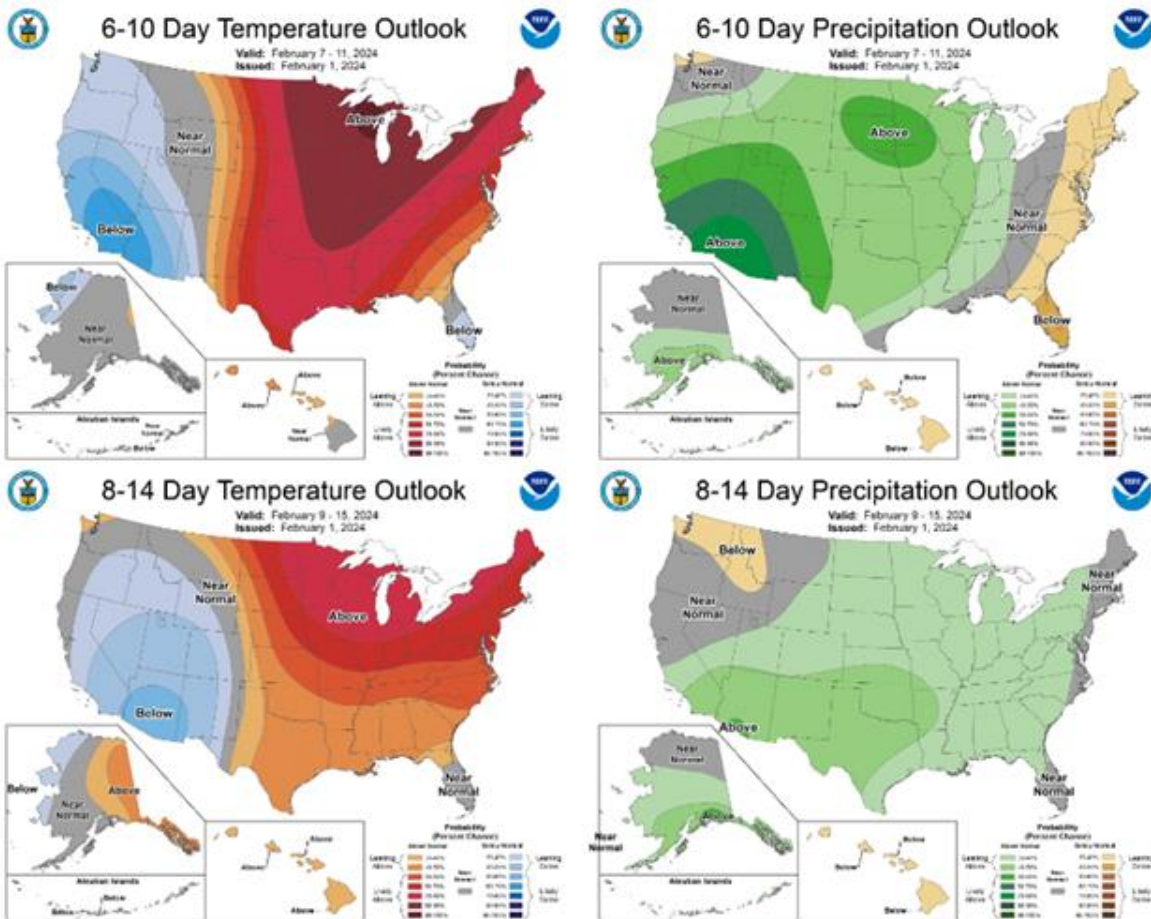


Precipitation forecast for February 2-9.

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Ten-day weather forecast for Kalamazoo according to wunderground.com.



The 6-10 day (February 7-11, top) and 8-14 day (February 9-15, bottom) outlooks for temperature (left) and precipitation (right).

Calendar

[Note: titles are clickable links to online content when highlighted and underlined]

- Feb 5** [MSU Extension SE Crop and Pest Management Update](#) . 8:30am – 3:00 pm. Old Mill Museum, 242 Toledo St., Dundee. Cost is \$40, includes light breakfast, lunch, 2024 MSU Field Crops Weed Guide. Register online by Jan. 26.
- Feb 5+** [MSU Extension Field Crops Webinar Series](#). 7:00pm Monday nights through March. Cost \$20 for series, recordings available, 1 RUP and 1 CEU available for each live session.
- Feb 7-8** [6th Annual Underground Innovations](#). Bavarian Inn Lodge, Frankenmuth, MI. Innovative farmers will share info on cover crops, strip-till, relay cropping, food grade grains, intercropping, new crops, precision technology, and new crop markets. Early bird registration (\$150) ends December 31, regular pricing (\$175) ends on January 26.
- Feb 13** [Farm Policy and Risk Management Series – Farm Bill Session #2](#). 6:30pm - 7:30pm. Zoom. Cost is free, register online.
- Feb 19** [Branch County Farmers Day Field Crops Track](#) . 8am-12pm. Branch Area Career Center, Coldwater, MI. Sessions to include irrigation practices, marketing vole management, conservation practices for less risk and more profit, and weed escapes in soybean. Cost is free, registration available soon. **3 RUP, 3 CCA**
- Feb 19** [In-Person Core Pesticide Review and Core Testing](#) . 8:00am. Branch Area Career Center, Coldwater, MI. Cost is \$15 for morning training payable to MSU, cost for testing dependent on license type. Morning training session is required before afternoon testing, only core and standards exams (no commercial categories) offered. Other locations and dates available. Register online.
- Feb 22** [MI Ag Ideas - Field Crops Track](#) . 8am-12pm. Cost is free, register once to attend any/all programs in this week-long event. Schedule and registration available online.
- Feb 26** [Michiana Irrigated Corn and Soybean Conference](#). Blue Gate Restaurant, 105 E Middlebury St, Shipshewana, IN. Cost \$20 for early registration. Registration and more details available soon.
- Feb 27** [MI Ag Ideas - Water Management Track](#) . 9am-4pm. Cost is free, register once to attend any/all programs in this week-long event. Schedule and registration available online.
- Feb 27** [Soil Fertility & Nutrient Management Short Course](#) . 8:30am-3:00pm. Allegan County MSU Extension office, 3255 122nd Ave., Ste. 200 Human Services Building, Allegan. Cost is \$50, register online.
- Feb 27-29** [2024 Drainage Workshop](#). East Lansing. Sponsored by MSU Extension in partnership with Michigan Land Improvement Contractors of America. Learn from university specialists and drainage industry professionals. Cost is \$210 by Feb. 1 or \$300 by Feb. 23. Register online, no onsite registration available.
- Apr 10** [In-Person Core Pesticide Review and Core Testing](#) . 8:00am. GreenMark Equipment, Three Rivers, MI. Cost is \$15 for morning training payable to MSU, cost for testing dependent on license type. Morning training session is required before afternoon testing, only core and standards exams (no commercial categories) offered. Other locations and dates available. Register online.

