



# Field Notes

## Kerr Center for Sustainable Agriculture E-Newsletter

*E-Field Notes*  
March 2018

With spring officially sprung, David Redhage returns to the topic of **organic small-scale grain production**.

Our online **events calendar** shows several **monarch meetups** happening around the state. This issue features several resources that would come in handy at such gatherings:

- a guide to the different **milkweed species native to Oklahoma**
- a worksheet to help **identify common Oklahoma pasture plants**
- a report on using **cover crops as habitat for beneficial insects**

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These are just a small sampling of the many educational materials that we are able to research, produce, and distribute thanks to the [donations](#) of supporters like yourself. Thank you!

## President's Note: Organic Small Scale Grain Production

Several months ago I wrote about small scale grain production. This year at the Southern SAWG meeting in Chattanooga, Tennessee, I attended a small scale organic grain production presentation by Meagan Roberts from Western Piedmont Community College in North Carolina. She did an excellent job and pointed out many of the challenges facing new producers.



One is finding seed. Since you are developing a niche market, you will probably be using local varieties.

Finding a sufficient quantity of seed can be difficult. In one case, she needed to increase seed for two years before they could plant a large enough field to sell the grain from. She also discussed planting, harvesting, storage, and marketing challenges.

Many of these challenges can be overcome with old equipment, if you can find it in good shape and you have some mechanical ability for repairs. Small grain drills are available for planting. You can use an old Allis-Chalmers All-Crop pull-type combine for harvesting, if you can find one in good condition. Since you are selling grain for human consumption, the grain must be tested for aflatoxin, among other things. This is an additional expense. Storage requirements can be challenging for food grade sales.

Meagan also mentioned a company called Meadows Mills, Inc., in North Carolina, that manufactures new grain grinding equipment. Most of their products are geared toward commercial operations, but they have a small home/light commercial grinder in their catalog. The company has been in business for a long time, and if you find an old antique version of their equipment, you can still buy parts for it!

There is also a German company manufacturing small grain grinding equipment. They manufacture a line of small grinding equipment which looks beautiful. Most of their equipment is for commercial scale, but here are two websites. (Bear in mind that you would need to order this equipment from Europe.)

<http://www.goodmills.eu/en/index1.htm>

<https://www.getreidemuehlen.com/en/grain-mills/household-grain-mills/household-grain-mills.php>

Rather than go over the entire slide presentation, I have linked to Meagan's presentation from the [Kerr Center website](#).

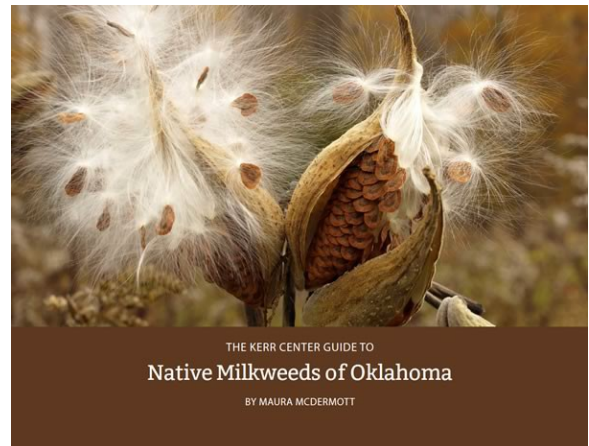
# Native Milkweeds of Oklahoma

When we picture milkweed, most of us are probably thinking of the plant known as *Asclepias asperula*, or antelope horns.

However, that well-known plant is just one of **over two dozen species of milkweed native to Oklahoma - each with its own unique ecological niche and role in pollinator conservation.**

[Native Milkweeds of Oklahoma](#), written by former Kerr Center Communications Director Maura McDermott, contains basic information and images for all these different milkweed species. It lists the common and scientific names of Oklahoma's native milkweeds, as well as **geographic range, bloom period, and host plant information.**

It makes a handy **identification guide in the field**, and also a **helpful tool for planning pollinator plantings**, choosing the species that best fit the particulars of a given site.



