

**IN THIS ISSUE**

<a href="#"><u>From the Director</u></a>	1
<a href="#"><u>New Academic Recruiter</u></a>	2
<a href="#"><u>Olives for Your Florida Landscape</u></a>	3
<a href="#"><u>FFA Students Visit</u></a>	4
<a href="#"><u>SRC Ag and Livestock Dinner</u></a>	4
<a href="#"><u>20th Anniversary and Graduation Ceremony</u></a>	5
<a href="#"><u>Erin Tinney Scholarship</u></a>	6
<a href="#"><u>Turfgrass Expo</u></a>	7
<a href="#"><u>Upcoming Events</u></a>	8
<a href="#"><u>Student Interns</u></a>	9
<a href="#"><u>Small Farms Initiative</u></a>	12
<a href="#"><u>New Grad Student</u></a>	13
<a href="#"><u>Around the Farm</u></a>	13
<a href="#"><u>Grad Student Spotlight</u></a>	14
<a href="#"><u>Academic Deadlines</u></a>	15
<a href="#"><u>That's a Wrap!</u></a>	15



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**From the Center Director**

The first day of summer was just a few days ago, but it seems like we're in the middle of it. Temperatures in the high nineties and pop-up showers are the norm now, which leads to rapid growth of warm-season crops, but uncomfortable conditions for those working in the field. Please keep in mind that heat stress can cause dangerous health impacts. All WFREC employees have been asked to complete heat stress training provided by UF Human Resources, and I hope that everyone will take advantage of that opportunity as soon as possible. Moreover, for non-UF persons wanting information on heat stress please contact us and we will do our best to quickly provide such information.



The spring quarter was good to us on several fronts. The weather allowed us to plant warm season crops in a timely manner, and in my morning ride-around on the farm today our research plots and crops looked great. We also had several events/happenings at the WFREC during the spring quarter that bear mentioning: 1) the 20th anniversary of our teaching programs that coincided with spring graduation, 2) the establishment of the Erin Tinney scholarship, 3) the 21st Turfgrass Expo and Field Day, 4) a field day related to our Gulf Coast Small Farms Initiative, 5) we hired Sondra Forrester as our Student Recruiter, and 6) we put advertisement of our teaching programs on our teaching vehicles. In this issue of our newsletter you will find articles on all these events and more.



In addition to the above events that have brought positive attention to the WFREC, Dr. Barry Brecke won the prestigious 2015 IFAS Research Professor Emeritus Award. Dr. Brecke retired in November, 2010 after 35 years as a Weed Scientist at the WFREC. After retirement he continued to

## IN THIS ISSUE

<a href="#">From the Director</a>	1
<a href="#">New Academic Recruiter</a>	2
<a href="#">Olives for Your Florida Landscape</a>	3
<a href="#">FFA Students Visit</a>	4
<a href="#">SRC Ag and Livestock Dinner</a>	4
<a href="#">20th Anniversary and Graduation Ceremony</a>	5
<a href="#">Erin Tinney Scholarship</a>	6
<a href="#">Turfgrass Expo</a>	7
<a href="#">Upcoming Events</a>	8
<a href="#">Student Interns</a>	9
<a href="#">Small Farms Initiative</a>	12
<a href="#">New Grad Student</a>	13
<a href="#">Around the Farm</a>	13
<a href="#">Grad Student Spotlight</a>	14
<a href="#">Academic Deadlines</a>	15
<a href="#">That's a Wrap!</a>	15

conduct weed science research in cotton, peanut, and turf grass. He also served as Interim Director of the WFREC from June, 2012 to February, 2014. On a personal note, Dr. Brecke has served as a mentor and confidant for me since I started as Center Director here – his advice and counsel have been invaluable. He has since taken the lead for the Variety Testing Program at WFREC for corn, cotton, soybean, wheat and peanuts; Variety Testing is one of the most visible programs at the WFREC. Dr. Brecke's dedication to and love for the WFREC and IFAS at large is evident in his everyday actions. The WFREC will experience a huge loss when Dr. Brecke finally decides to leave us for good. I'm not looking forward to that day. I hope that you all will congratulate Dr. Brecke the next time you see him for being awarded the 2015 IFAS Research Professor Emeritus Award.

