

June 2015



Homestead & Farm Notes

Wildlife Wonders

- Gopher tortoises are breeding.
- Red Bats and Seminole Bats are being born.
- Watch for Southern flying squirrels.
- On June 1, 1952, the first Cattle Egrets were sighted in Florida.

Upcoming Programs & Events

June 8th—10th: 4-H Baker's Dozen 9:00AM to 2:00PM daily at the Union County Extension Office.

June 9th: Beekeepers Club Meeting at 7:00PM at the Union County Extension Office.

June 11th: 4-H Canoe Trip leave the Extension Office at 8:00AM.

June 16th: 4-H Can It Up at Hamilton County. Leave Extension Office at 8:00AM.

June 22nd—26th: 4-H Camp Cherry Lake bus will leave Monday morning at 8:00AM and return between 11:30AM and Noon on Friday.

June 23rd: Union County Soil & Water Board at 6:30PM at the Union County Extension Office.

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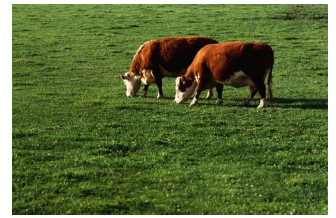
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Livestock Calendar

- ◆ This is the last month recommended for planting sorghum.
- ◆ Check mineral feeders.
- ◆ Check Bahia pastures for mole crickets. Treat if necessary. June is usually the best month to treat for mole crickets if you have a problem.
- ◆ Be sure to keep hayfields fertilized with three parts nitrogen to two parts of potash when you fertilize after the first hay cutting .



Vegetables

If you need to lime, now is the time to apply for fall gardening. Now is a good time to control nematodes by solarizing.

- **Heat tolerant vegetables:** Eggplant, okra, New Zealand spinach, sweet potatoes from vine cuttings, lima beans and southern peas.



Conservation Easements

By: Laurel Schaafsma

Over the past few months, the Union County Soil and Water Conservation Board has been discussing conservation programs that may provide some financial advantages to local landowners. The major conversation topic was concerning Conservation Easements. This allows the landowner to live and remain on the land while paying a reduced property tax in exchange for restrictions attached to that property.

Conservation easements have been used for many years as a method to restrict urban sprawl and ensure that environmentally sensitive areas are protected. When one purchases land, one purchases a bundle of rights for that property. A conservation easement is the repurchase of some of these rights by a government or government sanctioned entity. In other words, a landowner is allowed the option to voluntarily sell his/her ability to use the land for some purposes. These easements have allowed landowners to keep property that may otherwise required them to sell their land outright. The rights to be sold can be comprehensive (allowing the landowner very few freedoms regarding the use of their property) or the rights sold may be very limited (like the right to subdivide the land in the future).

If you own a parcel of land that consists of more than 40 acres and has a stream, river, pond, or lake, water districts may be interested in conserving these areas from future developments. A conservation easement may be of interest to you. You can start the process by calling your water district, Suwannee River Management (352) 362-1001.

4-H Happenings



June Birthday's: Tiffany Williamson, Carissa Griffis, Cassie Tomlinson, Caitlin Gainey, Jayda Hendrieth, Brody Nettles, and Emma Jenkins.

June 8th–10th: Baker's Dozen, limit 10, \$25 from 9AM to 2PM each day

June 11th: Canoe Trip, \$15, meet at Extension Office at 8AM, pack a lunch

June 16th: Can It Up, Hamilton County, limit 6, \$10 includes lunch, leave Extension Office at 8AM

June 22nd–26th: Camp Cherry Lake

June 2015

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
	1	2	3	4	5	6
7	8 Baker's Dozen	9 Baker's Dozen	10 Baker's Dozen	11 Canoe Trip	12	13
14	15	16 Can It Up	17	18	19	20
21	22 Camp Cherry Lake	23	24	25	26 Bus returns at Noon	27
28	29	30				

What's Poppin with Your Snacks

By Samara Deary

When shopping at the grocery store I always seem to end up going down the aisle where the chips are strategically displayed with their nifty price deals of buy one get one free. The varieties of flavors and sizes of bags seem to be endless. Surely there isn't room for a snack that is actually good for the body. Down at the very end of this aisle is an old but true snack that seems to never fade in its popularity. It's Popcorn!!

