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Nita Cooper: Making memories

Nita Cooper started her career with Extension in 1988 fresh out of college. As a trainee in Faulkner County, she had 4-H responsibilities and worked there for four years. She moved to Boone County as the family consumer science and 4-H agent and eventually became the staff chair.

Cooper said her decision to join Extension was all about timing and opportunity.

“Extension had been under a hiring freeze,” Cooper said. “I finished my undergrad degree, and I was toying with the idea of finishing my elementary education degree or getting a job. I really look at it as a God thing. I love working with people, and I needed a job.”

She liked serving the people in her community and having a job that allowed her to do meaningful work.

“I truly enjoyed working with local folks to address local needs,” Cooper said. “One thing I liked about Extension is that we had a framework, but we had a lot of freedom to be able to pull from different strengths to address those local needs.”

One of her favorite Extension memories is being part of building the 4-H center in Boone County.

“That truly was a community effort, and a lot of people worked pretty hard to make that happen,” she said.

Cooper retired in January 2019 but stays busy with her cow-calf operation and volunteering in the community.

“I volunteer a bit with our local church and on the local Farm Bureau board,” she said. “I also serve on the state women’s leadership committee and on our local conservation district board.”

She helps her husband with his appraisal business quite a bit as well.

“He does commercial and farm appraisals,” Cooper said. “It’s been kind of fun because that’s been something very different from the Extension world. It’s been fun to help with that and learn that end of things.”

Her family is important to her, and retirement has allowed her to spend more time with them.

“Gary had two daughters when we got married, and now they’re married and have kiddos,” Cooper said. “Now I have a lot of fun playing with grandkids.”

Extension and 4-H made a lifelong impact on Cooper from a young age.

“I have very good memories of 4-H camp when I was younger,” Cooper said. “4-H has benefits for youth and adults — whether it be giving youth the confidence to stand up and speak or whether it’s an issue that a producer has that Extension can help them work through.”

The benefits also reach beyond the typical agricultural scope by which most people know Extension.

“Some of the FCS programs help with financial management, or it could be a nutrition program that has been very helpful to a family,” Cooper said. “It just gives you a good feeling to know that you can use that research-based information to improve someone’s life.”



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Hammerhead worms found in multiple Arkansas counties

Whenever you think you've seen it all, you can always rely on Mother Nature to remind you: You're not even close. Especially in Arkansas, which hosts not only its own native oddities, but is increasingly visited by strangeness from afar.

This brings us to hammerhead worms — a complex species in several genera known as planarians, or terrestrial flatworms. Though native to tropical and subtropical Southeast Asia, hammerhead worms have become invasive worldwide and have been reported in Arkansas for at least a decade.

Jon Zawislak, extension apiarist for the University of Arkansas System Division of Agriculture, said hammerhead worms tend to prefer climates like those found in Arkansas.

"The worms are thought to have been accidentally transported in soil through the global horticultural trade," Zawislak said. "These flatworms prefer warm climates and feel right at home in the southeastern United States."

One species, known as *Bipalium kewense*, or the Shovel Headed Garden Worm, has been observed in 10 different counties in Arkansas. Several similar looking species have also been found in neighboring states.

Reports of these invasive worms to county agents have become increasingly more common in the last year.

"Gardeners have become aware of these worms because of photos and stories on social media and are now more alert and concerned about their presence here," Zawislak said.

So the questions become: What do these nonnative worms do? And what should homeowners do about them?

The most visually distinctive characteristic of these worms is their broad, spade-shaped head. They have a long flattened body that typically grows to 8 to 12 inches long, or longer. They are light-colored, with one to five dark, thin dorsal stripes. These worms are carnivorous and prey on insect larvae, slugs, snails and various earthworm species.

Many species of hammerhead worms contain a potent neurotoxin called tetrodotoxin, which they use to immobilize their prey and defend against predators. This is the same toxin found in pufferfish and a few other animals. When they secrete this substance, it can irritate your skin if han-



Hammerhead worms, an invasive species of terrestrial flatworms, have been confirmed in at least 10 counties in Arkansas.

dled, and will sicken pets if eaten. As a precaution, gardeners should never handle these worms without gloves.

Hammerhead worms are hermaphrodites and can mate with any member of their species, but more often reproduce asexually by fragmentation.

"Like many other planarians, if cut into pieces, these creatures can regenerate each part into fully developed worm within a couple of weeks," Zawislak said. "If injured, they can quickly regenerate damaged tissue. These worms regularly break off pieces of their tails as they move along, leaving a bit behind to become a new worm. This ability likely contributes to their success in colonizing new habitats."