I wish everyone a productive summer, and I look forward to successful research, crop harvests, outreach events and the beginnings of a new academic year at the WFREC.

GO GATORS!

## WFREC Gets a New Academic Recruiter



Please join us in welcoming Sondra Forrester as our new Academic Program Recruiter. Sondra comes to us from Education Affiliates/Fortis College in Pensacola where she served in a similar position as Admissions/High School Outreach Coordinator. She holds a Bachelor of Science Degree in Health Science / Public Health from UWF. We are looking forward to Sondra maintaining our student numbers in the short run and increasing them over time. Please introduce yourself to Sondra when you get the chance.

You may contact Sondra at 850-983-7138 or [sondraforrester@ufl.edu](mailto:sondraforrester@ufl.edu).



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## IN THIS ISSUE

<a href="#">From the Director</a>	1
<a href="#">New Academic Recruiter</a>	2
<a href="#">Olives for Your Florida Landscape</a>	3
<a href="#">FFA Students Visit</a>	4
<a href="#">SRC Ag and Livestock Dinner</a>	4
<a href="#">20th Anniversary and Graduation Ceremony</a>	5
<a href="#">Erin Tinney Scholarship</a>	6
<a href="#">Turfgrass Expo</a>	7
<a href="#">Upcoming Events</a>	8
<a href="#">Student Interns</a>	9
<a href="#">Small Farms Initiative</a>	12
<a href="#">New Grad Student</a>	13
<a href="#">Around the Farm</a>	13
<a href="#">Grad Student Spotlight</a>	14
<a href="#">Academic Deadlines</a>	15
<a href="#">That's a Wrap!</a>	15

Ever thought of growing olives? Here is an excerpt from an article published in EDIS/IFAS co-written by WFREC's Dr. Mack Thetford, Dr. Mike Mulvaney, and Dr. Jennifer L. Gillett-Kaufman.

Olives (*Olea europaea*) have great potential as a landscape ornamental and may also provide opportunities for home fruit production. However, as a relatively new commercial crop to Florida, the cultural requirements of these trees are not completely known and research is ongoing to understand how to manage them for plant health and fruit yield as well as to make recommendations on varietal selections best suited to the southeastern region of the United States.

Olives may be established in many areas of Florida in well-drained soils. While olives grow well on almost any well-drained soil up to a pH of 8.5 and are tolerant of mild saline conditions, sand-dominated soils are best as olives are susceptible to root rot diseases in moist or wet soils. Avoid planting olives in low areas where standing water accumulates after rainfalls.

Nutrient requirements for olive are low and the trees do not produce well on highly fertile soils. Olive is a rapidly growing plant and while growth increases are possible with supplemental nitrogen (N) fertilization, too much N will cause excessive vegetative (shoot) at the expense of reproductive growth (fruiting). Although nutrient deficiencies are uncommon, excessive N will negatively affect fruiting and oil quality. It is anticipated that management problems in Florida likely will involve excessive water and fertilization.

Read the full article here <http://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/ep515>



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## IN THIS ISSUE

<a href="#">From the Director</a>	1
<a href="#">New Academic Recruiter</a>	2
<a href="#">Olives for Your Florida Landscape</a>	3
<a href="#">FFA Students Visit</a>	4
<a href="#">SRC Ag and Livestock Dinner</a>	4
<a href="#">20th Anniversary and Graduation Ceremony</a>	5
<a href="#">Erin Tinney Scholarship</a>	6
<a href="#">Turfgrass Expo</a>	7
<a href="#">Upcoming Events</a>	8
<a href="#">Student Interns</a>	9
<a href="#">Small Farms Initiative</a>	12
<a href="#">New Grad Student</a>	13
<a href="#">Around the Farm</a>	13
<a href="#">Grad Student Spotlight</a>	14
<a href="#">Academic Deadlines</a>	15
<a href="#">That's a Wrap!</a>	15



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# FFA Student Visit

On February 27th, 2015, UF/WFREC Jay Research Facility hosted FFA students from Jay, Central, and Milton High Schools. They learned about Variety Trial testing from Dr. Barry Brecke. Dr. Mike Mulvaney spoke about Cropping Systems, and Dr. Ramon Leon spoke about Weed Science. They were also treated to a presentation of our grist mill.



