

## Soil temps, rain postpone planting

Written by Elizabeth Barrett  
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### Area farmers grateful for rain

Compared to previous years, Dale and Brian Gronewold may be planting corn a few days later than usual.

But the father and son farmers are not complaining.

Nearly three inches of rain refreshed parched soil during a thunderstorm April 8 that “has changed the whole spring outlook,” Brian said.

“Hopefully the rain won’t stop,” he said, noting that Monday’s precipitation added up to another half inch to help less-than-ideal planting conditions. “Besides farmers, the cattle guys got a chance with pastures.”

A lingering drought produced only four inches of rain during last year’s growing season, the corn and soybean farmer said.

And below normal snowfall this past winter exacerbated already dry conditions.

Now he said there’s enough residual moisture in the earth to get corn growing without having to irrigate like the Gronewolds and other area farmers were prepared to do.

Although the drought isn’t over, Brian said soil moisture won’t be as much a concern when

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planting begins.

For large producers, cool soil temperatures are keeping them from getting a start on planting thousands of acres.

If soil temperatures are too cold, planted corn won't grow.

"Last year, guys started in early April," Brian said about an unusual spring and summer with high temperatures and little precipitation.

Most of the corn in Nebraska is normally planted from April 19 through mid May and soybeans throughout the month of May, according to United States Department of Agriculture officials.

While they wait to plant, the Gronewolds have been tilling fields and applying fertilizer.

On Monday, the Gronewolds were getting their tractor and planter ready to go.

"We're also waiting to dry out and warm up," Brian said.

That's likely to lure some farmers into the fields to plant this weekend if temperatures rise into the 70s and stay there for a few days as forecasters are predicting.

Brian, a 2010 graduate of Chadron State College, has farmed full-time with his father for nearly three years.

Hail in 2010 wiped out their corn and soybeans while 2011 brought a bumper crop.

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Irrigation saved the Gronewold's corn and soybeans during the hot and dry spring and summer of 2012, he said.

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