SUSTAINABLE CORN PRODUCTION

NATURAL TREATMENTS FOR PINKEYE IN THE HERD

SODIUM: THE VITAL PARADOX

FOCUS: SEEDS

SAVING SEEDS: SAFEGUARDING OUR FUTURE

BENEFITS OF MYCORRHIZAL INOCULATION

THE SOUTHERN SEED LEGACY PROJECT

$3.75 U.S. / $5.00 Canada
Field Recordings
The Southern Seed Legacy Project & Pass Along Southern Seed

by Deborah Chastain

Putting down roots — we use the notion as shorthand for attaining a sense of place, of community. Yet the idea that a region’s plants, and the way they are tended and passed along to one’s neighbors and kin, are a vital piece of its cultural identity has lost its currency in the wake of industrial agriculture. The Southern Seed Legacy Project, directed by UGA anthropology professors Robert Rhoades and Virginia Neasre, seeks to revive this lost cultural concept by conserving both heirloom plants and the stories their growers and owners have to tell.

An heirloom variety is a domesticated plant that has been grown for at least 50 years through open pollination with other indigenous plants. Because each of its growers selected superior yields with which to further the line, such a plant becomes unusually well suited to its climate and conditions. Also, through their careful selection over generations, these plants came to capture a community’s tastes.

As agriculture became increasingly industrialized, hybrid varieties, developed by scientists for seed companies, became the norm on newly mechanized farms. Uniform output was easier to market, easier for machines to sow and harvest. Rural growers have always operated within hard, thin margins, and most turned gratefully to these labor-saving innovations. Thus, countless, uniquely adapted farmer-bred strains died out. Unlike heirlooms, hybrids will not maintain their characteristics through generations if their seed is saved and replanted. New seed stock must be bought, usually from national corporations. Current agribusiness further reduces biodiversity through patented GM seeds, which have come to dominate certain food crops.

Negative consequences of the modern lack of crop biodiversity became readily apparent as early as 1971, when a major corn blight wiped out almost 50 percent of the Southern crop. Recognition of the peril of our food supply’s narrow genetic base spurred on the USDA’s germplasm program, which collects and maintains genetic samples of crop plants from regions around the world. Meanwhile, people concerned about the vulnerability of our food supply created networks of seed exchanges to nurture and spread heirloom varieties. Somehow most of these networks didn’t make their way South.

Yet individual seed-savers were there, of course, as they had been.

Dr. Virginia D. Nazarea talks with Ernest Kaleda, a long-time seed saver from Marietta, Georgia, who has contributed many seeds and stories to the Southern Seed Legacy.

John Raybendall from Tennessee, a regular participant at the annual Southern Seed Legacy seed swaps, displays his heirloom seeds for swapping.

Crystal Leaver and Kathy O’Connell grow out seeds for planting in the Southern Seed Legacy garden at the Agrarian Connections Farm.
Field Recordings
The Southern Seed Legacy Project & Pass Along Southern Seed

by Deborah Chastain

Putting down roots — we use the notion as shorthand for attaining a sense of place, of community. Yet the idea that a region's plants, and the way they are tended and passed along to one's neighbors and kin, are a vital piece of its cultural identity has lost its currency in the wake of industrial agriculture. The Southern Seed Legacy Project, directed by UGA anthropology professors Robert Rhodes and Virginia Neareas, seeks to revive this lost cultural concept by conserving both heirloom plants and the stories their growers and observers have to tell.

An heirloom variety is a domesticated plant that has been grown for at least 50 years through open pollination with other indigenous plants. Because each of its growers selected superior yields with which to further the line, such a plant becomes uniquely well suited to its climate and conditions. Also, through their careful selection over generations, these plants came to capture a community's tastes.

As agriculture became increasingly industrialized, hybrid varieties, developed by scientists for seed companies, became the norm on newly mechanized farms. Uniform output was easier to market, easier for machines to sow and harvest. Rural growers have always operated within hard, thin margins, and most turned gratefully to these labor-saving innovations. Thus, countless uniquely adapted farmer-bred strains died out. Unlike heirlooms, hybrids will not maintain their characteristics through generations if their seed is saved and replanted. New seed stock must be bought, usually from national corporations. Current agrobusiness further reduces biodiversity through patented GM seeds, which have come to dominate certain food crops.

