



# Field Notes

## Kerr Center for Sustainable Agriculture E-Newsletter

*E-Field Notes*  
November 2018

Season's greetings from the Kerr Center!

David Redhage starts off this issue with a review of a book on two very different visions of the future, and the men who championed them.

As usual, the balance of the December issue takes a **look back at the year gone by**, focusing by turns on our **conservation, livestock, and horticulture programs** - with some sneak peeks at what we'll be working on in 2019.

We ended 2018 with some nice donations – [thank you for your support!](#) If you haven't supported our work recently, please do consider [making a donation](#).

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## President's Note: Book Review: The Wizard and the Prophet

I recently read the book [\*The Wizard and the Prophet\*](#), which contrasts Norman Borlaug (the Wizard) and William Vogt (the Prophet) – or, more simplistically, conventional ag. vs. organic ag. It is not a light read, due to the depth to which the author, Charles C. Mann, delves into both types of agriculture.

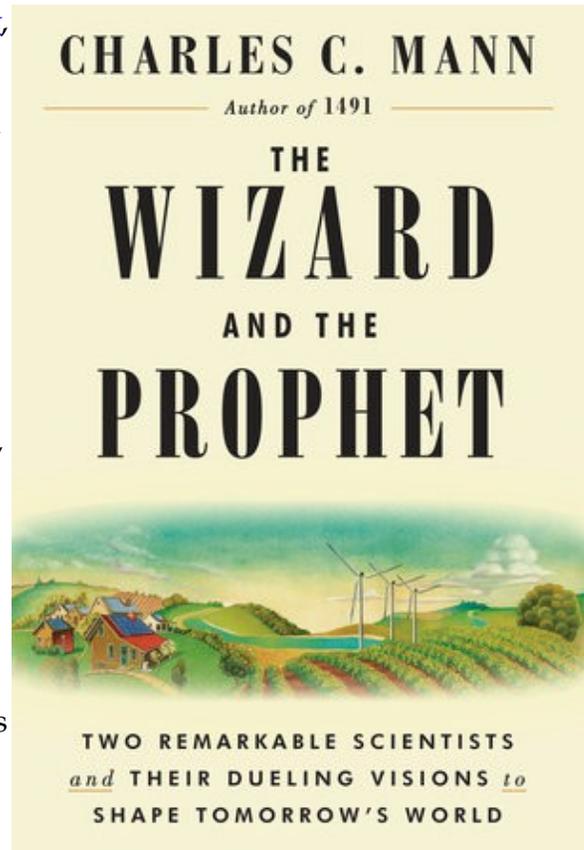
The book does not answer which is correct, but does contrast the differences, and traces how each view has developed over time. One believes in using science to increase agricultural production levels to feed the world; the other believes overuse of resources will ultimately lead to a collapse of society, and that we should live within the limits of the world's ecosystems.

While the Kerr Center works in the world of sustainable agriculture and more closely aligns with "the Prophet," I find there are pros and cons to both viewpoints. Plant breeding has led to higher yields and disease resistance using conventional techniques (not genetic engineering methods). This was what ultimately led to the Green Revolution.

Organic production methods don't reject plant breeding as long as it does not involve genetic engineering methods, but do reject synthetic fertilizers and sprays, which were used to increase yields of new varieties used in the Green Revolution. Organic systems have long used cover crops, and now conventional production systems are adding cover crops to improve soil organic matter and reduce erosion.

While both viewpoints are still fundamentally different, there seems to be some adopting of technology and ideas across both methods. There is an interesting discussion on GMOs found on pages 201-206. It covers some early attempts to field-test the results of GMO research, and the resulting controversy and protests.

While the written part of the book is long, at 477 pages with an additional 103 pages of notes and works cited, it was an interesting journey through the history of both versions of agriculture, and how we arrived where we are today. It did not change my view on the importance of sustainable agriculture as we practice it at the Kerr Center, but it did show me how each view developed over time.



## 2018: The Year in Review



The Kerr Center's programming in 2018 focused on [season extension](#) and [grazing](#), as well as the [elderberry](#) project and management of the SARE [Producer Development Program](#).

### [Horticulture](#)

Due to the wet spring, we did not lay any new **plastic mulch** on the horticulture plots this year. We did plant some varieties of cantaloupe on plastic from last year, between the [elderberry](#) rows, but these suffered heavy wildlife damage.

