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On The Farm

NEWS LETTER OCTOBER, 2007

UP COMING MEETINGS

Alabama Agriculture Energy Conference

Place: Auburn University Hotel and Dixon Conference Center

Date: November 7-8, 2007

This year's conference will feature a host of presentations on topics that include, but are not limited to:

- The Emerging Bioenergy Industry
- The Link Between Water and Energy
- Biofuel Feedstock Logistics
- Energy Innovations on the Farm
- Heat and Power Production from Biomass
- Agricultural Energy Sustainability
- Forest Resources for Bioenergy
- Launching a Bioenergy Business

Check out this year's [agenda](#) for the complete list of topics and speakers. If you have questions or would like additional information, please contact: Kathy Hornsby at (334) 242-5284 or kathy.hornsby@adeca.alabama.gov Registration will soon be available on line. CCA point will be awarded for those who register and attend the conference. <http://www.nrmdi.auburn.edu/bio/ADECA/conference/>

ALABAMA A&M AND AUBURN UNIVERSITIES, AND TUSKEGEE UNIVERSITY, COUNTY GOVERNING BODIES AND USDA COOPERATING

The Alabama Cooperative Extension System offers educational programs, materials, and equal opportunity employment to all people without regard to race, color, national origin, religion, sex, age, veteran status, or disability

Corn Hybrid Selection: “Get Your Name In The Pot Early”

Place: David’s Catfish House in Atmore

Date: November 13, 2007

Time: 11:30 a.m.

Speakers: Corn Company Representatives will share information concerning their top corn hybrids. The program should be over by 12:30 or 1:00 in order for growers to continue work in the fields. This is a busy time of the year. However, it is not too early to make your corn hybrid selection.

Southwest Alabama Stored Grain Pest Management Training

Date: Tuesday December 4, 2007

Place: Volunteer Fire Department in McCulough, Escambia County

Commercial Applicator Pesticide Points will be awarded to those who attend.

Time and Speakers:

9:30 Why Store Grain, and Why Is Pest Management Important? Eric Hall

9:45 Sanitation and grain bin preparation, Kathy Flanders, Extension Entomologist, Auburn University

10:15 Loading, Moisture Content, Warren Griffith, Regional Extension Agent, Alabama Cooperative Extension System

10:45 Aeration, Eric Hall or Kathy Flanders

11:15 Monitoring, Warren Griffith

11:45 Grain Protectants, Kathy Flanders

12:00 lunch

1:00 Empty Bin Treatments, Top Dress Treatments Kathy Flanders

1:15 Fumigation, Kathy Flanders

2:00 Preparing a Fumigation Plan, Kathy Flanders

2:30 Adjourn

SMALL GRAINS: The Next Crop To Be Planted

Varieties: The July 2007 News Letter contained a list of the recommended varieties for this area. AGS 2000, USG 3209, Pioneer 26R61 and Coker 9663 are the big four with Fleming being the main early season variety. Remember with wheat plant an early season variety late and then harvest it early. Planting it too early may result in cold damage if there is a spring warm spell and then it freezes again.

Seeding Rate: In most wheat producing areas growers are going to seed per foot instead of pounds or bushels per acre. The reasons are for accuracy in planting and the high cost of seed. There may easily be a 30 % difference in seed size depending on the variety and lot. Most wheat seed will now have a seed per pound on the tag. Seed size may range from 10,000 to 20,000 seed per pound and this makes a tremendous difference. The seeding rate is also in seed per square foot. It takes from 1.0 to 1.3 million plants per acre to make an optimum crop. That correlates to a 23 to 30 plants per square foot. Seeding rates also vary with planting method. Planting with a grain drill typically results in better emergence than broadcast methods. Growers typically need to up the seeding rates when broadcasting. When planting late you also may want to up your seeding rate. When calibrating your grain drill this seeding rate correlates to 18 seed per foot for 7-inch drill spacing or 26 seeds per foot for a 10-inch drill spacing. If unable to plant seed per feet, the recommended rate is typically 120 to 130 pounds of seed per acre of wheat

to get the maximum rate. With seed costs being high, some growers will cut back their seeding rate a little.

What About High Seeding Rates? Many growers are upping their wheat seeding rate to 140 and even more pounds per acre and believe this to increase their yields. In a wheat seeding rate study in Arkansas the wheat showed no significant difference in yield with seeding rates from 60 to 180 pounds per acre. This is not to recommend lower seeding rates. However, there are many other factors that growers can do to optimize their yield besides going extremely high on the seeding rate. Wheat has a tremendous ability to compensate for poor or skippy stands and planting too thick can increase disease and lodging.

