



Field Notes

Kerr Center for Sustainable Agriculture E-Newsletter

E-Field Notes
April 2016

Registration is now open for two June workshops, on livestock (June 4 at the Kerr Center) and elderberries (June 11 at 360 OK Farms). Space is limited, and registration is first-come, first-serve, so please sign up early for these popular topics. For details, see the articles below.

The livestock workshop rolls grazing management and watering systems into one information-rich day. Get a head start with a look at our report on riparian area management techniques.

Our events calendar offers details and registration for all of our presently scheduled events and workshops - use it to keep up-to-date.

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

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Note from the President's Desk

Many times when I look at different organizations and what they stand for, I wonder if those in charge actually "practice what they preach." I have been involved in agriculture my whole life, having grown up on a farm. I have grown a garden most of my life and have used many of the practices considered to be part of sustainable agriculture.



Looking back, I realize I was not involved in gardening for only the first four years of my life, and even then, my grandparents had gardens. When my parents decided to start a garden, it was large from the start, right at 17,400 square feet, or about four-tenths of an acre.

I started making compost for the family garden when I was in high school. My dad experimented with sowing a cover crop of turnips for the garden in the fall. We spread wood ashes over the garden from our wood stove.

We didn't grow for fun, but to can vegetables for the winter and fresh vegetables for the summer. Over 1/3 of the garden was planted to Irish potatoes each year. My job was to hill, mulch and water the potatoes. In late summer/early fall we would dig the potatoes with a one bottom horse plow pulled behind an 8-N Ford tractor. In order to grow enough potatoes, we went in on a separate "truck patch" of potatoes with my grandparents and uncle.

Our garden would not meet organic certification standards, but the only thing we used for insect control was Sevin dust. Livestock manure was applied in the fall and lime if needed based on soil tests.

I don't consider myself to be an expert gardener, but for me, growing vegetables to eat was part of my youth and has continued into my adult years. Over time, I incorporated compost and cover cropping as a yearly part of my production system.

I have never grown vegetables to sell, but I am still aware of what it takes to grow a garden. So when I talk about gardening, vegetable production and sustainable practices, I speak from a lifetime of experience.

There is still a lot I don't know, but learning new things is still fun. I hope I never have to stop growing vegetables and gardening. So when I talk about vegetable production, I try to "practice what I preach."

- David Redhage, President/CEO

Livestock Workshop June 4



Every rancher knows cattle can't last long without grass and water. The most successful ones coordinate their management of those two resources to maximize both profits and sustainability. A [June 4 livestock workshop](#) will explain how the Kerr Center puts that strategy into practice.

The day-long workshop, running from 9 to 4 at the Center's ranch near Poteau, will demonstrate how the Kerr ranch stretches its grass by spreading watering points as evenly as possible, and grazing any given pasture as little as twice a year.

When water sources are few and far between, cattle graze less efficiently. They spend time trekking between grass and water when they could otherwise be grazing or resting. They trample paths to ponds and tanks, and leave the farther reaches of pastures ungrazed.

On the Kerr ranch, buried water lines fill tanks from ponds by gravity flow, keeping the herd within a few hundred feet of water at all times.

Having **multiple watering points** lets Cattle Manager Will Lathrop **divide the ranch into many smaller pastures, resting the majority of the acreage for most of the year.** That boosts grass production, and paves the way to "**stockpiling**" forage for the cattle to graze outside the

growing season, when many producers spend time and money feeding hay.

In addition to these broad strokes, the workshop will feature fine details of managing both water and grass, covering such topics as:

- using old tractor tires as an **economical source of watering tanks**,
- fencing cattle out of streams and ponds to **improve water quality and limit erosion**,
- estimating available forage and planning grazing rotations,
- setting up **temporary electric fencing**, and more.

Kerr Center workshops are small and informal, with plenty of time for attendees to ask questions and compare notes. They feature both classroom presentations and time out on the ranch.

Registration is due by May 27, but early registration is encouraged to be sure of a place. Registration costs \$25 (\$15 for each additional family member), and includes lunch and snacks. (Refunds are available for cancellations made by the due date.)

For more information or to [register](#), visit the events calendar at www.kerrcenter.com, call 918.647.9123, or send an email to mailbox@kerrcenter.com.

