Dear Friends of Extension,

Can you believe it? The countdown to the holidays has already begun! Only 22 days until Thanksgiving and 54 days until Christmas! As this year wraps up, we would like to take this opportunity to let our readers know how much we appreciate your continued support. We really work hard to advertise all that we have to offer, utilizing a variety of methods, but ultimately, it is you, who helps us the most. We know that word of mouth is one of the best ways to get the word out and sincerely hope that you will continue to tell all your family and friends about us.

I’m sure most of you have seen the locally published magazine, Discover: The Essence of St. Clair County. Please be sure to check out the December issue and the article about the St. Clair County Extension Office! Special thanks to writer, Elaine Hobson Miller, for telling our story and helping to promote our services.

Warmest Holiday Blessings to You & Your Family!

Lee Ann Clark

Agriculture touches every aspect of our lives. From the clothes we wear and the food we eat, to the homes where we live and the cars we drive, agriculture and forest products are ever present.

The week leading up to Thanksgiving, November 15th-22nd, 2017 is National Farm-City Week and this year’s theme, “Agriculture: Food for Life” captures the essence of farming. No other industry or activity is more connected to “life” than agriculture. And, agriculture’s contribution to life continues to expand. Through biotechnology, farming is improving life around the world. Farms and forests generate alternative energy sources. Agricultural products are utilized every day in not only food, but also pharmaceuticals, textiles and industrial applications.

As we prepare to celebrate Thanksgiving and Farm-City Week, we also gather to count our blessings and give thanks for the bounty available to us. This bounty is possible thanks to all those involved in getting the food from the farm to the table so that we can enjoy this abundance. During Farm-City Week think about all the farmers, ranchers, processors, truck drivers, retailers and others who work hard to supply your food, and if you see some of them, please say “thanks.”

The St. Clair County Farmers Federation will host their annual Farm-City Banquet on Monday, November 13th at 7 p.m. This year’s guest speaker is Ms. Doris Patterson, Cullman County Farm-City Committee Member. We will also be recognizing our Farm-City Poster and Essay Contest winners. The Banquet will begin with a pot-luck dinner. Everyone is welcome!

Source: Jeff Helms, AL Farmers Federation
Extension Publication Feature: Controlling Damage from Moles and Voles

→ Damage to your property may be caused by moles or voles. Knowing the difference between the two animals is essential to controlling the problem.

Moles and voles, while both tunnel makers, are distinct in behavior and in the type of damage they cause to lawns, gardens, and agriculture. Because of this, the techniques used to control their activities are not the same. Before acting, you must know who your opponent is.

Distinguishing Characteristics

→ Moles and voles are physically different.

Southern moles (*Scalopus aquaticus*) are between 6 and 7 inches long and weigh between 3 and 4 ounces. They have small eye and ear openings and a pointed nose that protrudes about one-half inch beyond the mouth. Their large front feet are webbed and have sharp claws to aid in digging.

Voles are 4 to 6 inches long and have short legs and tails, and small eyes and ears. There are two species native to Alabama. The most common is the pine or woodland vole (*Microtus pinetorum*), which is found statewide in woodlands. The second is the prairie vole (*Microtus ochrogaster*), found only in the northern one-third of the state.

→ Moles are carnivores; voles are herbivores.

Moles eat white grubs, earthworms, beetles, and assorted larvae. They may actually benefit plants by feeding on grubs and worms that damage plants. Voles feed on grasses, forbs, and occasionally tree bark.

→ Moles and voles have different habitats.

Moles make the familiar raised tunnel system in lawns. They are usually solitary, although females and the young may share the same burrow. They construct feeding tunnels and nesting burrows in dry, warmer soil under trees or solid structures. They seem to prefer cool, moist soil (the same preferred by grubs and earthworms).

Voles have underground tunnel systems. They search for food in a home range of about one-quarter acre and seldom venture into exposed places. Their preferred habitat is areas with heavy ground cover, such as natural environments, orchards, fields, and gardens.

→ Voles produce more offspring.

Voles breed throughout the year. They may have up to five litters of six offspring. Vole life-spans are only 2 to 16 months. Populations tend to peak every 2 to 5 years. During these times, densities of voles may become quite high, and areas that had no damage may suddenly experience severe damage.

Moles breed in March and April. Gestation is approximately 5 weeks, and litter sizes range from two to five offspring. Because of moles’ solitary nature, you may find only five or six moles per acre.