MSU Extension Digest Briefs

ATTEND THE BRANCH COUNTY FARMERS DAY ON FEBRUARY 19

PUBLISHED ON FEBRUARY 1, 2024

The Branch County Farmers Day will feature two simultaneous but separate events with field crops educational sessions and in-person pesticide applicator testing.

EDUCATIONAL SERIES OFFERS INSURANCE BASICS ON MANAGING PRODUCTION AND PRICE RISK

PUBLISHED ON FEBRUARY 1, 2024

Session recordings now available from Michigan State University Extension.

NEW CLIMATE RESILIENCY PROGRAM TO ADDRESS LONG-TERM PLANT AGRICULTURE CHALLENGES IN MICHIGAN

PUBLISHED ON FEBRUARY 1, 2024

The Agricultural Climate Resiliency Program is a partnership among MSU, the plant coalition, and the Michigan Department of Agriculture and Rural Development.

GREAT LAKES FORAGE AND GRAZING CONFERENCE IS MARCH 7, 2024

PUBLISHED ON JANUARY 31, 2024

The Great Lakes Forage and Grazing Conference features current topics and a tradeshow for producers of hay, haylage and pasture.

MICHIANA IRRIGATED CORN AND SOYBEAN CONFERENCE ON FEBRUARY 26

PUBLISHED ON JANUARY 31, 2024

The Michiana Irrigated Corn and Soybean Conference will help growers and agribusiness professionals improve irrigation practices and pest management on irrigated acres.

REGISTER NOW FOR THE MICHIGAN WHEAT PROGRAM ANNUAL WINTER GROWER MEETING

PUBLISHED ON JANUARY 30, 2024

The Michigan Wheat Program's annual Winter Grower Meeting will be Feb. 21 at the Eagle Eye Conference Center in Bath.

THE 2024 FIELD CROPS WEBINAR SERIES KICKS OFF WITH A DISCUSSION ON WILDLIFE DAMAGE IN FIELD CROPS

PUBLISHED ON JANUARY 30, 2024

James DeDecker, MSU Upper Peninsula Research and Extension Center director, and Monica Jean, MSU Extension field crops educator, discuss Repellant and Palatability trial results.

HOW IS THIS MILD WINTER AFFECTING MY WHEAT CROP?

PUBLISHED ON JANUARY 29, 2024

We've had a milder than normal winter. How is this affecting vernalization and cold hardiness of the 2024 wheat crop?

SOIL FERTILITY AND NUTRIENT MANAGEMENT TRAINING REGISTRATION IS OPEN

PUBLISHED ON JANUARY 24, 2024

Join Michigan State University Extension for a one-day soil fertility and nutrient management training that will build in detail in subsequent years.

NEW MSU RESEARCH DETAILS HOW ANALYZING HISTORICAL CROP YIELDS CAN REVEAL KEY SOIL HEALTH INSIGHTS

PUBLISHED ON JANUARY 18, 2024

An MSU-led team used a novel analytical method known as yield stability zones to show the relationship between

crop yield and soil health. The results can help farmers lower input costs and increase yield, while lessening environmental impact.

[JOIN MSU EXTENSION FOR A DISCUSSION ON 2024 FARM BILL COMMODITY PROGRAM DECISIONS](#)

PUBLISHED ON JANUARY 17, 2024

MSU Extension hosts webinar series to help you chose which Farm Bill commodity program best fits your farm.

[FINAL CALL TO REGISTER FOR 2024 DRAINAGE WORKSHOP OFFERING DESIGN CONCEPTS TO INCREASE PROFIT](#)

PUBLISHED ON JANUARY 16, 2024

Learn from university specialists and drainage industry professionals in the 2024 Drainage Workshop on Feb. 27-29, sponsored by Michigan State University Extension in partnership with Michigan Land Improvement Contractors of America.

[DUNDEE HOSTS 2024 SOUTHEAST MICHIGAN CROP AND PEST MANAGEMENT UPDATE](#)

PUBLISHED ON JANUARY 12, 2024

Join MSU Extension and Ohio State specialists on February 5 in Dundee for the latest updates on crop and pest management research.

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Michigan State University Extension

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