



Field Notes

Kerr Center for Sustainable Agriculture E-Newsletter

E-Field Notes

September 2021

Happy fall! With shorter days and cooler weather coming on, this issue's lead article helps you get a leg up on **fall gardening and season extension** - including a **newly posted webinar on cold frames** by David Redhage.

Another rite of fall is the southward migration of the monarch butterflies to their wintering groves in Mexico. We're highlighting a project that helps **elementary students** wrap their minds around that journey by **participating in a symbolic monarch migration**.

The autumnal equinox, with its near-equal shares of day and night, falls this month - today, in fact! So we've also got an article about **agrivoltaics: using solar panels**, with their need for light and inevitable shade, **to boost crop and livestock production while making electricity**.

But first, check out David Redhage's review of a **brand new field guide to bees**.

If sustainable agriculture news and tips like these are helpful to you, please consider helping us in turn: [donate to the Kerr Center!](#) If you've already given, [thank you!](#)

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President's Note: Book Review - *Common Bees of Eastern North America*

[*Common Bees of Eastern North America*](#). Messinger Carril, Olivia, and Joseph S. Wilson. 2021. Princeton University Press. 288 p.

I have worked with [native plants and native pollinators](#) here at the Kerr Center, promoting the importance of both in sustainable agriculture. Princeton University Press has released a *new field guide*, entitled *Common Bees of Eastern North America*. It covers 125 of the most commonly seen species, with **photos** and a **key for identification**, along with a **range map**.

While it is a good field guide, based on the subject covered, I wonder how well the binding would hold up if used in the field. I wish the book covered when each species was most active during the year and what its pollination plant preferences are.

The authors of this book also authored the book [The Bees in Your Backyard](#), which covers **diet and pollination services**. You will need to look up when the flowers are blooming to determine when the bees are active.

Overall, *Common Bees of Eastern North America* is a good addition to the literature on pollinators.

PRINCETON FIELD GUIDES

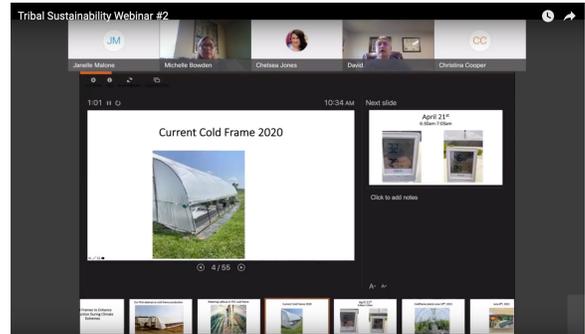


COMMON BEES OF EASTERN NORTH AMERICA

OLIVIA MESSINGER CARRIL
AND JOSEPH S. WILSON

Fall Gardening and Season Extension

Did you know that **when planting crops for fall harvest, just a day or two's delay can add two to three weeks to the time until harvest?** That's one of many points about fall gardening and season extension that David Redhage covered in a [recent webinar on season extension](#).



As the season shifts from summer into fall, the length of daylight gets shorter with each passing day. That means plants are able to grow less and less per day as they get deeper into fall - which is where the two-week factor comes in when calculating fall planting and harvest dates.

Eventually, as Redhage points out, **plants cease growing altogether due to daylength alone, even if they're protected from freezing temperatures** by season extension structures like cold frames or greenhouses.

In the webinar, Redhage reviews the history of season extension work at the Kerr Center, with a focus on the most recent effort, involving a small cold frame or **hoop house with roll-up sides**. With a frame made of **metal pipe, and skids for the base, it can be dragged from one location to another**.

He also gives an overview of various other approaches to season extension from different places around the U.S. and the world.

The webinar is only the latest of the Kerr Center's resources on fall gardening and [season extension](#). Others include:

- spreadsheet-style [planting guides](#) that enable the calculation of planting and harvest dates for various fall crops. (These are calibrated for specific first-frost dates, but include the information needed for the simple conversion to others.)
- extensive and detailed plans for building an [economical hoop house design](#).

Symbolic Monarch Migration Project

The [monarchs](#) are filtering past again on their way to their overwintering groves in Mexico. Most of us can't follow along on the journey - we have to be content watching them pass by, and perhaps logging our sightings on citizen science websites like [Journey North](#), hosted by the University of Wisconsin-Madison Arboretum.

Now that site, in cooperation with Monarchs Across Georgia, is **giving elementary school kids the chance to tag along with the monarchs** on their epic journey - at least symbolically.

Teachers can download [extensive resource materials](#), including slideshows and suggestions for activities and lessons. **Students make and decorate their own life-size butterflies**, and the class as a group decorates a single monarch-themed folder to contain their individual butterflies.

They send the entire packet to the project organizers, who bundle it with other students' packets and **send them all on to classrooms in Mexico, near the monarchs' overwintering groves**.

[Continue reading....](#)



Power from Pasture Panels: Agrivoltaics

By now most of us have gotten pretty well accustomed to seeing images of cattle grazing beneath giant wind turbines, illustrating the idea that agriculture and renewable energy generation can go hand-in-hand. Now, new research is showing that **solar panels can have similar synergies when planted in pastures - or even, paradoxically, over crops.**



When solar panels get too hot, they don't work as efficiently. **Installing them over vegetation helps keep the panels cooler**, because of the continuous flow of water vapor exiting the plants' leaves.

However, if the vegetation gets too tall, it can shade the panels. That's where the synergy with livestock begins. **Grazing animals can keep the plants from getting high enough to shade the panels.** The animals themselves, meanwhile, can also use the panels as shelter from the sun.

This idea has become widespread enough that an organization has even sprung up to promote it - the [American Solar Grazing Association](#). Its website mentions that it was founded specifically "to promote grazing sheep on solar installations."

Agrivoltaic applications are more common with sheep and goats, simply because they're smaller, and the panels can be mounted on shorter frames. **Solar installations in cattle pastures** require higher and sturdier mounts - but though they may be less common, they're **on the rise as well.**

[Continue reading....](#)

Early Fall Events: Backyard Hens, Climate-Resilient Farming Tools, Fall Gardening, Monarchs....

Fall's earliest learning opportunities are the **Project WET educator's training** (Ada), and a **raising backyard hens workshop** (Oklahoma City), both on Sept. 25.

Online, learn about **protecting the western monarchs' overwintering groves** in California (Sept. 28), **tools for climate-resilient farming**, including [cover crops](#), [biochar](#), and [water management](#) (Sept. 30), and **fall gardening/decorating** (Oct. 4).

Two **monarch-related deadlines** are coming up: the **100 Schools for Monarchs Challenge**, for schools to win free pollinator garden seed packets (Oct. 1), and the **Symbolic Monarch Migration Project** (Oct. 8 - see article in this issue for details).

The Kerr Center's [tour](#) season has wrapped up for the year. [We hope to see you next year!](#)

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

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