## Santa Rosa County Agriculture and Livestock Dinner

The Annual Santa Rosa County Agriculture and Livestock dinner was held on April 6 at the June Ates Arena. This is an opportunity for guests to experience an exclusive preview of the Santa Rosa County Fair livestock exhibits. We were honored to have Congressman Jeff Miller, a resident of our county, attend the dinner presented by UF/IFAS, and sponsored by JFarm Bureau.



Congressman Jeff Miller talks to FFA students

"It is very encouraging to see great support for the Livestock and Agricultural portion of the Santa Rosa County Fair. We have a great opportunity before us to grow the educational programs that focus on Livestock and Agriculture as well as the leadership skills of our students here in Santa Rosa County. I see tremendous excitement and camaraderie growing amongst the FFA and 4H leaders and student members as well as the local agriculture industry leaders." Rhett Fendley, Chairman of the Ag & Livestock Committee.



Superintendent Tim Wyrosdick came out to support Ag in Santa Rosa County

# Milton Campus 20th Anniversary Celebration and Graduation

## IN THIS ISSUE

<a href="#">From the Director</a>	1
<a href="#">New Academic Recruiter</a>	2
<a href="#">Olives for Your Florida Landscape</a>	3
<a href="#">FFA Students Visit</a>	4
<a href="#">SRC Ag and Livestock Dinner</a>	4
<a href="#">20th Anniversary and Graduation Ceremony</a>	5
<a href="#">Erin Tinney Scholarship</a>	6
<a href="#">Turfgrass Expo</a>	7
<a href="#">Upcoming Events</a>	8
<a href="#">Student Interns</a>	9
<a href="#">Small Farms Initiative</a>	12
<a href="#">New Grad Student</a>	13
<a href="#">Around the Farm</a>	13
<a href="#">Grad Student Spotlight</a>	14
<a href="#">Academic Deadlines</a>	15
<a href="#">That's a Wrap!</a>	15

In 1995, the UF/IFAS began offering academic programs at the Milton Campus. Our academic programs allow students to earn a Bachelor of Science degree in Natural Resource Conservation or Plant Science (Specialization in Landscape and Nursery Horticulture) at the Milton Campus without having to relocate to Gainesville. These programs are possible through a partnership with Pensacola State College and other local area colleges. To date, the Milton Campus has graduated over 130 professionals. We had many of those Alumni students in attendance to celebrate the success of the teaching programs throughout the last 20 years.

During the celebration held on May 8th, we had the opportunity to recognize the UF Milton Campus 2015 Spring and Fall graduates. Dr. Wes Wood, Center Director, opened the ceremony with a warm welcome and Dr. Joel Brendemuhl, Associate Dean for CALS did a fantastic job addressing the graduates with lots of words of encouragement. UF alumni Sheila Dunning and Gina Duke also addressed the graduates with their experiences during and after earning their degree from the UF Milton Campus.



Congratulations to the following Spring and Fall 2015 graduates:

William L. Bodiford—Cum Laude

Bachelor of Science—Forest Resources and Conservation

Chris H. Johansen

Bachelor of Science—Forest Resources and Conservation

Quina A. Lambert

Bachelor of Science—Forest Resources and Conservation

*(Continued on page 6)*



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## IN THIS ISSUE

<a href="#">From the Director</a>	1
<a href="#">New Academic Recruiter</a>	2
<a href="#">Olives for Your Florida Landscape</a>	3
<a href="#">FFA Students Visit</a>	4
<a href="#">SRC Ag and Livestock Dinner</a>	4
<a href="#">20th Anniversary and Graduation Ceremony</a>	5
<a href="#">Erin Tinney Scholarship</a>	6
<a href="#">Turfgrass Expo</a>	7
<a href="#">Upcoming Events</a>	8
<a href="#">Student Interns</a>	9
<a href="#">Small Farms Initiative</a>	12
<a href="#">New Grad Student</a>	13
<a href="#">Around the Farm</a>	13
<a href="#">Grad Student Spotlight</a>	14
<a href="#">Academic Deadlines</a>	15
<a href="#">That's a Wrap!</a>	15

