



Field Notes

Kerr Center for Sustainable Agriculture E-Newsletter

E-Field Notes

April 2020

As the COVID-19 outbreak continues, we hope you and yours are staying safe and healthy. Please check our page of [pandemic resources for farmers and ranchers](#) to help your operation weather this crisis.

The monarch butterflies currently fluttering northward through the state are a sign that **many essential services - including pollination - can't shut down for coronavirus**. Fortunately, **there are many things you can do, even during social distancing, to support the monarchs and other pollinators**. David Redhage explains how **even something as simple as changing how you mow your lawn can help**. In addition:

- For those with livestock acreage, Okies for Monarchs has a **new guide to best management practices for monarch habitat on rangelands**.
- COVID-19 may not infect insects, but it can still harm them indirectly if the shutdown forces out of business the nurseries and seed houses that supply pollinator plants. **Find and support local native plant nurseries**.
- **NRCS programs can help you with pollinator plantings and management - and maybe even help pay for them**.

Times like these are the ones we try to prepare for by promoting and teaching sustainability and resilience. [We appreciate your past support](#) - and if you're in a position to [donate now](#), your assistance is more needed than ever. [Thank you!](#)

In this issue:

President's Note: Mowing for Wildflowers

Best Management Practices for Monarchs on Rangelands

Support Local Nurseries!

NRCS Assistance for Monarch Habitat

Spring Events: Learning Online, USDA Program Deadlines

President's Note: Mowing for Wildflowers

Over the last several years, when mowing my lawn in the spring, I have left areas of wildflowers alone, so that the blooms are available for [pollinators](#). Two I have managed for are Carolina anemone and common yarrow. Both stands have grown in size over the years.

This year I left more areas unmowed to allow spring beauty and blueeyed grass to bloom freely. For better or worse, I have large amounts of henbit, a non-native, in my lawn, since I don't spray it. Bees still use it, but not as much as the others mentioned.



I know people wonder what I am doing, leaving some areas tall and weedy-looking, but it works. After the flowers have stopped blooming and the foliage has started to die back, I mow the areas with wildflowers, and then my lawn looks like everyone else's! It's an easy way to help pollinators, and I didn't need to plant any seeds.

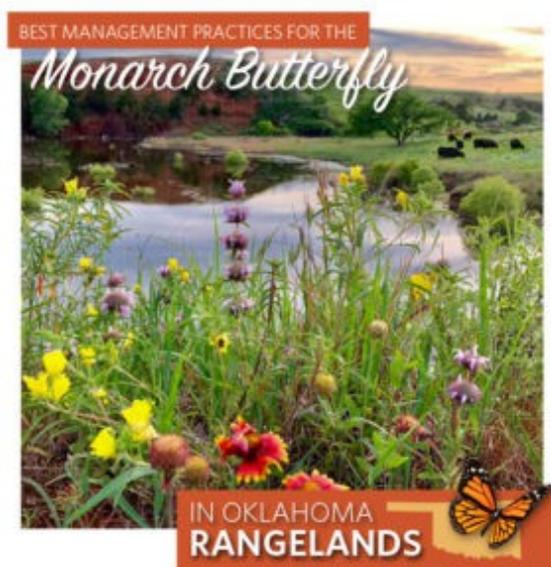
Best Management Practices for Monarchs on Rangelands

[Working ranches](#) can provide broad acreages of high-quality [monarch butterfly habitat](#), but land managers may not always know **which management practices to use in order to maximize this potential**. A new report from the Lands Working Group of [Okies for Monarchs](#) aims to clear that obstacle.

["Best Management Practices for the Monarch Butterfly in Oklahoma Rangelands"](#) is just what the title says. The authors drew recommendations from technical and scientific publications and condensed them into a **short, accessible, and handsomely illustrated reference guide**.

Sections include [grazing](#), [prescribed burning](#), **brush management**, and [forage harvest](#), as well as managing and developing early successional habitat, and **controlling weeds**. There are also **recommendations for all phases of monarch habitat establishment**, from **planting**, through **maintaining new plantings** during the first two years, to **monitoring established plantings**.

["Best Management Practices for the Monarch Butterfly in Oklahoma Rangelands"](#) is available free in electronic format from the [Okies for Monarchs website](#).



Support Local Nurseries!

[Okies for Monarchs](#) is working to maintain and increase [support for independent local nurseries](#) during the COVID-19 crisis:

"It has never been more important to support our Oklahoma independent plant growers and retailers than now.

The cancellation of spring plant fairs and festivals has really put a strain on these businesses during what should be a peak time of their year. We need these businesses to remain in our state. Native plants are crucial to urban and rural [habitat](#) work!

