



Northwest Region Newsletter

February 2010 Edition

Upcoming Events

LSU AgCenter aiding in Census

The LSU AgCenter has agreed to help the U.S. Census Office with the distribution of information regarding the importance of the 2010 Census.

To help get the word out and encourage everyone to participate, the AgCenter has produced a 2010 Census information card with grant funds provided by the U.S. Census Office. Census announcements and information card distributions are encouraged at all AgCenter meetings.

The result of the Census count will determine the number of U.S. Congressional districts, state legislative districts and parish government districts. An accurate Census count assures that the appropriate amount of federal tax dollars comes back to Louisiana to improve roads, schools and other needed community projects.

The 2010 Census includes 10 questions and can be completed in about 10 minutes. The information they provide is strictly confidential and by federal law cannot be shared with anyone.

LSU AgCenter hosting Market Gardening Seminar

The LSU AgCenter is hosting a Market Gardening Seminar at the Caddo Extension Office on Saturday, March 6 from 8:30 a.m. to 3 p.m.

This educational program is for commercial growers at all levels, both start-up and experienced, said Denyse Cummins, LSU AgCenter horticulturalist.

Topics will be weed control, vegetable varieties, soil improvement and scheduling for season-long production.

A marketing panel of produce buyers (chefs, market managers and buyers) will answer questions about buyers' needs.

The event is free and open to the public.

To register or for more information, contact Cummins at 318-698-0010.

26th annual Forestry Forum set for March 11

The 26th annual Ark-La-Tex Forestry Forum will be held Thursday, March 11 from 8:30 a.m. to 3:15 p.m. at the Holiday Inn Financial Plaza in Shreveport.

Sponsors are the LSU AgCenter, Louisiana Department of Agriculture and Forestry, Louisiana Forestry Association, Northwest Louisiana Extension Forestry Advisory Committee and the Ark-La-Tex Ag Council.

Registration by March 8 is \$20, and \$25 thereafter. Lunch is included. Send the fee along with your name and address to Forestry Forum, P. O. Box 370, Benton, La. 71006-0370.

Topics include "Surviving the Wood Products Depression" by Matthew Pelkki, professor at the University of Arkansas; landowner water issues by Bill Branch, director of the Sparta Ground Water Commission; tax update by Paul Spillers, tax attorney; Ark-La-Tex forestry issues by Buck Vandersteen, executive director, Louisiana Forestry Association; and a national perspective of the timber market by Bill Hubbard, forester, University of Georgia.

Rep. Richard Burford will make opening comments.

For more information, call Ricky Kilpatrick, LSU AgCenter area forestry agent, at 965-2326.

Pesticide recertification meetings set

Pesticide recertification meetings for those individuals whose pesticide applicator cards expire March 31 will be held in Sabine Parish on Thursday, March 4 at 6 p.m. at the Extension office in Many and on Thursday, March 18 at 6 p.m. at the Red River Extension office in Coushatta.

Louisiana Department of Agriculture inspectors will be present to make sure participants attend the full 90 minutes of the program, distribute cards and collect the \$25 recertification fee.

DeSoto Cattleman's Association to meet

The DeSoto Parish Cattleman's Association will meet on Tuesday, March 23 at 6:30 p.m. at the DeSoto Parish Extension Office in Grand Cane.

Randy George with Spectra Position Products will demonstrate using GPS to eliminate skips and overlaps when applying pesticides and fertilizer. A light meal will be served, and those attending are asked to call 318-872-0533 for planning. You do not have to be a member of the DeSoto Parish Cattleman's Association to attend.

Report on Past Events

LSU AgCenter Greenhouse Tomato Seminar has record crowd

Growing tomatoes in a greenhouse is a "pay attention to detail" business, said Dr. H.Y. Hanna, a researcher who is in charge of the greenhouse tomato project at the LSU AgCenter Red River Research Station.

A record crowd of 94 attended Hanna's 14th annual four-hour Greenhouse Tomato Seminar Feb. 26.

Among the topics were cutting costs without reducing yield, a new root media recycling method that saves money, research tips that produce results, productive greenhouse varieties and growing your own vegetables in a hobby greenhouse.



Hanna with a tomato with blossom end rot

Hanna explained tomato varieties he has studied and tested for yield, fruit weight, quality and shelf life. A good variety is the recipe for success, Hanna said.

