



Field Notes

Kerr Center for Sustainable Agriculture E-Newsletter

E-Field Notes
June 2021

It's summer - and summer means bugs! Not all of them are pests - but **when it comes to beneficial insects, what can we do to help them? And what, exactly, do they do for us?**

David Redhage tackles that first question with a review of a **new book from the Xerces Society, *100 Plants to Feed the Monarch***. An older report from the Kerr Center's horticulture program expands that answer to the field scale, looking at ways to **use cover crops to create habitat for beneficial insects**.

Meanwhile, a recent study provides part of an answer to the second, revealing that **pollination services can make up a larger share of commercial beekeepers' profits than honey sales**.

Speaking of bugs - from the biological kind to the digital, they've been causing problems for the beef business for the past year and counting. **Local beef** provides an alternative, but not without challenges of its own. There are plenty of **resources to help you** navigate those, **whether you're buying, selling, or literally in between, as the processor**.

One thing that definitely doesn't bug us is your **[donations](#)**. **[Please keep them buzzing in!](#)**
[Thank you!](#)

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President's Note: Book Review - *100 Plants to Feed the Monarch*

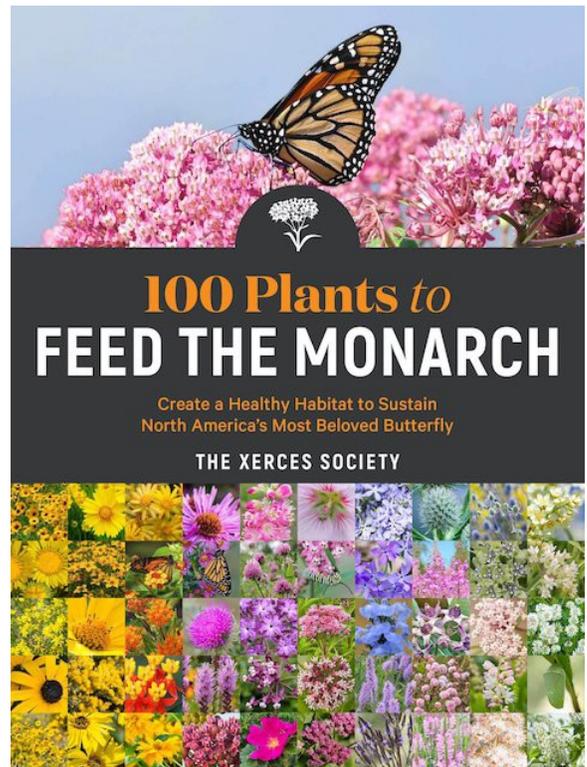
[100 Plants to Feed the Monarch](#). Xerces Society. 2021. Xerces Society. 288 p.

I have written before about the [eastern monarch butterfly](#) and how [the population has dropped dramatically](#) in recent years. Estimates indicate [a drop of up to 84% since 1996](#) (Saunders *et al.*, 2019).

One way to help the monarch is by planting [native milkweed](#) and other [native flowering plants](#) in the landscape. The question many have is [what to plant](#). Most know milkweed is the host plant for the monarch caterpillar, but **what flowers do adult monarchs need to feed on?**

The [Xerces Society](#) has published a book to help individuals identify the appropriate plants for helping the monarch. It is titled [100 Plants to Feed the Monarch](#). It provides brief descriptions of milkweeds attractive to monarchs nationwide, and includes a list of flowering plants for adult monarchs to nectar on.

By adding plants highlighted in the book to your landscape, you benefit both the monarch butterfly and other native pollinators. I hope you will help the monarch by [including some native plants in your landscape](#).



Cover Crops as Beneficial Insect Habitats

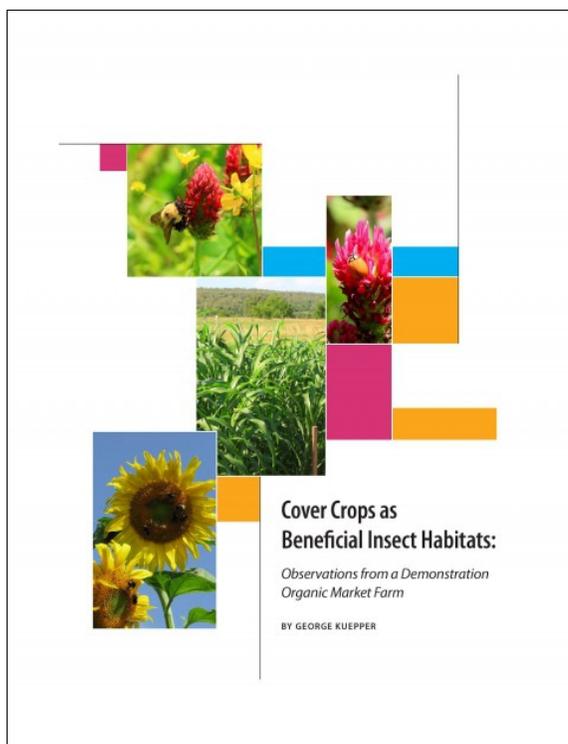
The Cannon Horticulture Plots' **bio-extensive** phase leaned heavily on **cover crops** for their many well-documented benefits - weed suppression, soil fertility, organic matter, water holding, and more.

