Century Farm Video at Soils and Crops Conference on March 26th

The 87th Jefferson County Soils and Crops Conference, the Jefferson County Social Event of the Year, will be held on Saturday evening, March 26th at the Hillsboro High School in Hillsboro. The Conference will feature all the things you love about Soils and Crops, good food, your friends and neighbors, informative displays of ag services, and awards. However, this year we have something really special. The Jefferson County Library District and Jefferson College received a grant to make a video on Century Farms in Jefferson County. The video focuses on Century farms that have three generations still working on the farm. The two farms selected are the Stanley Bonacker Farm and Weber Dairy.

I was fortunate enough to sit in on the interviews with the families. All three generations were asked how farming had changed through the years, why they thought they had been able to survive when so many farms had been sold, and what they thought the future held for their farms. The answers were really interesting and perhaps somewhat different for each generation. It became obvious that while hard work and dedication had been essential to the success of the farms, sound financial management and maybe surprisingly the adoption of new technology were equally important. There was one interesting comment that was repeated by most of the members and probably won’t come out in the video. While all family members showed a well deserved pride in their farming operations, many wondered what their life would have been like if they had not chosen careers in agriculture.

I have not seen the video. It will debut at the Soils and Crops Conference. Watch for your invitation to the 87th Jefferson County Soils and Crops Conference, the Jefferson County Social Event of the year, in early March. Again the Conference will be held Saturday, March 26th.

2011 Master Gardener Training starts on April 13th

The next opportunity to take the Master Gardener Training will be April 13th at the Jefferson College Student Center, 1000 Viking Drive in Hillsboro. Ron Patrick and his committee have put together a great set of speakers!

Topics include:

1) Insects and pests
2) Lawn care
3) Rain gardens
4) Worm farming
5) Plant growth and anatomy
6) Care of shade trees & shrubs
7) Plant diseases
8) Landscaping
9) Vegetable gardening
10) Flowering plants
11) Soil anatomy
12) Tree Identification
13) Bee Keeping

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Did you notice the tall grass that showed up in hayfields and pastures in late summer and fall? It is often referred to as grease grass or red top, but it actually is purple top, *Trident flavus*. Purple top is a perennial warm season grass that often grows in hayfields, pastures, and waste areas. It makes most of its growth in late summer. Purple top is a bunch grass with wide leaves that grows primarily near the ground. While it can reach nearly 3 feet in height, most of the growth is in the long stem. The seed head looks a lot like Johnsongrass and sometimes is confused with it. The top is red to purple and hence the name. Cattle will eat it when it is young and tender. However, by late fall, it is pretty woody and does not provide much value. Sometimes it shows up in second cutting grass hay and most of the time should be palatable as long as it doesn’t get too mature.

Some folks call it redtop, but redtop is a member of the “bentgrass” family and different from purple top. Redtop is also a cool season grass as opposed to purple top. For some reason, (I suspect good moisture late in the summer), purple top really grew this year. Then, when fall weather got dry, the fescue didn’t crowd out the purple top. We see this plant every year, but usually not as much as this year.

This brings me to another point. If you tried to stockpile grass this fall, especially if you had cut the field for hay earlier, you may have found that you got a huge growth of warm season and annual weeds including purple top. From a distance, it appeared that you had lots of pasture for late fall and winter. However, because of the dry fall, we just didn’t get much fescue growth. Therefore, when the weather got colder, those warm season grasses died. Without the new fall growth of fescue, the quality of those other grasses, including purple top, is very low. Cows may appear to have grass, but may need to be supplemented with hay or feed because of the low quality present.

Since I have never seen so much growth of purple top, I wonder if these stems will decompose in time to prevent them from being a contaminant of first cutting hay. If you are seeing the same situation, let me know what you think.