If I Plant Early, Will I Harvest Early? The answer to this is no. A wheat variety planted two weeks earlier in the fall will only be harvested about two days earlier in the spring. Planting early may make your crop vulnerable to Hessian fly, aphids, Barley Yellow Dwarf and then spring cold damage. Earliness is managed by planting varieties with early maturity like Fleming, LA 841 and Pioneer 26R61. In some years these varieties may be harvested from middle to the end of May, rather than in early June as most wheat varieties are.

Seeding Depth is Vital to having a good stand: A good target is 1 to 1.5 inches deep. In trouble shooting fields last year, planting too deep was often part of the problem. Over two inches tends to reduce plant vigor. This is especially a problem if heavy rains occur after planting, but before emergence.

Seed Treatments: There are several seed treatments that help control seedling diseases. Raxil MD-W is an example of one of these. There are also seed treatments to control aphids and to suppress Hessian flies. Gaucho XT and Cruiser 5FS are two of these. In most every University study the treatment always pays for itself, but may or may not increase yields enough to make more profits. In South Alabama, where aphids, Hessian fly and seedling disease are more prevalent the seed treatments should more than pay. Foliar treatment with Karate or Warrior for Hessian fly at the early post emergence (2-4 leaf stage) typically 30 days after planting can significantly reduce fall infestation Hessian fly in susceptible wheat varieties.

Insects: The Big Three

Hessian Fly: Control by planting date and variety. Plant as late as you can without compromising your crop quality. There is a good circular on Hessian fly that will give you background on this insect: <http://www.aces.edu/pubs/docs/A/ANR-1069/>.

Aphids: The main concern with aphids is they are a vector of and spread Barley Yellow Dwarf Virus. Oats are more susceptible to BYD than wheat. Scout for aphids and know the thresholds as it varies greatly with growth stages. Aphids can be here any time of year. Seed treatment is not as good here as in North Al. as in North Al. aphids are present primarily in the fall when seed treatments work. We have an all year approach to scouting and controlling aphids here.

Fall Armyworm: Basically they are here in the fall and growers need to be on the alert. Fall Armyworm seem to come out of no where. That is because when they are small we may not be scouting for them and only see them when they are larger and then they really do their damage.

True Armyworm: These are not in the big three. However, True Armyworm like wet springs. If we have a wet spring it is like ordering on the menu, true armyworms will come.

PLANTING PEANUTS INTO SOD

The best peanuts are the peanuts planted on land that was in Bahia or Bermuda grass. The best way to kill that grass is to kill it in the fall, by spraying it with Roundup at the 2 quart rate. The benefits of killing the grass then are to allow the roots plenty of time to decay. Most of the plant mass of Bahia is under ground. Many of those roots go four feet deep. When you kill the sod in the fall the roots decay leaving the soil very porous and full of organic matter. The more frequent method used is to disc and plow it up in the spring. This method works pretty good in killing the grass, but does not leave the soil as porous and rich in organic matter, as when the grass is simply sprayed in the fall and left alone over the winter.

Quite a few growers are strip tilling their peanuts. If you killed the sod in the fall there is no problem. The sod will have decayed in plenty of time to easily strip till your crop. If you did not kill the sod in the fall you will not have a problem planting, but you may have problem with the turf when you dig your peanuts. The sod will not have decayed enough by this fall to easily dig your peanuts. The best plan if you did not kill your sod in the fall and you want to strip till is wait until the grass turns green. Allow about four inches of growth on the pasture. Then spray it with two quarts of Roundup. Apply your lime and fertilizer according to soil sampling. Potassium deficiency is common behind Bermuda hay fields. Wait ten more days and then disc the sod. The purpose for discing now is to loosen up the sod for harvest. Strip till and plant your peanuts. Single or twin row works fine when planting into sod. Inoculate peanuts when planting into new ground for peanuts. Spray a pre-plant grass herbicide like Prowl or Sonolan right before planting. A herbicide program of Gramoxone Max plus Dual and then Cadre has been the program of choice of growers in our area.

THE PERENNIAL PEANUT – WHAT IS IT?

The perennial peanut is a legume grown for the vegetation, not the nut. The advantages are that it is a high quality forage. It is similar in value to alfalfa. But unlike alfalfa, once it is established, it is easy to maintain. So it becomes a high value, but low cost, pasture or hayfield. Some growers are growing it just for repropagation and that also may be a part of your business.