→ Voles kill plants; moles usually do not.

People experiencing vole damage generally describe these types of scenarios: One day my small tree appeared healthy, the next day it was dead. Or, One day my flower garden was beautiful, the next day the plants were wilted and dying. Closer inspection reveals tiny teeth marks around the plant at ground level or that the root system is gone.

Mole Versus Vole Damage

Moles seldom cause extensive damage to plants. Their tunneling activities, however, can disfigure lawns and gardens. The greatest risk is from burrows that wash out during heavy rains, posing a safety hazard. The most obvious sign of damage by voles is a dead or dying plant. Vegetable gardens, ornamental plantings, and your forest stock are all susceptible. Voles may tunnel adjacent to root systems, eating the roots and chewing or “girdling” the main stem just above the ground.

Damage by voles may be confused with damage by rabbits. To determine the culprit, look at the gnawing or chewing pattern. Voles have small teeth that leave small, irregular gnaw marks at various angles on the plant. Rabbits have wider teeth that leave wider marks. In addition, rabbits often will cut the plant in two with a uniform 45-degree angle cut.
Control Techniques for Moles

Repellents and toxicants are generally ineffective for controlling mole damage. One difficulty with toxicants is getting the moles to accept the bait. Lethal or biological control efforts are the most effective.

Traps
Lethal traps are usually of three types: harpoon, scissor-jawed, and choker. Any of these work well if set properly, but soil type can impact effectiveness. Harpoon traps are more effective in sandy soils, while scissor-jawed and choker traps are more effective in loamy soils, or soils with a higher clay content.

Before setting your traps, you must determine which mole tunnels, or runs, are being used most frequently. To find out, flatten tunnels either by stepping on them or using a lawn roller. The next day, see which ones have popped back up. Put the traps on these new tunnels.

If using a harpoon trap, allow the trap to spring into the ground several times before making the final set. This ensures that the harpoons can travel through to the tunnel unimpeded.

When setting scissor-jawed or choker traps, dig out a portion of soil around the tunnel and place the trap in the hole. Fill the hole back in with the soil, making sure no light penetrates into the tunnel. It is recommended that you wear rubber or latex gloves to prevent your scent from getting on the trap. After setting the trap, be sure not to walk on or disturb other portions of the tunnels.

Traps can sometimes be triggered without catching the mole, so check traps daily and reset if needed. If the mole doesn’t use the tunnel with the trap after a few days, relocate the trap to another tunnel. Once the trap is in place, be sure to remove the safety catch.

Biological controls
To achieve nonlethal mole control, you must eliminate the food source. This involves applying insecticides to control grub populations. White grubs may be controlled naturally by introducing milky spore disease into the soil. While these techniques may be effective, they are not quick. It may take some time before the food supply is reduced enough to impact the mole population.

There are no toxicants currently registered for control of moles in Alabama. Trapping regulations may vary, so check local laws.

Control Techniques for Voles
Voles generally do not venture into open territory; therefore, modifying the habitat by eliminating ground cover can be effective in reducing damage.

Traps
Trapping of voles in large-scale operations is not cost-effective, but it may be useful in flower gardens or small vegetable gardens. Place mouse-sized snap traps at the entrance to tunnels/runways. Bait the traps with a mixture of peanut butter and oatmeal or sliced apples. Place traps so that the trigger faces the tunnel mouth.

Biological controls
Keep lawns adjacent to flower gardens mowed to a short height to discourage voles from moving into gardens to feed. Also minimize the amount of mulch in flower gardens and turn the mulch frequently to deter them from establishing tunnel systems. Clear back mulch rings or mounds a minimum of 3 feet from the base of trees. In agricultural settings, tilling the soil destroys the tunnel systems. This helps to reduce vole populations and subsequent damage.

Snakes, hawks, owls, and other predators feed on voles if afforded the opportunity. Voles have extremely high reproductive potentials, however, so it is doubtful that predators alone could prevent damage.

There are no toxicants currently registered for control of voles in Alabama. Fumigants are generally ineffective due to the expansive tunnel system associated with vole activity.

Conclusion
Even though moles may be beneficial in controlling lawn insects, many people find them destructive to landscaping and want them removed. Trapping and biological control are the two most promising methods of managing mole damage.

Damage from voles may vary in severity from year to year as populations increase and decrease in number. The harm to ornamental and vegetable gardens by voles may warrant control by habitat modification and trapping. A combination of control methods usually produces the best control results.

