



Field Notes

Kerr Center for Sustainable Agriculture E-Newsletter

E-Field Notes

August 2021

It's August, and it seems like everything is looking for the nearest shade tree.

With that thought in mind, we're sharing resources on **agroforestry** - a **new guide to marketing agroforestry products** you might not have considered, and new methods **incorporating silvopasture and biochar to shrink cattle ranching's carbon hoofprint**.

We've been beating the drum about **warm-season cover crops** for a while, so we're also happy to share new research showing that **intercropping cowpeas with vegetable crops can boost both yields and pollinator numbers**.

Speaking of **pollinators**, David Redhage has a heartening report on **habitat increasing right on the ranch**.

You help boost our reach when you [donate to the Kerr Center](#), helping us spread sustainable agriculture news and tips like these to a wider audience. [Thank you!](#)

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President's Note: Milkweeds in Nurse Cow Pasture

The Kerr Center has been working with a group called [Okies for Monarchs](#) to help spread awareness and educate the public on the plight of the [monarch butterfly](#). If you haven't followed the news, the overwintering populations have dropped dramatically, potentially endangering the monarch.

One question science has yet to answer is **how important is late summer/fall egg laying to the overall population of monarchs**. It was thought monarchs stopped laying eggs as they migrate south to Mexico each year, but we know **in some areas they lay eggs, and the caterpillars develop into adults, which continue to migrate**.



The question has also been raised about **how to manage habitat or pastures with milkweed to make them attractive to egg-laying adults** in the late summer.

One Kerr Center pasture, called Nurse Cow, has a significant population of [milkweeds](#). Two years ago we fertilized it with chicken litter. Since the dominant grasses are fescue and bermudagrass, I thought the grasses would suppress the milkweeds.

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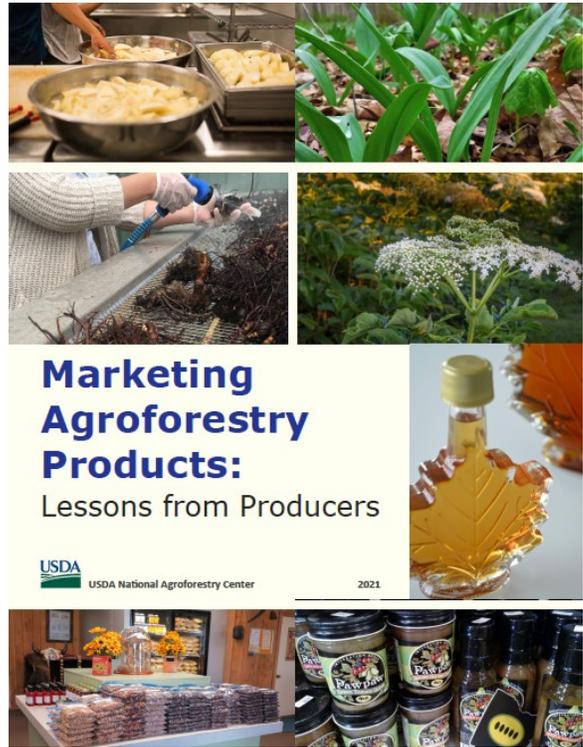
Marketing Agroforestry Products

“Agroforestry products” might put most of us in mind of timber - and that's certainly the main product of the Kerr Center's [agroforestry](#) projects. However, that only scratches the surface of what it's possible to harvest and sell from agroforestry enterprises. A **new, free publication** from the USDA's National Agroforestry Center offers several **examples of the diversity of potential agroforestry crops**.

[Marketing Agroforestry Products: Lessons from Producers](#) is a 15-page pdf of short profiles of seven farms around the country producing and marketing different agroforestry products - from breadfruit in Hawaii to ramps (wild leeks), fiddlehead ferns, and stinging nettles in Delaware. Of particular interest to Oklahoma farmers and ranchers are profiles of enterprises marketing pecans, [elderberries](#), and [pawpaws](#).

Each profile includes a list of **assistance and resources received** in the development of the enterprise. In addition, the publication includes a concluding page of **lessons learned**.

Marketing Agroforestry Products: Lessons from Producers is available free online [here](#).



Marketing Agroforestry Products:

Lessons from Producers

USDA National Agroforestry Center

2021

Board Feet & Biochar: Silvopasture Converts Cattle to Carbon Sinks

Speaking of **agroforestry**, recent research has opened two different paths to **combining it with cattle grazing to keep carbon budgets balanced**.

We've long touted the benefits of **silvopasture - combining tree plantings and cattle grazing** on the same land. Cattle have better access to shade in summer and shelter in winter, and gain weight faster as a result. Meanwhile, the trees provide habitat for wildlife.

Now, new research has shown that silvopasture systems can actually sock more carbon into the soil than the cattle emit, making **cattle grazing a carbon-neutral proposition** at the level of the individual ranch.