He presented data from three root media--perlite, pine bark and rock wool. Although pine bark is the least expensive, Hanna suggested growers try perlite, which he has been recycling for 14 years. "I like perlite because you can recycle it. It's always good to recycle," he said.

The crew at the Red River Research Station uses a heavy duty nozzle mounted on the steel wand of a hot water pressure washer to stir and disinfect the perlite, Hanna explained.

He advised not leaving misshapen fruit on a plant. “If your plant could talk, they’d really appreciate it,” Hanna said. “It takes nutrients from your plant.”

The tomato program employees use mirrors under the fruit clusters for easier viewing to spot misshapen fruit for removal.

Hanna said that his research has found that heating costs can be reduced when using a constructed interplant bottom-heated greenhouse using diesel fuel rather than suspended heaters using natural gas.

Heating the root system means reducing heat on the foliage, said Hanna. “The root system is out of sight and many people don’t pay attention to it,” Hanna said. “If you have a strong root system, you have a strong plant.”

Hanna called soil-less media, bumblebee pollination, inverted gutters, harvesting rainwater and grafting tomatoes major innovations in growing greenhouse tomatoes. He said the future is growing under light-emitting diodes. “It’s a big research project right now in Canada,” Hanna said.

Tomatoes could then be grown in basements, he explained.

Participants were able to practice grafting (fusing two plants together) in the LSU Ag Center auditorium after the program. Tools needed for grafting are razor blades, clips, a box, clear plastic bags, a shaded area and water.

Hanna said grafted plants grow stronger.

Hanna mentioned other crops that can be grown in a greenhouse and offered the following suggestions:

Squash and zucchini—buy the vining type if you are growing in a hobby greenhouse.

Cantaloupe—grow up a trellis. Don’t worry; the trellis will hold the fruit.

Eggplant—feed it right and you’ll get a tremendous yield.

Participants also toured the greenhouses at the station.

“Who Gets Grandma’s Pie Plate?”

Making decisions and managing conflict before your death is the best gift you can give to your family and it makes sure your wishes are carried out, says Terry Foster, an LSU AgCenter family and consumer sciences agent.

There are key factors influencing the transfer of movable property to reduce conflict that she addressed in a talk called “Who Gets Grandma’s Yellow Pie Plate?” at the monthly Lunch and Ag Discovery session at the Red River Research Station on Feb. 25.



Terry Foster with a table of her memories

“Do you know what your pie plates are? Every family has a pie plate,” Foster said, explaining that is “stuff” or “treasures.” She said hers were her mother’s Bible and thimble.

She said fulfilling last wishes and distributing personal possessions is five times more likely to be a source of family conflict during legacy than the distribution of finances. “Objects help preserve memories, family history and family rituals,” Foster said.

Foster said people must first recognize the sensitivity of the issue of denying mortality. She said three things are certainties: taxes, coming into this world with nothing and leaving possessions behind when dying. “It is a fact.”

Foster said you never really know someone until you share an inheritance. Discussions can prevent nightmares and celebrate a person’s life and provide meaningful continuity across generations.

Share stories about items before your death, Foster advised. “Give a history of the item and where it came from.”

Determine who needs to be in on the discussions, Foster said. Spouses of your children? Grandchildren?

“Look for natural opportunities to talk, such as a TV show or news article,” she said.

Discuss the definition of fair because people have different perceptions, Foster said. “Does equal mean the number of items or value of items?”

Assuming causes misunderstanding and inaccuracy, she said.

For instance, does the child get back gifts he has given his parents? That should not be assumed. Nor does being the oldest or the baby of the family, Foster said.

She suggested keeping a list of who gives what items each Christmas.

Putting masking tape with your name on an item doesn't necessarily claim it either, nor does who gets their first, Foster said.

She cautioned givers that they could be dismayed and hurt by responses from intended recipients. These may include: "I don't have room for anything, mother." "It's just not something I would use."

Foster passed out sheets for children to identify special objects they would like transferred that has columns for why the item is special and how they would feel if someone else received it.

Clinton Bowers, a family law attorney, discussed immovable property (land, buildings, timber). Immovable property requires a written act, he said. "If there is no will, the state decides where property goes after you die."

LSU AgCenter agent lists top ten tree troubles in Bossier Parish area

The No. 1 yard tree problem is construction damage, according to Ricky Kilpatrick, LSU AgCenter agent in Bossier Parish.