For a complete copy of this publication, visit our website, www.aces.edu/StClair. Then just click on publications and search for ANR-2412 to download a copy or stop by the Extension Office located in Suite 103/BO4 which is on the lower level of the St. Clair County Courthouse in Pell City.

Source: ANR-2412 Controlling Damage from Moles and Voles; Bence Carter, Regional Extension Agent, Forestry, Wildlife and Natural Resources, and Jim Armstrong, Extension Specialist, Professor, Forestry and Wildlife Science, Auburn University; September, 2017
Our Blue & White Prostate & Lung Cancer Awareness Luncheon was held on Tuesday, October 10th at the Pell City Civic Center. There were 120 people in attendance. Dr. Tyler Poston from the Urology Centers of Alabama and Ms. Ashley Lyerly from the American Lung Association were our special guest speakers. We appreciate them taking time out of their very busy schedules to share their expertise.

Thanks to ALL of you who attended this year’s Blue & White Prostate & Lung Cancer Awareness Luncheon as well as ALL of our sponsors! Donations and door prizes this year were provided by: The Alabama Department of Public Health; BUTTS to Go; Chad’s Plumbing & Drain Cleaning; Chick-fil-a of Pell City; City Market Grill & Buffet; Cracker Barrel of Pell City; Hazelwood’s Nursery & Greenhouses, Inc.; ERA King Real Estate; The Choppin Block Restaurant of Springville; Sam’s Club in Trussville; The St. Clair County Extension Office; Warren’s Family Garden Center & Nursery; and The St. Clair County Farmer’s Federation Women’s Leadership Committee.

We would also like to thank everyone who served on the planning committee: Earnestine Carter, St. Clair County Head Start; LaTonya Williams, Alabama Career Center; Jason Pate, ALACARE; Nancy Howard Tempel, Alabama Department of Public Health; LaToya Lockhart, Alabama Career Center; Kimberly Rider, St. Vincent’s Health System/Ascension; and Roger Gilbert, American Red Cross.

The St. Clair County Extension Office team, including Veterans Outreach Agent Assistant, Wayne Johnson, Administrative Assistant, Verhonda Embery, 4-H Agent Assistant, Becky Bridges Staples, and SNAP Ed Agent Assistant, Cori Harris all worked tirelessly to help make the luncheon successful. And, last but definitely not least, special thanks to St. Clair County Master Gardener Deborah Adams and her husband, Dave, who arrived at the Civic Center bright and early to help out. (please visit our Facebook page to see more photos)
Welcome to the Blue & White Prostate & Lung Cancer Awareness Luncheon

SPECIAL THANKS to OUR SPONSORS

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Arthur Woods

Volume 12, Issue 72 Extension Newsletter
The St. Clair County Commission

We gratefully acknowledge the St. Clair County Commission, the St. Clair County Conservation District, and all our Extension Newsletter readers who have donated monies that make it possible for you to continue to receive the printed version of the Extension Newsletter.

Pictured: (l to r) Commissioners Jeff Brown, Ken Crowe, Chairman Paul Manning, Commissioners Tommy Bowers and Jimmy Roberts

For Your Donation

A special thanks to all these readers who generously donated funds that has helped us to continue to provide the printed version of the Extension Newsletter!

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“Mama says gratitude helps us to see what is there instead of what isn’t.”
~Annette Bridges
This Veterans Day, the Center for Education and Performing Arts (CEPA) is teaming up with The St. Clair County Extension Office’s Veterans Outreach program to present a special tribute to St. Clair County’s veterans.

On Friday, November 10th, veterans and the local organizations that support them will be treated to a special performance by Pell City’s The Wingnuts. The show, called “Run Through the Jungle” after the iconic Creedence Clearwater Revival song, is a group effort to raise funds to support programs that aid veterans in our area.

The band said coming up with the name of the event was particularly easy. “We asked several Vietnam veterans from the area to tell us what songs they remembered listening to during their tours of duty – what songs they thought defined the era,” said Donnie Todd, guitarist for The WingNuts. “Every single one of them said ‘Run Through the Jungle.’ For most, it was the first song they named.”

Todd said the event’s goal, besides raising funds to support local efforts, was to pay tribute to the men and women who served during the Vietnam War by presenting them with the gift of music, specifically their favorite songs of the time. Many of those works were not in The WingNuts repertoire, and the band has been working tirelessly to present the material. “We knew some of the songs they requested,” Todd said. “But most are new to us and will be new to WingNuts fans. We’re even branching out and adding popular folk songs to the mix – something we’ve never done before.”

