Field Notes

Kerr Center for Sustainable Agriculture

Kerr Center for Sustainable Agriculture Vol. 29, #1 • Spring 2003

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Join Friends of the Kerr Center!

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The Food Connection

—Maura McDermott

How can food producers make better, more profitable connections with both consumers and other food producers?

Many answers to that question were presented at *Future Farms 2002: A Supermarket of Ideas* on November 15 and 16 at the NCED Marriott in Norman. The Kerr Center sponsored the gathering of 500 people, in cooperation with the Oklahoma Department of Agriculture, Food, and Forestry (ODAFF), and the USDA Risk Management Agency, with help from the National Center for Appropriate Technology's ATTRA program. Participants came from around Oklahoma and the nation.

With 47 sessions, six intensive workshops and a trade show, the conference lived up to its billing as a "supermarket of ideas" for farmers, ranchers and food entrepreneurs. Presenters were producers and educators who shared success stories, resources, and research with attendees eager to learn how to make more profitable connections.

The underlying message was that agriculture in Oklahoma, after years of contraction, is beginning to open up again for small farmers who often have been marginalized as prices and profits have fallen.

One reason for this expansion: increasing consumer demand for quality, locally-produced food.

Another reason: growers joining together to market their products, whether on a large scale, such as through a value-added cooperative, or small scale, such as at a local farmers market. Add to that a new willingness by agricultural producers to think "out of the box" and try new enterprises, and a renaissance in Oklahoma agriculture may be beginning.

Contributing to the success of these connections is the willingness of government agencies such as ODAFF and the USDA, as well as non-profit organizations such as the Kerr Center, to provide meaningful assistance to producers wanting to take advantage of these new opportunities.

continued 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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PROGRAMS INCLUDE:

- Oklahoma Producer Grants
- The Stewardship Farm
- Rural Development and Public Policy
- Communications/Education
- Vero Beach Research Station
- Overstreet-Kerr Historical Farm

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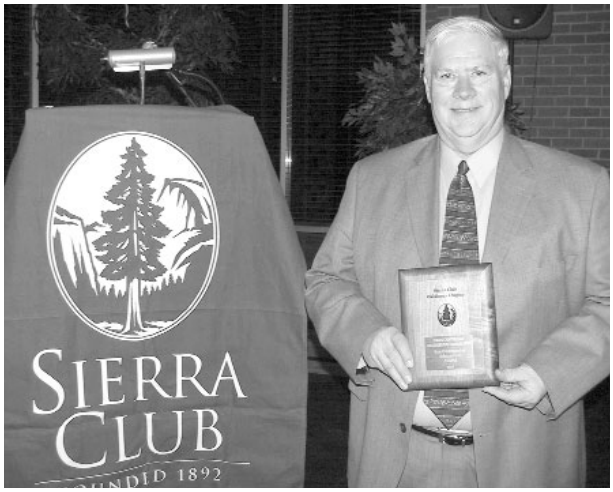
All articles written by Maura McDermott, unless otherwise noted.

Kerr Center's Educational Efforts Honored

The Oklahoma Chapter of the Sierra Club held its annual environmental awards banquet recently at the Commons Restaurant in Norman. The Kerr Center was honored with the club's Environmental Education Award.



Jim Horne

This award is given to an individual, special group, or institution providing the greatest effort to inform citizens (general public, students, or special target groups) with information that would be valuable to the process of critical thinking and decision-making in the area of environmental education.

Susie Shields, Chapter Environmental Education Chair, presented the award to the Kerr Center for Sustainable Agriculture. "The Kerr Center has provided many opportunities for education in the sustainable agriculture field, through conferences such as *Future Farms* and enlightening publications such as the book *The Next Green Revolution: Essential Steps to A Sustainable Agriculture*," says Shields.

"Their informative exhibits are set-up at a variety of conferences, with such materials as a guide to green investing made available. Everywhere you go, you will see the efforts of the Kerr Center to provide environmental education to all.

"The Kerr Center is also a mover and a shaker in Oklahoma's efforts to promote the purchase of food grown by local family farms. Jim and Maura are both active in the Oklahoma Food Policy Council, with Jim serving as co-chair. The Kerr Center is also involved in the movement to preserve farmland, working alongside the Oklahoma Land Legacy to promote conservation easements and land legacies."

Accepting the award was Dr. Jim Horne, President and CEO of the Center. Additional honoree, Maura McDermott, Kerr Center Communications Director, was unable to attend.

"We are deeply honored that we have been chosen to receive the "Environmental Educational" award for our work. Each day the Sierra Club and Oklahoma's farmers and ranchers are finding more common ground. The Kerr Center is committed to continue dealing simultaneously with the tough issue of protecting natural resources and the environment while keeping Oklahoma farmers on the land earning respectable profits," says Dr. Horne.

"The Kerr Center has always advocated that in the long run the interest of agriculture and the environment is not in conflict. It is in the short run that we must all sit down together and plan strategies that will keep our long term objectives in focus."

The Making of a QUILT

For thirty years, James E. Horne has worked with the Kerr Center, serving as director since 1979. Two years ago three trustees of the Kerr Center envisioned creating a quilt to commemorate Dr. Horne's service to agriculture and the farmers and ranchers of Oklahoma.

Trustees Kay Adair and Christy Price worked on plans for a design that could incorporate photo transfer images of Dr. Horne's life and work and brief quotations reflecting his ideas, his goals, and his personal qualities. Mrs. Horne and Barbara Chester, Kerr Center administrative secretary, collected pictures from home and work and the book cover of *The Next Green Revolution*, co-authored by Dr. Horne and Kerr Center Communications Director Maura McDermott. Trustee Janie Hipp, teacher of agricultural law at the University of Arkansas and co-owner of Spinning Star Quilt Shop in Fayetteville, Arkansas, donated ample yardage of organically grown cotton, including soft greens and beige from color-grown cotton plants. The cotton came from the Texas Organic Cotton Marketing Cooperative (TOCMC) run by long-time friend of the Kerr Center, LaRhea Pepper.

The vision of the commemorative quilt was shared with Elia Woods, a fiber artist, quilter and organic gardener in Oklahoma City. Elia's unique vegetable theme quilts – with names like *Ode to Okra, Meditations on Eggplant, Tomato Tales, Onion Rings,* and *Squashed* – have been exhibited locally.