Negative consequences of the modern lack of crop biodiversity became readily apparent as early as 1971, when a major corn blight wiped out almost 50 percent of the Southern crop. Recognition of the peril of our food supply's narrow genetic base spurred on the USDA's germplasm program, which collects and maintains genetic samples of crop plants from regions around the world. Meanwhile, people concerned about the vulnerability of our food supply created networks of seed exchanges to nurture and spread heirloom varieties. Somewhere most of these networks didn't wind their way South.

Yet individual seed-savers were there, of course, as they had been.

John Kaybendall from Tennessee, a regular participant at the annual Southern Seed Legacy seed swap, displays his heirloom seeds for swapping.

Dr. Virginia D. Nazarea talks with Ernest Kaleday, a long-time seed saver from Marietta, Georgia, who has contributed many seeds and stories to the Southern Seed Legacy.
"A Step Beyond"  
World Class Fencing at Affordable Prices  
New concepts in permanent and portable fencing for all classes of livestock

Exclusive from Powerflex Fence  
Hi-Tensile Woven Wire  
Better coating - Forty year life - Superior fixed powdertick knot - Affordable - It’s the best of the best!

The Powerflex Post is made from the first ever “outdoor" wood plastic composite material available for commercial use. It is the perfect line post for electric fencing. It is flexible, strong, durable, and easy to handle and install. The Powerflex Post will provide a maintenance-free electric fence system.

Call or email for a FREE product catalog!

www.powerflexfence.com - 417-741-1230 - info@powerflexfence.com

Questions for Kinsey  
Kinsey Agricultural Services Inc.

How can pastureland best be improved in a limited budget?

A  
When keeping livestock, the cost of growing feed is always a big factor to consider, especially when farmers and ranchers are already spread thin due to weather and market conditions. According to data from the United States Department of Agriculture, the cost of feed can account for up to 80% of a farm’s total expenses. In a limited budget, one option is to focus on improving pastureland by implementing conservation practices such as rotational grazing, cover crops, and contour planting. These practices not only reduce the cost of feed by increasing the productivity of pastureland but also improve soil health, water quality, and wildlife habitat. Another option is to use more efficient feed conversion technologies, such as controlled-atmosphere feeding or the use of dry matter feeders, which can help reduce feed waste and improve feed efficiency. These strategies can help farmers and ranchers maximize the efficiency of their pastures and, in turn, reduce the cost of feed while improving the overall sustainability of their operations.