Hammerhead worms are considered highly invasive, Zawislak said, and a potential threat to local earthworm populations, as well as to gastropods such as slugs and snails.

Zawislak said that if a gardener spots a hammerhead worm, he or she shouldn't hesitate to kill it.

"But you don't want to chop it in half with your garden trowel," he said. "Using gloves, place it into a plastic bag or other container with salt and vinegar, then freeze it overnight before disposing of it."

Arkansans can report any suspected invasive species to the [Arkansas Department of Agriculture's Cooperative Agriculture Pest Survey office](#). 

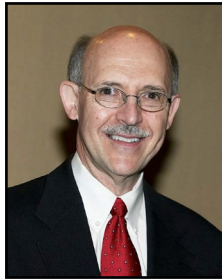
Pumpkins: A Fall Favorite for More than Decorating

Pumpkins are great, not only to decorate with but also to eat. Pumpkins are a nutritional powerhouse and can be considered a "health food." They are low in calories, fat, and sodium, yet high in fiber. They are good sources of Vitamins A, B, C, potassium, protein and iron. As an added benefit, the pumpkin seeds, which provide protein and iron, make a great snack or lunch box item when roasted.

To read more about the nutritional benefits of pumpkins, how to select the best pumpkin, and a recipe for pumpkin praline cake, [click here](#).

Bobbitt names Division of Agriculture veteran Culver as interim chief


University of Arkansas System President Dr. Donald R. Bobbitt named longtime Division of Agriculture executive Chuck Culver as interim vice president of the University of Arkansas System Division of Agriculture (UADA).



“Dr. Cochran has been a driving force in advancing agriculture in Arkansas for more than a decade, and his leadership will be missed,” Bobbitt said. “The Board of Trustees and I now have the difficult task of trying to replace Dr. Cochran with someone who shares both his technical expertise, as well as his love for this state and its agricultural communities. I know Mr. Culver possesses the experience and institutional knowledge to lead the division in the interim, and we appreciate his willingness to take on this role.”

Read the full article [here](#). 

Tips for fall bulb planting

- Now is the time to plant spring flowering bulbs.
- Tulips should be kept in a cool, dark place and planted in late October or November. If planted sooner, they will often grow and sprout to the surface this fall.
- As you shop the bulb at your local garden center, check out the alliums. Nearly all row best in free-draining soil. If you have wet clay, you'll have to create a raised bed or amend the existing soil with loads of organic matter to improve drainage.
- Mix a balanced fertilizer into the planting soil and set the bulbs three times the depth of the bulb width.
- Mulch the area and be prepared to cover the bulbs with some type of wire mesh material if voles and squirrels have been a problem in the past.
- Plant bulbs in a sunny spot, in well-drained soil.
- [Download the fall bulbs tip sheet](#). 




Message from the director

Fall is my favorite time of the year. Probably comes from growing up on a family farm and enjoying harvest, fall fairs, hunting, football and the cooler weather. It is also a good time of the year to take stock in all the things you have accomplished and the things left to do. Extension is doing most of these things right now: harvesting research plots, county fairs, effort reporting, award nominations and lots of fall programming and activities.



Speaking of reporting, our numbers are in for the past reporting year, and I am pleased to say that even under the challenging conditions created by COVID-19, our contacts remained steady. Much of this is the result of going virtual with a great deal of our educational programming. But all of it is the result of our greatest resource, our employees. Another number that I always love to get is the value of our volunteer hours, much of which comes from retirees. This year, Extension volunteers added around \$13 million in added value labor to community development, youth education and other areas to the state of Arkansas! I thank all our volunteers for their efforts; it is good and noble work.

I am excited to let you know the district directors —Carla Due, Ouachita; Kevin Lawson, Ozark; and Jerry Clemons, Delta — are developing a county agent internship program. The aim is to place six to nine college juniors in internships to increase the awareness of careers in Extension, with a focus on county agents. We hope this program will enable us to identify possible candidates for agent positions once they graduate. I see this as part of an overall effort to recruit, retain and foster individuals to be county agents and ensure their jobs are more fulfilling after they are hired. Retirees are a part of this effort. Your contributions support scholarships for agents to advance their education and increase their opportunities for promotion.

Finally, I am pleased that University of Arkansas System President Dr. Don Bobbitt wasted no time in appointing Mr. Chuck Culver as interim vice president for the Division of Agriculture. I have known and worked with Chuck for many years. He understands the mission of Extension and has already made positive contributions. Chuck likes to brag that he has been with the Division for half of its existence! He will use his 31 years of Division experience to guide us until we name a new full-time vice president — a process that we are already working on. Please join me in wishing Mr. Chuck Culver success. 

