KERR CENTER

Field Notes

Kerr Center for Sustainable Agriculture Vol. 34, #3 • Fall 2008

Get Growin' This Fall!

–Wylie Harris & Maura McDermott

Inside This Issue:

Kerr Center Hiring Interns for 2009 2
Fall Farmfest 3
Hoop House Workshop at Trebuchet Gardens 5
Event Registration Form 6
Getting Your Goat: Practical Advice, Cutting Edge Research on Raising Goats 7
Calendar 8

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With years of studying and teaching sustainable agriculture under their belts, Mike Appel and Emily Oakley of Three Springs Farm are educators as well as farmers, frequently sharing their strategy for staying both small and economically viable (see *Field Notes*, Summer 2007).

The couple will continue that work at the *Growing for Local Markets* horticulture workshop on Saturday, Sept. 20, at Connors State College in Warner.

From 9-12, Appel and Oakley will describe the "Nuts and Bolts of Market Farming."

The afternoon will feature a selection of hands-on, basic skills classes on growing transplants, drip irrigation, cover crops, and hoop houses for season extension. Each participant will be able to attend two of the four options.

Oakley and Appel operate a 5-acre, certified organic, two-person farm in Cherokee County.

"We will cover the history of our farm's development from the start-up phase, to leasing, to finally owning our own land," Oakley says. "We will present the practical ways in which we strive to balance environmental, economic, and social sustainability."

Their specific topics include soil fertility; weed management; pests and diseases; greenhouse production; crops, varieties, and succession planting; irrigation; tools and equipment; marketing outlets; and record-keeping.

Mike Appel and Emily Oakley

"We will discuss all aspects of our production practices for fresh vegetables, fruits, and herbs through direct marketing with CSAs and farmers' markets," says Oakley.

After lunch, Chris Kirby will speak on the Oklahoma Farm-to-School Program and local market venues. Kirby administers the program at the Oklahoma Dept. of Agriculture, Food and Forestry.

Following Kirby's talk, a variety of other Oklahoma experts on market farming will lead the hands-on, mini-workshops.

See registration form and schedule on page four

The Kerr Center for Sustainable Agriculture offers progressive leadership and educational programs to all those interested in making farming and ranching environmentally friendly, socially equitable, and economically viable over the long term.

The Kerr Center is a non-profit foundation located on 4,000 acres near the southeastern Oklahoma town of Poteau. It was established in 1985.

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P.O. Box 588, Poteau, OK 74953
918/647-9123 phone,
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www.kerrcenter.com

Overstreet-Kerr Historical Farm
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- Oklahoma Producer Grants
- The Stewardship Farm/Ranch
- Rural Development and Public Policy
- Communications/Education
- Overstreet-Kerr Historical Farm

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Kerr Center Hiring Interns for 2009 – *Apply Now!*

Got a knack for goats or gardens – or want to? The Kerr Center is looking for interns for 2009, as part of a long-term educational program to build a School of Sustainability.

"The School of Sustainability will provide a diversity of educational and training opportunities in sustainable food and agriculture," says intern coordinator George Kuepper.

Interns will learn practical skills in a hands-on setting, focusing on sustainable livestock handling and organic horticulture. In addition, they will provide support for Kerr Center educational activities, such as workshops, conferences, and publication updates. They will also spend 20-30% of their time on academic work, including reading/study, film screenings, and research on topics of individual interest.

Interns will live in Poteau and must be able to provide their own transportation to the Stewardship Ranch 7 miles away. A minimum commitment of 40 hours per week is expected, including occasional evening and weekend time. Some tasks can be tiring and physically demanding, particularly in the heat and humidity of summer months, and applicants should be prepared for such conditions.

Interns receive a $600 monthly stipend plus housing and basic utilities.

The earliest available term begins in mid-January 2009 and can run for 5, 7, or 11 months. A second term begins in June, for 3 or 7 months. The final term begins in mid-August, running 7 months.

"We are seeking high quality, self-motivated individuals, and can be flexible with regard to lengths of term, and starting and ending dates," Kuepper says.

Qualified applicants must be U.S. citizens, at least 18 years old, interested in sustainable agriculture. They must have a valid U.S. driver's license, basic computer and communications skills, and be in good physical health with the ability to do moderate physical labor (e.g. lift 50 lbs.) for extended periods.