(Continued from page 5)

Steven Lawhon

Bachelor of Science—Forest Resources and Conservation

Lilian C. Mauney—Cum Laude

Bachelor of Science—Forest Resources and Conservation

Shawn M. Pack

Bachelor of Science—Forest Resources and Conservation

Case G. Pilcher

Bachelor of Science—Forest Resources and Conservation

Charles “Chaz” G. Riley III

Bachelor of Science—Forest Resources and Conservation

Alexander “Alex” J. Steed—Cum Laude

Bachelor of Science—Forest Resources and Conservation



A scholarship was established in Ms. Erin Tinney’s (former Academic Program Recruiter) honor and she was presented with a plaque in recognition of outstanding service to students of the University of Florida. This scholarship was established in 2015 by the University of Florida, Milton Campus to support undergraduate education. If you would like to contribute to the “Erin M. Tinney Scholarship” fund please go to <http://erinmtinneyscholarship.eventbrite.com>

Thanks to all faculty, staff, students, alumni, and friends who came out to celebrate and support the programs here at the UF Milton Campus.



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# Turfgrass Expo and Field Day

## IN THIS ISSUE

<a href="#">From the Director</a>	1
<a href="#">New Academic Recruiter</a>	2
<a href="#">Olives for Your Florida Landscape</a>	3
<a href="#">FFA Students Visit</a>	4
<a href="#">SRC Ag and Livestock Dinner</a>	4
<a href="#">20th Anniversary and Graduation Ceremony</a>	5
<a href="#">Erin Tinney Scholarship</a>	6
<a href="#">Turfgrass Expo</a>	7
<a href="#">Upcoming Events</a>	8
<a href="#">Student Interns</a>	9
<a href="#">Small Farms Initiative</a>	12
<a href="#">New Grad Student</a>	13
<a href="#">Around the Farm</a>	13
<a href="#">Grad Student Spotlight</a>	14
<a href="#">Academic Deadlines</a>	15
<a href="#">That's a Wrap!</a>	15



UF/IFAS West Florida Research & Education Center hosted the 21st Annual Gulf Coast Turfgrass Expo and Field Day on June 17. This event had more than 250 people in attendance. Attendees ranged from lawn enthusiasts to professional turfgrass managers from golf courses, sod production operations, lawn maintenance companies, and athletic field complexes.

Now in its 21st year, the expo is the premier turfgrass research event on the upper Gulf Coast. Attendees learn first-hand about cutting edge research aimed at minimizing green industry environmental impact through improved irrigation, fertility, and management practices; developing new and improved turfgrass cultivars that are superior to their predecessors; and improving pest (weed, insect, disease, and nematode) management practices.



Dr. J. Bryan Unruh talks about Turfgrass studies



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**IN THIS ISSUE**

<a href="#">From the Director</a>	1
<a href="#">New Academic Recruiter</a>	2
<a href="#">Olives for Your Florida Landscape</a>	3
<a href="#">FFA Students Visit</a>	4
<a href="#">SRC Ag and Livestock Dinner</a>	4
<a href="#">20th Anniversary and Graduation Ceremony</a>	5
<a href="#">Erin Tinney Scholarship</a>	6
<a href="#">Turfgrass Expo</a>	7
<a href="#">Upcoming Events</a>	8
<a href="#">Student Interns</a>	9
<a href="#">Small Farms Initiative</a>	12
<a href="#">New Grad Student</a>	13
<a href="#">Around the Farm</a>	13
<a href="#">Grad Student Spotlight</a>	14
<a href="#">Academic Deadlines</a>	15
<a href="#">That's a Wrap!</a>	15

The Expo—co-hosted by the Gulf Coast Golf Course Superintendents Association—brings together in one location equipment vendors and suppliers of turf management products. This allows attendees to get the latest information on what's new in the industry.