The disadvantages are that it is vegetatively propagated. It has a slow rate of establishment. Drought during the first spring could cause problems unless grower is ready to irrigate. Also, competition by grass and weeds the first year can be a big problem. This may not be a big problem to our growers who are already set up for spraying peanuts. The perennial peanut, of course, is not a good rotation for peanuts.

The exact area of adaptation of perennial peanuts is not know, but the crop appears to be well suited to the southern portions of the Gulf States as well as to virtually all well-drained soils in Florida. Winter kill may be a problem as the plant is moved northward, but several plots have persisted well at Auburn, Alabama and Moultrie, Georgia, for at least 15 years.

The perennial peanut originated in Brazil. The first perennial peanut came to the U.S. in 1939, but sat on research plots until 1979. Dr. Gordon Prine with the University of Florida is responsible for most of the research on perennial peanuts. In 1980 a few growers tried the perennial peanut. Now there are approximately 17,000 acres in Florida, about 3,000 in Georgia and a few acres in Texas, Louisiana and Mississippi. There are now around 1,000 acres in Alabama.

Diseases, insects, and nematodes do not appear to be a problem which will affect perennial peanuts.

The varieties are Florigraze which is probably best for our soils, Arbrook for sandier soils, and EcoTurf, a variety grown for its ornamental use. It is a beautiful bluish green plant with bright orange flowers. It can be used in flower beds, as a lawn grass and for erosion control. The University of Georgia is soon to release a forage variety named Cowboy.

Cost per acre for rhizomes – It takes 80 bushels per acre and the going rate is \$2.50 a bushel or \$200 for one acre's worth. A long bed pick-up stacked high will hold 80 bushels. Volume, rather than weight, is a problem in transporting. In transporting rhizomes, it is necessary to provide cover to protect from wind drying. The Arbrook variety is about \$4.00 per bushel and the EcoTurf is \$10.00 per bushel.

The peanuts take at least two full years before you can harvest for rhizomes. Depending on how thick your sod, one acre of peanuts produces enough rhizomes to replant from 20 to 50 acres of new ground.

The hay is high quality (14-18 % protein) and it yields 4.5 to 5 tons per acre in hay off of three cuttings. It dries quickly. You need to keep the hay covered for just like any other high protein hay it will rot. The hay is in big demand by dairymen and horse growers. Some silage is being made.

For pasture use, the perennial peanut is an excellent forage. Once it is established, it is very hardy and will compete with most any other pasture grass. It is also drought tolerant and grows on our sandy soils much like bahia grass.

Soil Type – It grows well on sandy soils and would probably not grow well on wet or heavy land.

Fertilizer – Approximately 400 pounds of 0-10-30 per acre per year according to soil test. You may want to fertilize twice during the growing season or after each cutting.

Lime – Adjust soil pH by thoroughly incorporating the recommended rate of dolomitic lime prior to sprigging the rhizomes.

Irrigation is definitely a plus, especially during the first establishing period. It helps establish a faster stand and a quicker cover. With irrigation you can almost obtain complete coverage in one year. Also, soil moisture helps in getting broadleaf weed control.

A Bermuda sprig digger is the best way to dig the rhizomes. January 15 through March is the best time.

How to plant: Use a sprig planter, if available. Prepare a good seedbed. Broadcast the rhizomes, and then lightly disk them in. One and one-half inches is the best planting depth. Then, cultipack to seal in the soil moisture and assure good root contact.

Herbicides – Weed control is a must. Do not use a preplant herbicide as this inhibits root growth on the rhizomes. If there is some Bermuda grass in the rhizomes you purchase, after you have spread the rhizomes on the field, spray the field with Impose or Select Max. This would kill the Bermuda sprigs but not the peanuts. After the peanuts are up, 2,4-D Amine Weed Killer should be used to control broadleaf weeds. Again Impose or Select Max should be used to control any grass that may still be in the peanuts.

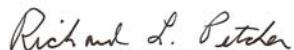
Nursery stock – The best way to start out is to aim for a 100 percent pure stand on your small acreage and then either get out of the business or expand from there.

Testimonials – It has been fed to every type of livestock, including hogs. The only complaint of growers in the business is that they don't have enough acreage planted. Dairy cattle when fed the hay increased their milk production by four pounds per cow per day. Some cases have had better results than when using alfalfa.

For more information on the Perennial Peanut concerning varieties, rhizome sources, how to join the Perennial Peanut Association contact Clay Olson, with the University of Florida Extension at 850-838-3508 or at the Extension Web Site: <http://taylor.ifas.ufl.edu>

I hope you are having a good and safe harvest. And again I hope this information is helpful to you.

Sincerely,



Richard L. Petcher
Regional Extension Agent
Agronomic Crops