



Field Notes

Kerr Center for Sustainable Agriculture E-Newsletter

E-Field Notes
January 2022

Happy 2022!

To get the new year rolling, David Redhage relates some observations on **increasing climate volatility and its implications for season extension**.

We point you to a **new guide on managing weeds**, a **new resource** for those interested in **combining solar electricity generation with agricultural enterprises**, and **guides to federal funding sources** to support those and many other food- and farm-related undertakings.

Speaking of **funding sources**: **our most important one is *you***. Please consider kicking off the new year by [donating to the Kerr Center](#)! If you've already given, [thank you](#)!

In this issue:

- **President's Note: Season Extension & Climate Volatility**
- **Manage Weeds on Your Farm**
- **AgriSolar Clearinghouse**
- **Free Guides to Federal Funding**
- **Winter Events: Soil Health, Blue Thumb, Grazing, Beginning Rancher Course, Doug Tallamy....**

President's Note: Season Extension & Climate Volatility

We have a new year ahead of us. I was able to attend the Oklahoma / Arkansas Horticulture Industries Show in Fayetteville, Arkansas, in early January. It was canceled last year, and was in-person this year.

While I attended several good workshops, one topic a speaker brought up really caught my attention. We all are aware of how volatile the climate is. The speaker mentioned that while the temperatures are warming up sooner in the spring and cooling off more slowly in the fall, the last freeze dates have not changed. This means in the spring you can plant a garden earlier but still face what would now be considered a late freeze with more mature plants than in the past.



I experienced this last winter in our cold frame. The tomatoes, peppers, and squash were growing well in our tubs, but a severe late freeze threatened to kill them. A small space heater for two nights kept the plants from freezing. I was not trying to turn the cold frame into a greenhouse. I simply added enough heat to keep the temperature above freezing.

This presents an issue for those using cold frames for season extension. Currently most cold frames are used with no supplemental heat, and most of the information on growing in cold frames is focused on using them without supplemental heat. Depending on what you are growing, this can become an issue.

Cold-tolerant crops such as lettuce and kale may require more monitoring in the early spring to avoid overheating in a cold frame. If you use a cold frame to push early-season tomatoes and cucumbers, the danger of a late (but normal) spring freeze may require adding supplemental heat to protect your crops.

[Continue reading....](#)

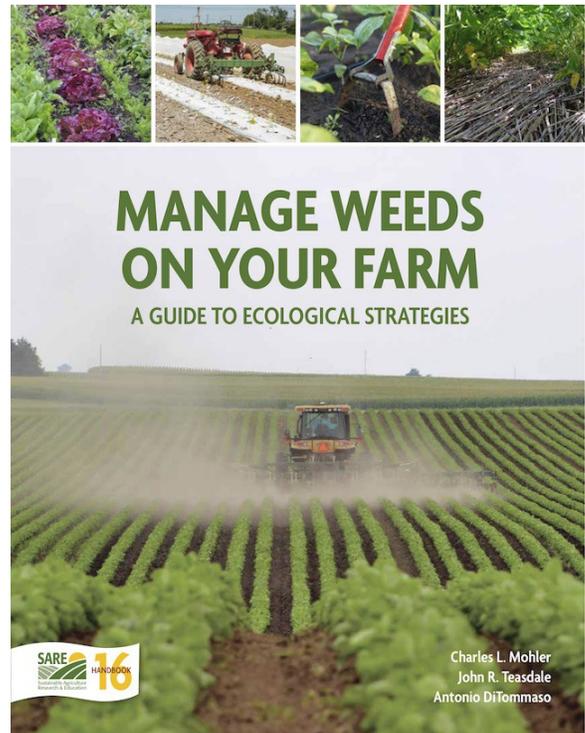
Manage Weeds on Your Farm

SARE has published a **new guide to dealing with weeds**, available free from its website. [Manage Weeds On Your Farm: A Guide to Ecological Strategies](#) offers 416 pages of advice on managing weeds **for organic and conventional farmers alike**.

The book's first section is a **general guide to weed biology** and behavior, along with the characteristics that make them susceptible to management interventions. The second section takes a **detailed look at 63 different weeds** found in the United States, including **both the most common and the most difficult to control**.

The full text of *Manage Weeds on Your Farm* is available on the SARE website. It can also be downloaded **free as a pdf file**. A **print version is scheduled for release this spring**; the website offers a signup for email notification when that becomes available.

[Download Manage Weeds on Your Farm](#)



AgriSolar Clearinghouse

Last fall, we ran an article on [agrivoltaics](#): planting **solar panels on working farm and ranch lands**. Perhaps that sounded intriguing, but you weren't certain how to pursue it? Wonder no more!

NCAT has launched the [AgriSolar Clearinghouse](#), an **online resource offering information, technical assistance, and networking** for farmers and ranchers interested in agrivoltaics.



According to the website, the AgriSolar Clearinghouse will “connect farmers, developers, researchers, and the public; provide practical **technical assistance**, develop best practices and innovative solutions to barriers, evaluate innovative **financing options**, and promote sustainable agrisolar opportunities.”

The site's **information library** is packed with articles, organized into topic areas like “System Design, Planning, and Analysis,” “Financial Resources,” and “Solar/Grazing.” Zooming in, the “Financial Resources” topic area is further divided into “Loans and Financing” and “Sample Contracts.”

In addition to that wealth of information, the site offers one-on-one **technical consultation** in the mode that has made NCAT one of the most well-known and trusted sources of farming and ranching advice in the country.

There's also an extensive **forum** section, in which landowners, producers, solar developers, and researchers can connect directly with one another.

