



# Field Notes

## Kerr Center for Sustainable Agriculture E-Newsletter

*E-Field Notes*  
July 2017

This time of summer, we can look with satisfaction out over the horticulture plots' "**green fallow**" of **warm-season cover crops**, keeping the soil shaded and sheltered, as well as weeded and nourished, despite the hot, dry weather.

We've just published former Kerr Center Horticulture Manager **George Kuepper's updated account of his nine-year effort developing that bio-extensive rotational system** on the Cannon Horticulture plots. (Kuepper was also recently recognized for his **work as an OMRI panel reviewer.**)

Two new **labeling programs reward farmers and ranchers for just such conservation-friendly practices.** Perhaps one would be a good fit for your operation?

Continuing last month's summer focus on water issues, we explain **how the Kerr Ranch uses gravity to carry water from ponds to pastures.**

As always, if you value our work, [please consider supporting it!](#)

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# New Report: Organic Bio-Extensive Management Revisited

This **new report**, by former Kerr Center Horticulture Manager George Kuepper, recounts the lessons learned during nine years of managing the Cannon Horticulture plots, converted organically from bermudagrass pasture using [cover crops and rotations](#).

The report includes **new data on biomass production from different cover crops**.

It addresses **management strategies for periods of both drought and excessive moisture**.

It also includes a section detailing the **conversion of annual crop beds to perennial plantings**.

[Organic Bio-Extensive Management Revisited](#) is the latest in a long line of quality publications, all available **free online** in the Kerr Center's [organic farming and gardening library](#).

## Organic Bio-Extensive Management Revisited



### INTRODUCTION

**BY GEORGE KUEPPER**  
Horticulture Program  
Manager (ret.)  
March 2017

I retired from the Kerr Center in mid-2016 after nine rewarding years of designing and managing an organic bio-extensive system for the Kerr Center's Cannon Horticulture Demonstration. All of us—staff, interns, and our friends in the horticulture and small farm communities—learned so very much about sustainability, practical horticulture, organic compliance, and the human element in small-scale farming. We captured much of that experience in the 2015 publication *Market Farming with Rotations and Cover Crops: An Organic Bio-Extensive System* (<http://kerrcenter.com/publication/market-farming-with-rotations-and-cover-crops-an-organic-bio-extensive-system>). We have learned even more since then, and are including it in this follow-up publication.

## George Kuepper Recognized for Organic Review Panel Service

The [June issue](#) of the Organic Materials Research Institute (OMRI) newsletter, *OMRI eNews*, featured review panel member George Kuepper. Kuepper was Horticulture Manager at the Kerr Center for nine years, retiring in 2016.

According to its [website](#), "OMRI is the only independent, nonprofit organization dedicated exclusively to **inputs**. OMRI lists input products such as fertilizers, pest controls, and livestock care products that are compliant with organic standards. Allowed products are "OMRI Listed®" and may display the OMRI seal. OMRI



verifies input products intended for use in organic production. By focusing exclusively on inputs, OMRI provides essential expertise to support the organic certification process."

"OMRI's External Review Panels consist of individuals selected by the Board of Directors to provide expertise in the review of input products.... All Review Panels make final decisions for newly applying products and selected products that undergo re-review."

The feature on Kuepper read:

*George Kuepper first joined OMRI's Crops Review Panel in 1999. According to George, "OMRI has been a fun and rewarding part of my career, and I'm glad to have the chance to continue. Not only is OMRI changing and growing, but the products are always changing. The industry is full of innovation. It's interesting to look at new ideas and ask ourselves, 'does this fit with organic?'"*

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# New Labels for Conservation-Friendly Farming Practices

Sustainable farmers and ranchers now have two more ways to **claim a premium for their ecologically friendly management practices**, thanks to [two new labeling programs](#). Both are backed by organizations with strong track records in conservation.



The [Bee Better Certified](#) program, operated by the **Xerces Society**, focuses on **increasing flower plantings on farms to provide food and nests for native bees, honey bees, and other pollinators**. It also helps farmers **reduce or eliminate pesticides** that harm bees.

**Oregon Tilth** assesses and certifies farms based on the amount and quality of habitat created, as well as the incorporation of pest management strategies aimed at protecting crop pollinators.

Bee Better is open to farms of all types and sizes. Those interested submit an application to Oregon Tilth, which inspects the farm and certifies if it meets standards. Certified farmers can use the Bee Better seal on their farmstands. Manufacturers can also use the seal on products that contain Bee Better Certified ingredients.

So much for the bees - how about the birds?

The **Audubon Society's** [Conservation Ranching Program](#) is helping ranchers restore the large swaths of prairie where they graze cattle, on the theory that "**what's good for the herd is good for the bird.**"

The program **pairs landowners with local ecologists who guide them through sustainable grazing practices** and other land-management systems that create vital habitats for birds. Cattle owners who commit to the program are entitled to brand their beef with Audubon's "Grazed on Bird-Friendly Land" label, and sell it at a premium ranging from \$0.50 to \$2.00 per pound.

So far, 40 ranchers covering 600,000 acres are participating, and this spring 15 meat retailers will begin selling the specialty beef.

# Gravity Flow Watering from Ponds

One key point of the Kerr Center livestock program's approach to water management is, as much as possible, to **take the water to the cattle in the pasture**. This allows cattle to make **more efficient use of forage**, and also **minimizes the amount of ground sacrificed for "lanes"** to and from watering points - both of which **reduce erosion**.

Boiled down to the bare essentials, we want to get the water from here...



...to here...

...and here.



The next refinement is to **let gravity carry the water to pastures**, instead of relying on power-sucking pumps.

[Continue reading....](#)

## Summer Events: Women in Ag, Floriculture, Soil Health

August opens with the statewide **Women in Ag & Small Business conference** (Oklahoma City, Aug. 3-4), and a **floriculture conference** in Stillwater (Aug. 3). There are several [Extension soil health field days](#) at different locations around the state during the month.

The Kerr Center's online [events calendar](#) provides full details on these and many other upcoming sustainable agriculture events 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.

Date	Event	Time	Location	Notes
Jul 31 (Mon)	Registration Deadline: Pontotoc County Soil Health Field Day	all-day	Pontotoc County	
Aug 1 (Tue)	Registration Deadline: Dewey County Soil Health Field Day	all-day	Dewey County	
Aug 1 (Tue)	Pontotoc County Soil Health Field Day @ Ada	8:30 am – 3:00 pm	Ada	
Aug 3 (Thu)	Oklahoma Statewide Women in Agriculture & Small Business Conference @ Oklahoma City (Moore Norman Technology Center)	all-day	Oklahoma City	Tickets
Aug 3 (Thu)	Current Challenges in Floriculture @ Stillwater (Wes Watkins Center Auditorium)	8:00 am – 4:30 pm	Stillwater	Tickets
Aug 7 (Mon)	Registration Deadline: Beaver County Soil Health Field Day	all-day	Beaver County	
Aug 7 (Mon)	Dewey County Soil Health Field Day @ Canton	8:30 am – 12:00 pm	Canton	
Aug 8 (Tue)	Beaver County Soil Health Field Day @ Elmwood	8:30 am – 12:00 pm	Elmwood	
Aug 8 (Tue)	Tour the Kerr Center @ Kerr Center	9:00 am	Kerr Center	

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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## Support the Kerr Center

Since 1965 the Kerr Center has been reaching out to folks in Oklahoma and beyond. Today, the Friends of the Kerr Center help us continue this vital work! If you enjoy reading this newsletter or visiting our website, please consider [making a gift to the Kerr Center](#) today!

## Quick Links...

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