Dates to Remember

3/13 Daylight Savings Starts
3/15 Taxes/Recordkeeping Workshop PCUAEX
3/22 Estate Planning Workshop PCUAEX
3/23 Pesticide Takeback Program Old PC Hospital
3/28 Field Day @ Ashdown
4/5 Grazing School–Nashville 2-5
4/5 PC Cattlemen’s 6:30
4/19 Beef/Forage Clinic @ Cattlemen’s Livestock 9:00-12:00
4/28 Forestry Field Day @ SWREC Hope, AR

Warm Days Can Be Misleading

Sunny days in early March can give many people the fever to start planting in the garden and flowers beds. Several cool season weeds and grasses can also give the illusion that Spring has sprung. The data says not so fast! According to UAEX’s Fact Sheet 6062, Year-Round Home Garden Planting Guide, the mean last spring freeze is April 1. Most of Pike County falls into the 7B Hardiness Zone.

To help combat the desire to plant, many gardeners germinating garden plants indoors. You may also wish to start with early plants such as lettuce, broccoli, mustard, onions, and potatoes.

Remember the key to a successful home garden is preparation. Making a map and planning where each crop will be grown can help when ordering seed or buying transplants. Your plants are only as good as your soil! Best wishes for a successful growing season.

All Green Thumbs by Jason Nocera

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Using Companion Planting in Your Garden

Companion planting can help you in the garden by saving time, reducing the need for pesticides, and increase the aesthetics of your property. Plants that help you repel insects include borage, sweet basil, catnip, chamomile, chives, dill, garlic, lavender, mint, tansy, and wormwood. To help increase the cosmetic value of your garden try bee balm, chrysanthemum, dahlia, four o’clock, marigold, nasturtium, petunia, or sunflowers. Remember there are also some plants that don’t play nice together in the garden. Keep onions and garlic away from beans and peas. Potatoes and beans don’t like sunflowers. And even though they are related, cabbage and cauliflower are more like foes. Carrots dislike dill and tomatoes can’t stand cucumbers.

By integrating several forms of pest management, you can be sure to grow healthy foods for yourself, family and friends. Let nature do the dirty work so you have more time to enjoy your surroundings.

4-H Spotlight – Andy Jackson

On sunny days, Caddo River Gems 4-H Club President Andy Jackson can be found in his garden. Gardening was a natural project choice since his grandmother, Lonita Ledbetter, was a gardener herself. “Grandma was always digging in something. When I was little, I spent a lot of time watching and handing her things while she worked in her gardens.”

As Jackson dug in the dirt next to his grandmother, she taught him how to sow seeds and transplant seedlings. “J-rooting a seedling is a terrible way to set out plants. Grandma would get on to me for not spreading those roots out so the plant would have a fighting chance,” according to Jackson. They spent many hours weeding the rows, picking up rocks, and searching for garden pests. When the time came, Jackson’s grandma taught him how to harvest and store his crops. She also encouraged him to give the extra produce to the needy and sell it to the grocery store. Wasting good food was not permitted in Grandma’s garden.

As Jackson grew so did his projects. He helped his grandfather build some raised beds for his grandma. Jackson and his grandmother experimented with different varieties of vegetables to see which ones would produce the best in the beds. The strawberry bed was a huge success. It was so successful that Jackson chose to make his educational fair booth about how to grow strawberries in a raised bed.

The Pike County 4-H Gardening in a Tub project is an gardening activity that Jackson participates in yearly. His choice of crops varies from year to year. One year he grew a bumper crop of potatoes and another year cherry tomatoes. He was curious about how peanuts grew and planted some one year as his project crop. Jackson often plants vegetables that he has not tried before or different varieties of familiar vegetables just to see what the results will be. Jackson stated, “I just like try something new. Sometimes I’m disappointed, sometimes I am surprised. I never know how a garden adventure will turn out.”

Since Jackson was a Cloverbud, he has created a different educational fair booth for each year the county fair is held. He has researched a wide variety of topics such as cucumbers and peanuts. The results of his research are shared with the visitors of the Pike County Fair.