The AgriSolar Clearinghouse is funded through a cooperative agreement with the U.S. Department of Energy. You can visit it at www.agrisolarclearinghouse.org.

Free Guides to Federal Funding

Maybe you've got a project for your farm or ranch that isn't solar related, but you'd still like to see whether similar kinds of assistance to those detailed on the AgriSolar Clearinghouse are available? There is a bewildering array of **federal support available for everything from agroforestry to aquaponics**, but it can be hard to know **where to begin looking**.

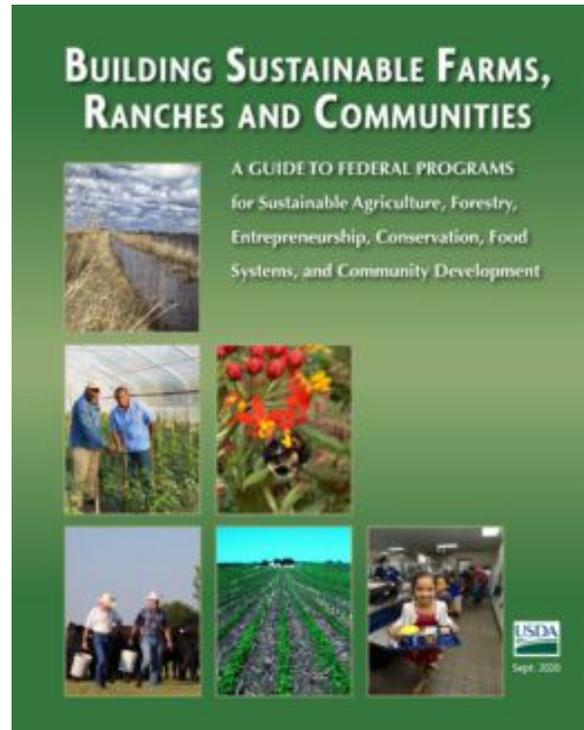
Fortunately, help is available! SARE offers a free online resource titled, [*Building Sustainable Farms, Ranches and Communities: A Guide to Federal Programs for Sustainable Agriculture, Forestry, Entrepreneurship, Conservation, Food Systems and Community Development*](#). The same publication is available **free in print (for a single copy) from [ATTRA](#)**.

According to ATTRA's description, "the guide provides information about program resources pertaining to economic development, farm loans, insurance and risk management, natural resources conservation and management, nutrition and consumer food access, renewable energy and energy conservation, research and outreach, and value added and marketing innovations."

To complement that overview, the National Sustainable Agriculture Coalition (NSAC) offers the free online [*Grassroots Guide to Federal Farm and Food Programs*](#). It "provides an in-depth look at dozens of **federal programs and policies most important to sustainable agriculture**, and details how they can be accessed by farmers, ranchers, and grassroots organizations nationwide."

Just a sampling of the program areas covered in NSAC's Grassroots Guide includes Conservation & Environment, Healthy Food Access, Organic Production, and Renewable Energy. These are just a few of many! The guide also includes a **quick reference chart** to help users **rapidly zero in on the most relevant programs** for their individual needs.

The entry for each program in the *Grassroots Guide* covers program basics, eligibility information, success stories, how to apply, program resources, and program history.



Winter Events: Soil Health, Blue Thumb, Grazing, Beginning Rancher Course, Doug Tallamy....

There's an **in-person soil health workshop** in Missouri with several Oklahoma presenters (Jan. 28), and **virtual ones on grazing for resilience** (Jan. 28) and **cover crops and water infiltration** (Feb. 1).

Upcoming **grant application deadlines** include the **Young Farmer Grant Program** (Jan. 28), the **Food & Agriculture Service Learning Program** (Jan. 31), and the **Organic & Transitional Education & Certification Program** (Feb. 4).

Blue Thumb's first volunteer training of the season is in Stillwater (Jan. 29), and OSU Extension's **Beginning Farmer & Rancher Livestock School** has its first session Feb. 4.

Finally, don't miss **Doug Tallamy**, author of [*The Nature of Oaks*](#), speaking in Jenks (Feb. 4) and Edmond (Feb. 5).

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.

The screenshot displays an online events calendar with the following entries:

- JAN 28 Fri:**
 - 4th Annual NEMO/WCIL Soil Health Workshop @ Monroe City, MO** (Jan 28 @ 8:30 am – 4:30 pm) with a "Tickets" button.
 - Young Farmer Grant Program (application deadline)** (Jan 28 @ 2:00 pm).
 - Grazing for Resilience – Bouncing Forward from Catastrophic Events (webinar) @ online** (Jan 28 @ 4:00 pm – 5:30 pm) with a "Tickets" button.
- JAN 29 Sat:**
 - Blue Thumb Volunteer Training – Stillwater @ Stillwater (Oklahoma State University)** (Jan 29 @ 8:30 am – Jan 30 @ 4:30 pm) with a "Tickets" button.
- JAN 31 Mon:**
 - Food and Agriculture Service Learning Program (application deadline)** (Jan 31 @ 4:00 pm).
- FEB 1 Tue:**
 - Cover Crops and Water Infiltration (virtual workshop) @ online** (Feb 1 @ 6:00 pm – 7:30 pm) with a "Tickets" button.
- FEB 4 Fri:**
 - USDA Organic and Transitional Education and Certification Program (OTECP) (signup deadline – extended)** (Feb 4 @ all-day).
 - Beginning Farmer and Rancher Livestock School @ Oklahoma City (OSU Extension Conference Center)** (Feb 4 @ 9:30 am – 3:30 pm).

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