November Birthdays

Eric Grant - Nov. 3	Luther Roberts - Nov. 20
Reba Hawkins - Nov. 3	Anita Clark - Nov. 20
Massie Silva - Nov. 3	Linda Bates - Nov. 22
Frances Story - Nov. 4	Joe Vestal - Nov. 22
Joe Waldrum - Nov. 7	John Philpot - Nov. 23
Ursula Crow - Nov. 9	Janice Jones - Nov. 24
Sue Palsa - Nov. 9	Brenda Hawkins - Nov. 24
John Hopkins - Nov.10	Kathryn Fowler - Nov. 25
Jerry McIntyre - Nov. 11	Rosemary Rodibaugh - Nov. 26
Nita Cooper - Nov. 11	Jane Kriigel - Nov. 26
Gerald Alexander - Nov. 12	Sharon Reynolds - Nov. 27
Doris Begeman - Nov. 13	Vatra Stone Hibbs - Nov. 27
Patsy Keller - Nov. 15	Ron Matlock - Nov. 27
Kay Stokes - Nov. 15	James Barrentine - Nov. 28
Gloria Eubanks - Nov. 16	Louise McPherson - Nov. 28
Virlean Fisher - Nov. 18	Jim Frala - Nov. 30
Eugenia Hockett - Nov. 18	

Welcome new retirees!

Diane Clement, Cleveland County

Diane began her career in September 2000 and retired Sept.16, 2021. She was the County Extension Agent – Family and Consumer Sciences in Cleveland County and retired with 21 years of service.

Joyce Mendenhall, Washington County

Joyce began with Extension in April 2004 and retired Sept. 1, 2021. She was an administrative specialist in Washington County and retired with 17 years of service.

Dana Stringfellow, Sevier County

Dana began her career in January 1999 and retired Sept. 1, 2021. She was an administrative specialist in Sevier County and retired with 22 years of service.

Scholarship donations - The following gifts were recently received to support professional development opportunities for faculty and staff of the Cooperative Extension Service.

Oscie Barnes

In memory of Carl Hayden

Allan Beuerman

Sam Boyster

Louise Burns

Stan Chapman

In memory of Barbara Chapman

Gail Clark

In memory of Mary Shaver

Nita Cooper

Ursula Crow

*In memory of James Jefferson,
Charles Whitaker and Lamar James*

Allen Davis

Beverly Fountain

Jim and Ella Geisler

Ramona Gordon

Bobby Hall

In memory of Harvey Gordon

Brian Helms

Debbie Henry

In memory of Barbara Chapman

Millie Henson

In memory of Larry Pitman

Shirley Hesselschwerdt

Eddie Hubbell

In memory of Barbara Chapman

Darlene Millard

In memory of Barbara Chapman

Susan Pickle

Don Plunkett

In memory of Barbara Chapman

Luther Roberts

Beverly Roth

In memory of Frank Roth

Ed Rhodes

*In memory of Kay Dickens and
honor of Ples Spradley*

Carol Sanders


Barbara Simmons

Debbie Still

Tom Troxel

Joe and Brenda Waldrum

In memory of Ken Scott

Honorary or memorial donations should be forwarded to the Development Office, ATTN: Brian Helms, Cooperative Extension Service, 2301 South University Ave., Little Rock, AR 72204. If joint recognition is desired, please indicate. To ensure proper notification is sent, please also include in whose honor or memory the gift is made and the mailing address of the person to receive the notification. 

James Jefferson Passes

James Jefferson, 79 of Paron, AR passed away Sept.19, 2021. James retired from Extension in 2003 as institutional printer in the CES print shop. He served for 39 years before retiring in 2003. After serving in the Vietnam War, James returned to work with Extension where he met his wife of 49 years, Aleta. Smith North Little Rock Funeral Home handled arrangements.

The University of Arkansas System Division of Agriculture offers all its Extension and Research programs and services without regard to race, color, sex, gender identity, sexual orientation, national origin, religion, age, disability, marital or veteran status, genetic information, or any other legally protected status, and is an Affirmative Action/Equal Opportunity Employer.

Frank Roth Passes

Frank Roth II, 72, of Tuscaloosa, AL passed away Aug. 15, 2020, after a long battle with Parkinson's disease. He was an Extension forrester stationed at the Southwest Research and Extension Center in Hope. Frank retired in 2001 after working in Arkansas for 13 years. His career focused on forestry research, extension and teaching.