Learn more about the Southern Seed Legacy Project and Pass Along Southern Seeds, visit www.ssgpo.edu/eds/seednashheim.
all along. Spreading tomatoes seeds out on small-town newspapers to dry, storing field peas in coffee cans to swap with neighbors or folks at a farmers market, these people were still growing traditional plants in ways they — and their parents and grandparents before them — had always done. Sometimes they couldn’t find old-timey varieties they recalled from their youth, so they placed “seeds wanted” advertisements in farmers’ bulletins and other classified columns. The seeds they sought and offered in trade bore colorful names such as plumgrayserum, rattlenake bean, ping-tung hog brains and chinkapin; even prosciutto cowpeas were monikered Hercules, red zipper, knuckle hulk and Georgia hunter. The seed savers themselves were often as creative as the plant names. Intelligence and curiosity consistently marked their efforts. The Southern Seed Legacy Project began in 1996 to identify, encourage, and record such endeavors. The SSSL promotes both genetic diversity and sustainable local food systems, as is shown by its initial funding by a USDA Sustainable Agriculture Research Education grant. However, this work uses different tools than those used by scientific or commercial conservationists. Gene-bank scientists establish rigid collection protocols and attach latent names to preserve formal species; heirloom seed companies propagate certain varieties and assign them names. Yet the cultural knowledge surrounding folk plant varieties is disappearing rapidly, in many cases faster than the actual genetic stock itself. It is this erosion of our heritage that the SSL seeks to check. The project refers to its focus as “memory banking,” and the workers looked for their first prospects among advertisers in the Georgia Farmers Market Bulletins. Students and assistants went down winding country roads and returned with not just seed samples, but recorded oral histories. These “Southern memory expeditions,” as Nazarea calls them, increased in range as the people interviewed mentioned they knew someone else who grew old-timey plants, and so forth. Nazarea describes these encounters as life history interviews taking the farmers through each stage of their lives, noting what was grown locally and how it changed. She leans forward and her dark eyes widen with enthusiasm as she emphasizes, “So what it is, we interweave the seeds with the memories of these farmers, and it’s all based on the principle of conservation through use — through living use, through living experiences with these seeds.” To put into practice this guiding idea of conservation through use, the Southern Seed Legacy Project began Pass: Pass Along Southern Seed. PASS offers several levels of whimsically named membership opportunities for anyone — whether an informed gardener, a small-scale or large-scale farmer — to obtain and grow their choice of these “memory banked” Southern heirloom seeds. Participants sign a contract agreeing to certain conditions, but PASS requirements aren’t in the least intimidating. Nazarea assures us, “It’s not rigid at all, because all the principle is the spirit of seed saving, which is really informal and fun. If we were to make it rigid, it would violate the very principles upon which it thrives.” Someone checking out the PASS website might anticipate impossibly daunting standards. Instead he or she’ll find colloquial plant names and a reassuring statement to the effect that seeds are not static, static, static. Nazarea says this embrace of informality is exactly the point. “By our philosophy, you don’t impose standards, because that’s already done and fulfilled by science. Our function is different; our share is the spirit of seed saving. We are trying to develop not only the conservation of cultures, but a cultural principle of conservation as a way of life.” More and more, it seems that the South — like other regions of the United States — is beingusername by a vast bland monoculture, which sweeps away the particular, the regional, the local, leaving the convenient and disposable. Nazarea agrees, but sees hope. “Heirloom varieties bring back taste and a sense of possibilities, that we don’t have to be completely sanitized of everything we’ve known and loved just because we are modern, that there’s a choice here, that we don’t have to surrender everything. Unless there’s something to hold on to, there’s everything will be dislocating, disorienting. But I think as long as the sense of place is strong — and the seeds, the gardens, the farms, the kitchens, the bond will be where that strong connection can be drawn — then you see all this change as just a matter of choice. Then you can creatively craft your own combination of choices. But that has to come from a very grounded sense of place so that you’re never completely blown away by forces which will inevitably come — which are here, in fact.”

To learn more about the Southern Seed Legacy Project and PASS Along Southern Seeds, visit www.nps.gov/ssl, or call 220-741-1230.

“1 Step Beyond”
World Class Fencing at Affordable Prices
New concepts in permanent and portable fencing for all classes of livestock

Call or email us for a FREE product catalog!

Exclusively from PowerFlex Fence
Hi-Tensile Woven Wire
Better coating - Forty year life
Superior fixed powerlock knot - Affordable
It's the best of the best!

www.powerflexfence.com - 417-741-1230 - info@powerflexfence.com

Questions for Kinsey
Kinsey Agricultural Services Inc.

Q How can pastureland be improved and what is the best method of pasture improvement?
A If improving pastureland is the concern, manure is the key. Simple things like the proper application of manures can go a long way towards improving pastureland. The manure can be used in a variety of ways, including as a fertilizer, or it can be used as a soil amendment.

Q How can pastureland be improved and what is the best method of pasture improvement?
A If improving pastureland is the concern, manure is the key. Simple things like the proper application of manures can go a long way towards improving pastureland. The manure can be used in a variety of ways, including as a fertilizer, or it can be used as a soil amendment.

Q How can pastureland be improved and what is the best method of pasture improvement?
A If improving pastureland is the concern, manure is the key. Simple things like the proper application of manures can go a long way towards improving pastureland. The manure can be used in a variety of ways, including as a fertilizer, or it can be used as a soil amendment.

Q How can pastureland be improved and what is the best method of pasture improvement?
A If improving pastureland is the concern, manure is the key. Simple things like the proper application of manures can go a long way towards improving pastureland. The manure can be used in a variety of ways, including as a fertilizer, or it can be used as a soil amendment.

Q How can pastureland be improved and what is the best method of pasture improvement?
A If improving pastureland is the concern, manure is the key. Simple things like the proper application of manures can go a long way towards improving pastureland. The manure can be used in a variety of ways, including as a fertilizer, or it can be used as a soil amendment.

Q How can pastureland be improved and what is the best method of pasture improvement?
A If improving pastureland is the concern, manure is the key. Simple things like the proper application of manures can go a long way towards improving pastureland. The manure can be used in a variety of ways, including as a fertilizer, or it can be used as a soil am