Kilpatrick presented his annual "Top Ten Yard Tree Problems" at the Bossier Parish Library in Benton on Feb. 23.

Kilpatrick bases his list on phone calls and actual observances of local problems. He has been keeping the list since 1999.

By construction damage, Kilpatrick means neighborhood development in which a lot of dirt is moved, killing the trees. Many times soil movement, compaction, mechanical injury and other damage resulting from construction are the culprits in the decline and death of yard trees, he said. "If you are building a house, leave more trees out there than you really want."



Ricky Kilpatrick at the library

No. 2 is bacterial leaf scorch. Confirmed cases have been in live, water, post and southern red oaks. Bacterial cells cause the problem by constricting the flow of sap through xylem. "If I had this, I'd prune that limb out and fertilize it," Kilpatrick said.

Third is graft compatibility. A decline in Bradford pear trees has been noticed in Shreveport-Bossier. Many trees were turning to their fall colors in mid-summer and then shedding their leaves. After closer inspection, many of these trees were found to have been grafted and it appears that the root stock is growing slower than the scion or top material, Kilpatrick said.

Bad pruning is listed fourth. After bad ice storms, homeowners want to prune back the large trees to reduce the chances of limbs falling through the house, however, improper pruning will result in weaker limbs than the ones that were pruned out, Kilpatrick said.

He demonstrated proper pruning techniques on some of the trees at the library. Keys to good pruning are keeping your tools sharp, Kilpatrick said, adding that one-hand pruning shears with curved blades work best on young trees. He suggested not pruning for the first year of a tree's life.

When you prune back to the trunk or a larger limb, branches too small to have formed a collar (swollen area at bases) should be cut close, Kilpatrick said. Otherwise, follow the rules of good pruning of larger limbs by cutting just the branch ridge and collar and at a slight down-and-outward angle so as not to injure the collar.

Yard care ranks fifth. Often homeowners with good intentions cause problems for their trees while tending their lawns. One of the worst problems is improper use of lawn chemicals. Another common problem is lawn mower and weed trimmer damage. Trunk and root injuries not only stress and weaken trees, but create entries for insects and diseases, Kilpatrick said.

Sixth on the list is species/site selection. Studying the site and understanding soil characteristics are the beginning steps in planning for landscape trees. "It's a good thing to know what your soil pH is," Kilpatrick said.

Homeowners should take a soil sample and use the results to select the appropriate trees to plant, Kilpatrick said. The LSU AgCenter can evaluate soil for nutrients and minerals, along with the soil pH, and the results are customized for whatever crop or plant that is desired to be grown. More information is available at parish extension offices.

The next culprit is fire blight. "If you have pear trees, you'll have fire blight," Kilpatrick said. This is a bacterial disease.

Eighth are the Eastern Tent caterpillar and fall webworm, which construct webs on tree branches and detract from aesthetic values.

No. 9 is oak decline/root rot. Oak decline is often a result of a complex interaction of various environmental stresses and pests. Root rot is commonly found in these stressed trees. Practices to promote good tree health are pruning to reduce competition for moisture and nutrients and to favor the more vigorous section of the tree, mulching to

reduce competition from sod and to reduce or alleviate soil compaction, fertilization to correct nutritional deficiencies, using insecticides as needed to reduce defoliation, and watering.

Galls round out the list. Galls are often a problem in hickory trees and more recently in oaks. The trees are attacked by a group of small insects called gall makers that cause deformities known as galls. The galls are formed when the female insects lay their eggs on the leaves or twigs. The reaction between chemicals deposited by the insect and the plant's hormones result in the formation of the gall, Kilpatrick said.

Receiving honorable mentions were oak leaf blister and wildlife damage. Leaf blister is favored by mild, moist conditions during the early phases of leaf growth. Severe cases may cause heavy premature defoliation, Kilpatrick said.

Wildlife damage done by woodpeckers, sap suckers, deer, squirrels, rabbits, beavers, nutria and domestic farm animals can strip off bark.

Kilpatrick said the pine beetle has dropped off of the Top Ten list.

Chefs in the Kitchen offered in Caddo



Lola Boone demos spaghetti

smoothies, paninis, banana pudding, fruit pizza and a punch and cookie party to celebrate the last class, said Lola Boone, LSU AgCenter agent.