Researchers in Brazil have established that, by planting eucalyptus trees over about 10-15% of a pasture's total area - about 100 to 150 trees an acre - they can [cut 30% off the time it takes cattle to reach slaughter weight, while doubling the stocking rate](#).

Meanwhile, the fast-growing eucalyptus trees on a single hectare are producing over **10,000 board feet of wood each year - enough to suck 5 tons of carbon out of the air, about a dozen cows' worth of emissions**. Since most of the wood harvested is used for construction, the carbon inside it stays locked out of the atmosphere for decades to centuries.

In these experiments, the trees are planted six feet apart in rows 50 to 75 feet wide - within the same general range as some of the [agroforestry projects on the Kerr ranch](#). In another parallel to the Kerr Center version, cattle are withheld for the first year to protect the young saplings, and the rows are hayed rather than grazed.

The similarities between Brazilian and Oklahoman silvopasture systems may or may not end there.

[Continue reading...](#)



Intercropping with Cowpeas Boosts Pollinator Numbers - and Crop Yields

Newly published research reveals that **intercropping cowpeas with vegetable crops can boost yields, as well as drawing larger numbers of pollinators** to fields.

Yield increases from intercropping with cowpeas ranged from **7% in okra** to **27% in squash** to **54% in watermelon**.

Researchers at North Carolina A&T State University conducted the study with support from a Southern SARE Research and Education Grant.



To start, the project evaluated twenty-five cowpea varieties for suitability as intercrops, measuring things like pest and disease resistance, nodulation efficiency, and chlorophyll content, as well as yield. They also counted pollinators.

The top performers, selected both for these measures and for customer preference, were Whippoorwill and Pinkeye Purple hull. (Pinkeye Purple hull was also a mainstay of the warm-season cover-crop lineup in the [bio-extensive rotations](#) on the Cannon Horticulture plots.)

The second phase of the project consisted of actual intercropping trials using those two varieties, with the vegetable crop yield increases noted above. In addition to that production boost, **pollinator numbers in the intercropped plots were 50% higher** than in monocropped ones.

[Continue reading....](#)

Late Summer Events: Soil Health, Regenerative Agriculture, Blue Thumb, Fall Gardens, Cover Crops....

The virtual Acres U.S.A. **Healthy Soil Summit** runs Aug. 25-26. Other upcoming **virtual workshop topics** include **regenerative agriculture** (Aug. 26) and **SARE On-Farm Research Grants** (Sep. 1).

In-person, you can attend workshops on **fall salad gardening** (Oklahoma City, Aug. 28), **summer cover crops** (Garfield County, Aug. 31), and **home-grown gardening** (Oklahoma City, Sep. 1). Don't forget to get trained as a **Blue Thumb volunteer right here in Poteau** (Aug. 28).

[Southern SARE PDP grant applications](#) are due August 31, and

Farmers Advocating for Organic grant applications are due September 1.

The Kerr Center's [tour](#) season is also ongoing, 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	Time	Location	Tickets
AUG 25 (Wed)	Acres U.S.A. Healthy Soil Summit @ online	Aug 25 - Aug 26 (all-day)	online	Yes
AUG 26 (Thu)	Explore Regenerative Agriculture (webinar) @ online	Aug 26 @ 12:00 pm - 1:00 pm	online	Yes
AUG 28 (Sat)	Blue Thumb Volunteer Training - Poteau @ Poteau (Poteau High School)	Aug 28 @ 8:30 am - Aug 29 @ 4:30 pm	Poteau (Poteau High School)	Yes
AUG 28 (Sat)	Plant A Fall Salad Garden (workshop) @ Oklahoma City (CommonWealth Urban Farms)	Aug 28 @ 11:00 am - 12:00 pm	Oklahoma City (CommonWealth Urban Farms)	Yes
AUG 31 (Tue)	Summer Cover Crops to Support Winter Wheat @ Garfield County (multiple locations)	Aug 31 @ 9:00 am - 2:00 pm	Garfield County (multiple locations)	Yes
AUG 31 (Tue)	Deadline: Southern SARE Professional Development Program Grant Applications 2021	Aug 31 @ 11:00 am	online	No
SEP 1 (Wed)	Farmers Advocating for Organic - Grants (application deadline)	Sep 1 (all-day)	online	No
SEP 1 (Wed)	Southern SARE On-Farm Research Grants Webinar @ online	Sep 1 @ 2:00 pm - 3:00 pm	online	Yes
SEP 1 (Wed)	Home Grown Gardening (workshop) @ Oklahoma City (OSU Conference Center)	Sep 1 @ 6:00 pm - 9:00 pm	Oklahoma City (OSU Conference Center)	Yes

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Contact Information

The Kerr Center for Sustainable Agriculture
24456 Kerr Road
Poteau, OK 74953
Phone: 918.647.9123
Fax: 918.647.8712
mailbox@kerrcenter.com