Organizations working to host the event include CEPA, the St. Clair County Extension Office, the Daughters of the American Revolution, and the Robert L. Howard Veterans Home. All proceeds from the event will go directly to the support of local veterans organizations.

The WingNuts are a group of aviation buffs who enjoy playing music from primarily the 1960s-80s. Three members are pilots and all enjoy playing in their home hangar at the St. Clair County Airport. Band Members are Alan Furr, Sandra Furr, Donnie Todd, Mickey Farmer, Teresa Carden, Glenn Wilson, and Bobby Breed.

The event will feature more than just music, as organizers are also asking for area veterans to display their collections from their times in the service. Those interested should contact Wayne Johnson at the St. Clair County Extension Office at 205-338-9416.

Tickets are $20 or $10 for seniors and veterans. Attendees will be treated to free food and beverages during the event. Doors open at 4:30 p.m. and food service will begin at 5 p.m. The show will start at 6 p.m., with Judge Bill Hereford serving as narrator.
Q. My peach trees struggled this year. The fruit set was very sparse, and the fruit that did make was inedible due to disease and bug holes. Can you provide some tips to hopefully prevent a repeat of last year?

A. I am so glad that you asked this question now. For some folks, peach trees are the last thing on their minds in fall and winter. However, there are some steps that you can take now to help alleviate a lot of problems when spring does roll around. Also, now is a great time to develop an annual maintenance plan to make sure that each season is a “fruitful” one.

Right now, you should be thinking about steps to control insects and disease. If any fruit fell to the ground this year, pick it up and dispose of it. Diseases can over-winter on fallen fruits. Fungal diseases are prevalent in our climate so it’s difficult, even with cleanliness, to grow peaches in Alabama without a spray program. More backyard fruit trees die from pests that could have been prevented with dormant sprays than from any other cause. In mid to late winter, you should make your first “dormant oil” application, making sure that the air temperature is above freezing. Three weeks later, you should make a repeat dormant oil application. As winter moves into spring, peach trees should be sprayed with a fungicide (like copper or chlorothalonil), just prior to flowering. This step should be repeated every 2 weeks until harvest. Additionally, an insecticide should be applied in 2-week intervals AFTER the blooms fall from the trees. This prevents peach curculio, fruit moth, and others. These applications should occur until harvest, as well. Timing of the insecticide application is crucial so that beneficial pollinators are protected.

Another important step in proper peach maintenance is correct pruning. Peaches should be trained to the open-center system. A properly pruned peach tree will have an upside-down umbrella shape. Remove any diseased or broken branches as well as all vigorous shoots growing upward or crossing over the middle of the canopy of the tree. Now, you know how to prune, but what about timing? Peach trees should always be pruned in mid- to late February, after the threat of freezing weather has passed. This process should take place just before trees leaf out. Pruning too early in the season encourages bacterial canker and could lead to tree death.

Adequate fertilization is essential to peach tree success. In early March, you should apply a cup of 10-10-10 (or similar analysis) fertilizer per year of tree age. Do not exceed a maximum of 10 cups for mature trees. In August, after all fruit is harvested, apply a cup of calcium nitrate per year of tree age, not exceeding 4 cups for mature trees.

One other tip is directly related to fruit size. The greater the number of peaches on the tree, the smaller those peaches will be. To prevent limb breakage and ensure fruit quality, you should thin peaches about four weeks after full bloom, or just after the natural “May” fruit drop. Hand-thin peaches, leaving about 6” between the remaining fruit on the tree.

I hope these tips are helpful. Yes, I know that it might be a little early to talk about peaches, but developing a maintenance plan now is essential to ensuring a bountiful harvest later. Happy gardening!
St. Clair County
Master Gardeners Association’s
Quarterly Happenings

This summer began with the St. Clair County Master Gardeners holding a workday at the Sheriffs’ Boys Ranch. We worked with some of the boys at the ranch to spruce up their entrance. A raised bed was built under the sign and filled with a selection of perennials designed to bloom during several seasons. When the fall temperatures cool the air, we will return to plant oak leaf hydrangeas and a couple of flowering shrubs around their office building. Meanwhile, maintenance at Lakeside Park continues.