The cost for the course is $140 plus a $50 deposit. Master Gardeners are required to contribute 30 hours the first year in volunteer service to the community and 20 hours each year after to remain an active member. Upon completion of the 30 hours, the deposit is refunded. Volunteer hours can be accomplished by working at public gardens like Jefferson College or Kress Farms, maintaining or planting gardens at churches, subdivisions, or nursing homes, answering questions at a Farmers Market, or other community projects.
Missouri Nut Growers Association

The Missouri Nut Growers Association (MNGA) is a Missouri non-profit Association to promote growing nut tree cultivation for good health and the Value-Added industry. Emphasis is placed on educating members and promoting nut tree products to both growers and consumers.

MNGA consists solely of volunteers dedicated to serving our members to the best of our abilities. Our members include experts in nut tree cultivation, farmer, amateur and commercial nut growers, experiment station works, horticultural teachers and scientists, nut tree breeders, nursery people, foresters, and beginning nut culturists. Our various members grow pecans, black walnuts, chestnuts, hickory, heartnut and butternuts as well as other tree crops such as persimmon and pawpaw. **Our primary goal as an organization is to provide an educational and networking body to promote and enhance the growing of nuts.**

With the thought of increased population and unknown food supplies in future years, you can have a personal health food source you can depend on. Once a member, we exist to answer your questions about nut tree cultures directly, when possible, or to help you find the best source of information for your particular interest or area. A nut tree in your yard or orchard can provide a health food choice you can depend upon.

We’re looking forward to visiting with you about nuts and their alternative healthy food source at the **Soils & Crops Conference on March 26, 2011.** For more MNGA information you can contact Grant Glatt (grant_40@juno.com or 636-274-2010) or Barb Ittner (bjittner@netins.net or 417-436-2351).

Grant Glatt
Missouri Nut Growers Association

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**Black Walnut Oatmeal Cookies**

3/4 c brown sugar  
1/2 c sugar  
1 egg  
1 tsp vanilla  
1-1/4 c butter  
1 tsp baking soda  
1-1/4 tsp nutmeg  
1-1/2 c black walnuts  
3 c oatmeal  
1/2 c raisins  
1-1/2 c flour

Preheat oven to 350°F. Mix sugars, egg, vanilla and butter together. Stir in remaining ingredients. Spoon on to cookie sheet and bake till crisp, about 10 minutes. Makes 2 to 3 dozen.

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**Secret Kiss Cookies**

1 c margarine (or butter)  
1/2 c sugar  
1 tsp vanilla  
2 c sifted flour  
1 c finely chopped nuts  
1 pkg (10 oz) Chocolate Kisses

Cream butter, sugar and vanilla together than add flour and nuts. Mix well and chill. **NOTE:** At this point dough may be wrapped in wax paper and placed in a plastic freezer bag for baking at a later time. Allow to thaw in refrigerator before baking. Using approximately one tablespoon of dough, shape it around a chocolate kiss and then roll to form a ball. Be sure to cover kiss completely. Place on un-greased cookie sheets and chill. Place cookie sheets to bake in a 375 * oven for about 12 minutes or until cookies are set, but not brown. Cool slightly, remove to wire rack. While still warm, roll in icing sugar. Cool and store in tightly covered container. If desired roll in icing sugar before serving.
Making Your Christmas Cactus Bloom

We exchange gifts here at the Extension Center for Christmas and purchasing my gift for someone usually is a job for Patti. Being the ag specialist, I suggested that I would like to give a plant this Christmas. She suggested that giving fescue or johnsongrass was not appropriate, so Patti came home with a Christmas cactus. I thought it was an interesting plant, so I did a little research on it. The Christmas cactus is not a desert cactus, but a tropical cactus. It likes bright, but indirect light. Since Christmas cacti are not really desert plants, they do need to be watered. The soil should be kept somewhat moist; however, most issues with Christmas cacti result from overwatering.

Getting the Christmas cactus to bloom at Christmas requires some planning and preparation. The plant is thermo-photoperiodic. I used this big word to impress you, as I learned that it means that the blooming process is controlled by temperature and hours of daylight. In mid-October, start putting the cactus in complete darkness for at least 12 hours per day. It is important that no artificial light interrupts the dark period. Light from the street or a door opening or such can affect the blooming process. During the day the cactus should be returned to indirect bright light. Continue the nighttime process until buds form.