Preferred applicants will be residents of the Mid-South enrolled in graduate or undergraduate degree programs in agriculture, ecology, environmental policy and related fields. College credit for internships is available.

To apply, send a resume, letter of interest, and three references to George Kuepper by email (gkuepper@kerrcenter.com) or post (see Kerr Center address at left). The letter should state a preference (if any) for livestock or horticulture work, and the length of term(s) sought. Samples of creative work (writing, video, etc.) are welcome but not required.

Receipt of all applications will be acknowledged, and face-to-face interviews will be arranged for promising applicants prior to final selection.

Selection of interns for all 2009 terms begins in early fall of 2008. Since only a few positions are available, early applications are encouraged. However, applications will be accepted until suitable candidates are identified.

OVERSTREET-KERR
HISTORICAL FARM

Fall FARM FEST

See How Things Were Done in Days Gone By!

October 11, 2008 • 9 a.m - 4 p.m.

Fall Farm Fest for Kids— Oct. 10 (school groups).

Featuring

"The Cooking of the Sorghum Syrup"
(1900 Mill and Copper Pan over an Open Fire)

On Display

Antique Farm Equipment Demonstrated by
the Arkansas Valley Antique Tractor Club
Rare Colorful Turkeys, Pineywoods Cattle

Watch Folks

Making Soap, Churning Butter, Spinning Cotton and Wool, Quilting, Hooking Rugs, Making Rope, Carving Wood, Chipping Arrowheads, Blacksmithi
Baling Hay, Gr

Event Cancelled

Try Your Hand

Shelling and Grinding Corn
Making Corn Cob Dolls, Shelling Peas
Learn About Soil and Antique Tractors

Enjoy a Hay Ride

Learn about Honeybees, Wildlife

Award Winning Event!

Best Attraction 2004, Runner up, Best Event 2004
Oklahoma Department of Tourism

More Information:

$5 adults, $3 youth; Kids under 6, free
Senior Citizen groups (10 or more) $3
(advance reservations required)
The farm is located ten miles south of Sallisaw
on highway 59, then right on Overstreet-Kerr Rd.
For more information call Jessica at 918.647.8749.
Schools must reserve space in advance
by calling the number above.

Growing for Local Markets

Saturday, September 20, 2008

Westbrook Library Learning Center, Connors State College • Warner, OK

SCHEDULE

8:00-8:30	Registration
8:30-8:40	*Opening Remarks & Housekeeping,* Dr. Debbie Golden or Blake Nelson
8:40-8:50	*Welcome from the Kerr Center,* Dr. Jim Horne, President, Kerr Center
8:50-9:00	*Welcome from Connors State College,* Dr. Donnie Nero, Connors State College President
9:00-10:15	*Nuts & Bolts of Market Farming,* Mike Appel & Emily Oakley
10:15-10:30	Break
10:30-12:00	*Nuts & Bolts of Market Farming (cont.),* Mike Appel & Emily Oakley
12:00-1:00	Lunch
1:00-2:00	*Farm-To-School and Local Market Venues,* Chris Kirby
2:10-3:10	*Workshop Sessions I*
3:10-3:25	Break
3:25-4:25	*Workshop Sessions II*

WORKSHOP SESSIONS

The same sessions will be offered both at 2:10 and at 3:25, allowing each attendee to choose two out of the four topics offered.
For directions, more info and online registration (PayPal) go to www.kerrcenter.com.

- **Growing Transplants for the Market Garden**
  Dr. Debbie Golden, Connors
- **Drip Irrigation— Equipment and Design**
  Alan Ware, Kerr Center
- **Innovations in Cover Cropping in Oklahoma**
  Doug Walton, Kerr Center
- **Hoop Houses for Season Extension**
  Steve Upson, Noble Foundation.

Sponsored by the Kerr Center, Connors State College and the Oklahoma Department of Agriculture, Food and Forestry

Growing for Market Workshop Registration

Deadline for registration Sept. 15
$45 registration includes lunch
$30 for spouse or second person
from the same farm/business
Held rain or shine. Wear shoes for outdoors.