"An idea reflecting the work of the Kerr Center drew me to the work," Elia said in a recent interview. "Considering the goals of the Kerr Center for Sustainable Agriculture it seemed right to use organic cotton and natural sources for dyes. One of the many gifts of the project was pushing me to learn more about the techniques of using natural substances for dyeing, so that the physical content of the quilt would be consistent with the message of the quilt."

The New World – Peru, Ecuador, Central America and Mexico– is one of the places where cotton was first domesticated and where color-grown cotton originated. Cotton is also an important crop in Oklahoma and in the life of Dr. Horne.

Indigenous people around the world have used natural dyes from plants for thousands of years. For the quilt, Elia experimented with dyes made from Osage Orange sawdust, indigo, the cutch tree, and madder root– source of traditional "turkey-red"– to obtain colors reflecting the yellows and orange of sunlight, greens of summer vegetation, beiges of winter grasses, blues of sky and water, and the red-browns of Oklahoma rocks and soils. She also used soil itself for some colors.

Elia imprinted selected quotes from Old Testament Psalms, Robert Frost, Wendell Berry, Masonobu Fukuoka, Walt Whitman and William Blake upon the fabrics, using a thermafax method akin to screen-printing. Photos were also transferred onto blocks of cotton. Other blocks were printed with potato dextrin resist techniques to create patterns like one would see in an aerial view of a ploughed field.

Piecing the varied blocks into a whole quilt top, integrating the composition and taking into account color contrast and the visual movement from one image to another proved the artist's skill. Underlying the work was Elia's awareness of the sacred quality of the earth and the tasks of agriculture. Her work and all necessary supplies that the project required (other than the organic cotton) were a gift from the artist.

When staff and trustees met on December 11, 2002, the quilt was presented to Dr. Horne. Kay Adair acknowledged the privilege she felt in quilting the extraordinary piece honoring Horne's life and work, and expressed a deep gratitude for the contributions of each person who helped in making the quilt.

Woods' *Ode to Okra* will be on display from April 5-May 4 at the Sedgwick Cultural Center in Philadelphia. Visitors to her studio may also view her work. Call 405-524-3977.

RESOURCES

"The Globalization of Food: How Americans Feel About Food Sources, What They Trust, Food Security, Genetic Modification, Food Labeling and the Environment" will be released at http://sa.nscu.edu/global-food. A summary will be published by the Southern Rural Development Center in Southern Perspectives magazine, http.srdc.msstate.edu

Harvesting Support for Locally Grown Food is a publication of the CISA Network describing the "Be a Local Hero" campaign. Contact them at 413-559-5338 or www.buylocalfood.com.

Surveys of producers, consumers, and market managers were part of the Strengthening Direct Market Channels: Programs to Develop and Enhance Farmers' Markets project. Survey results are on line at www.kerrcenter.com

The Food Connection

continued from page one

Be a Local Hero

Shopper interest in buying locally produced food is increasing nationally and in Oklahoma. Driving the trend is consumer desire for better taste and better nutrition, concern for food safety and the environment, and a willingness to support local farmers and rural economies.

A recent national survey conducted by Ronald Wimberley, a sociologist at North Carolina State University (in collaboration with researchers from 12 American universities) questioned consumers about their food preferences, especially in regard to the globalization of agriculture.

Answers revealed overwhelming support for U.S. grown, locally grown, and food grown in ways that protect the environment. Approximately three-quarters stated it was of some or great importance to them that the food they buy was grown and processed in the US. About 68% would pay more for US grown, and even more say they would not relinquish food production to other countries even if that resulted in cheaper food.

More than 70 percent were willing to pay more for locally produced food or for food produced in ways that protect the environment. Fifty-three percent prefer to buy food they know has been grown on small rather than large farms.

When it came to the safety of our food supply, over 90 percent were somewhat or very concerned after 9/11, perhaps reflecting the fact that the average food item travels 1500 miles to reach the consumer.

In Oklahoma, a recent survey of farmers market customers done by the Oklahoma Farmers Market Alliance, the Kerr Center, the Oklahoma Dept. of Agriculture, and Oklahoma State University, reinforces some of these findings. (Highlights were presented at *Future Farms*.)

Over 300 surveys at eleven farmers markets were distributed. Quality was a characteristic deemed "very important" by

Doug Hyde, Hyde-Away Farms, Chouteau, OK at Muskogee Farmers' Market.

89.1 percent when shopping for fresh produce. Other characteristics or factors that were very important included the availability of in-season produce and unusual varieties, quantities from which to choose, chemical residues (presumably lack of), and in line with the national survey, the knowledge that the food was grown in Oklahoma or grown by the vendor.

Price was also important. However, consumers didn't expect bargain-basement prices at farmers' markets; instead more than three-quarters expected to pay the same price as elsewhere or a higher price.

In some parts of the country, buying local whenever possible is becoming part of the culture and is a source of community pride. In rural western Massachusetts, the *Be A Local Hero, Buy Locally Grown* promotional campaign has helped local growers become highly visible, contributing to more sales on the farm, at farmers' markets, and even in supermarkets.

An extensive study of consumer attitudes done by the group found that consumers believed that locally grown food tastes better and was fresher and of higher quality.

However, surveyors also found that an important underlying motivation to buy local was the belief that buying local contributes to the local economy.

The Massachusetts group now makes sure

Jerome Kerasek, Vine and Branch Vineyard, Haskell, OK. at Muskogee Farmer's Market

that the message they convey to consumers is always "buy locally-grown food that is fresher and tastes great *and* support your local economy and neighbors."

Health concerns and the desire to eat more nutritious food is another factor driving farm-to-school programs around the country. The links between junk food and obesity in children has spurred parents and schools around the nation to include healthier, often locally-grown food in their lunches. In Oklahoma, the ODAFF's Food Policy Advisory Council recently completed a survey of institutional food managers around the state. Getting a whopping 66% rate of reply (the norm is less than 10%), more than half indicated an interest in connecting with local producers for food. (A full report on the survey will be available later this year).

Support Your Local Economy

It seems clear that Oklahoma farmers are looking for new ideas. The majority of *Future Farms* conference attendees were farmers and ranchers looking to make their farms profitable and viable into the future.

It almost goes without saying that if you want to make more profit, you need to either cut money going out or increase the amount coming in. Both of these approaches were addressed at *Future Farms*.

One way to get retail price for farm products is to sell directly to customers whether on the farm, on the web, or at farmers' markets.

The question of course is whether a farmer can make any real money doing this. Until recently, many in Oklahoma (though not in other parts of the country) perceived farmers markets, for example, as being the venue for hobbyists or backyard gardeners.

