

THE SCOOP

AGRICULTURE | GARDENING | COMMUNITY



Fall Farm Focus

Fall is arriving across north central Arkansas. This time of year is important for managing fall and winter grazing, preparing livestock for calving season, evaluating hay supplies, and getting pastures and animals ready for the months ahead. With continued drought conditions in parts of the area, planning ahead is especially important this fall. This issue contains timely information to help producers make management decisions as we move into fall and prepare for winter. As always, contact the Fulton County Extension Office if we can assist with forage management, livestock production questions, soil testing, gardening concerns, or youth development opportunities.

How Can Extension Help You?

Fulton County Extension offers a variety of services and resources, including farm and site visits, soil sampling, forage testing, sprayer calibration assistance, and Asian Longhorned Tick identification and testing. We can also assist with identifying plants, insects, weeds, and horticultural diseases, helping residents and producers make informed management decisions. Through educational programs, workshops, publications, and one-on-one consultations, Extension provides practical, unbiased information to support agriculture, families, youth, and communities across Fulton County.

Upcoming Events

- October 8 - Baxter County Homestead Conference
- October 20 - Pesticide Applicator Training
- November 26-27 - Office Closed
- December 24 - January 4 - Office Closed

Check out our Facebook page [UADA - Fulton County](#), for details on upcoming events.



For the Herd

Hay Inventory

- Drought can turn a comfortable hay supply into a short hay supply very quickly. Before winter feeding gets underway, take an inventory of what you have. Count your bales, estimate how much your herd will need and consider how long your current supply will last. Don't forget to account for storage losses and hay that may be lower quality than expected.
- Testing your hay is another important part of the process. Knowing the nutritional value of your hay allows you to determine whether your livestock are getting what they need and whether supplementation will be necessary.
- If your hay supply is short, don't wait until you are down to the last few bales to make a plan. Look at options such as extending the grazing season, stockpiling forage, purchasing hay or adjusting the number of animals being carried.
- A hay inventory is much easier to manage when you still have time to make decisions.

Know What You're Feeding: Test Your Hay

- A bale of hay can look good on the outside and still leave a lot to be desired nutritionally. This year, with some hay being harvested later than ideal, testing your hay is important.
- Forage maturity at harvest is one of the biggest factors affecting hay quality. As forage matures, it generally becomes more fibrous and less digestible. Delays in harvesting can also increase leaf loss and reduce the overall feeding value of the hay.
- The best way to know what is in your hay is to have it tested. A forage analysis can provide information such as crude protein, total digestible nutrients and fiber levels. This allows you to compare your hay to the nutritional needs of your cattle and determine whether additional supplementation may be needed.
- Don't guess at your winter feeding program. Test your hay, know what you have and build your feeding plan around the results.

Drought Means it's Time to Look at the Whole Herd

- Drought management is not just about the pasture. It is also about managing the number of mouths depending on that pasture.
- Take an honest look at your current forage, hay and water supplies and compare them to the number of animals you are carrying. If forage production continues to decline, waiting until you run completely out of feed can leave you with fewer options.
- This is a good time to evaluate the herd and identify animals that may need to be sold or culled. Pregnancy status, age, body condition, reproductive history and individual performance can all be considered when making those decisions.
- Culling is never an easy decision, especially when you have invested years into building a herd. However, making decisions early and based on the needs of the operation can help protect the long-term productivity of the herd.
- Don't wait until the hay is gone or the ponds are dry to make a plan. Know what you have, know what your cattle need and make adjustments early.

Beef Cattle



Watch for Acorns in Cattle Pastures

- As fall arrives, producers with wooded pastures should keep an eye on the amount of acorns available to livestock. Acorns can become a concern when cattle have access to large quantities, especially when pasture forage is short or poor in quality.
- The toxic compounds in acorns are tannins, which can cause gastrointestinal problems and severe kidney damage. Cattle and sheep are most commonly affected, although other livestock can also be at risk. Not every animal that consumes acorns will become sick, but some animals can develop serious illness or die after consuming large amounts.
- What should producers watch for? Early signs of acorn poisoning can include: poor appetite, abdominal pain, diarrhea (which may be dark or bloody), constipation, increased thirst, frequent urination, dehydration, and/or weakness and weight loss.
- As the condition progresses, kidney damage can occur. Severe cases may include fluid buildup or other signs of kidney failure.
- Prevention is the best approach. Walk your pastures and identify areas with heavy oak cover and large numbers of fallen acorns. If possible, fence cattle away from areas with heavy acorn production. This is especially important when pasture forage is limited, since hungry cattle may be more likely to seek out acorns. Providing additional feed can help reduce the amount of time cattle spend searching for acorns in wooded areas.
- Acorns tend to become less palatable after weathering and several hard freezes, which may reduce consumption. However, freezing does not remove the tannins from the acorns, so producers should not assume that frozen acorns are safe.
- If you suspect acorn poisoning, remove cattle from the source and contact your veterinarian promptly. There is no specific antidote for acorn poisoning, so prevention and early action are important.