Though it's been a treat for ages, popcorn shows no sign of going out of style. The National Popcorn Board estimates that each person in America consumes 204 cups of popcorn each year. From a nutritional perspective, popcorn can be head and shoulders above other snack foods. After all, 1 cup of plain air-popped popcorn contains just 31 calories. Popcorn is also a whole-grain food. This means that it's loaded with fiber and none of its nutrients have been stripped away. The calories in popcorn can vary based on how it's prepared. For example, cooking popcorn in a tablespoon of oil on top of the stove can double the calories!

Each kind of microwave popcorn has its own added ingredients, which almost always include fat, sodium, and sugar. If you have your hearts set on microwave popcorn, look at the nutrition labels first and choose an option that's low in calories, solid fats, sodium, and added sugars.

Making your own popcorn at home gives you control over the ingredients and can help you save money too. It's easy to make your own microwave popcorn without any added ingredients!

1. Place 2 tablespoons of un-popped popcorn kernels in a microwave-safe bowl and cover.
2. Microwave on high until the popping slows. This usually takes about three minutes, but it's important to listen for it and stop the microwave when you count a few seconds between pops.
3. Uncover the popcorn and serve.

This is not the time to leave the kitchen! As the popcorn pops, it becomes drier and may even catch on fire if left in the microwave too long. Be sure to skip brown paper bags. These bags are not approved for microwave use and may not be safe for foods. Bags can easily catch fire and unknown chemicals or other materials on or in the bags may come in contact with the food.

The National Popcorn Board recommends storing popcorn in a tightly closed container in a cool location. But don't store the kernels in the refrigerator or freezer, as this may cause them to lose moisture.

So get out there and get popping!

2015 VALUE-ADDED PRODUCER GRANT PROGRAM FOR AGRICULTURE PRODUCERS

Don't Miss Out on the 2015 Value-Added Producer Grant Program!

The USDA **Value-Added Producer Grant** Program expects to announce a call for applications this April! This is a great opportunity to plan a value-added business or to help fund early stage working capital expenses. Grants of up to \$75,000 for business planning and up to \$200,000 for working capital were made last year.

"Value-added" is defined quite generously by the USDA. Not only does it mean changing the physical state of your raw product, but it can mean the fact that you are marketing and branding your fresh product as local, or by your means of production, such as organically grown, or by physical segregation of your raw product, such as non-GMO corn. Projects producing renewable energy from one's raw products might also be considered value-added.

There is a 50% matching funds requirement. So please, investigate this program now at <http://www.rd.usda.gov/programs-services/value-added-producer-grants> to find out if it can help you achieve your business goals. Start on your application *even before* the federal announcement, if it is not already out. Use last year's application toolkit.

Once the program is announced this year, applications will be due in only 60 days.

The growing season is upon us. But don't miss at least considering this opportunity.

Contact Kenda Robison or Marty Sander of the Lake City Rural Development office at 386-719-5590.

USDA Grants Help Cut Energy Costs For Farmers and Rural Businesses

USDA Rural Development Energy program

Grants are available to rural small businesses and agricultural producers for the purchase and installation of renewable energy systems and energy efficiency improvements to reduce their energy costs and consumption through the Rural Energy for America Program (REAP).

Through REAP, projects are funded which reduce operating costs for businesses, farmers and ranchers. These projects not only assist community and economic development, but the energy savings and energy advancements extend the life of existing energy resources and contribute to preserving a healthy ecosystem.

Loans and grants are available to purchase and install renewable energy systems or make energy efficiency improvements to a farm or business. Residential projects are not eligible for the REAP program.

Renewable energy systems include solar, wind, geothermal, anaerobic digesters and renewable biomass. Energy efficiency improvements include grain drying and handling, lighting, refrigeration, facility improvements (such as adding insulation or replacing windows), heating and cooling upgrades, motor replacements and automated control upgrades.

Grants are available to pay for up to 25 percent of the eligible project costs. The maximum grant is \$250,000 for energy efficiency improvements and \$500,000 for renewable energy systems. The REAP program also provides for the guarantee of loans for up to 75 percent of the cost of a renewable energy or energy efficiency project.

Rural Development accepts applications year round, however, grants are awarded and funded on a competitive basis following the application deadlines which are announced each fiscal year. Guaranteed loan applications will be reviewed on a monthly basis.

For more information on REAP contact the Kenda Robison or Marty Sanders at the Lake City Rural Development office at (386) 719-5590.

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