Eighteen youth ages 11 to 18 have been attending "Chefs in the Kitchen," a program presented by the LSU AgCenter.

The five-week class, held Thursday nights for two hours, is being held at the Caddo Extension Office and includes lessons on MyPyramid, the U.S. Department of Agriculture's recommendations for healthy eating; food safety; proper cutting techniques; how to measure and use equipment; preparing healthy snacks; physical fitness; hand washing; manners and etiquette; table setting; reading food labels; vitamins and minerals and actually preparing food dishes.

The class began Jan. 21 and lasted through Feb. 18.

Dishes have included chicken spaghetti, spinach salad, pancakes, omelets,

After breaking up into teams, a spokesman explains how the dishes were made.

Sarah Mitchell was in the group that made spinach salad and decorated it with a smiley face of strawberries. “It has a lot of freckles,” she said, explaining that pecans were also used.

Volunteers assist LSU AgCenter agents and guests have included fitness experts and dietitians.

Each child gets a booklet that includes recipes he can make at home.

A Wii Fit is used in the fitness component of the program, Boone said. The children are also wearing pedometers and are encouraged to increase their steps by 2,000 each week.

The America on the Move program is incorporated into the lessons.

Webster News

LaDonna Chreene and Joan Almond conducted the Smart Bodies program for the first time at Cotton Valley School in Webster Parish on Feb. 23.

Almond will be conducting a court-ordered “Children in the Middle” class on Wednesday, March 10 at 9 a.m. at the parish office.

Natchitoches Participates in Sign Up Saturday

Natchitoches Parish was selected as one of four parishes statewide to participate in Sign Up Saturday, held Feb. 20 at the Natchitoches Events Center.

Sign Up Saturday® is a comprehensive event designed to educate and activate the community. The event allows community groups, private organizations, clubs, camps and local event organizers to educate the public on the numerous ways families can “sign up” for a healthier lifestyle. It’s a “One Stop Shop” for families to meet directors from multiple physically active programs in their area and make informed decisions about what activities are best for their family.

The expo also provides health education and testing, games and activities for the kids, a demonstration stage, as well as charity, retail and sponsor booths.

The event featured the Body Walk, an interactive walking tour through the human body, courtesy of the LSU AgCenter and the Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Louisiana Foundation.

Gwen Fontenot, Family and Consumer Science agent, hosted a hands-on booth featuring “fruitful yogurt parfaits.” Youth and adults had the opportunity to create their own healthy low-fat, fresh fruit parfait. Over 300 took part in the activity.

SportsCare USA Inc. developed Sign Up Saturday® in order to tackle the obesity and lack of physical activity head-on. More opportunities exist than ever have before for families to take control of their health by joining a physically active group. Sign Up Saturday® is a window into those opportunities.

This family health expo promotes physical activity, provides health education, creates community partnerships and works to expand physically active opportunities.

4-H

Awards presented to outstanding youngsters, volunteer for work with livestock

The LSU AgCenter honored an outstanding volunteer leader and five 4-H and FFA members Feb. 20 for their work with youth livestock projects.

The awards were presented during ceremonies that concluded the 75th Annual LSU AgCenter Livestock Show Presented by Price LeBlanc. The annual event ran Feb. 13-20 at the Lamar-Dixon Expo Center in Gonzales.

Sponsored by the Louisiana 4-H Foundation and Louisiana FFA, the annual awards recognize young people and adults for outstanding contributions to or work with youth livestock programs. The awards are based on evaluation of each person's record book or a detailed application concerning his involvement with youth livestock projects.

“We’re pleased to be able to recognize an outstanding volunteer leader, since volunteer leaders help us reach even more young people with our projects and programs,” said Dr. Paul Coreil, vice chancellor of the LSU AgCenter. “We’re also happy to be able to honor outstanding young people who are excelling in their 4-H and FFA projects.”

Among the honors presented were the Attorney General’s Award, which recognizes volunteer 4-H leaders who have assisted youngsters with livestock projects. This year’s award went to Lynn Farrar of Caddo Parish.

She has been serving as a livestock project leader in Caddo Parish for 10 years. Among her many activities have been helping young people locate, train and show their animals; conducting clinics on grooming, care and showing of horses, exhibition birds, broilers, pygmy goats, market goats and rabbits; and supervising at parish fair poultry and rabbit shows, along with helping the youth with their chickens at the Louisiana State Fair since 2000.