NAME

NAME OF SPOUSE/SECOND ATTENDEE

ADDRESS

CITY STATE: ZIP:

PHONE

EMAIL

TOTAL ENCLOSED

Workshop Sessions/Topics (choose two):

Growing Transplants for the Market Garden
☐ workshop session 1 ☐ workshop session 2

Drip Irrigation—Equipment and Design
☐ workshop session 1 ☐ workshop session 2

Innovations in Cover Cropping for Oklahoma
☐ workshop session 1 ☐ workshop session 2

Hoophouses for Season Extension
☐ workshop session 1 ☐ workshop session 2

For college credit contact
Dr. Ron Ramming, 918.463.2931 ext. 6328
rronald@connorsstate.edu

Mail form and check to:
Kerr Center
Growing for Market Workshop
PO Box 588
Hwy. 271 South
Poteau, OK 74953

Hoopty-Do: Hoop House Workshop at Trebuchet Gardens

–Wylie Harris

Come summer, many an Oklahoma gardener would jump through hoops just to cool off. At Trebuchet Gardens in Norman, Tod and Jamie Hanley use hoops to get the heat when they want it.

Some years, the Hanleys don't even have a summer garden. "Usually we do just winter stuff, and try to relax during summer," says Tod.

They can do "winter stuff" in their homemade hoop houses. Over the past several years, the Hanleys have worked out a design that keeps their crops happy, weathers the elements, and costs less than a thousand dollars to build.

They focus on season extension, growing heat-loving crops earlier and later than other growers, and keeping cool-season ones going all winter long.

On September 14, the Hanleys will host a hands-on, on-farm workshop to explain just how they put together their low-cost, high-profit hoop houses.

I'll Huff and I'll Puff....

"I'm not an expert on hoop houses," says Tod Hanley. "I just tried a bunch and looked at a lot that fell down."

The concept of a hoop house seems simple: stretch a sheet of clear plastic over a row of hoops. However, building a house that stays up while keeping costs down can be tricky.

"I had a commercial greenhouse," Hanley says. "Bits of it are still in the trees out there," he grins, gesturing toward a line of trees where storm winds blew the structure.

His latest hoop house designs have withstood 50 mile-per-hour winds, and come cheaper.

When the Hanleys first began looking at hoop house designs 3 to 4 years ago, metal hoops cost $55 each. At that price, the hoops alone for a single house could cost a thousand dollars or more.

Hanley cut corners and costs by buying straight tubing, and then forming it into hoops with a homemade tube bender. At the time, each home-built tube cost $17, a third of the price of the store-bought hoops.

That put the total cost of the Hanleys' three 17' by 100' hoop houses at $600 each.

Inside the House, Outside the Box

An affordable, workable hoop house design wasn't the end of the Hanleys' experiments with season extension. They won a 2007 Oklahoma Producer Grant from the Kerr Center to study the effects of different types of plastic on temperatures and crop yields inside the hoop houses.

In summer, they remove the plastic to keep the house tomatoes from wilting in the heat. Sweet potatoes, on the other hand, seem to thrive in it. "They're the size of footballs," Hanley marvels.

In winter, they raise garlic and onions in low tunnels (hip-high hoop houses) covered with a lightweight, light-admitting fabric called Reemay.

"It vents itself, and bugs can't get in," Hanley explains. "Garlic and onions just love it in there."

Outside the hoop houses, the Hanleys laid black plastic down directly on the ground to kill Bermuda grass. The trick worked, and the warm soil under the plastic was perfect for

out-of-season potatoes.

"We get potatoes a month early. I've kept them alive up through December," says Tod. "It wasn't on a large scale, but we got paid a dollar a pound."

Hot Sellers

"Dad had a certified organic farm; he used to do the farmers' market," Tod Hanley says. But he and Jamie have adapted their marketing approach to suit themselves, just like their production methods.

Jamie makes weekly CSA-style deliveries, at $10 to $20 per customer each time.

The Hanleys also sell to local health and natural food stores. One has a juicer in the deli section, so, Tod quips, "they don't care if they get ugly beets." They also grow highly profitable wheatgrass to feed the juicer.

"The only problem is that we can't grow enough," Hanley says. The property, an old cotton farm, has so little nitrogen in the soil that, he quips, "It won't grow weeds."