Small Ruminants



Fall Health Check for Sheep and Goats

- Fall is a good time to take a closer look at your sheep and goats before heading into winter. A few simple checks now can help catch problems before they become bigger issues.
- Check body condition. Pay attention to animals that are losing weight or are noticeably thinner than the rest of the herd. As pasture quality declines, make sure animals have adequate forage, hay, minerals and water to maintain good condition.
- Keep an eye on parasites. Internal parasites are a major concern for small ruminants in Arkansas. Watch for weight loss, poor growth, diarrhea, weakness or an unthrifty appearance. Rather than automatically deworming the entire herd, use tools such as FAMACHA scoring and fecal egg counts to identify animals that need treatment.
- Don't forget the feet. Check for overgrown hooves, lameness and signs of foot problems. Addressing these issues now can help prevent them from becoming more serious.
- Fall is also a good time to review your herd health records and identify animals with repeated health or production problems. Taking care of these issues now can help set your flock or herd up for a healthier winter.

Forages



Don't Waste Your Forage

- When forage is short, every acre counts. Good grazing management can help you get more out of the forage you already have.
- During dry conditions, avoid grazing pastures too short. Rotational or controlled grazing allows you to give pastures time to recover and helps prevent livestock from repeatedly grazing the same plants.
- Temporary electric fencing can be a simple way to control access to pasture and make better use of available forage. If a pasture needs a break, consider moving livestock to another area or using a designated sacrifice area while feeding hay.
- This year, protecting the forage you have may be just as important as producing more.

Fall is the time to start thinking about cool-season forages.

- Annual ryegrass, wheat, cereal rye and oats can provide additional grazing during the fall and winter and help reduce the amount of hay needed.
- Annual ryegrass is a good option for producers who are new to winter annuals, but choosing a forage should depend on your soil, livestock needs and overall forage plan.
- Before planting, make sure you have a good plan for soil fertility, seeding rate, planting date and grazing management. A soil test is a good place to start.
- Cool-season forages can be an important part of extending the grazing season, especially when pasture supplies are tight.

Cool-season forage options for fall/winter grazing

Stockpiled fescue

- Starting date: Clip or graze field by Sep. 1
- Fertilizer: 50-60 lbs N/acre before Sep. 15
- Fall Yield: 2,000 to 3,500 lbs/acre
- Potential grazing start date: Dec. 1

Spring oats

- Planting date: Aug. 20 to Sep. 15
- Seeding rate: 100 lbs/acre
- Planting method: Tilled seedbed or drilled into suppressed sod
- Fall Yield: 2,200 to 3,700 lbs/acre
- Potential grazing start date: Nov. 15

Cereal rye or wheat

- Planting date: Aug. 20 to Sep. 15
- Seeding rate: 100 lbs/acre
- Planting method: Tilled seedbed or drilled into suppressed sod
- Fall Yield: 1,200 to 2,000 lbs/acre
- Potential grazing start date: Dec. 1

Ryegrass

- Planting date: Aug. 20 to Sep. 15
- Seeding rate: 25 lbs/acre
- Planting method: Tilled seedbed or drilled into suppressed sod
- Fall Yield: 450 to 1,100 lbs/acre
- Potential grazing start date: Dec. 1

Forage brassica

- Planting date: Aug. 20 to Sep. 15
- Seeding rate: 5 lbs/acre
- Planting method: Tilled seedbed or drilled into suppressed sod
- Fall Yield: 1,900 to 2,900 lbs/acre
- Potential grazing start date: Oct. 20

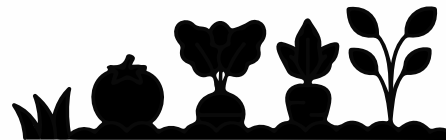
Fall Is the Perfect Time to Soil Test!

Planning for next year's garden, pasture, or hay field? Fall is a great time to test your soil and find out what nutrients your soil needs. Soil testing helps you make informed decisions about lime and fertilizer applications before the growing season begins.

Soil testing is FREE through your local Extension Office! Stop by or contact the Fulton County Extension Office to pick up a soil sample box and learn how to get started.



Garden Guide



Fall Home Flowers - Planting Guide

October

- Fall bulbs (tulips, daffodils, etc.)
- Garlic bulbs
- Wildflowers (from seed or transplant)
- Pansies
- Violas
- Ornamental kale
- Ornamental cabbage
- Swiss chard

November:

- Pansies
- Violas
- Dianthus
- Flowering cabbage
- Flowering kale
- Garlic bulbs
- Wildflower seeds
- Spring-flowering bulbs

December:

- Spring bulbs (last call!)
- Wildflowers
- Pansies
- Violas
- Flowering kale
- Purple mustard

Fall Home Garden - Vegetable Guide

October

- Mustard greens
- Kohlrabi
- Turnips
- Spinach
- Strawberries
- Lettuce
- Shallots
- Leeks
- Garlic
- Collards

November

- Strawberries
- Garlic
- Collards
- Turnips
- Salad Greens

December:

- Strawberries
- Garlic
- Salad greens (protected)
- Cabbage
- Swiss chard



Winterize Your Garden: Fall Garden Clean-Up

If you leave your garden nice and healthy this fall, you will be off to a good start as the weather starts warming up in February. Fall garden clean-up can result in a healthier garden for next season by removing disease spores and insect eggs that will over-winter in plant materials.