It also noted the fact that **beneficial insects could and did use cover crops as habitat** - and, though it was never a formal focus of investigation, the program developed ideas for enhancing that role, as well.

The project's findings are summarized in the free report, [*Cover Crops as Beneficial Insect Habitats*](#).

In general, cover crops provide the most habitat benefits when flowering. As such, the longer a given cover crop can be allowed to flower before termination, the greater the benefits to beneficials. However, this often favors using a single cover crop species rather than a mix, to avoid additional complications with timing of termination.

[Learn more....](#)



Sweeter than Honey? Pollination Pads Beekeepers' Profits - But Ecosystem Services Still Poorly Priced

A trans-continental team of researchers has recently published work demonstrating both how difficult and **how essential it is to pin an accurate dollar value on pollination services** - both to keep honey bee pollination markets operating smoothly, and to protect overall ecosystem health.

Economists and ecologists from the University of Maryland, the University of North Texas, and the University of California, Santa Barbara (UCSB), collaborated on the [study](#), which is published in the *Annual Review of Resource Economics*.



Overall, commercial beekeepers make more money nowadays from renting out their colonies' pollination services than from selling honey. Pollination is big business, involving an [annual migration of trucks loaded with beehives](#) from southern California through the Pacific Northwest into the northern Great Plains.

However, the pollination services sector is on shaky footing, assailed by everything from traditional pests like Varroa mites to more recent threats like Colony Collapse Disorder. A major aim of this new research is to **identify which of those factors are not yet adequately priced into the market**.

Coming from the ecological side of the equation, the researchers also identify areas in which the value of pollination as an ecosystem service is as yet poorly quantified.

[Learn more....](#)

Viruses Boost Demand for Local Beef

Whether of the COVID or computer variety, viruses' impact on large-scale meatpacking plants has led to a **new wave of demand for local beef - and the sector is scrambling to meet it.**

When a cyberattack shut down 20% of U.S. beef processing capacity at the beginning of this month, it was only the latest in a series of upsets to the industry dating back to the early days of the coronavirus pandemic.



Last April and May, COVID outbreaks in some of the nation's largest meatpacking plants led several to close. Since just over **50 of the nation's 800-some federally-inspected plants handle up to 98% of the country's total** capacity, those closures caused a sharp drop in the number of cattle slaughtered. At the worst point, **in May, the weekly number of cattle slaughtered was barely more than half that from the year before.**

[Learn more....](#)

Summer Events: Agroforestry, Prescribed Fire, Pressure Canning, No-Till, Grant Deadlines....

A week into summer, you can go online for the **North American Agroforestry Conference** (June 28 - July 2), or turn up in person in McAlester for a **prescribed fire workshop**. If you're feeling like preserving some of summer's bounty, check out OSU-OKC's **pressure canning workshop** (July 12). No-Till on the Plains celebrates its 25th anniversary with a **no-till field day** in Liberal, KS (July 13).

Grant deadlines keep coming up: you can learn how to apply to SARE's **On-Farm Research Grants** in a June 30 webinar; applications are due soon for USDA's

Regional Food System Partnerships (July 6) and **Conservation Innovation Grants** (July 19).

The Kerr Center's [tour](#) season is also open, 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.

Date	Event Title	Location	Time	Notes
JUN 28 Mon	North American Agroforestry Conference 2021 @ online	online	Jun 28 - Jul 2 (all-day)	Tickets
JUN 28 Mon	Prescribed Fire Workshop @ McAlester (Kiamichi Technology Center)	McAlester (Kiamichi Technology Center)	Jun 28 @ 9:00 am - 1:30 pm	Tickets
JUN 30 Wed	Southern SARE On-Farm Research Grants Webinar @ online	online	Jun 30 @ 2:00 pm - 3:00 pm	Tickets
JUL 6 Tue	Grant Application Deadline: Regional Food System Partnerships (RFSP) @ n/a	n/a	Jul 6 @ 11:59 pm	
JUL 12 Mon	Pressure Canning @ Oklahoma City (OSU Extension Conference Center)	Oklahoma City (OSU Extension Conference Center)	Jul 12 @ 1:00 pm - 4:30 pm	
JUL 13 Tue	BY APPOINTMENT ONLY: Tour the Kerr Center @ Kerr Center	Kerr Center	Jul 13 @ 9:00 am	
JUL 15 Thu	No-Till on the Plains 25th Anniversary Celebration and Field Day @ Liberal, KS (Seward County Events Center and Nic Vos Farms)	Liberal, KS (Seward County Events Center and Nic Vos Farms)	Jul 15 @ 8:30 am - 2:00 pm	Tickets
JUL 19 Mon	Grant Application Deadline: Conservation Innovation Grants (CIG) @ n/a	n/a	Jul 19 @ 10:59 pm	

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