Oklahoma's Best-Kept Secrets: Elderberry Workshop June 11



Elderberry is much in the news these days, with good reason. Its flowers and berries yield a **wide range of products**, with reputed **health benefits** from burn treatment to flu prevention.

However, many may not realize that this **promising new crop** grows **native in Oklahoma**. One of the most popular commercial selections, "Wyldeewood," was developed from a plant found growing wild near Eufaula.

Likewise, one of the nation's **largest commercial elderberry operations is also an Oklahoma original: Brent and Valerie Madding's 360 OK Farms**, in southeastern Muskogee County.

The Maddings will welcome visitors to their farm on **June 11 from 10 to 2**, for a workshop to introduce potential new growers to the crop and share the details of their operation. The Kerr Center is pleased to host this timely and fascinating workshop, addressing a native plant with great potential for family farming in the region.

360 OK Farms boasts a **7,000-plant elderberry orchard on eight acres**. The Maddings specialize in the research and cultivation of Oklahoma native varieties of elderberry. They market retail and wholesale, selling both cuttings and rooted stock of several different

varieties.

Finding a new niche crop was only the beginning of 360 OK Farms' innovations. "The berries sell for \$2 a pound," says Brent Manning. "The flowers go for \$10 an ounce."

With that in mind, 360 OK Farms makes and markets a **variety of value-added elderberry products**, including teas, soaps, and skin care products. They **grow their own ingredients** for this product range, using no pesticides.

360 OK Farms needed a reliable means of both propagating elderberry plants and growing herbs and vegetables year-round in Oklahoma's unpredictable climate. Their solution shows yet another example of the Maddings' outside-the-box thinking: an **aquaponic greenhouse** that gets its fertility from fish rather than commercial fertilizers.

The workshop will cover variety selection, propagation, establishment, production, harvest, marketing, and the many uses for this perennial plant. Along with the Maddings, Kerr Center President David Redhage will also speak.

Registration is due by June 3, but early registration is encouraged to be sure of a place. Registration costs \$40 (\$20 for an additional family member), and includes lunch and snacks.

For more information or to [register](#), visit the events calendar at www.kerrcenter.com, call 918.647.9123, or send an email to mailbox@kerrcenter.com.

Riparian Area Management Techniques



One topic at the [June 4 livestock workshop](#) will be the **benefits for soil conservation and water quality of limiting livestock access to streams and rivers**. A 2011 report, "[Riparian Area Management Techniques](#)," by the Kerr Center's David Redhage, gives a detailed treatment of the same topic.

This report gives an overview of riparian area management techniques in use on the Kerr Ranch, including **fencing, limited-access watering, and stabilized stream crossing points**. It includes a **detailed budget and description for constructing stabilized stream crossing points**, as well as a discussion of the benefits of riparian areas.

Register Now for Early June Workshops

MAY 12 Thu	Deadline: Farmers Market Promotion Program (FMPP) Grant Applications May 12 @ 6:12 pm	+
	Deadline: Local Food Promotion Program (LFPP) Grant Applications May 12 @ 6:12 pm	+
MAY 27 Fri	Registration Deadline: Livestock Workshop May 27 <small>all-day</small>	+
JUN 2 Thu	Pasture Plant Identification Workshop @ Kerr Center for Sustainable Agriculture Jun 2 @ 10:00 am – 12:00 pm	+
JUN 3 Fri	Registration Deadline: Elderberry Workshop Jun 3 <small>all-day</small>	+
	Deadline: Southern SARE Professional Development Program Grant Applications Jun 3 @ 11:00 pm – 11:00 pm	+
JUN 4 Sat	Livestock Workshop @ Kerr Center for Sustainable Agriculture Jun 4 @ 9:00 am – 4:00 pm	+
JUN 11 Sat	Elderberry Workshop @ 360 OK Farms Jun 11 @ 10:00 am – 2:00 pm	+

Registration is now open for three Kerr Center workshops in early June:

- a free [pasture plant identification workshop](#) on the morning of **June 2** (no advance registration required)
- an all-day [livestock workshop](#) on **June 4** (**register by May 27**)
- a mid-day [elderberry workshop](#) at 360 OK Farms on **June 11** (**register by June 3**)

The Kerr Center's online [events calendar](#) provides full details on all of these workshops, along with others happening 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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