# Plant Identification Worksheet

Did you know that sumac is the only tree species native to all of the lower 48 states? That the fruit of poison ivy provides food for many bird species, including turkeys and quail? That buttercup sap can cause blisters in susceptible individuals?

This [plant identification worksheet](#) contains these and many other interesting and little-known facts. It is also a good **all-around quick reference**, as well as a **useful study aid** for anyone looking to learn (or re-learn) **basic pasture botany**.



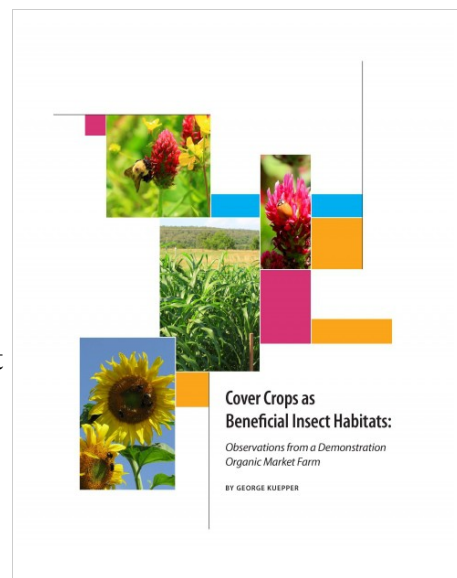
The worksheet is used in plant identification trainings on the Kerr ranch. It includes basic information and notes on **50 plants common in southeastern Oklahoma**, including common and scientific names, growth and flowering seasons, size, and more.

## Cover Crops as Beneficial Insect Habitats

The heavy use of [cover crops](#) in the Cannon Horticulture plots creates opportunities for plantings that can foster populations of **beneficial insects**.

However, beneficial insect habitat usually takes a back seat to other priorities, such as fertility and weed management, in cover crop selection.

[This report](#) shares insights into **which cover crops are more compatible with beneficial insect habitat** and which are less so. It offers numerous examples of how **management choices can maximize this aspect of cover crops' potential**.



# Early Spring Events: Soil Health, Beef Cattle Summit, Produce Safety

March goes out like a lion with a **soil health workshop** (Mar. 27, Ada) and the **Eastern Oklahoma Beef Cattle Summit** (Mar. 29, McAlester), as well as a **talk on perennial crops** by Land Institute researcher Tim Crews (Mar. 31, Tulsa). At the start of April, you can earn a **safe produce handling certificate** (Apr. 4, Woodward), or learn about both **feral hog management and soil health** (Apr. 4, Altus).

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.

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.

The screenshot displays a calendar interface with the following events:

- MAR 27 Tue**: Strategies to Promote Soil Health Training Workshop @ Ada (Mar 27 @ 9:30 am)
- MAR 29 Thu**: Eastern Oklahoma Beef Cattle Summit @ McAlester (SE Oklahoma Expo Center) (Mar 29 @ 8:00 am – 3:15 pm)
- MAR 31 Sat**: Raising Food in a Healthy Way @ Tulsa (Tulsa Botanic Garden) (Mar 31 @ 10:00 am)
- APR 3 Tue**: Our Farms, Our Future Conference: The Next 30 Years of Sustainable Agriculture @ St. Louis, MO (Hyatt Regency at the Arch) (Apr 3 – Apr 5 all-day) [Tickets]
- APR 4 Wed**: Produce Safety Alliance Grower Training Course @ Woodward (Woodward County Event Center & Fairgrounds) (Apr 4 @ 8:30 am – 5:00 pm) [Tickets]
- APR 4**: Feral Hog Management & Strategies to Promote Soil Health Workshop @ Altus (Southwest Technology Center) (Apr 4 @ 9:30 am)

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### Quick Links...

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