Field Notes

Kerr Center for Sustainable Agriculture E-Newsletter

E-Field Notes
March 2016

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Spring has sprung!

In this issue, we direct the current and future graziers among you to some eyes-on resources for electric fencing, and point the way to some clarity on the sometimes confusing subject of biochar.

In addition, we offer advice on a not-so-obvious suite of pollinator plants (hint: look up).

Our events calendar now lists details on all of our spring workshops - don't miss them!

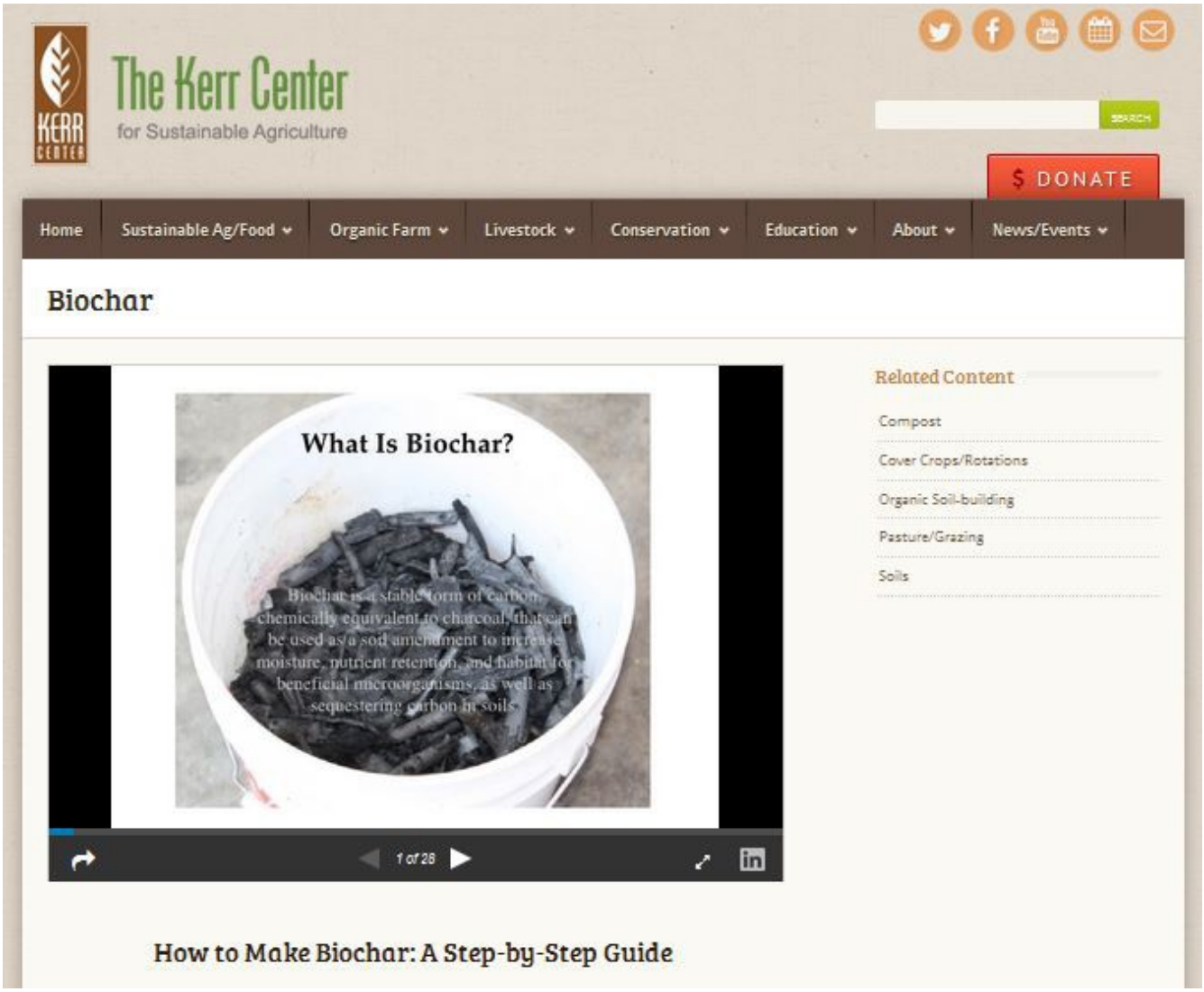
As always, if you value our work, please also consider supporting it!

Zap! Electric Fencing Video Tutorials

No matter what the job, watching someone with experience do it can make it clear in ways that no amount of solo trial-and-error can match.

That's why the Kerr Center hosts a series of how-to videos on electric fencing on our website. You can watch NRCS expert Ralph Harris demonstrate how to tie a flexible end loop, attach an insulator, and splice wires.

There are plenty more resources on electric fencing, and videos on other topics, in the Kerr Center's free online library of sustainable agriculture resources.



Biochar Basics

In recent years there's been a good deal of hype and not a little mystery surrounding the term "biochar." The basics are simple: mix charcoal into compost, or soak it in compost tea, and then add it to the soil.

The positive results from these simple steps can be far-reaching: increased soil microbial activity, water-holding capacity, and organic matter, for a few.

The Kerr Center's biochar page details the Cannon Horticulture Project's experiences with making and using biochar, from building and operating simple kiln designs to some preliminary results on the different properties of char made from different on-farm feedstocks.

Biochar is only one of many helpful topic areas in the Kerr Center's online horticulture library.

Trees for Pollinators

Pollinator plantings don't have to be limited to wildflowers.

The Kerr Center's newly revised publication, "Trees and Shrubs of Value to Pollinators," describes the roles that taller, woodier members of the plant family can play in providing habitat for native pollinators.

Compiled by the Xerces Society for Invertebrate Conservation, this report lists, in table format, a variety of trees and shrubs that grow in Oklahoma. For each, it gives time of bloom, mature height, water requirements, and commercial sources, as well as the pollinators that visit the plant, whether it is a host or nest plant, and its value to other wildlife.

The Kerr Center's online native plant and pollinator library contains many other resources for working with native pollinators and the plants they depend on. Give it a look!

Kerr Center Workshops for Late Spring

Three Kerr Center workshops are now set for late spring:
- a free pasture plant identification workshop on the morning of **June 2**
- an all-day livestock workshop on **June 4**
- an elderberry workshop at 360 OK Farms on **June 11**

Registration for all Kerr Center events that require it will be available on our website beginning in early April.

Kerr Center President David Redhage will be speaking on pollinators and their impact on public welfare at the Finding Center conference in Stillwater on **April 7-8**.

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.

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!

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