You can help, while safely social distancing, by ordering online or by phone for pickup or delivery."

Visit Okies for Monarchs' website for a [list of nurseries and seed houses](#) that are still open for business. This way, you can do your part to **keep the COVID-19 pandemic from becoming yet another [factor in pollinator declines](#).**



NRCS Assistance for Monarch Habitat

Deadlines are quickly approaching for a USDA-NRCS program that can help Oklahoma farmers and ranchers manage portions of their property for monarch butterfly habitat.

The NRCS [Regional Conservation Partnership Program](#) (RCPP) is partnering with [Pheasants Forever and Quail Forever](#) (PFQF) in Oklahoma. PFQF is assisting Oklahoma farmers and ranchers to apply for the RCPP, which provides **free technical and possible financial assistance to landowners wanting to preserve or improve monarch habitat on their land.**



PFQF biologists, in partnership with NRCS, work side-by-side with Oklahoma producers to develop a conservation plan tailored to the producer's property. "These plans provide technical and possible access to financial assistance on how to use conservation practices to meet natural resource concerns and production goals," said Gary O'Neill, Oklahoma State Conservationist for NRCS.

Leslie Elmore, a wildlife biologist with Quail Forever, states, "Together we can reverse the trend to improve the habitat for the monarch butterfly and additional [pollinator](#) species that are valuable to agriculture in Oklahoma." The Farm Bill conservation practices that benefit monarch butterflies also can improve soil and water quality, control invasive species, and provide quality forage for livestock.

Producers can plant native wildflower seeds along field borders or in under-productive areas of crop fields, in buffers along waterways, around wetlands, near barns or gardens, and other suitable locations. Farmers interested in planting nectar-rich plants, including milkweed, to fuel the monarch's multi-generational migration, may be eligible for assistance through the **monarch RCPP Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP)**, which has a **May 29, 2020 application deadline.**

NRCS field offices are currently open by phone appointment only until further notice. NRCS staff are available to provide one-on-one, customer-specific assistance and take applications. For questions about the monarch program, contact Leslie Elmore by [email](#) or phone (405-714-8886) to discuss how you might improve monarch habitat on your property.

[Continue reading....](#)

Note that signup for another USDA conservation program, the [Conservation Reserve Program \(CRP\) Grasslands](#) component, opened March 16 and runs through May 15.

Spring Events: Learning Online, USDA Program Deadlines

While many events over the next couple of months have been canceled or postponed, the number of online learning opportunities is blossoming in response, including upcoming webinars on:

- [online ordering platforms for farmers markets](#) (Apr. 29)
- [economic injury disaster loans](#) (Apr. 29)
- [Paycheck Protection Program](#) for farmers and ranchers (Apr. 30)
- [building monarch habitat capacity](#) (May 12).

The screenshot shows a calendar interface with the following events:

- MAR 26 Thu:** CANCELED: Eastern Oklahoma Beef Cattle Summit @ McAlester (SE Oklahoma Expo Center) Mar 26 @ 8:00 am – 3:30 pm. Includes a 'Tickets' button.
- MAR 27 Fri:** Deadline: Agricultural Conservation Easement Program – Wetland Reserve Easement component. Mar 27 all-day.
- MAR 27 Fri:** Oklahoma Conservation Leadership Academy: Application Deadline. Mar 27 all-day.
- MAR 27 Fri:** POSTPONED: Prescribed Fire Planning Workshop @ Pryor (Twin Ridge Ranch). Mar 27 @ 8:30 am – 3:30 pm.
- MAR 28 Sat:** Blue Thumb Volunteer Training – Duncan @ Duncan (Fairgrounds: Heritage Room). Mar 28 @ 8:30 am – Mar 29 @ 4:30 pm.
- MAR 28 Sat:** POSTPONED: Landscape Design for Water Conservation @ Oklahoma City (OKC Zoo Education Auditorium). Mar 28 @ 10:00 am – 12:00 pm. Includes a 'Tickets' button.
- APR 2 Thu:** CANCELED: Monarch Meetup: McAlester @ McAlester (McAlester Public Library). Apr 2 @ 5:00 pm – 7:00 pm.

In addition, deadlines for several USDA programs are approaching, including:

- [CRP Grasslands signup](#) (May 15),
- [Farmers Market](#) and [Local Food Promotion Program](#) and the [Regional Food System Partnerships Program](#) (May 26), and
- [monarch RCPP](#) (May 29).

Full details on these and other sustainable agriculture learning opportunities, as always, can be found on the Kerr Center's online [events calendar](#).

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** 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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