The thermo-period requirement is a little harder. Starting in late September or early October, the plant should be kept at temperatures of 50 to 60 degrees. In fact, closer to 50 would be better. The cactus can tolerate colder temperatures, but don’t let it freeze. Follow the directions and you should have blooms for Christmas.

Classes being held at the Extension Office

Beginning Beekeepers Class

Saturday, March 5, 2011
8:00 a.m.—4:00 p.m.

Eat Well Be Well with Diabetes

Four Sessions on Wednesdays,
6:00 p.m.—8:30 p.m.
- February 23, 2011
- March 2, 2011
- March 16, 2011
- March 23, 2011
Three things have been bothering me! First, I hate winter, snow and cold weather. Second, I heard a joke on KTJJ radio about Billie Bob and a John Deere tractor and I just can’t quite clean it up enough to put in the Ag News although I’m tempted, and third, the radio in my feed truck will only pick up country stations! So, after listening to all that country music, “I heard voices” like the song, about 4:00 am this morning. They revealed unto me many predictions for 2011. You could say that these predictions are from NostraDEANus. You will find them scattered below in italics.

February 17th is the annual meeting of the Jefferson County Cattlemen’s Association. Folks from the Soil and Water Conservation District will show some pictures of some of the cost-share practices from Jefferson County. We also will have a steak dinner followed by the annual auction to raise money for the Cattlemen’s events. It is a fun event, so I hope you will watch for your invitation.

For 2011, I predict that Kenny Wilson will start a new political organization called “the ICE TEA Party”. He will run for County Council and win in a landslide! From there he will run for state representative and win the seat. His political career will continue with a successful bid to be state senator. He will be the first senator to commute to the capitol every day while keeping his job milking cows for Weber Dairy. His success will be noted and he will become the next president of the University of Missouri. On his first day on the job, Kenny will announce that he plans to run the University from his farm in Jefferson County. He also will announce a name change for the University. Finally, there really will be a University of Grubville!

In 2011, Gardener Angus Ranch will see the new Camaro SS and start breeding Angus cattle with silver racing stripes! Other breeders will see what Gardeners are doing and then will follow along. Pretty soon the size, length, and number of silver racing stripes will replace EPD’s as a selection tool. The Charolais Association will notice that the new stripes on Angus cattle look a lot like the “smoky” color of Angus / Charolais cross cattle. The Charolais breed sues the Angus breed and Stan Bonacker rallies the breeders with his famous statement. “Dang it! We’re the silver breed!”

We got a chance to see home foreclosure data from St. Charles County. It was pretty amazing the number of folks that have lost homes in the last couple of years. More on Extension’s effort to address the foreclosure issue in Jefferson County will come soon.

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Dean Wilson
Agriculture & Rural Development Specialist

We did lots of soil tests this fall. In fact, we mailed soils samples out each week all the way up into December. A couple of things point to an increased need for soil testing this spring. First, the trend toward locally grown or home grown produce as well as higher cattle prices may result in increased interest in applying fertilizer. Remember that a soil test is still just $12 per sample. And don’t forget that a soil test is just as important for folks that want to grow organically.

Someone sent me a picture of what is apparently a bear track from a backyard off of Flucom Road in De Soto. And I thought the bears just lived in Ware!

And finally, in February, after 18 inches of snow and near zero temperature, the ag specialist comes into the Extension office in Hillsboro dancing and singing, “I love winter and wish it would never end and by the way could someone get me a plate of Mexican food”. In panic, the staff calls his wife, Patti. Anticipating the call, Patti says, “Yep, he has lost his mind!” Desperately, the Extension staff calls Ed Kemp at 911 and arranges to have them haul the ag specialist to the stress center. However, the University of Missouri blocks the transfer to the stress center saying that the ag specialist is 8 months behind on his webbapps reporting!

Got the fever to start gardening? The Vegetable Planting Guide is available at the Extension Center. It gives you seeding rates, planting dates, row spacing, and popular varieties for most all vegetables.

In 2011, a county which historically has voted almost entirely Democratic will elect almost all Republicans — nah, no one would ever believe that!

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