This perception is changing. In 2001, sales at nine farmers markets in the state were estimated at $1.3 million. Six new markets opened in 2002, bringing the total to 26. Some markets, such as the one in Muskogee, have experienced growth rates of 25 percent per year in recent times.

As part of the farmers' market survey project, producers were also questioned. Who sells at farmers' markets? For the most part it is "real" farmers and ranchers—2/3 listed some type of agricultural production as their primary occupation, 52 percent not working off the farm at all. And they are committed—on average selling 4.45 years at their farmers market.

While only 5 percent of those surveyed realized full time income from selling at farmers' market, 43 percent obtained part-time income and 25 percent said the market income made up a portion of full-time income when combined with sales from other outlets. That farmers' markets were an important source of income for these producers seems clear. (Only 27 percent considered the farmers market a source of hobby or extra income).

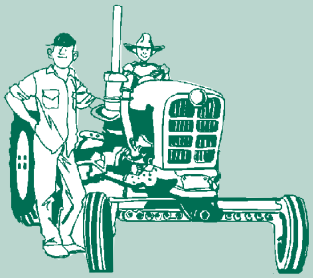
While farmers markets are enjoying a revival in popularity in the state, other opportunities are just getting established.

Utilizing produce grown on the farm in a restaurant was the topic of Dick Ortez's talk. His homemade sauerkraut and salsa are popular items at his Boarding House Cafe in Stillwater. His motto is "nurturing your meal from seed to table."

Jeff and Chris Emerson sell their farm's natural beef through their Naturalfarms store in Tulsa. Both take great satisfaction in producing a quality product for their customers. At *Future Farms*, Emerson said that one of their best marketing strategies is "to convince people not to buy their meat in the same place they buy their underwear. Educate them on what is meant by quality meat."

The CSA or community supported agriculture (or subscription farming) concept is definitely a strategy that is just getting started here. In a March 5 article in the *Daily Oklahoman*, Food Editor Sharon Dowell identified three fledgling CSAs in the state (compared to 16 in Missouri and six in Kansas).

In a CSA, a consumer pays a farmer or group of farmers in advance for a



Support Your Local Farmer

Boarding House Café
(open for lunch on weekdays)
Dick Ortez 209 & 213 S. Knoblock, Stillwater, OK
405-624-1019

Naturalfarms
Jeff and Chris Emerson
420 S Utica
Tulsa, OK 74104
918-583-5354
Order online:
www.naturalfarms.com

PD&H Farms (CSA)
Don McGehee, Okemah
405-944-5940

For a list of Oklahoma farmers who will sell directly to consumers:
Oklahoma Food
Robert Waldrop
www.oklahomafood.org

For a list of **Oklahoma farmers'markets**, fruit and vegetable growers, and certified organic growers, go to www.madeinoklahoma.net or call ODAFF at 405-522-5509

certain amount of produce from that farm. Among the advantages: the farmer is not at the mercy of the weather on market days, as at farmers markets; he/she gets retail prices and is able to concentrate marketing efforts, said Dan Nagengast who conducted a workshop on starting a CSA. He is a founding member of the Rolling Prairie Farmers Alliance, a nine-farmer group with subscribers in the Lawrence, Kansas, area. The alliance has been in existence for almost ten years. His group is a good example of what can be accomplished when farmers connect with each other and also connect directly to the shopper.

While often CSA farmers deliver produce to their buyers or to a central location to be picked up, sometimes CSAs have consumers pick up produce on the farm or involve urban folks in activities on the farm. Several conference speakers addressed how to attract urban folks to the farm. In Oklahoma, opportunities abound for farmers in agritourism and other alternative enterprises, said James Maetzold, national alternative enterprises and agritourism leader at the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) in Washington, DC.

With alternative enterprises, he says, the farmers "add value" to their own products and realize a larger income by performing marketing activities and incurring the risks by processing, packaging, storing, transporting, and selling directly to the consumer. The farmer becomes a competitor with agribusiness firms for a larger share of the consumer's dollar.

He explained that in 1913, farmers received 46 percent of the consumer's dollar compared to less than 20 percent today. This occurred because many small farmers carried out the marketing at the local level such as delivering milk, manning the butcher and bake shop, and selling in-season produce; or consumers visited farms to buy directly from the farmer/rancher. In 1950, farmers received 50 to 80 percent of the consumer's dollar spent on fruits and vegetables. Today, the figure is less than 30 percent.

A farmer or rancher entrepreneur who diversifies into value-added agriculture or agritourism has several market opportunities, he continued. He categorized these as: food

Richard Ortez chats with conference attendee

(processing, packaging, branding, specialty markets, farmers' markets), roots (heritage and culture), agrieducation (schools, retreats, conferences), experiences (farm stays, ranch stays, B&Bs, pick-your-own), agritainment (petting farms, mazes, hayrides), and nature-based adventure (horseback riding, rock climbing, hunting, fishing).

Going into an alternative enterprise can sometimes save the farm. Okemah farmer Don McGehee, who has begun his own CSA, was facing foreclosure on the farm his great-grandfather bought in 1916 according to the recent *Daily Oklahoman* article. "I have farmed before," McGehee said, "and I couldn't make it work as far as the cash flow. With community-supported agriculture, this more or less guarantees me a market."

His CSA gives him a direct connection to the people who eat the food he produces. The Japanese call this "food with the farmer's face on it."

The face attached to our food can be the face of one farmer or many. Maetzold echoed the idea that joining with neighbors to develop alternative enterprises is a good idea. Several speakers at *Future Farms* spoke about "new wave" or value-added cooperatives. Mike Frickenschmidt of the Oklahoma Agricultural Cooperative Council in Enid says that over 200 new wave coops have been started since 1990 in the US, with investment greater than $4 billion. Myron Bradt of Alva

described the formation of Value-Added Products, a cooperative in western Oklahoma owned by wheat farmers. The cooperative owns a state-of-the art frozen dough production facility utilizing Oklahoma-grown wheat.

While VAP sells their products around the country, not just locally in Oklahoma, it is a great example of farmers connecting with each other to build something greater than them. The fact that the wheat used to make the dough is grown in the US and owned by farmers would seem to be in tune with what Americans want these days—to support American agriculture and the folks who are on the farm and ranch working every day to give us safe, healthy food.

"Convince people not to buy their meat in the same place they buy their underwear. Educate them on what is meant by quality meat."

– Jeff Emerson

Jeff Emerson of Tulsa's NaturalFarms sells natural beef.

