



# Field Notes

## Kerr Center for Sustainable Agriculture E-Newsletter

*E-Field Notes*  
March 2021

Happy spring!

David Redhage gets this month's issue rolling with a reassurance, based on the latest science, that elderberries, and products made from **elderberries, are safe to consume.**

Sometimes we may toss around the phrase "sustainable agriculture" without thinking too much about what it really means. SARE has a **new video series that explains the concept of sustainable agriculture** in short bites that are easy to follow.

Two more **USDA programs have deadlines coming up. Applications are due April 29 (online, or May 4 by mail) for the Value Added Producer Grant (VAPG) program.** It helps farmers and ranchers **develop and market value-added products from raw commodities** - on the theory that you can make more selling grape juice and burgers than grapes and steers.

The original **deadline to sign up for this year's round of Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) payments** was last month, but it's been **extended**, and no new deadline has yet been set. **CRP pays producers to put land in trees or grass for 10 to 15 years - holding soil, making more efficient use of nutrients, and enhancing wildlife habitat.**

Speaking of funding sources, we can only do the work we do because [you support us.](#)  
[Thank you!](#)

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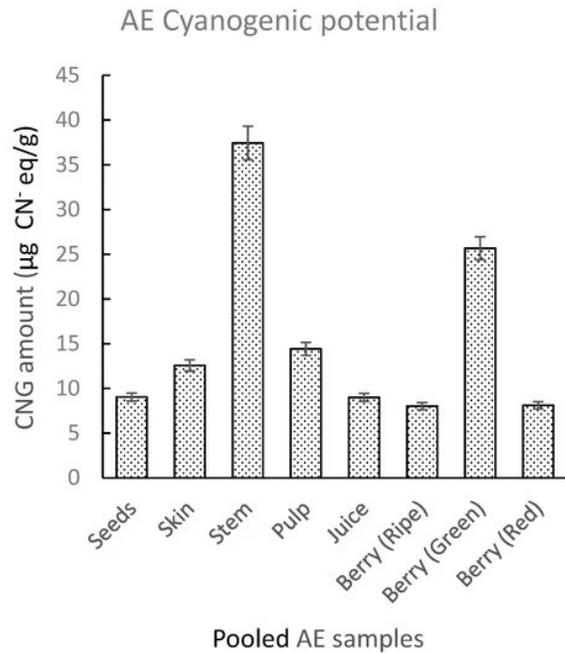
- **President's Note: Is the American Elderberry Safe to Consume?**
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## President's Note: Is the American Elderberry Safe to Consume?

Questions have been raised about the safety of consuming the American [elderberry](#) (AE) due to the presence of cyanogenic glycosides (CNGs), which are naturally occurring plant molecules. The University of Missouri received funding to study the total cyanogenic potential of American elderberry samples.

The abstract of the resulting study states that the conclusion was that "concentration levels in all tissues were generally low and at a level that poses no threat to consumers of fresh and processed American elderberry products." However, the study's conclusion recommends separating out the stems, green berries and leaves from ripe berries during product preparation.

[Read the full study.](#)



## Lemons to Lemonade? It's Only the Beginning!

It's no secret that commodity agriculture is a low-margin undertaking. Recognizing fact, many enterprising farmers and ranchers have elected to **add value to their own products** by cutting out the middlemen and **processing their own crops and livestock**.

As it turns out, **USDA's Rural Development arm** has a program that provides **grants to producers looking to develop or expand value-added agricultural enterprises** - and the deadline is coming up soon.



[Applications for Value Added Producer Grants \(VAPG\) are due April 29](#) (or May 4, if submitted by mail).

The **National Sustainable Agriculture Coalition (NSAC)** has released the latest version of its **free [Farmers' Guide to the Value-Added Producer Grant \(VAPG\) Program](#)**. The guide provides farmers and ranchers looking to apply for the VAPG program with information on how to determine **whether the program is a good fit** for their operations and helpful **tips on improving their applications' chances of success**.

Stuck for ideas? Check out the Kerr Center's [Farm Made: A Guide to On-Farm Processing for Organic Producers](#). It contains examples of four different value-added enterprises: [sorghum syrup](#); fresh greens; jams, jellies, and spreads, and table eggs.

[Learn more....](#)

## New SARE Video Series: What Is Sustainable Agriculture?

**Sustainable agriculture**: many of us may feel like we have a pretty good handle on what it means, but how many could come up with a precise definition on the spot? For those new to the topic, the idea can be even more bewildering.

Cue up a **new video series from SARE**. Aptly titled "[What Is Sustainable Agriculture](#)," the series tackles the question in an appealing format broken up into digestible two- to three-minute chunks.

[Learn more....](#)



What is Sustainable Agriculture? A Whole-Farm Approach to Sustainability

# Conservation Reserve Program Signup Extended

The signup period for the USDA [Conservation Reserve Program](#) (CRP), which was originally set to end on February 12, has been [extended indefinitely](#).

Via CRP, the **USDA pays farmers and ranchers to keep land in perennial cover** (trees or grass) for 10 to 15 years. This **limits soil erosion, reduces contamination from nutrient waste**, and can even create habitat for wildlife, including [pollinators](#).

**More information** on CRP in general, and the current signup period extension, is available from the [National Sustainable Agriculture Coalition's website](#).



# Early Spring Events: Grant Application Deadlines, Traditional Soil Health, Summer Survivors, Market Gardening School...

Deadlines for many grant applications are coming up:

- REAP Renewable Energy Systems and Energy Efficiency Improvements (Mar. 31)
- BIPOC Farmer Micro-Grants (Mar. 31)
- Monarch Butterfly & Pollinators Conservation Fund (Apr. 15)
- Value Added Producer Grants (Apr. 29)

Month	Date	Day	Event	Time	Notes
MAR	31	Wed	Application Deadline: REAP Renewable Energy Systems & Energy Efficiency Improvement Guaranteed Loans & Grants	all-day	
MAR	31	Wed	Deadline: BIPOC Farmer Micro-Grants @ online	all-day	
MAR	31	Wed	Webinar: Indigenous and Traditional Soil Health Practices @ online	2:00 pm	Tickets
APR	9	Fri	Oklahoma Summer Survivors @ online / Oklahoma City (OSU Conference Center)	12:00 pm – 1:15 pm	Tickets
APR	13	Tue	BY APPOINTMENT ONLY: Tour the Kerr Center @ Kerr Center	9:00 am	
APR	15	Thu	Webinar: Useful Plants Across the Continents @ online	1:00 pm – 3:00 pm	
APR	15	Thu	Deadline: Monarch Butterfly and Pollinators Conservation Fund 2021 Pre-Proposals @ online	10:59 pm	
APR	16	Fri	Beginning Farmer Market Gardening School @ Oklahoma City (Oklahoma County Extension Office)	all-day	

You can also take in webinars on **indigenous and traditional soil health practices** (Mar. 31), **heat/drought tolerant garden plants** for Oklahoma (Apr. 9), and a **global perspective on useful plants** (Apr. 15). OSU's six-session weekly **course on market gardening for beginning farmers** begins April 16.

The Kerr Center's [tour](#) season opens in April, by appointment only. [Come visit us!](#)

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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Since 1965 the Kerr Center has been reaching out to folks in Oklahoma and beyond. Today, the Friends of the Kerr Center help us continue this vital work! If you enjoy reading this newsletter or visiting our website, please consider [making a gift to the Kerr Center](#) today!

## Quick Links...

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