**Mark your calendars to attend next year's Gulf Coast Turfgrass Expo on Wednesday, June 15, 2016.**



## Upcoming Events

**July 7:** International Year of Soils Teach the Teacher Workshop – View flyer [here](#)

**July 24:** Grain Corn Field Day

**August 27:** Fall Extension Farm Field Day

**October 15:** Santa Rosa Leadership Agribusiness Tour

**October 29:** Santa Rosa County Farm Tour

**November 13:** Fall Harvest Dinner

**November 20-26:** Farm to City Week November 23 Food Harvest – November 24 Food Distribution



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## Undergraduate Research Internships at WFREC

### IN THIS ISSUE

<a href="#">From the Director</a>	1
<a href="#">New Academic Recruiter</a>	2
<a href="#">Olives for Your Florida Landscape</a>	3
<a href="#">FFA Students Visit</a>	4
<a href="#">SRC Ag and Livestock Dinner</a>	4
<a href="#">20th Anniversary and Graduation Ceremony</a>	5
<a href="#">Erin Tinney Scholarship</a>	6
<a href="#">Turfgrass Expo</a>	7
<a href="#">Upcoming Events</a>	8
<a href="#">Student Interns</a>	9
<a href="#">Small Farms Initiative</a>	12
<a href="#">New Grad Student</a>	13
<a href="#">Around the Farm</a>	13
<a href="#">Grad Student Spotlight</a>	14
<a href="#">Academic Deadlines</a>	15
<a href="#">That's a Wrap!</a>	15

This summer several undergraduate students at the University of Florida are participating in research at the WFREC. Three of the students- Nathan Mooers, Jeremy Munn, and Lexi Woodson- are local students enrolled in the Natural Resource Conservation Major at the Milton campus. This summer they were awarded paid internships through the 2015 Summer Research Internship Program administered by UF/IFAS.

Through the Summer Research Internship Program, each student is responsible for carrying out at least one small research project. This provides students with an understanding of the research process from method development to data collection and interpretation. As examples, Jeremy has been assisting Dr. Mack Thetford with methods for establishing and cultivating olive and pomegranate orchards in the panhandle of Florida, and Lexi has worked with Dr. Debbie Miller to simulate feral hog damage and measure their impacts on vegetation in seepage slopes. Nathan is working with Dr. Kimberly Bohn to determine whether prescribed fires create lethal temperatures for the invasive Japanese climbing fern. Another student, Andraya Mendez, is a Plant Science major in Gainesville who was also able to take advantage of local internship opportunities this summer near her hometown of Navarre. We encourage all of the students to participate in a variety of research activities in a variety of disciplines from horticulture to forestry to wildlife. Recently, several of the students joined Dr. Bohn on a 3 day trip to Tate's Hell State Forest to collect forestry data on a long-term research study to restore natural forest conditions in former slash pine plantations. Through these summer internships students gain valuable experiences which will enhance their resumes and make them more competitive for jobs in their field.

At the end of the summer, the students will be presenting their research experiences at a Student Seminar on the WFREC- Milton campus.



Jeremy records data in an olive orchard at the Jay Research Facility



Lexi measures ground cover in a longleaf pine ecosystem.

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## Undergraduate Research Internships Continued

### IN THIS ISSUE

<a href="#">From the Director</a>	1
<a href="#">New Academic Recruiter</a>	2
<a href="#">Olives for Your Florida Landscape</a>	3
<a href="#">FFA Students Visit</a>	4
<a href="#">SRC Ag and Livestock Dinner</a>	4
<a href="#">20th Anniversary and Graduation Ceremony</a>	5
<a href="#">Erin Tinney Scholarship</a>	6
<a href="#">Turfgrass Expo</a>	7
<a href="#">Upcoming Events</a>	8
<a href="#">Student Interns</a>	9
<a href="#">Small Farms Initiative</a>	12
<a href="#">New Grad Student</a>	13
<a href="#">Around the Farm</a>	13
<a href="#">Grad Student Spotlight</a>	14
<a href="#">Academic Deadlines</a>	15
<a href="#">That's a Wrap!</a>	15



