Field Notes

Kerr Center for Sustainable Agriculture E-Newsletter

E-Field Notes
September 2025

Happy fall! We're all going back to school with new educational resources.

The Xerces Society has a new article that makes the process of **creating pollinator gardens as easy** to follow **as it's ever been**.

Food Animal Concerns Trust does the same thing for sheep and goats with a **new, free online course on small ruminant production**.

New York researchers have **profitability numbers from cantaloupe in high tunnels** that may make Oklahoma growers sit up and take notice.

But first, share David Redhage's **look back over a decade of Monarchs on the Mountain festivals - and forward at what still needs to be done to save the monarchs**.

One lesson we never tire of learning is how much **your donations to the Kerr Center** help with our work. **Thank you!**

In This Issue

- **President's Note: Ten Years of Monarchs on the Mountain**
- **How to Make a Pollinator Garden**
- **Raising Ruminants Right**
- **New Research: Cantaloupe Cash from High Tunnels?**
- **Early Fall Events: Blue Thumb, Native Plant Sale, Homemade Food Freedom Act, Plant ID, Symbolic Monarch Migration, Native Perennials from Seed, Pollinator Party, Micro-Farm Field Trip....**

President's Note: Ten Years of Monarchs on the Mountain

I was invited to speak at the Tulsa **Monarchs on the Mountain** event on September. 20. This was the tenth anniversary of the event.

I was invited to speak at the first event ten years ago. Sorry for the cliché, but, "time flies." I can't believe ten years has gone by.

The event was well attended. Unfortunately, **the monarch butterfly is still struggling** to increase population levels.

I hope you will **consider adding milkweed and other wildflowers to your landscapes** to support the monarch and other pollinators. While I covered the **milkweed plant**, I emphasized the need for **other flowering plants** to feed the adult monarch, both traveling north and for the migration back south in the fall.

We have information available on native pollinators on our website.

How to Make a Pollinator Garden

Planting a pollinator garden has never been easier! Over the summer, the Xerces Society posted a **quick online guide** that covers all the bases for **starting a refuge for pollinators right in your own backyard**.

The article offers **concrete, ordered steps**, beginning with, "Before you plant, get set for success," and continuing on with others like, "Manage pests without pesticides," and, "Weed wisely."

Each of these general steps is then **fleshed out with more detailed bits of advice**. For instance, the first step, about planning before you plant, contains links to the Xerces Society's **regional lists of pollinator-friendly native plants**. (The Kerr Center has such **lists of pollinator plants for Oklahoma**, too!)

The article advertises itself as just a six-minute read - packing a wealth of information into just a few words. It concludes with a bulleted list of still more resources.

"Making your home pollinator-friendly is straightforward and rewarding," it reads. "**By establishing pollinator habitat in your home garden**, schools, parks or other community spaces, **you become an active part of helping to protect and restore at-risk species**."

We couldn't agree more!

Raising Ruminants Right

It's been a while since we had an active **small ruminant** component to the Kerr Center **livestock program**, but **raising sheep and goats** continues to be a popular topic, especially among small landowners.

With that in mind, it's well worth pointing out a **new, free online course** for those considering starting a sheep or goat enterprise. Food Animal Concerns Trust (FACT) has released "**Raising Ruminants Right (Sheep and Goat Edition)**," a comprehensive short course on all things sheep- and goat-related.

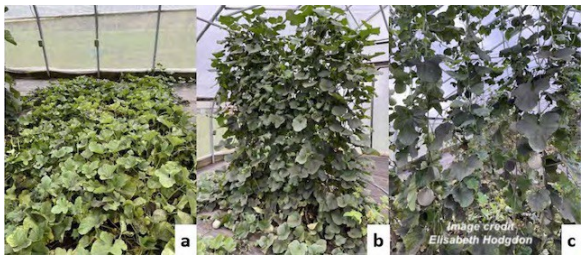
Though the material is **ideal for beginning farmers**, it's **also valuable for existing sheep and goat producers** who are interested in **expanding their operations and/or converting to a pasture-based system**.

The course offers a total of 24 lessons, grouped into seven sections. It covers topics including **breed selection, body condition scoring, medicinal grazing, parasite management, lambing/kidding on pasture, first aid**, and more.

The course is one of several livestock-related short courses hosted as part of FACT's Humane Farming School, hosted on the Teachable platform.

"**Raising Ruminants Right**" is available through FACT's website.

New Research: Cantaloupe Cash from High Tunnels?



Cantaloupes are getting their day in the sun as the latest crop to have its profit potential under **high tunnel production** investigated.