Currently, Jackson maintains the butterfly garden in front of the Pike County Extension Office. He began last spring by prepping the ground and sowing the seeds. He weeded and water when he could. Many enjoyed the garden and it was featured on the Pike County Extension website and in local newspapers. When asked why he chose to work on this project, Jackson replied, “Butterflies are important to pollinating many flowers and vegetables. We need to protect our pollinators today so we can insure our food supply in the future. Besides, butterflies are pretty.” In the future, Jackson would like to start a greenhouse business.

-Article written by Renita Jackson
5 STEPS TO CONTROL FLIES IN CATTLE

A popular question is how to eliminate flies in a cattle herd. Elimination is not a realistic, however we can do some things to control the number of flies on your animals. Biting flies are carriers of such diseases as anaplasmosis and bovine leukosis virus. Face flies can spread Moraxella bovis (pinkeye) animal to animal. The economic loss from each horn fly biting an animal 30 times/day can also be substantial because horn flies can exceed 1000 flies per animal. Flies have adapted to the environment for many, many years; realistically, there is zero chance that we’ll completely win the battle. However, we can use a multi-pronged approach to lessen flies’ impact on cattle.

1. **Feed a larvicide** or an insect growth regulator like Altosid® (labeled for horn flies) or Rabon™ (labeled for horn, face, house- and stable flies) to cows, starting 30 days before flies typically emerge. Continue until 30 days after a killing frost. These products are usually added to minerals or range meal. If an adjacent property also has cattle, the owners of those cattle also need to feed the product to their cattle or you might inherit some of the neighbor’s flies. Horn flies don’t travel long distances, but face flies may travel 1-2 miles.

2. **Fly tags** are another option. Newer-generation fly tags that contain a higher concentration of insecticide are quite helpful in controlling flies. Use pyrethroid tags for two consecutive years, then switch to an organophosphate tag for one year to reduce pyrethroid resistance. Follow label directions on the number of tags/cow or calf. The key to using tags is to wait until you have 200 flies/cow to place the tags. Be sure to remove the tags in 3-5 months, in order to prevent resistance issues.

3. **Use a pour-on** at the same time you fly-tag the cows. If it’s spring turnout time, you can use a product that also kills internal parasites. Later in the year, use products only labeled for flies and/or lice. Using pour-on dewormers many times throughout the year could lead to internal parasite resistance issues.

4. The advantage of a **dust bag or rub** is that, if placed at a site where all cattle must use it, it can provide very economical control of face and horn flies. Proper placement and keeping it charged with insecticide are the keys.

5. Timely **spraying** of cattle throughout the year can be effective in reducing the fly population, but can be time-consuming. There are many products on the market for fly control. Develop a plan to control flies that fits your operation. Using just one strategy from the above list likely won’t give you the results.

Spring is typically a time of renewal. We hope that as you plant your garden and flower beds or manage your pastures, you will keep us in mind when problems arise. Our goal at Pike County Extension to provide research based solutions to your everyday problems. Feel free to call the office, send an email, or follow us on social media. We hope that you will consider taking time from your busy schedule to join us in one of the many workshops and training that we have planned this Spring.
March 15– Tax Help and Recordkeeping Tips

Sara Stewart McKinney is the owner and operator of McKinney Tax Services. She will be giving practical advice to be used for your farming operation. Topics covered will be expenses, deductions, considerations unique to farming, and how to keep well organized records to assist you in making your operation more profitable.

March 22– The Basics of Estate Planning

Laura Hendrix is an Assistant Professor with the University of Arkansas Division of Agriculture System. She will be teaching the foundations of estate planning and topics such as advanced health directives, non-titled property, and family conversations. Whether you own a home and one acre or one hundred, this workshop will help you prepare for your family’s future. Come discover the essentials of creating a plan that will leave your family with direction and security.

All meetings will be held at the Pike County Extension Office starting at 6:00. Please preregister by calling the office at 870-285-2161. A light meal will be served. We would like to thank Pike County Farm Bureau and Farm Credit of Western Arkansas.