"Hi guys, I'm **Nathan Mooers** and right now I am halfway through my bachelors in natural resource conservation (NRC) studying here in Milton. This spring, Gina Duke of the Florida forestry service and alumni of our NRC program asked for volunteers to work with red cockaded woodpeckers (RCWs) on Blackwater state forest. I learn best hands on, so I did my best to volunteer consistently one day a week through the spring semester on top of my spring curriculum.

A day working with RCWs starts with the morning check. For the morning check, we get to a colony just before sunrise and record (through spotting scopes) the color combos of each bird's leg as they wake up and leave their cavity. After the morning check, the rest of the day consists of replacing enlarged artificial cavities or removing flying squirrels from cavities. As the RCWs started laying eggs we started spending more time finding and marking nest trees, monitoring the eggs, and then as the chicks hatched, banded them. For me, volunteer work is important because it provides context from the real world in school. It also provides an avenue for me to meet professionals (Florida forestry service, Longleaf alliance, Florida fish and wildlife commission) in my prospective field. Best of all, it also worked me into a summer job with the FFS working with RCWs and their invasive species spray crew.



Nathan pulled a flying squirrel from a RCW hole

When I'm not working for the FFS, I am also working as an intern for Dr. Bohn and Justin McKeithen at the WFREC in Jay. We are working primarily on several studies concerning controlling the invasive Japanese climbing fern.

My specific project deals with trying to see if prescribed fire can kill or reduce Japanese climbing fern spores in the seed bank. We have also monitored herbicide studies on Chinese tallow and remarked and collected data from plots in Tate's hell state forest for a long term study on slash pine regeneration."



Nathan holds newly hatched red cockaded woodpeckers



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### IN THIS ISSUE

<a href="#">From the Director</a>	1
<a href="#">New Academic Recruiter</a>	2
<a href="#">Olives for Your Florida Landscape</a>	3
<a href="#">FFA Students Visit</a>	4
<a href="#">SRC Ag and Livestock Dinner</a>	4
<a href="#">20th Anniversary and Graduation Ceremony</a>	5
<a href="#">Erin Tinney Scholarship</a>	6
<a href="#">Turfgrass Expo</a>	7
<a href="#">Upcoming Events</a>	8
<a href="#">Student Interns</a>	9
<a href="#">Small Farms Initiative</a>	12
<a href="#">New Grad Student</a>	13
<a href="#">Around the Farm</a>	13
<a href="#">Grad Student Spotlight</a>	14
<a href="#">Academic Deadlines</a>	15
<a href="#">That's a Wrap!</a>	15



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Meet **Jeremy Munn**— “I lived in Fort Walton Beach, Florida until I was 18 and joined the Navy as an aviation machinist mate for 4 years. I left with an Honorable Discharge, Good Conduct ribbon, and a National Defense Service Ribbon. In 2005 I went to school for elementary education and graduated with my B.A. in 2008. I married my wife May 2007 and had my son in 2009. I took care of him as a stay at home dad until he was 4. I went back to school in 2012 for biology degree at University of West Florida and transferred to University of Florida spring 2015. I am interning for Dr. Thetford and sometimes for Dr. Bohn and Dr. Miller. For Dr. Thetford, I am working on establishing demonstration crops for olives and pomegranates production. For Dr. Bohn, I am measuring and weighing rhizomes of the ferns, from test blocks to determine different herbicidal treatments.



Andraya uses a clinometer to measure tree heights.

Nathan remarks trees in permanent measurement plots at Tate's Hell State Forest.