To add fertility, the Hanleys – who follow organic practices but are not certified – apply manure from a co-worker's pair of horses. "The horses do the best they can," Tod grins, but their manure can only build so much soil at a time.

So far, the Hanleys are working about a third of an acre, out of their property's 40 acres. Tod says they'd eventually like to expand up to 2 acres.

What to Expect

At the field day, the Hanleys will go through as much as possible of the process of building one of their hoop houses.

"I want people to see just how quick and easy it is," Tod says. "We're going to bend some pipes, put in rebar. It'll be very how-to."

DIRECTIONS

To reach Trebuchet Gardens, follow Highway 9 to 60th Avenue on the east side of town. Go north on 60th for 2 miles, then turn right (east) on Alameda. After about half a mile, turn right (south) on 66th. Watch for Reynolds Lane, a dirt road, on the left; follow it to the second driveway.

Registration for the field day includes an Oklahoma-grown dinner and costs $10, due by September 11. The event will be held rain or shine; bring a lawn chair and wear outdoor shoes. Register online or by calling Kerr Center at 918.647.9123 or use form below.

The Kerr Center is sponsoring the workshop together with the Oklahoma Department of Agriculture, Food, and Forestry, in partnership with the USDA Risk Management Agency.

Kerr Center Event Registration Form

Use this form to register for the hoop house and multi-species grazing field days.
Register with Paypal online at www.kerrcenter.com

Select Event(s) you are registering for:

☐ **Hoop House Workshop**
($10)
Sept. 14 - Registration deadline: Sept. 11

☐ **Multi-species Grazing Field Day**
($10)
Sept. 27 - Registration deadline: Sept. 23

Mail form to:
Kerr Center
Kerr Center Fall Events
PO Box 588
Poteau, OK 74953

Name: _____

Address: _____

City: _____

State: _____ Zip: _____

Phone: _____

Email: _____

Total Enclosed: _____

Make checks payable to Kerr Center

Getting Your Goat:

Practical Advice, Cutting Edge Research on Raising Goats

– Maura McDermott

Field Day: Multi-species Grazing

Do you want to raise goats, but need some expert advice to get started? Can you graze goats and cattle together? What are the impacts on animal and pasture health? Is this "multi-species grazing" a viable option for Oklahoma?

Three of Oklahoma's top researcher/educators will answer those questions during the Kerr Center-sponsored Multi-species Grazing Field Day, Saturday, Sept. 27, from 9-2 on Dr. David Sparks' 80 acre farm near Porum.

Through a three-year producer grant from the Kerr Center, Sparks is studying the effects of multi-species grazing on goat parasites and pasture forages. This is the first year of a three year study.

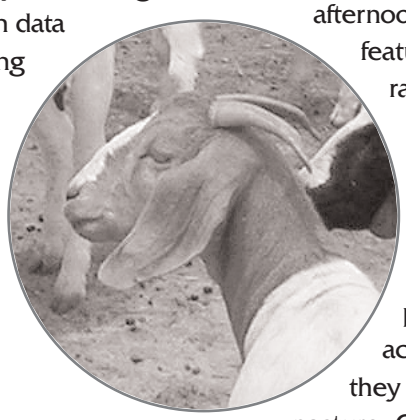
Goat parasites are a growing problem in the South. Dr. Sparks has found that cattle can reduce goat parasite loads by consuming the parasites' larvae as they graze. He is using fecal samples to measure parasite loads in goats that are rotated through pastures where cattle have grazed.

During the field day he will talk about parasite loads in the goat herd and the overall economics of the grazing system.

Dr. Sparks has practiced veterinary medicine in Oklahoma, Kansas, California, and Arizona, and joined the OSU Cooperative Extension Service in 2006. He is Area Extension Food Animal Quality and Health Specialist serving 40 eastern Oklahoma counties.

Langston University Goat Extension Specialist Dr. Steve Hart will present information on basic goat care and parasite management. Hart has been working with goats and goat producers for seventeen years. Langston is the state leader in goat research and outreach.

Dr. Bob Woods will present forage and pasture composition data collected from the grazing of goats and cattle together. There will be a pasture walk to view the effects on the forages in a multi-species grazing system.