Future Farms 2002: What was Discussed

The Proceedings of the *Future Farms* conference is now available. Topics covered are below. To get a bound copy ($15 postpaid), please send a check to Kerr Center, P.O. Box 588, Poteau, OK 74953

From Field to Table *(crops)*

- growing cut flowers
- conservation tillage/rotations for peanuts, corn and cotton
- growing and marketing organic wheat
- marketing certified organic grains
- identity-preserved grains
- warm season vegetables in high tunnels
- herb production in this region
- low-till and cover crops in vegetable production
- sustainable pecan management
- diversifying a western Oklahoma farm

From Pasture to Table

(livestock, chicken, and fish)

- range poultry production
- holistic resource management in western Oklahoma
- growing and marketing natural beef in Oklahoma
- new opportunities in aquaculture
- venison production and marketing
- high value pork and poultry production and marketing
- adding value through the Oklahoma Quality Beef Network
- advantages of rotational grazing
- organic, grass-fed beef and chicken: management and markets
- integrated goat management
- management of cool season grasses
- more profits with hair sheep

Preparing for the Table

(marketing and value-added)

- establishing a value-added cooperative
- introduction to cooperatives
- subscription farming/CSAs
- small-scale food businesses
- creating a value-added product
- Oklahoma ag diversification grant/loan program
- selling at farmers' markets
- marketing ethnic vegetables
- Made-in-Oklahoma program
- local food, local community: you get what you pay for
- crop insurance for new and specialty crops
- starting your own food business

Beyond the Table

(other ideas for using land)

- agri-tourism trends and ideas
- marketing Oklahoma wines and wineries
- bringing customers to your farm
- dos and don'ts of hunting leases
- carbon sequestration
- honey marketing tips
- wind farms in Oklahoma
- conservation easements
- financing alternative farm enterprises
- fair mineral leases
- recycling municipal waste on the farm
- growing Christmas trees

"Friends of the Kerr Center"

Dear Friends,

This is an exciting time for those of us working for a more sustainable agriculture and food system in Oklahoma and around the nation. Just as the warm days of spring spark feelings of hope and joy in the new life unfurling around us, so the many signs of the regeneration of our agricultural/food system give us hope that happier days are just ahead for farmers and ranchers, indeed for all of us, because as the saying goes, "if you eat, you are part of agriculture."

I believe that if you look around you will agree with me that reasons for optimism abound. Increasing numbers of consumers around the country are "voting with their forks"-- opting to eat food that is grown sustainably and grown locally. The continuing interest that Americans have in health is expanding beyond going to gyms and counting calories to demanding fresh, nutritious food for themselves and their children.

At the same time, a new awareness is growing of the importance of keeping agricultural land for agriculture, rather than losing it to urban sprawl. The public is also beginning to understand that it is up to them to support farmers who use sustainable methods to raise crops and animals. People are also beginning to acknowledge that it is not just forests and wetlands that need protecting—that well-managed, environmentally-healthy agricultural lands are important environmental assets. Some of the walls that have stood between urban folks and farmers/ranchers are beginning to crumble.

Farmers are responding positively to these changes by diversifying their operations—looking to try sustainable methods, adding value to their produce, bringing folks out to the farm, and in general reconnecting with consumers and each other to find new ways to sustain their farms into the future.

To see these positive signs of change is gratifying to me both personally and professionally. I grew up on a small farm in southwestern Oklahoma and today raise cattle on my farm in Latimer County. I grew up during the post-World War II agricultural revolution, when farmers were told to "get big or get out" and the percentage of the American public engaged in farming fell from nearly 20 per cent to around 2 per cent. I have watched our rural areas decline and noticed that the tantalizing promises to American farmers of big new export markets never materialized.

Agriculture was at a low point when the Kerr Center for Sustainable Agriculture was created in the mid-1980s. Despite the misery in rural areas, agricultural leaders dismissed progressive movements such as sustainable agriculture, sometimes aggressively. However, we at the Kerr Center had a vision for the future and core beliefs that have sustained us from that time to the present. These core values include a belief in the family farm structure of agriculture, the enhancement and protection of natural resources, respect for nature, and support for local food systems and rural communities. We also believe in the need for fair markets and public policy for farmers and ranchers, as well as governmental and university research that will benefit agricultural producers directly.

Since it was established, the Kerr Center has provided substantive research, educational activities, and policy guidance to agriculturists. From the successful anti-brucellosis campaign of the late 1970s to the demonstration projects and field days of the '90s, to the book, reports, and conferences of the new century, we have explored many avenues in our efforts to reach people. As a result, the Kerr Center has become a leader, not only in Oklahoma, but nationally, in advocating for a food system that provides a safe, adequate, and nutritious supply of food produced and distributed in ways that are economically viable, ecologically sound, and equitable to producers and consumers.

Through the years, we have made a conscious decision to provide information to the public free of charge whenever possible, and when it is not possible, to keep charges low so that we are

Program Activities

- Grants for Farmers and Ranchers
- Food and Agriculture Public Policy
- Educational Publications, Events, and Website
- Demonstrations of Best Management Practices
- Sustainable Citrus
- New Crop Trials
- Preserving Our Farming Heritage
- Farmland Preservation

Gifting Program Established

able to reach the people most in need of our information. So it is that you receive this newsletter free and that many of our publications are also available free of charge from our office or on-line at our web site.

Attendance at our conferences, visits to our web site, and the use of our books and reports by educators and policy makers have convinced us that support for sustainable agriculture is indeed growing. However, we can't claim victory yet. Indeed there are still many, many battles to be fought, and many minds and hearts to be changed.

The Kerr Center is a 501(c)(3) non-profit educational foundation. We are funded in large part by an endowment from the estate of Robert S. Kerr, Oklahoma oilman, governor and senator. (We have no connection with Kerr-McGee, the company he co-founded). We have been sustained by this generous endowment for many years, and we have tried to be faithful to the senator's vision of stewardship of Oklahoma's land, wood, and water.

Unfortunately, just as real progress seems to be occurring and we are ready to face new challenges, the Kerr Center has been hit hard by the prolonged economic bad times. We have reluctantly concluded that in order for us to maintain the same level of service to farmers, ranchers, and policy makers, we must look to our friends for financial support. So for the first time in our history, we are launching a "Friends of the Kerr Center" gifting program.