## IN THIS ISSUE

<a href="#">From the Director</a>	1
<a href="#">New Academic Recruiter</a>	2
<a href="#">Olives for Your Florida Landscape</a>	3
<a href="#">FFA Students Visit</a>	4
<a href="#">SRC Ag and Livestock Dinner</a>	4
<a href="#">20th Anniversary and Graduation Ceremony</a>	5
<a href="#">Erin Tinney Scholarship</a>	6
<a href="#">Turfgrass Expo</a>	7
<a href="#">Upcoming Events</a>	8
<a href="#">Student Interns</a>	9
<a href="#">Small Farms Initiative</a>	12
<a href="#">New Grad Student</a>	13
<a href="#">Around the Farm</a>	13
<a href="#">Grad Student Spotlight</a>	14
<a href="#">Academic Deadlines</a>	15
<a href="#">That's a Wrap!</a>	15



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# Gulf Coast Small Farms Initiative

The Gulf Coast Small Farms initiative continues to build momentum. Since being awarded a USDA Specialty Crop Block Grant in January many activities have begun in research and extension. The grant focuses on two main areas; protected agriculture production and Marketing/Nutrition of specialty crops. Along with trials being conducted and nutrition publications being developed, field days were also planned as part of the extension strategy.

On May 29th the Gulf Coast Small Farms team hosted small farmers from all over northwest Florida for the Spring Field Day. Extension Agents discussed the high tunnel variety trial of organic tomatoes and conventional seedless cucumbers, petiole sap testing, and using TDR moisture meters. Dr. Mathews Paret, UF/IFAS Professor of Plant Pathology stationed in Quincy, discussed field diagnostics of watermelon diseases and general diseases of vegetable crops. The Family Consumer Sciences Agents on the small farms team presented Panhandle Produce Pointers, a nutrition education campaign to help improve the consumption of local specialty crops.



Variety testing of tomatoes in the high tunnels

One purpose of the trials presented at the field day is to give the growers a better understanding of the latest technologies being utilized in production agriculture. The organic tomato trial was designed to specifically showcase the use of black plastic mulch, drip irrigation, and petiole sap testing. Many small growers want to utilize organic production methods but fail to recognize the benefits of some of these technologies. With field days like the one on May 29th, growers can be convinced of the usefulness of these tools to better their yields and quality.

The Gulf Coast Small Farms team will continue to work on more trials this fall including an heirloom tomato trial in the high tunnel, "hot-set" tomato variety demonstration, and plant a strawberry variety trial in the high tunnel. If you have any questions regarding the Gulf Coast Small Farms initiative, contact Blake Thaxton at [bthaxton@ufl.edu](mailto:bthaxton@ufl.edu).



Dr. Paret talks about watermelon diseases

**IN THIS ISSUE**

<a href="#">From the Director</a>	1
<a href="#">New Academic Recruiter</a>	2
<a href="#">Olives for Your Florida Landscape</a>	3
<a href="#">FFA Students Visit</a>	4
<a href="#">SRC Ag and Livestock Dinner</a>	4
<a href="#">20th Anniversary and Graduation Ceremony</a>	5
<a href="#">Erin Tinney Scholarship</a>	6
<a href="#">Turfgrass Expo</a>	7
<a href="#">Upcoming Events</a>	8
<a href="#">Student Interns</a>	9
<a href="#">Small Farms Initiative</a>	12
<a href="#">New Grad Student</a>	13
<a href="#">Around the Farm</a>	13
<a href="#">Grad Student Spotlight</a>	14
<a href="#">Academic Deadlines</a>	15
<a href="#">That's a Wrap!</a>	15



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# Welcome New Graduate Student

**Arun Jani**—"I am a PhD student in Agronomy working under the direction of Dr. Michael Mulvaney. I completed my MS in Soil Science with an emphasis on soil fertility management from North Carolina State University. My MS research focused on winter legume cover crop root decomposition and N release dynamics as a function of spring kill method and soil inorganic nitrogen status. I received my BS in Agriculture from the University of Hawaii. My current research at the University of Florida focuses on nutrient management and soil water conservation in alternative cropping systems for the southeaster US. In my spare time, I enjoy outdoor activities, reading, and traveling to new places.