Woods is OSU's Extension Agronomy Specialist in northeast Oklahoma. In January 2008, Woods received the Distinguished Educator Award. He has 32 years experience providing quality information on technical research data and turning it into practical recommendations for producers.

Multi-species Grazing Field Day
Time: 9– 2
Pre-registration required, $10, inc. lunch.
Register online at www.kerrcenter.com or by calling 918.647.9123, or use the form on p. 6.
Registration deadline: Sept. 23
Bring a lawn chair, wear outdoor shoes
Held rain or shine.

Directions: Take I – 40 to Ross Road exit located just west of the Muskogee Turnpike near Warner, Oklahoma. Turn south on Ross Rd. Go approximately five miles to road 111. Take Road 111 west for one mile. The farm is on the right just past the low water crossing.

Field Day: Oklahoma Meat Goat Forage Performance Test

On Saturday, Oct. 25, the top performers in this season's (meat goat) buck performance test will be announced during a morning field day at the Kerr Center Ranch. In the afternoon a sale will be held featuring the bucks that ranked gold, silver and bronze and their contemporary females. The event is free and begins at ten.

The test ranks participating bucks according to how well they gain weight on pasture. Conducted by the Kerr Center and OSU Extension, it is the only such test in the region. Farms in Arkansas, Kansas, Missouri and Virginia, as well as Oklahoma, have entered their animals. Breeds represented are Kiko, Boer and Texas Genemaster, says Mary Penick, manager of the test.

The test began on July 14 and will end October 24 (105 days). Participating bucks were born between February 1, 2008 and April 15, 2008 and weighed a minimum of 35 lbs at check-in.

Join us and learn more about raising goats in Oklahoma. Contact 918.647.9123 or visit www.kerrcenter.com/ event_links/goat_buck_test.htm for more information.

The Kerr Center is located on highway 271 about five miles south of Poteau.

Calendar: Fall Events

To register for any of these events, visit www.kerrcenter.com/events.htm, or call 918.647.9123, or use the reg. forms on pgs. 4 or 6.
Please note registration deadlines in individual event descriptions.

FIELD DAY: Season Extension and Hoop Houses*
September 14 – Norman

Fall is the perfect time to build a hoop house to extend your growing season. Join Tod and Jamie Hanley at Trebuchet Gardens to see how they built a 17′ x 100′ hoop house for under $1000, allowing them to grow produce year-round. Registration includes an Oklahoma-grown dinner and costs $10, due by September 11. This event will be held rain or shine; bring a lawn chair and wear outdoor shoes. (See p. 5.)

WORKSHOP: Growing for Local Markets
September 20 – Warner

The Connors State College campus will host this all-day workshop for market gardeners. In the morning, Mike Appel and Emily Oakley, from Three Springs Farm in Cherokee County, will talk about their successful market farm, both production and marketing. The afternoon will include a selection of basic skills sessions, covering specialty marketing, drip irrigation, and other topics of interest to small growers. Registration includes lunch and costs $45, due by September 15. (Spouses and additional persons from the same farm or business register for $30 each.) This event will be held rain or shine; wear outdoor shoes. (See p. 1.)

FIELD DAY: Multi-species Grazing
September 27 – Porum

Dr. Dave Sparks, a 2008 Oklahoma Producer Grant recipient, will host this field day sponsored by Kerr Center and OSU Extension. Sparks' project is studying the effects of multi-species grazing of cattle and goats on goat parasite loads and sustainability of forages. Registration includes lunch and costs $10, due by September 23. Wear outdoor shoes. (See p. 7.)

FARM FEST
October 10-11
Overstreet-Kerr Historical Farm

The annual Fall Farm Fest is held the second Friday and Saturday each October. Friday is reserved for school groups. On Saturday, the festival is open to the general public from 9 – 4. Volunteers demonstrate activities and crafts common on farms one hundred years ago. (See p. 3.)

FIELD DAY: Meat Goat Forage Buck Test
October 25 – Poteau

This free field day will offer tips on raising goats and Information on the test and top-scoring goats will be presented in the morning. A sale is scheduled for the afternoon.) (See p. 7.)

RMA

**These events presented in partnership with the USDA Risk Management Agency, an equal opportunity provider*

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Don't miss our fall events!