Here is how it works. All contributions are tax deductible. We have designated levels of support—Tiller ($20-$34), Sower ($35-49), Cultivator ($50-$199), Harvester ($200-$999) and Steward ($1000 or more). Donors at the steward level will receive a copy of *The Next Green Revolution: Essential Steps to a Healthy, Sustainable Agriculture* in appreciation. *(See inserted envelope.)*

All donations, no matter what the level, will be gratefully accepted. We also can provide you information about donating assets as well as estate planning.

We don't believe in heavy-handed fund raising campaigns, so don't expect your mailbox to be inundated by pleas from us. After this initial appeal, we will just ask for your support annually. Our list of donors' contact info will be kept confidential. (You have the option of having your name listed as a donor in our newsletter each year.) And if you find you cannot help us at this time, perhaps we can count on you in the future. In any case, will continue to receive this newsletter and other mailings.

If you would like more information about our programs and concerns, please visit our web site, www.kerrcenter.com. Click on the "About Kerr Center" button to learn more about the history of the foundation. For more information on donations (including estate planning), please call our donations coordinator, Ann Ware, at 918-647-9123.

If you have benefited from one of our programs, publications or events, or know someone who has; or if you're aware of the importance of the issues we continue to tackle, please consider becoming an "official" friend of the Kerr Center.

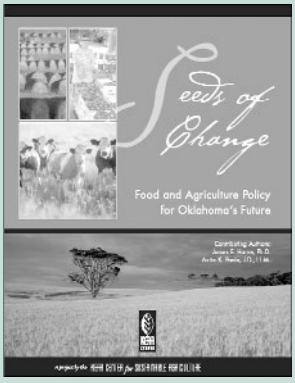
Thank you for your support and good will.

Sincerely,

Jim Horne

Jim Horne
President and CEO
Kerr Center

New at kerrcenter.com



Now available to read or print out:

Seeds of Change: Food and Agriculture Policy for Oklahoma's Future (report) by contributing authors, James E. Horne, Ph.D. and Anita K. Poole, J.D., LL.M

Analysis of the problems of contemporary agriculture and the American food system, and sustainable solutions. Topics include guiding principles of the Kerr Center, environmental issues, fairness, marketing, education & research and rural development

New Life for Forgotten Equipment

–Jim Combs

The Adams family donated a John Deere # 3 horse drawn sickle mower. The mower is a 1930's model and was used by the late Troy Adams of Tom Bean, Texas. Mr. Adams' family donated the mower, in memory of Troy, to the Overstreet-Kerr farm last year. (L to R) Judy Hamilton, Wilma Adams, Pat Hamilton, and Tricia Hamilton Moore with the restored mower.

We have made great strides of progress on the new antique farm equipment exhibit and educational display at the Overstreet-Kerr Historical Farm. Because of the generous contributions made by local people, others around Oklahoma, and even out of state, the educational exhibit will be open in time for youth educational workshops and to be enjoyed by adult visitors this spring.

In the new workshop for school groups, students will see and hear about equipment used for tillage, planting, and harvesting of essential grain and forage crops. They will then shell corn and grind it into corn-meal by using hand operated shellers and grinders produced at the turn-of-the-century.

To complete the experience, school kids will use the corn meal to make corn bread in our Dutch ovens over an open fire on the lawn of the historical farm. Each student will have the opportunity to sample homemade corn bread topped with farm-fresh sorghum or honey.

Over the past year or so, approximately twenty pieces of hay and grain production equipment dating back to the late 1800's have been rescued, some from rock piles, briar patches, and dilapidated old buildings. Other pieces we received were being carefully cared for as collector's items.

This equipment, once essential for producing income and food for the farm household, was laid away and forgotten years ago as more modern and efficient equipment came available.

Today, owners of the "forgotten" equipment are partnering with the Overstreet-Kerr Historical Farm and allowing the equipment to be brought back to life and used as valuable tools once again. Kerr Center employees Scott Phillips and Simon Billy are carefully restoring the equipment to near original condition.

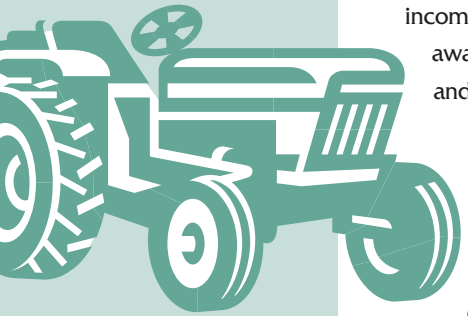
In learning about the farm equipment of yesteryear (and comparing it to modern equipment) visitors will learn about life on an eastern Oklahoma farm before WWII. Both adults and kids will get a better feel for how life has changed in rural Oklahoma and what effects, both good and bad, that changes in technology have brought.

The most recent additions to the exhibit are a 1930's John Deere stationary belt-driven hay press and a John Deere buck rake from Harold Pippins of Missouri. A recent donation of a John Deere horse drawn disk plow and a disk cultivator (wiggletail) is special to us because it had been purchased and used locally by the late husband of the donor, Ruth Qualls, of Wister, Oklahoma.

A few pieces are still needed in order to more fully carry out the initial plan of showing technology changes in ten-year intervals from 1890 to 1940. Those needs are: John Deere horse-drawn manure spreader, John Deere horse-drawn 5 or 6 foot disk, John Deere #5 sickle mower, John Deere side delivery rake, John Deere stationary engine powered hay press, John Deere tractor-pulled, engine powered, non-automatic tie hay baler; John Deere tractor-pulled fully automatic hay baler; walk behind drag harrow.

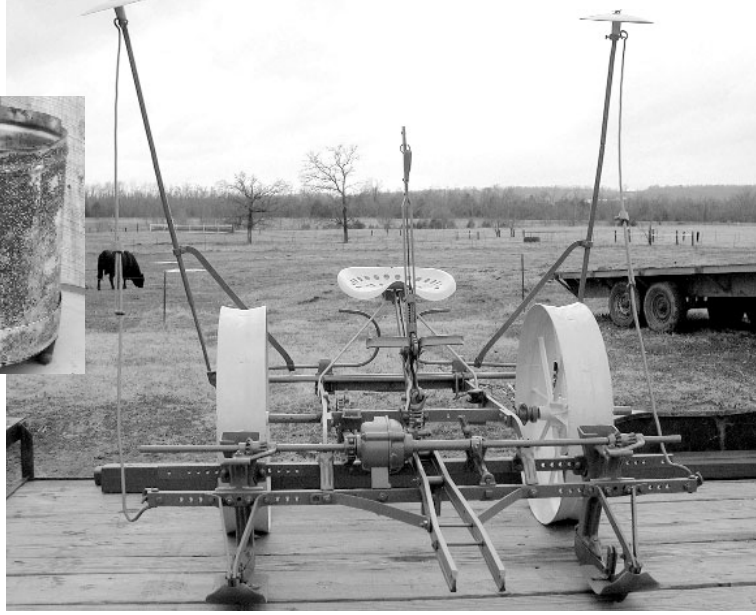
Come by the farm this spring and see our new