## Around the Farm



**Farm Manager Greg Kimmons with  
Cubano Argentinio corn variety.  
It's used to make flour for tamales!**



**Chad Stewart spreads gypsum before  
the big rain hits!  
Go Chad!**



**IN THIS ISSUE**

<a href="#">From the Director</a>	1
<a href="#">New Academic Recruiter</a>	2
<a href="#">Olives for Your Florida Landscape</a>	3
<a href="#">FFA Students Visit</a>	4
<a href="#">SRC Ag and Livestock Dinner</a>	4
<a href="#">20th Anniversary and Graduation Ceremony</a>	5
<a href="#">Erin Tinney Scholarship</a>	6
<a href="#">Turfgrass Expo</a>	7
<a href="#">Upcoming Events</a>	8
<a href="#">Student Interns</a>	9
<a href="#">Small Farms Initiative</a>	12
<a href="#">New Grad Student</a>	13
<a href="#">Around the Farm</a>	13
<a href="#">Grad Student Spotlight</a>	14
<a href="#">Academic Deadlines</a>	15
<a href="#">That's a Wrap!</a>	15



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# Grad Student Spotlight

on  
**Bobby Kerr**



I fell in love with the game of golf growing up in Scotland, I was always interested in how the golf course was managed and the turf surfaces produced. I started an apprenticeship in greenkeeping when I was 16 at Gleneagles Hotel in Scotland. Through my apprenticeship I gained the qualifications needed to start a Bsc (Hons)

undergraduate degree in Turfgrass Science at Myerscough College near Preston, England. Upon the completion of my undergraduate, I worked and travelled for a few years. In 2011 I found myself in Canada. I have always wanted to pursue graduate work in the area of Turfgrass science. Dr. Eric Lyons at the University of Guelph had a graduate assistantship position advertised. I applied and got the opportunity to work with Dr. Lyons on my Msc degree. During my time at Guelph, I worked on improving Turfgrass cold tolerance with the application of plant hormone inhibitors. The time I spent at Guelph was very positive and has impacted my life very positively. The years I spent as a graduate student in the department of Plant Agriculture were excellent. In 2014 I was looking to pursue a PhD at the University of Florida in the Turfgrass program. I contacted Dr. J. Bryan Unruh and Dr. Jason Kruse asking if there was the possibility of a graduate assistantship. To my delight there was an opportunity available. My research will be focusing on better understanding the dynamics of warm-season Turfgrass rooting.





**IN THIS ISSUE**

<a href="#">From the Director</a>	1
<a href="#">New Academic Recruiter</a>	2
<a href="#">Olives for Your Florida Landscape</a>	3
<a href="#">FFA Students Visit</a>	4
<a href="#">SRC Ag and Livestock Dinner</a>	4
<a href="#">20th Anniversary and Graduation Ceremony</a>	5
<a href="#">Erin Tinney Scholarship</a>	6
<a href="#">Turfgrass Expo</a>	7
<a href="#">Upcoming Events</a>	8
<a href="#">Student Interns</a>	9
<a href="#">Small Farms Initiative</a>	12
<a href="#">New Grad Student</a>	13
<a href="#">Around the Farm</a>	13
<a href="#">Grad Student Spotlight</a>	14
<a href="#">Academic Deadlines</a>	15
<a href="#">That's a Wrap!</a>	15



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## Fall 2015 Academic Dates:

Back to School Bash.....	8/21 5-8pm
Classes begin.....	8/24
New student orientation.....	8/24—8/28 3-4:30pm
Drop/Add.....	8/24—8/28
Late Registration.....	8/24—8/28
Labor Day Holiday.....	9/7
Degree Applications.....	9/18
UF Homecoming.....	11/6—11/7
Veteran's Day Holiday.....	11/11
Thanksgiving Holiday.....	11/25—11/28
Classes End.....	12/9

## WFREC Vehicles Get a New Look



Our vehicles are getting a new look. Now they give a big shout out to all the wonderful programs offered at UF/ WFREC!

Be sure to watch for our Academic recruiter, Sondra. She will be on the move in her decked out Gator vehicle.