A late freeze killed five of thirty **Chinese chestnut** trees, setting back that trial. Replacements were purchased and planted this fall, with landscape fabric and drip irrigation installed. One lesson learned so far in this trial is how much Chinese chestnuts dislike heavy irrigation. The combination of summer rains followed by irrigation, usually one week later, resulted in leaf curl. The soils on the planting site hold more water than anticipated, so the irrigation was turned off by mid-summer.

2018 was the first year of the **elderberry** grant. The late freeze also set back the elderberries, but they produced, and blossom size, fruit yield, and brix were recorded. It will be interesting to see whether the late freeze impacts yields compared to future years.

The Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma sponsored four [hoop house](#) construction workshops in

2018, at the Jones Academy, Wilburton College, Monroe School, and Calvin School. The workshops were well received by students and staff, with some parents attending.

### Conservation

Requests continue for talks on [native plants and pollinators](#) and pollinator tours at the Kerr Center. Participating in monthly conference calls with the Oklahoma Monarch & Pollinator Collaborative keeps the Kerr Center in contact with all the relevant players in promoting good pollinator habitat in Oklahoma.

[Water bars](#) were installed for ranch roads to reduce erosion. The installations are being photo monitored in order to document their effectiveness.

### Livestock

The Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma sponsored a [grazing](#) workshop in 2018. It was a strange spring, with the late start to summer. As a result, [hay](#) stocks were down to three round bales before spring green up, requiring extra baling this year to rebuild hay supplies.

### SARE Professional Development Program

The University of Georgia was selected as the SARE Southern Region host institution for the next five years, and the Kerr Center received the contract for the PDP Program.

## **2019**

In 2019, we hope to continue to work with the Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma and the Oklahoma Monarch Collaborative, and build the horticulture and livestock education programs.

The horticulture program will focus on season extension and perennial crops. The livestock program will focus on developing a cow herd to manage the ranch forage base, but will include a small herd near the office to investigate how rotational grazing can work for the small producer.

Moving forward, the program emphasis will be on dealing with the changing climate. This has affected both the livestock program and the horticulture program. The livestock program will need to work on being more flexible in stocking rates and in what tools are used to manage pastures. The horticulture program will move further into season extension and season modification technology, with an emphasis on automation.

# Don't Miss the Horticulture Industries Show!

The [Horticulture Industries Show](#) runs Jan. 4-5 in Fayetteville, AR. Also in Arkansas, [Southern SAWG's annual conference](#) takes place later in the month. In other neighboring states, you can catch the [Mid-America Organic Association conference](#) (Independence, MO, Jan. 24-26), the [No-Till on the Plains conference](#) (Wichita, KS, Jan. 29-30), and the [Mid-Missouri Grazing Conference](#) (Jefferson City, MO, Jan. 31). Back in Oklahoma, the Noble Foundation is running a workshop on [fire for both wildlife and livestock](#) (Ardmore, Jan. 15).

Date	Event	Location	Time	Tickets
JAN 4 Fri	Horticulture Industries Show: People, Plants, & Pollinators	Fayetteville, AR (Chancellor Hotel)	Jan 4 - Jan 5 all-day	🔗 Tickets
JAN 8 Tue	Tour the Kerr Center	Kerr Center	Jan 8 @ 9:00 am	
JAN 15 Tue	Field Day: How to Use Prescribed Fire for Wildlife and Livestock	Marietta (Noble Research Institute, Coffey Ranch)	Jan 15 @ 8:30 am - 3:00 pm	🔗 Tickets
JAN 23 Wed	Southern SAWG 2019 Conference	Little Rock, AR	Jan 23 - Jan 26 all-day	
JAN 24 Thu	Conference: Mid-America Organic Association 2019	Independence, MO (Stoney Creek Hotel & Conference Center)	Jan 24 - Jan 26 all-day	🔗 Tickets
JAN 29 Tue	No-Till on the Plains Winter Conference	Wichita, KS (Century II Convention Center)	Jan 29 - Jan 30 all-day	🔗 Tickets
JAN 31 Thu	Mid-Missouri Grazing Conference	Jefferson City, MO (St. Martins K of C Hall)	Jan 31 @ 1:00 pm - 6:30 pm	🔗 Tickets

You can find full details on these and many other upcoming sustainable agriculture events around the state and region on the Kerr Center's online [events calendar](#).

The calendar 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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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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