



Field Notes

Kerr Center for Sustainable Agriculture E-Newsletter

E-Field Notes
May 2020

David Redhage starts off this issue with an update on how **programming on the ranch has been holding up under the combination of shutdown and downpour.**

The latest updates to our page of [pandemic resources for farmers and ranchers](#) include information on the **Coronavirus Food Assistance Program, which has just begun taking applications** from farming and ranching operations that have suffered economic losses from COVID-19.

Spring may be getting long in the tooth, but there are still plenty of **crops that you can plant now for good harvests in summer and fall.**

It turns out that the insects we rely on to pollinate those crops don't quit when the sun goes down. Learn about **new research on nighttime pollinators - and how to help protect them.**

As ever, [we're grateful](#) for the support you provide that enables us to keep spreading the word about these and other aspects of sustainable agriculture. If it's been a while since you contributed, please consider making a [donation](#). [Thanks again!](#)

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President's Note: COVID-19 and a Wet Spring

Due to the economic shutdown, the Kerr Center closed our offices during April and canceled spring and early summer workshops planned for 2020. We hope to be able to start educational programming again in mid- to late summer and the fall.

We have been able to maintain ranch activities with livestock and at the horticulture farm. One of the additional challenges has been the amount of late winter and early spring rainfall we have received.

At our horticulture farm the elderberry trial is ongoing, but no plot work has been conducted to date due to the wet fields. We have several projects involving hydroponics and hope to have some information later in the year.

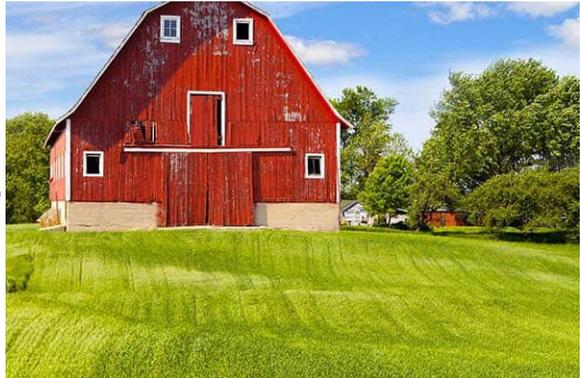
Rest assured, we will take everyone's safety into consideration as we plan for future activities. So stay safe and keep watching the website for information on upcoming events, as hopefully activities can return to some level of normalcy as the season progresses.



Coronavirus Food Assistance Program Accepting Applications

Has your been farming or ranching operation been directly impacted by the coronavirus pandemic?

The [Coronavirus Food Assistance Program](#) (CFAP) will provide **direct relief to producers who faced price declines** and additional marketing costs **due to COVID-19**.



CFAP will provide vital financial assistance to producers of agricultural commodities who have suffered a five-percent-or-greater price decline or who had losses due to market supply chain disruptions due to COVID-19 and face additional significant market costs.

Beginning May 26, the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA), through the Farm Service Agency (FSA), will be accepting applications from agricultural producers who have suffered losses. Applications will be accepted through August 28, 2020.

Livestock eligible for CFAP include cattle, lambs, yearlings and hogs. The total payment will be calculated using the sum of the producer's number of livestock sold between January 15 and April 15, 2020, multiplied by the payment rates per head, and the highest inventory number of livestock between April 16 and May 14, 2020, multiplied by the payment rate per head.

For **eligible specialty crops**, the total payment will be based on the volume of production sold between January 15 and April 15, 2020; the volume of production shipped, but unpaid; and the number of acres for which harvested production did not leave the farm or mature product destroyed or not harvested during that same time period, and which have not and will not be sold. Specialty crops **include, but are not limited to, almonds, beans, broccoli, sweet corn, lemons, iceberg lettuce, spinach, squash, strawberries and tomatoes.**

Additional information and application forms can be found at farmers.gov/cfap. Producers of all eligible commodities will apply through their local FSA office.

As usual with such programs, the [National Sustainable Agriculture Coalition](#) offers a [free, detailed guide to the application process](#).

It's Not Too Late to Plant!

The [prime planting window](#) for many crops may have passed, but **it's still not too late to get a garden in, or to add to an existing one** - and the Kerr Center's website is chock full of [useful advice](#).

It's the perfect time for planting **sweet potatoes**. We've worked extensively with that crop in the past. You can see a [quick overview](#) of that experience, with links to detailed reports of heirloom sweet potato variety trials from three different years ([2010](#), [2011](#), and [2012](#)).

We've also got a **video** showing [how to use a bed shaper](#) to make planting ridges, and a report full of [tips for small-scale growers](#) for **every step of production from starting slips to harvest**.

SARE has also recently published the results of on-farm research into [what spacing gives the highest yields](#) in organic sweet potato production.

Don't limit yourself to sweet potatoes, though. There are **other crops that can go into the ground this late and still yield good harvests**, including [sorghum](#) and [okra](#). In some years, we've had decent results from [squash](#) and [tomatoes](#) planted this late in the season.



Pollination after Dark

Step outside after dark this time of year, flip on the porch light, and there they are - moths. Though they're infamous for swarming bright lights, chewing holes in clothes, and ruining stored food, it turns out that **moths play an important role** in ecosystems - **as nocturnal pollinators**.

When they aren't batting themselves against the lights, moths spend their nights pollinating. Their nighttime activity complements that of more commonly recognized daytime pollinators, such as bees and butterflies. While moths are not as efficient at pollinating particular plant species, they may visit species that their daytime counterparts don't, and may spread their visits more evenly among different species.



Such are the findings of an English [study](#) published this month in *Biology Letters*. From March to October in two successive years, the researchers monitored pollinators both day and night, noting which plant species they visited.

Moths and their daytime counterparts visited about the same number of species, but moths visited at least seven species that were rarely or never visited by daytime pollinators during the study.

"While bumblebees and honeybees are known to be super pollinators they also preferentially target the most prolific nectar and pollen sources," said lead author Dr. Richard Walton.

"Moths may appear to be less effective pollinators by comparison, but their high diversity and abundance may make them critical to pollination in ways that we still need to understand."

[Continue reading....](#)

Spring Events: More USDA Program Deadlines

USDA program deadlines keep coming up! On June 3, there's a webinar explaining how to apply to a **new urban agriculture grants program**. NRCS has just announced that **the cutoff date for 2020 Conservation Stewardship Program signups is June 12**.

Also, while the deadline for the **Coronavirus Food Assistance Program** isn't until August 28, applications are now open. Bear in mind that funds for some similar programs have depleted quickly.

JUN 3 Wed	Webinar: USDA Urban Agriculture Grants @ online Jun 3 @ 1:00 pm – 3:00 pm	Tickets +
JUN 6 Sat	POSTPONED: Growing Season Fire Workshop @ Ames	+
JUN 8 Mon	CANCELED: National Rural Grocery Summit @ Manhattan, KS (Hilton Garden Inn) Jun 8 – Jun 9 <small>all-day</small>	Tickets +
JUN 9 Tue	CANCELED: Tour the Kerr Center @ Kerr Center Jun 9 @ 9:00 am	+
	CANCELED: Establishing a Native Prairie and Wildlife Garden @ Stillwater (OSU Botanic Garden) Jun 9 @ 6:00 pm – 7:30 pm	+
JUN 12 Fri	Deadline: 2020 Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP) Signup Jun 12 <small>all-day</small>	+

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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