



Field Notes

Kerr Center for Sustainable Agriculture E-Newsletter

E-Field Notes
July 2016

Summer is blockbuster movie season. This month, we've got viewing suggestions of our own, highlighting **several videos from the Kerr Center site.**

First, though, take a look with David Redhage at **small-scale grain raising** - both past and potential future.

Then, grab your popcorn for **two new videos** that explain how to **prepare and install watering tanks made from old tires.**

Last year's **TV report on pollinators in Oklahoma**, by Scott Thompson from Tulsa's News on 6 – **filmed in part at the Kerr ranch** – is still available **online.**

Finally, learn **how to take a soil sample** from a video featuring **Horticulture Manager George Kuepper, and recorded and edited by Communications Director Maura McDermott** – both of whom **have recently retired.** Please **visit our website and join us in wishing them well.**

As always, if you value our work, please also consider supporting it!

In this issue:

President's Note: Days Gone By, Looking to the Future - Grains

Tire Tank Videos

Bees on TV, One Year Later

Soil Sampling Video

Happy Retirement to George Kuepper, Maura McDermott!

High Summer Events: Focus on Soil Health

President's Note: Days Gone By, Looking to the Future - Grains

Today there seems to be a **resurging interest in local grains and heirloom grain varieties**. (I have listed several resource books, documents and websites at the end of this article.)

When we think of wheat today, most envision large combines on the Great Plains or Pacific Northwest. People are waking up to the idea that **grain crops used to be grown on small farms throughout the United States**, outside of today's commodity wheat production regions.



I remember my dad and me planting a 15-acre bottom field in wheat using my grandfather's steel-wheeled, 9-hole Oliver grain drill with a wooden grain box. My dad bought it for my grandfather new in 1952 before he went into the army. A neighbor would custom combine the field using an old John Deere combine.

Dad raised beef cattle and he wanted the wheat for straw bedding, not for grain. At that time, most wheat producers had moved to short straw wheat, since it was bred to yield more and have shorter stalks to prevent lodging. **My dad searched for and found an old wheat variety** (he doesn't remember the name) **which had long stalks to increase the straw yield for livestock bedding**.

We saved the seed for replanting over several years. Some years we kept the grain to use in livestock rations. We would sack it up (and tie the bags with a miller's knot) and haul it to the local feed store, where Dad would have them mix and grind it with other grains for a balanced ration....

<http://kerrcenter.com/presidents-note-days-gone-looking-future-grains/>

Tire Tank Videos



[Water tanks made from old tractor tires](#) have long attracted the attention of visitors to the Kerr Ranch - as well as forming a low-cost backbone to the livestock team's efforts to [bring water to every pasture](#).

Now, **two new videos** walk viewers through the process of preparing and installing the tire tanks:

[Tire Tanks: Preparation](#)

[Tire Tanks: Installation](#)

Bees on TV, One Year Later



What can be done to help native and honey bees thrive in Oklahoma? A year ago, **Scott Thompson from Tulsa's News on 6** (KOTV, Channel 6) came to the Kerr Center to find out. The **special report** that resulted is still [viewable online](#).

Thompson interviewed **David Redhage, who heads up the center's pollinator project**, and visited with attendees at a pollinator workshop, as well as the **Xerces Society's Ann Stine**, who led the workshop.

There is no disputing that honey bees are in trouble, and have been for years, due to habitat loss, pesticides, mites and the mysterious colony collapse disorder.

The **4,000 North American species of native bees** are being looked at to fill the gap. But they too are suffering habitat loss. **Development, mowing of roadsides at the wrong time, and careless pesticide use kill native bees like bumble bees, too.**

Preserving habitat for native bees will also benefit honey bees. The Kerr Center has been protecting native plants wherever it can, and has established an office landscape of largely native plants, grasses, shrubs and trees. The plants are labeled for visitors and we have held several workshops on native pollinators.

Soil Sampling Video



In this **15-minute video**, recently retired Kerr Center Horticulture Manager George Kuepper explains and demonstrates [how to take a soil sample](#) so that laboratory tests will give the most accurate results possible. No matter what the crop or the production practices, soil testing provides one of **the most critical pieces of information necessary** for productive agriculture. **Proper sampling procedure is the first step!**

Happy Retirement to George Kuepper, Maura McDermott!



Over the last few months, the Kerr Center has bid **fond farewells** to two employees who have been indispensable in shaping its vision and operations for many years: [George Kuepper](#), **Horticulture Manager**, and [Maura McDermott](#), **Communications Director**.

Our website holds a more complete description of George's and Maura's contributions and accomplishments. We invite you to please help enrich those tributes by **clicking on their names or photos above to add your own reminiscences and well-wishes**.

"I want to take this opportunity to wish George and Maura a wonderful retirement," says Kerr Center President David Redhage. "Working with them has been a great experience.

"I also wanted to let our readers know how dedicated they are to sustainable agriculture. I know without a doubt both Maura and George will continue to promote and use sustainable practices for the rest of their lives whether it be through writing and speaking or simply in the home garden.

"In many jobs, when you retire you walk out the door and never look back. In a field like sustainable agriculture, it is part of your life."

High Summer Events: Focus on Soil Health

JUL 18 Mon	Southern Region Cover Crops Conference Jul 18 – Jul 19 <small>all-day</small>	+
JUL 21 Thu	Healthy Soil Field Day – McClain County @ McClain County Demonstration Farm Jul 21 @ 8:30 am	+
JUL 25 Mon	4th Annual Agroforestry Academy Jul 25 – Jul 29 <small>all-day</small>	Tickets +
JUL 28 Thu	Soil Health Expo @ Leedey Community Center Jul 28 <small>all-day</small>	+
AUG 9 Tue	Tour the Kerr Center @ Kerr Center Aug 9 @ 9:00 am	+
AUG 30 Tue	Oklahoma Market Gardening School (first meeting) @ Tulsa County Extension Office Aug 30 @ 6:00 pm – 9:00 pm	Tickets +

There are at least two separate soil health-related events in Oklahoma this month: a field day at the McClain County demonstration farm on the 21st, and an expo in Leedey on the 28th. Both are free, but the last day to sign up for the McClain County event is just a few days away, on July 18.

The Kerr Center's [online events calendar](#) provides full details on all of these happenings, along with others around the state and region. It also serves as a reminder for the dates of **monthly Kerr Center tours**, which run all year round, every second Tuesday by appointment.

Don't forget that you can also use our online calendar to **keep yourself and your friends up to date** on these and other upcoming events, including our tours:

- **Subscribe to our feed** and receive **updates to your personal calendar** (Outlook, Google+, etc.) as they are made.
- **Share events on the calendar** via a number of **different social media sites**, including Facebook, Twitter, and Pinterest.

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