Her work has paid off with awards to the youngsters she’s helped, including the state-winning 4-H Quiz Bowl Team, two state Premier Poultry Exhibitors, a State Dairy Premier Exhibitor and a State Horse Premier Exhibitor, as well as four belt buckle winners in poultry showmanship at the LSU Ag Center Livestock Show, two state

commodities speech winners, one lamb exhibitor winning a trip to the North American International Livestock Exposition and a dairy exhibitor winning a trip to the American Jersey Cattle Association 2009 Jersey Youth Academy.

Other awards included the Superintendent of Education Awards, which go to students 13-years-old and younger who have excelled in the livestock program. This year's Superintendent's Awards went to Sam Laroux of Sabine Parish and Morgan Rian Williams of Grant Parish.

Laroux is a member of the Ebarb High School FFA chapter and the son of Wade and Yolanda Laroux. His livestock projects center on swine production, and he has shown pigs at parish and state levels. He serves as Ebarb High's FFA chapter sentinel, and he's also a 4-H member and vice president of Ebarb High's 4-H Club. In addition, he is a member of FBLA, the Fellowship of Christian Athletes, One Great River and SADD, as well as playing on his school's basketball team.

Louisiana youth named champions at 75th Annual LSU AgCenter Livestock Show

Hundreds of young people from across Louisiana were named state champions during the 75th Annual LSU AgCenter Livestock Show Presented by Price LeBlanc Feb. 13-20 at the Lamar-Dixon Expo Center in Gonzales.

To qualify for the state show, competitors had to first participate in parish and district livestock shows across Louisiana. At the state show, more than 3,000 young people competed with more than 6,000 animals, according to the LSU AgCenter Livestock Show office.

This year's show was dedicated to Dr. Terry Dumas – a familiar face to many current and former participants in Louisiana 4-H and FFA livestock projects.

Dumas served more than 37 years in the LSU AgCenter before retiring in November. Most of his career was spent working in some capacity with youth livestock projects.

Judges at the LSU AgCenter Livestock Show determined 2010 state champions in various breeds of beef and dairy cattle, goats, hogs, poultry and sheep.

Although the event showcases examples of the state's important livestock industries, LSU AgCenter administrators say it is about much more than that.

“This show is much more about recognizing champion young people than it is about naming champion animals,” said Dr. Bill Richardson, LSU AgCenter chancellor. “Every youngster who participated in this show is a champion because of the dedication, skills and knowledge they've demonstrated by caring for their animals.”

Dr. Paul Coreil, LSU AgCenter vice chancellor, said the livestock show demonstrates the result of years of hard work on the part of the 4-H and FFA members.

“But we also see the support of parents, teachers, volunteer leaders and others who helped them along the way,” Coreil said.

A new feature to the Livestock Show in 2010 is the designation of Supreme Champions for breeding animals in each livestock category. The winners this year are:

Supreme Champion Beef Bull – Darrell McLemore, Red River 4-H (Brangus)

Supreme Champion Beef Heifer – Kimberly Rodriguez, Caddo 4-H (AOB Non-Brahman)

Following is a list of additional winners in various livestock categories and their home parishes and 4-H or FFA affiliation:

Exhibition Poultry

Reserve Champion Old English Game – Tommy Renick, Caddo 4-H

Market Steers

Reserve Champion and Reserve Champion Louisiana-bred British Market Steer – Kimberly Rodriguez, Caddo 4-H

Breeding Beef

Reserve Champion and Reserve Champion Louisiana-bred Angus Heifer – Kimberly Rodriguez, Caddo 4-H

Champion Brangus Bull – Darrell McLemore, Red River 4-H

Champion Louisiana-bred Brangus Heifer – Darrell McLemore, Red River 4-H

Champion Limousin Heifer – Amber Shamsie, Bossier 4-H

Champion Shorthorn Bull – William Kolodzey, Caddo 4-H

Champion Louisiana-bred Shorthorn Bull – William Kolodzey, Caddo 4-H

Reserve Champion and Reserve Champion Louisiana-bred Simmental Heifer – Kimberly Rodriguez, Caddo 4-H

Champion and Champion Louisiana-bred Any Other Breed, Non-Brahman Influence, Heifer – Kimberly Rodriguez, Caddo 4-H

Calendar

March 3—Chancellor speaking in Webster office

March 6—4-H Night at the Mudbugs