Persons wishing to preserve a portion of their family farm heritage and have farm equipment or memorabilia they feel would benefit the educational exhibit may contact Jim Combs, development manager at the Overstreet-Kerr Historical Farm at 918-966-3282 or 918-658-5771 for more information on how to become a "farm partner." The Kerr Center is a 501c(3) non-profit organization. Donations are tax deductible.



exhibit! The Overstreet farm is open to the public from 10-4 on Fridays and Saturdays and other times by reservation. Groups of ten or more should make advance arrangements by calling 918-966-3396 or emailing okhfarm@crosstel.net. Admission is $3 (under 6 free) and includes a tour of the restored home and access to various exhibits, heritage breeds of livestock (including Choctaw ponies), gardens, and trails on the farm grounds. The farm is also open for meetings, special events and photo shoots.

▲ Corn planter bucket. The number on the bottom is JD Y4670B. If anyone has one of these, please contact Jim Combs.



▲ A 1930's John Deere horse drawn, two row, corn planter from Greg Duncan of Spiro. Restored to near original condition except for missing a planter bucket.

Herbist Barbara Zieschang serves her herb tea to schoolchildren at Fall Farmfest each year.

On-the-Farm Workshops Set

Learn a traditional craft and enjoy a spring day in the country at the beautiful Overstreet-Kerr Historical Farm! Pre-registration required; deadline one week before class date. Call 918-966-3396 or mail okhfarm@crosstel.net

APRIL 26th
Chuck Wagon Cooking
Instructor R.L. (Tex) Wood of Sallisaw, OK will discuss and demonstrate different varieties and uses of cast iron cooking utensils and cookware. He will give instruction as participants assist in the preparation of an 1870's cattle drive meal. Handouts will include easy recipes and sources of cast iron cookware. Class limited to 20.
Time 9 a.m.-1:30 p.m. Fee $25 per person.

MAY 3rd
The Art of Bonsai
Instructor Bill Choat of American Bonsai Nursery will take away the mystery of bonsai by teaching the basics of bonsai care and design. He will discuss tools needed, how to choose the right specimen, how and what to trim, and the significance of the finished product. Participants will receive instruction and handouts so they may pursue the art of bonsai. Questions are welcome.
Fee includes tour of Overstreet mansion and grounds. Class limited to 20.
Time: 9 a.m. - 12 p.m. Fee: $15 per person.

MAY 17th
Making Herbal Tinctures and Infused Oils
Barbara Zieschang, writer of the "Garden Plot" column for the *South West Times Record* in Ft. Smith, will provide hands-on instruction in the preparation of tinctures and infused oils from various herbs and will discuss using these tinctures and oils to prepare healing creams and hand and foot cream remedies at home. A handout will have recipes.
Class limited to 20.
Time: 9 a.m. to 12 p.m. Fee $20 per person.

MAY 24th
Beginning Spinning & Weaving
Instructor Margie Raye and friends of Gore, OK will discuss and demonstrate the art of spinning. She will be using a variety of colored cottons and will have pre-spun materials on display that are ready for use. Participants will receive hands-on training in this nearly forgotten art and plenty of personal attention. Students will take home their spinnings, supplies, and a drop spindle for future use. Class limited to 10.
Time: 9 a.m. - 12 p.m. Fee: $20 per person.

JUNE 14th - Kraut Making
Instructor Sherry Choate of Marble City, OK will demonstrate the art of old-fashioned kraut making. She will discuss preparation needs, the needed equipment, and show how to prepare, cure, and store kraut. Participants will get hands-on instruction as they make their own homemade kraut, which can be taken home for future cooking. Handouts will be provided and questions are welcome. Class limited to 15.
Time: 9: a.m. - 12 p.m. Fee: $20 per person

JUNE 21st & 28th
Beginning Flint Knapping
Instructors Reece Hairod and Neal Garrison of the Flint Knappers Association will provide hands-on instruction in the Native American art of flint knapping. Participants will learn about and use natural and home-made tools to begin the process of making arrowheads. They will be able to create their own arrowhead from their choice of different flints and take home their finished product. *Note: Participants should bring safety glasses and leather gloves.*
Class limited to 10.
Time: 9 a.m. - 12 p.m. Fee: $25 per person.

Field Day – McClure Farm

Calvin, OK Thursday, June 12

See Variety Trials and Learn About Production Practices

FREE -
RAIN or SHINE

Starts at 6 p.m. with hamburgers and hotdogs with grilled onions. Please call the Kerr Center at 918-647-9123 by noon June 1 to help us plan for enough food!

DIRECTIONS:
From highway 75 in Calvin, cross the South Canadian River on the iron bridge. Turn off highway 75 just south of the river and go east. After crossing the river, turn right (east) and follow the road along the river about 3 miles. The field will be on the right hand side. A prominent sign will be displayed.

Growing Sweet Onions in Oklahoma

–David Redhage

Sam McClure has been working for four years to identify a sweet onion adapted to southeastern Oklahoma and to develop a market for the onion as a replacement for peanuts. Sam's farm/ranch operation is located in southeast Oklahoma in Hughes County near Calvin, along the South Canadian River.

In 2001 McClure applied for a Kerr Center producer grant to set up a variety trial to identify new sweet onion varieties with potential for Oklahoma production. The Oklahoma Cooperative Extension Service, the USDA Agricultural Research Service and the Hughes County Extension Office have assisted him.

In 2002, he planted equal amounts of *Yellow* and *White Granex, Texas 1015Y* and *Candy* for a total of four acres. The large planting provided a supply large enough to test marketability.

Reliable markets have proven to be the most difficult part of producing onions, with local farmer's markets already being well supplied by small growers. Selling directly to stores is difficult because of the difficulty of breaking through the store supply chain.

However, he did find an Oklahoma outlet for the young onions (with small bulbs) thinned from his onion rows. He also sent boxes of these "green" onions to the Dallas market. These sold quickly, with orders placed for more. McClure feels the market is there for such onions, and it could be profitable if the labor costs can be reduced.