As you remove plants and leaves from your garden, you can add them to your compost pile.

Check on your old mulch! Remove any diseased mulch and replenish your mulch as needed.

Winterize your garden by emptying any hoses and other irrigation tools and storing them away.

Leaving them with water in them in freezing temperatures can damage your hoses and cause leaks next year.

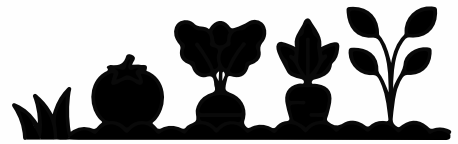
You will also want to clean and disinfect your tools with a bleach solution or disinfectant wipes, allow them to dry completely, and coat them in a light oil, such as mineral oil or linseed oil to protect the wood and keep the metal from rusting. Be sure to store all of your tools in a cool, dry place away from the elements.

You will also want to store any unsealed clay pots, as exposure to rain and freezing temperatures can cause them to crack.

To Rake, or Not to Rake? What to Do with Fall Leaves

Leaves do provide shelter for pollinators and other small creatures in the ecosystem; however, excessive leaf matter can smother plants and should be removed. Leaves can be raked into a dedicated space in your yard, added to a compost pile, or used as mulch around your ornamental shrubs. You may also want to shred your leaves, as this helps them decompose faster.

Garden Guide



Caring for Chrysanthemums

Chrysanthemums like a cooler climate, and they love full sun. For the longest lasting mums, choose plants whose buds are still closed. This means they will last longer into the fall season. Wait until the weather cools a bit before buying. When choosing your plants, check for broken stems, dying flowers, and wilted, limp leaves before purchasing. Buy the healthiest plants you can find for the best show.

Fall is Time to Plan and Plant Spring Bulbs

Do you want those lovely early spring blooms, such as tulips, daffodils, crocus, and more? Get your fall bulbs ready and get to planting!

Look for big, healthy bulbs, and plant them this month or early next month as the soil starts to cool down to give them the proper amount of time required so they can blossom in February, March, and April.

Tips for Digging Up Tender Summer Bulbs

Do you have summer bulbs that won't make it through the winter? Be sure to dig them up before or immediately after the first frost.

Tender summer bulbs include caladiums and fancy elephant ears, although common elephant ears will likely survive winter in Arkansas.

To dig up these bulbs, cut the tops off of them and shake off as much of the soil as possible. Let them air dry for a few days on top of some newspaper in a safe place such as a garage, and brush any remaining dirt off. Then store them in a cardboard box, layering them using packing materials such as shredded paper or shipping peanuts. Be sure not to over-crowd them, as this can cause them to rot. Store the box(es) in a cool, dry place until the weather warms back up.

Mulching Tips

Mulching helps keep the temperature of the soil more consistent, helps retain more water, and keeps unwanted weeds at bay. Avoid heaping up the mulch onto the main stem(s) of the plant to provide airflow. Place mulch 2–3 inches high in your bed and around trees.

In the Event of Freezing Temps

Cover vegetables and other plants when the temperature drops 28°F or below with an overturned box or large flower pot. When plants are frozen, avoid touching them until the temps are above freezing again. If snow is weighing down your plant, gently remove it to lighten the load. Do not prune damaged leaves, as this will expose more of the plant to the cold. Avoid pruning until February.

Caring for Poinsettias

When you buy a poinsettia, punch holes in the decorative foil to allow drainage and prevent soggy conditions. Place these beauties in a plant dish to catch any excess water, and provide even moisture for the plant.

Poinsettias love a well-lit spot in bright sunlight. Be sure to place your poinsettia in a place where night temperatures do not drop below 50–60°F.



Online Pesticide Applicator Training

Our next in person Private Pesticide Applicator (PAT) will be held October 20th. If you cannot attend or are in a crunch and needing to renew your license, there is an online option. Here is some information on taking the online Private Pesticide Applicator Training course.

Step 1: Complete the online training.

- Go to this link: <https://uada.lmscheckout.com/Course/index>
- If this is your first time to take the course online, you will have to create an account. If have previously completed it online, you will log in to your account.
- You will take the \$20 Private Pesticide Applicator Course.
 - You will need to add it to your cart, check out, and complete the course.

Step 2: Submit license application.

- You will need to complete the DP-25 form after you have finished the course. The form can be found on the Arkansas Department of Agriculture website.
 - NOTE: Read and follow the instructions carefully. They will explain how to submit your information by mail or online.

We do not have any control over the process. Please be patient, as it does take around a month to obtain your license. If you have more questions, there is an email address on the bottom of the DP-25 form that you can contact.

If you have trouble finding the online websites and forms, give us a call or send me an email, and we can get those to you.

THAT'S THE SCOOP!

Feel free to call or drop by the office for any questions or additional information!

Sincerely,

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