Field Notes

Kerr Center for Sustainable Agriculture E-Newsletter

E-Field Notes
May 2016

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Last Chance to Register for June Workshops

Registration is closing soon for two June workshops - don't miss out!

May 27 is the last day to register for the **June 4** livestock workshop. This intensive, hands-on session combines the topics of two of last year's most popular workshops - watering systems and grazing management - into a single day.

June 3 is the last day to register for the **June 11** elderberry workshop at 360 Farms.

Space is limited at both these events, and once the spots are filled, they're gone. **Please don't let these opportunities slip away!** For details, see the articles below.

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!

President's Note: Soil Erosion and Agriculture

David Redhage, President/CEO

Soil erosion is a natural process. Under agricultural production systems soil erosion in many cases exceeds the natural rate. Many of you are aware of the issues surrounding soil erosion. Long-term loss of productivity, inability to produce food for future generations, and silting of streams and waterways are just a few.

What may be surprising to many is that we have not, despite years of research and changes to crop and livestock production practices, solved the problem of soil erosion. A 2007 book by David Montgomery, called Dirt-The Erosion of Civilizations, describes how past civilizations fell due to how they managed their soils. It is not the only book to tie resource management with the long term health of a civilization, but it does point out that we are still mismanaging our soil resource and are not immune to the failures of the past.

We do, however, recognize the issue and can document and study it. The book promotes moving to a more sustainable agriculture. The issue is defining what a soil conserving sustainable agriculture should look like. Some argue no-till farming, with or without chemicals; others suggest organic systems; and still others suggest a system based on perennial crops.

Continue reading....

Register by May 27: Livestock Workshop

May 27 is the last day to register for the livestock workshop on June 4.

The workshop devotes an entire day to covering **two of the most essential topics in cattle ranching**: watering systems and grazing management. It explains how the Kerr Center contrives to keep both fresh, clean water and abundant forage in front of its herd at all times.

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**. That lets cattle spend their time grazing, instead of sweating off precious pounds trekking back and forth between food and drink.

It also lets managers **focus the herd on small sections of the ranch**, leaving the bulk of the acreage to rest and regrow during most of the year.

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 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.

Register by June 3: Elderberry Workshop

June 3 is the last day to register for the elderberry workshop on June 11.

Two of **Oklahoma's most successful elderberry entrepreneurs** will host this workshop at their own operation, **360 Farms** in southeastern Muskogee County.

Brent and Valerie Madding were popular presenters at last year's elderberry workshop at the Kerr Center. This time around, they're bringing the crowd to their own place.

Running from 10 to 2, the workshop will introduce potential new growers to elderberries and share the details of 360 Farms' operations. **Topics include variety selection, propagation, establishment, production, harvest, marketing**, and the many uses for this perennial plant.

Kerr Center David Redhage will also make a presentation and describe the Kerr Center's own experience with elderberries.

Finding a new niche crop was only the beginning of 360 OK Farms' innovations. "**The berries**

sell for $2 a pound," says Brent Madding. "The flowers go for $10 an ounce."

With that in mind, 360 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.

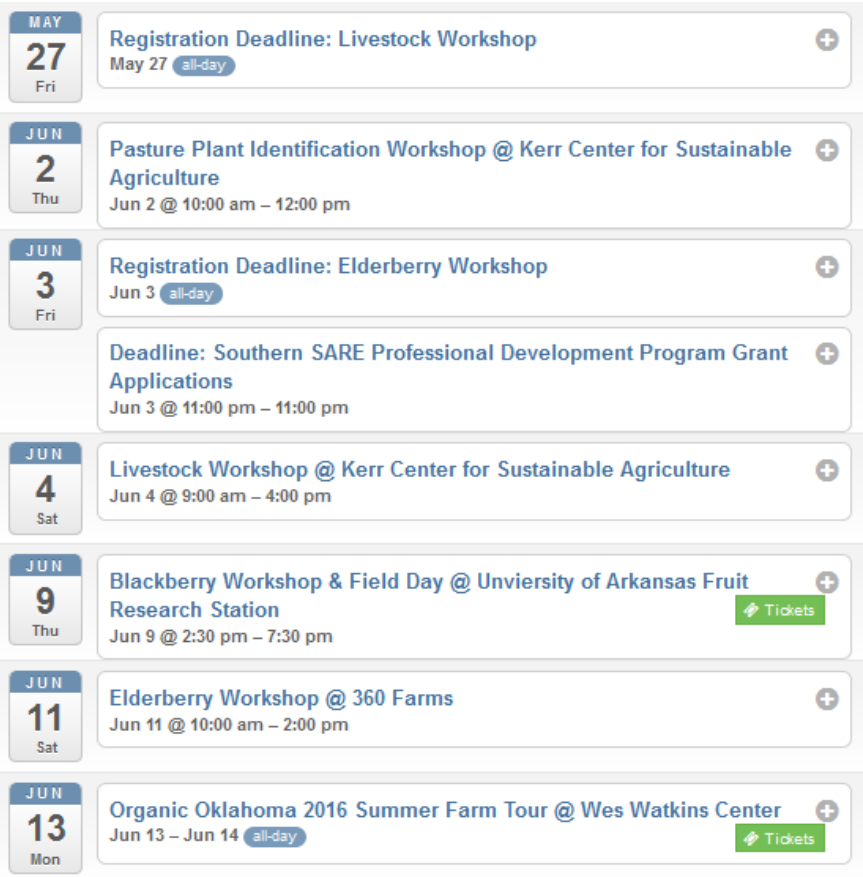
The Maddings specialize in the research and cultivation of Oklahoma native varietals of elderberry, maintaining an eight-acre elderberry orchard with 7,000 plants. They market retail and wholesale, selling both cuttings and rooted stock of several different varieties.

360 Farms needed a reliable means of both propagating elderberry plants and **growing herbs and vegetables year-round in Oklahoma's unpredictable weather**. 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.

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.

Last Chance to Register for June Workshops



Registration ends soon for the Kerr Center's two June workshops:
- **register by May 27** for the **June 4** **livestock workshop**
- **register by June 3** for the **June 11** **elderberry workshop** at 360 OK Farms

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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