During the 2002 growing season, McClure could not meet the demand for his yellow onions at the Dallas market. He noted the market did not open up until the onion harvest was done in central Texas.

The variety trial is beginning to provide information on promising sweet onions for Oklahoma. He is excited about the trial results for a new variety, the *1015 Supersweet*. During the 2002 season, the variety *Candy* was planted both in the trial plots and in the field. It too has done very well, both in production and marketing and seems to meet the criteria for an Oklahoma sweet onion. So far, the variety trial has not identified a red onion variety that will work under Oklahoma conditions.

McClure's experience shows that the major obstacles to Oklahoma onion production are sufficient affordable labor and market access. Despite those obstacles, he is excited about the potential for sweet onions in the state. He feels any irrigated peanut acreage has potential for onion production. This spring he planted approximately 10 acres of onions, increasing the plantings of *Candy*.

McClure also continues to look for new crops to diversify his farm. He has tried planting sweet potatoes the second week in July, after the onions were harvested. With irrigation he was harvesting sweet potatoes by the second week in September. As with the onions, labor and marketing are issues that need to be addressed.

Some producer grant recipients and Kerr Center staff, Sept. 2002. Top (l-r) Graydon Trible, Robert Wall, Frank Schwartz, Ken McMennemy, Jim Horne, Richard Ortez, Glen Ledbetter, Howard Beavins, Doug Walton. Bottom (l-r) Mike Walters, David Redhage, Alan Ware, Sam McClure, Mike Green, Charley Walton

Farmland Preservation Workshops Set

A professional development workshop that will provide training in farmland and forestland preservation will be held this summer at three locations in the southern U.S.

The goal of the workshop is to "train the trainer," i.e., educate leaders and educators who will pass on what they learn to those who contact them for assistance. Extension educators and officials; NRCS, FSA, and other USDA personnel; as well as state farm and forestry leaders, are examples of people who will find the workshop helpful. In many cases professional development credits will be available for attending this workshop.

The workshop is being funded by a grant from the southern region of the Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education (SARE) program. Participants should come from one of the states in the region: Oklahoma, Texas, Arkansas, Louisiana, Mississippi, Alabama, Florida, Georgia, Tennessee, Kentucky, South Carolina, North Carolina, Virginia, or from the two US protectorates, Puerto Rico and the Virgin Islands.

One workshop will be held in **Oklahoma City** at the Holiday Inn/Airport on July 24 and 25; another in the **Memphis** area on August 5 and 6; and the last in **Atlanta** on August 12 and 13. The workshop is being held at various locations to make it easier for people to attend one nearby.

Gerry Cohn and Kevin Schmidt of the American Farmland Trust will be instructors. In addition, knowledgeable local speakers will also participate.

SESSION TITLES INCLUDE:

■ **What is the Problem and Why Should We Protect Agricultural Land?**
Using information from the Southern SARE region and across the country, the speakers will provide an in-depth look at why we are losing agricultural land to development and other uses; the social, environmental and economic impacts of this loss; and why communities across the country have decided to address these issues.

■ **Farmland Protection Toolbox I: Planning for Agriculture**
This session will provide a detailed overview of how communities across the South and the nation have used various tools and techniques to plan for the future of agriculture in their community, including agricultural districts, comprehensive land use plans, agricultural economic development and agricultural zoning.

■ **Farmland Protection Toolbox II: Agricultural Conservation Easements**
This session will provide a detailed overview of how agricultural conservation easements have been used across the South and around the country to protect farm, ranch and forest land. Purchase of Development Rights programs and opportunities in the 2002 Farm Bill will be highlighted.

■ **Farmland Protection Programs at the State Level**
This session will provide a detailed case study of how one or two states have combined the tools and techniques previously discussed as part of their statewide farmland protection strategy.

■ **Group Discussion: Bringing This Back to Your State**
Participants will break into small groups by state to discuss what they see as the opportunities and challenges of addressing farm and forestland protection when they return home. Each state will be asked to prepare an action plan that outlines possible next steps after the workshop.

■ **Special Topics**
Each workshop will highlight a different topic, targeting a specific interest area identified by SSARE advisory committee.

- Farm Transfer—linking the generations and supporting beginning farmers— Oklahoma
- Minority Land Loss—Tennessee
- Forestry Issues—Atlanta

■ **Responding to Questions from Your Community**
This session will cover how participants can answer common questions from their communities about land use and agricultural and demographic issues. It will identify the major sources available nationwide for data on land use, farm, forest and ranchland, and demographics, and how this data should and should not be used.

■ **Small Group Discussion: Bringing this Back to your Community**
Participants will break into groups that reflect the audiences that they most often work with in their communities, such as farmers, elected officials, Extension/university, etc. Once in these small groups we will ask participants to create action plans for providing technical assistance and training to their target audiences.

■ **Registration:**
Registration is $25, which covers the one day workshop, resource notebook and lunch on 2nd day of workshop. Participants are responsible for all other meals, overnight accommodations and travel expenses.

If financial assistance is needed for registration and/or travel and accommodation, please submit a detailed letter of request to Anita Poole at the Kerr Center, PO Box 588, Poteau, OK 74953, apoole@kerrcenter.com by June 25.

Deadline for registration is July 2, 2003. Each workshop is limited to approximately fifty participants. For a registration form or more information about the workshops, instructors and hotel accommodations contact Barbara Chester or Anita Poole at the Kerr Center, 918-647-9123, bchester@kerrcenter.com or visit www.kerrcenter.com

Barbara Chester

Thirty-seven years! Barbara Chester, the Kerr Center executive secretary, has been with the Kerr Center for most of her life. She has seen many changes, including the pivotal change from working in the Agricultural Division of the Kerr Foundation in the '60s, to assisting in shaping its successor, the Kerr Center for Sustainable Agriculture, in 1985. Barbara has worked on policy projects, human resources, brucellosis eradication and numerous other projects. Throughout the years, Barbara has been the glue of the organization by tending to the business of keeping everything running smoothly.

Barbara is a friend to all. Kind and compassionate, Barbara works diligently to help us solve our problems. People at the Kerr Center know they can trust Barbara to tackle just about everything. She always listens, and she always goes that extra mile.

On top of her excellent personal qualities and professional skills, Barbara also cooks a delicious Blueberry Delight!