During our July meeting, we were treated to a knowledgeable speaker, Melanie Jones. She gave us detailed information on Alabama’s native orchids. It was interesting to find out there are so many varieties and that most of them are so small they often go unnoticed.

In August, Norm Haley, Regional Extension Agent, presented information on Nuisance Wildlife during a Lunch and Learn program in Ashville. The Master Gardeners and others who attended learned about the problems caused by wild life and several methods of control. We also learned who to contact when help is needed.

The speaker at our August meeting was Dr. Brian Keener, a professor at the University of West Alabama. He spoke on the history and significance of herbariums. He brought to our attention the importance of these plant collections in understanding the range and diversity of plants within a defined area.

Our September meeting was a field trip to Ruffner Mountain Nature Preserve. At 1,056 acres, it is one of the largest privately owned urban nature preserves.

Source: Pathways, Fall, 2017, Pam Garrison, St. Clair County Master Gardener Assistant Treasurer

Holiday Office Closings

Our office will be closed for the
Thanksgiving holidays Wednesday—Friday, November 22nd—24th
and for the Christmas holidays Wednesday, December 20th—
Tuesday, January 2nd, 2018

Visit Us on the
World Wide Web
www.aces.edu/StClair
Teatime Tassies

1 (3 oz.) pkg. cream cheese
1 stick margarine, softened
1 cup all-purpose flour
1 cup brown sugar

Cream together cream cheese and margarine. Using a spoon, stir in flour to make soft dough and roll into 24 balls, about the size of walnuts. Using a small cup muffin tin, press each ball into cups and chill one hour. Meanwhile, beat together sugar, egg, and vanilla until frothy. Stir in nuts. Fill muffin cups about 3/4 full. Bake in preheated 300° F. oven for 25 to 30 minutes. Yield: 24 tassies

Source: Mrs. Laura Rogers’ St. Clair County High School Home Economics Class. (I’ve made lots of these since high school—so easy and absolutely delicious! A must for the holidays!)

Agent Spotlight

Cori Harris
Agent Assistant,
SNAP-Ed Program

Cori Harris joined the Alabama Cooperative Extension System’s St. Clair County office in August. Prior to that, she worked at Children’s Hospital in the Clinical Nutrition Department. She currently serves as a SNAP-Ed Program Agent Assistant. She is a native of Trussville, AL in Jefferson County where she still resides. She graduated from Crossroads Christian School and earned a Bachelor’s of Science degree in Foods and Nutrition from Samford University. Outside of work, Cori enjoys spending time with family and friends, cooking/eating, and reading.

Currently, Cori is teaching nutrition using the Body Quest iPad program in Odenville Intermediate and Walter M. Kennedy schools in St. Clair County. Her students are really enjoying being able to use the iPads and participating in veggie tastings to learn more about good nutrition and a healthy diet. She plans and is looking forward to working with the St. Clair County Farmers Market next summer! For more information about nutrition and the SNAP-Ed program, please contact Cori at the St. Clair County Office by calling 205-338-9416 or email cmh0126@auburn.edu.
The St. Clair County Farmers Federation Women’s Leadership Committee presents their

Annual Holiday Foods Open House

Wednesday, November 8th
10 a.m.
ALFA Building
32775 Hwy 231 South
Ashville, AL

EVERYONE WELCOME!!

Come join us for great holiday food & craft demonstrations.
(Lee Ann Clark, County Extension Coordinator, will be demonstrating how to make one of her favorite recipes, Butter Pecan Bars)

Bring a Dish
Potluck Lunch Will Be Served

St. Clair County, Alabama Extension Office
@StClairCoALExtensionOfc

Be Sure to “Like” Our Facebook Page to Keep Up With All That is Going on In Our Office!
Preserving Jams & Jellies for Holiday Gifts

Wednesday, December 6th
1:00—4:00 p.m.
Pell City Civic Center,
2801 Stemley Bridge Road, Pell City, AL

Fee: $5 per person

Jams and jellies make perfect Christmas gifts! Come learn the proper way to prepare and process these high acid foods at this hands-on workshop. We will sample some unusual jams and jellies and everyone will receive “The Twelve Jars of Christmas” recipe booklet and many other handouts will be available.

For more information, please contact Regional Extension Agent, Angela Treadaway at 205-410-3696 or email treadas@aces.edu. You must pre-register to attend no later than Friday, December 1st by calling the St. Clair County Extension office at (205) 338-9416.