Researchers at the Northern New York Agricultural Development Program (NNYADP) compared the profitability of two different cantaloupe varieties grown in high tunnels. While the results from a New York-based study might not seem relevant for Oklahoma, some aspects of the report may be useful for Sooner State growers.

For each of the two cantaloupe varieties, the project **compared untrellised melons against both vertical mesh and double leader trellising systems**.

For a 30' x 96' high tunnel, estimated two-year **net income ranged from $1,690.11** for the "Tasty Bites" variety grown on a mesh trellis system (200 plants per tunnel), **to $2,624.67** for "Sugar Cube" grown without a trellis (160 plants per tunnel).

The project **report also includes enterprise budgets** for each combination of variety and trellising system. These include fixed costs for land and equipment, as well as 30 different variable costs, including labor, beneficial insects, and fertilizer.

The researchers point out that **the choice of trellising system has a major impact on the cost of labor**.

Full results of the study are available from the NNYADP website.

Early Fall Events: Blue Thumb, Native Plant Sale, Homemade Food Freedom Act, Plant ID, Symbolic Monarch Migration, Native Perennials from Seed, Pollinator Party, Micro-Farm Field Trip....

Get trained as a Blue Thumb volunteer (Oct. 4) and get to work monitoring your local waterways. The **Oklahoma Native Plant Network** is hosting a native plant sale (Oct. 4, Tulsa), and Okies for Monarchs is throwing a **native plant and pollinator party** (Oct. 11, Calera).

In-person workshops abound in October: learn how to **legally sell home-cooked foods under the Homemade Food Freedom Act** (Oct. 8, Stillwater), brush up your native plant ID skills (Oct. 9, Coweta), delve into **starting native perennials from seed** (Oct. 10, Oklahoma City), and **tour a micro-farm** (Oct. 18, Bethany).

Educators: October 10 is the deadline to sign up for your students to participate in the Symbolic Migration Project, sending paper butterflies to Mexican schools near monarchs' overwintering sites.

There are many more sustainable agriculture educational activities going on, and we're adding more to the calendar all the time. Get the latest on our 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.

SAT 4
October 4 @ 8:30 am - October 5 @ 4:30 pm
Blue Thumb Training – Lawton
Cameron University 2800 West Gore Boulevard, Lawton, United States
Love science and being outdoors? Help protect Oklahoma streams by becoming a certified Blue Thumb stream monitor at this training in Lawton.

SAT 4
October 4 @ 10:00 am - 2:00 pm
Oklahoma Native Plant Network Plant Sale
Oxley Nature Center 6700 Mohawk Boulevard, Tulsa, OK, United States
Come out to the Oklahoma Native Plant Network Plant Sale for a day of plants and community under the shade of Shumard oaks!

WED 8
October 8 @ 8:30 am - 5:00 pm
Homemade Food Freedom Act Workshop
ROBERT M. KERR FOOD & AGRICULTURAL PRODUCTS CENTER Stillwater, OK, United States
Specific training requirements, such as this workshop, are required before selling food out of the home under the Homemade Food Freedom Act.

THU 9
October 9 @ 10:00 am - 3:00 pm
Plant ID Field Day
Rick's Place 33904 East 111th Street S., Coweta, OK, United States
At this free plant ID field day, learn hands-on plant identification: indicator species, soil health, what is growing in your pastures.

FRI 10
October 10
Symbolic Migration Project (final deadline)
Through the Symbolic Migration Project, youth can participate in monarch conservation by sending paper butterflies to schools in Mexico.

SAT 11
October 11 @ 11:00 am - 12:00 pm
Planting Native Perennials from Seed: Cold Stratification & Other Mysteries Unveiled
Commonwealth Urban Farms 1016 NW 32nd, Oklahoma City, OK, United States
In this workshop, learn techniques for planting native perennials from seed, using cold stratification and other techniques.

SAT 11
October 11 @ 12:00 pm - 4:00 pm
Southeast Oklahoma Native Plant & Pollinator Party
Choctaw Cultural Center 1919 Hina Hanta Way, Calera, United States
The free Native Plant & Pollinator Party offers native wildflowers and milkweed for sale, as well as experts and family-friendly activities.

SAT 18
October 18 @ 1:00 am - 3:00 pm
Micro-Farm Field Trip
Bethany Bethany, OK, United States
Join this field trip to tour David Rushton's micro-farm in Bethany: an extensive vegetable garden and initial food forest plantings.

Support the Kerr Center

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...

Kerr Center website

Find us on Facebook

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