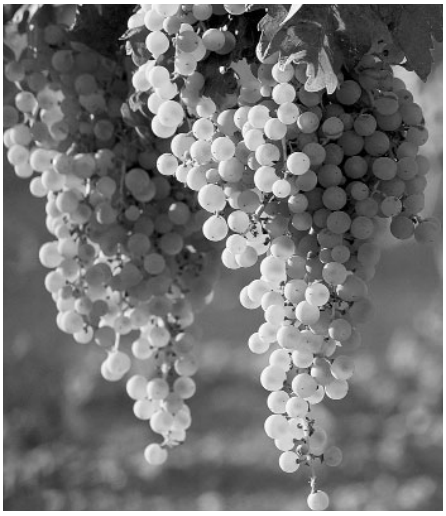
Barbara is a native of Monroe, Oklahoma, where she was born along the banks of Sugarloaf Creek. She has been married to Glendon for 40 years, and they have two children and two grandchildren.

If you have done any business with the Kerr Center in the last 37 years, chances are that you have had the pleasure of working with Barbara. We deeply appreciate her devotion and her professionalism, but most importantly, her friendship.

Please feel free to contact Barbara at 918-647-9123 or bchester@kerrcenter.com to offer your congratulations.

– Anita Poole

Events Planner



What: Free Field Day at Kerr Center's Horticulture Farm

- Emphasis this year will be on the small fruit variety trial including blackberries, blueberries, table grapes and muscadine grapes.
- The farm's trial garden of heirloom vegetables (organically grown) will also be available for viewing.
- New this year will be information from a three-year cover crop trial which evaluated 16 different cover crops for their suitability within this region in a low-tillage production system.

When: Saturday, June 14, 2003

- Registration is at 9:00 a.m. The program will begin at 9:30 a.m and last until around noon. Tables will be provided for anyone wishing to bring their lunch.

Where: Kerr Center for Sustainable Agriculture

- Located five miles south of Poteau or two miles north of Wister on Hwy 271. Watch for field day signs.

Why:

- Participants will have a great opportunity to see a wide variety of small fruit crops being produced in one location, along with other educational information on market gardening during this informal tour of the Kerr Center's Horticulture Farm.

Contact:

- For more information contact the Kerr Center at 918-647-9123 or e-mail easpeake@kerrcenter.com. Also see our website www.kerrcenter.com for information.

The Next Green Revolution #1 on 1000 Great Books List

"In a world racing to forget the past, thoughtful agriculturists take time to learn what they can from the best teachers they can find: those thoughtful farmers and agricultural thinkers who have remembered, restated and renewed a holistic vision for their time…"

So begins the introduction to the list of "1000 Great Books for Sustainable Agriculture," on The New Farm website (newfarm.org) from the Rodale Institute. *The Next Green Revolution: Essential Steps to a Healthy Sustainable Agriculture* by Kerr Center president Jim Horne and Communications Director Maura McDermott tops the list.

The book joins other classics such as *Agroecology: The Scientific Basis for Alternative Agriculture, Making Your Small Farm Profitable, The One Straw Revolution,* and *The Basic Book of Organic Farming,* along with books from notables such as Joel Salatin and Frances Moore Lappe.

Recent reviews point out the book's utility for students, farmers, environmentalists, and people in the general public interested in food and agriculture issues. A sampler:

What a delight to review a book which so eloquently traces the history of American agriculture, delineates its current status and shares a dream and guidance of how a sustainable future for agriculture might be assured! This volume is a practical guide for the farmer struggling to be productive and profitable in an increasingly hostile economic environment. It would also be useful as a reference for agricultural courses and outreach programs and the public, policy makers, and other interested in agriculture. The volume is instructive, thought provoking, and a stimulus for action…

— Norman J. Doorenbos, Auburn University, in Economic Botany

Agriculture is no longer an afterthought in the environmental movement. Farming, our most extensive interface with the natural environment, is now on the agenda of numerous environmental groups. A more general awareness and understanding of the diversity, subtleties, and struggles of farming, however, is still needed.

Authors James E. Horne and Maura McDermott offer a timely primer on the state of sustainable agriculture at the turn of the new century. The book takes on the whole story, putting industrial agriculture on trial and laying out the fundamental tenets of a more sustainable approach.

Raised a true believer in the wonders of modern agriculture, Horne uses anecdotes from his experience as the reformist director of the Kerr Center for Sustainable Agriculture to add some spice to long stretches of important… information on the details of modern farming. This is where the book is at its best. Horne talks about his own experiences and the difficult process of change. His stories are directed as much toward his fellow farmers as toward urban environmentalists, which makes the book refreshing. It may succeed with farmers as a tool for change, but it will most assuredly give others a better understanding of the challenges involved in moving the juggernaut of American agriculture in a new direction.

— Merill Ingram, Department of Geography, University of Arizona, Tucson, in Environment

For more reviews, table of contents, and ordering information go to kerrcenter.com or haworthpressinc.com

The Next Green Revolution is a thorough introduction to sustainable agriculture, written for students and farmers just starting to learn about sustainable practices, but to be appreciated by people from all walks of life who are fresh to the topic…

The authors argue that nothing less than a new green revolution is called for to lead society on a better path to an agriculture that can be sustained. They sketch some of the history of sustainable agriculture and its philosophical origins and definitions—essential background for the intended reading audience: students in agriculture programs and courses and individuals who are starting from scratch to learn about sustainable agriculture. The book prescribes eight steps to the next green revolution and is packed with basic information about such topics as soil, nutrient cycles, water cycles, cover crops, pest management, etc. There are several "Checklists for Farmers" included, such as the one that lists fourteen points on how to conserve water and protect its quality.

—Dana Jackson

Land Stewardship Project Associate Director, in *The Land Stewardship Letter*

CALENDAR

Adult Workshops at the Overstreet-Kerr Historical Farm, south of Sallisaw, see p.11

- April 26, Chuck Wagon Cookery,
- May 3, The Art of Bonsai
- May 17, Making Herbal Tinctures and Infused Oils
- May 24, Beginning Spinning and Weaving
- June 14, Making Old-Fashioned Sauerkraut
- June 21 and 28, Beginning Flint Knapping

June 12 - Growing Onions in Oklahoma, Field Day, McClure Farm, Calvin see p.12

June 14 - Field Day: Small Fruits, Cover Crops, Heirloom Vegetables, Kerr Center Horiticultural Farm, Poteau, see p.14

June 19 - Oklahoma Wind Power and Bioenergy Conference, Norman, OK. For more information: www.seic.okstate.edu/owpi/

Farmland Preservation Workshops, see. p.13

- July 24-25, Oklahoma City
- Aug 5-6, Memphis
- Aug. 2-13, Atlanta

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