As I drove around the county this past weekend with an out-of-town friend, we were amazed to see how far planting has progressed across all of Ashtabula County. In fact, our planting season is right on par with the rest of Eastern Ohio, when we usually are a good 10 days behind. A great week ended with some very timely showers on Sunday and last night. A lot of excellent hay was also made last week. I know that we made some of the nicest hay we have ever produced on our farm. I cannot wait to run a nutritional test on it! Now, I am pondering what the weather will do for the rest of the week. To cut or not to cut is the question on my mind for today (maybe Shakespeare was a farmer!). I hope each of you will take the time to read John Grime’s article (Another Example of the Disconnect). There are lots of great thoughts in the article. Stay safe this week. Have a great week!

David Marrison, Ashtabula County Ag & NR Educator

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Ava Mae Murphy first baby born in June is Dairy Month
June is Dairy Month! Each June, the Ashtabula County Dairy Service Unit and the Ashtabula County Dairy Princess present a basket to the first baby born in Ashtabula County in June. We are very pleased that Katie Stokes, 2016 Ashtabula County Dairy Princess, was able to present a basket to Ava Mae Murphy who was born last week. Ava was born on June 1, 2016 at 2:48 p.m. June 1, 2016 at the Ashtabula County Medical Center. She weighed 8 pounds, 5 ounces and measured 20 inches. She is the daughter of Matt and Jolene Young, Andover. Congratulations to Ava! We wish her and her parents a very happy life.

Evan Schaefer Serving as OSU ACRE Intern for Northeast Ohio
Evan Schaefer has been hired as the OSU Extension Acre Intern for Northeast Ohio (Trumbull, Ashtabula, Geauga & Mahoning Counties). Evan is currently an Ohio State Agricultural Technical Institute student working towards a degree in crop and soil management. He grew up on a 1200 acre crop farm that also raises livestock as well. After
graduation he plans on going back to take over the family farm. Evan will be based out of the Trumbull County Extension office and will be conducting agronomic research and assisting with summer field programs for the region.

Northeast Ohio Ag Scouting Update
By Evan Schaefer, OSU ACRE Intern

As I begin to set up a normal scouting routine for my Mondays I have a few fields that I have been scouting regularly. The first couple are wheat fields that I have been watching closely. All the fields seem to be looking pretty good. I saw some rust but it was nowhere near the threshold to take any actions. I was watching for head scab as the wheat was in growth stage 10.5. I have not seen any signs of head scab yet. The second clumps of fields I check out are soybeans. One soybean field in particular been watching as it was emerged before that frost a few weeks ago. The soybeans looked pretty good they had some insects eating holes in leaves but it was rare in occurrence. While in the soybean field I found an increasing grass weed pressure, but no broadleaf’s were found. I also found some soybeans that were no tilled in and have poor emergence in some areas, because of the observation of hard compacted soils I was guessing that Pythium played a rule in the poor emergence. I scouted the end of a corn field that had very poor emergence. Because I was unfamiliar with who farmed it I decided to wait to get permission from the owner to scout the field. Other corn fields I scouted looked pretty good. In conclusion the wheat was looking pretty good right around growth stage 10.5, and soybeans for the most part looking good at a wide range from emergence to V3. And finally corn is looking good as well with a growth stage right around v3- v5.

Northeast Ohio Agronomic Crops Report
By Les Ober, CCA & Program Assistant for Geauga County Extension

As we enter the month of June, most of the crops are in the ground and with all of the hot weather, the crops are doing well. It is hard to believe at this time last year we were getting ready to build an arc and round up all of the little animals. We were getting ready to embark on one of the wettest June's on record. 2016 is 180 degrees different, we are actually below normal in rainfall for this time of year. If you are a hay producer one of the benefits of hot dry weather is the ability to make good quality early cut forage. For livestock and dairy producers this is usually done in the form of haylage or baleage. This week I have selected two articles from Penn State University in the area of forage management. The first article pertains to adjusting your mower to the proper height to keep forage stand damage to a minimum. This is especially important for producers who are using Disc Mowers. It is very easy to damage a forage stand especially when you are making 3 to 4 cuttings a year.

Keep an Eye on Cutting Height to Maintain Forage Stands
Posted: May 25, 2016
Cutting height can have an effect on both the quality of your forage and the longevity of the stand. Now that the sun is beginning to shine (at least on a more regular basis), forage growers have begun to take first cutting hay across the state. One of the questions we get when trying to maximize both forage yield and longevity of the stand is “How low can you mow?”

This question came to light with the popularity of the disc mower. One of the features of the disc mower allows the operator to lower the cutting height closer to the soil surface. Because of this, we can expect an increase in the tonnage we harvest. However, there are some negatives associated with cutting closer to the soil surface.

First, we can expect an increase in the ash content of the forages. Forages naturally contain some ash; around 6%. However, as we clip closer to the soil surface, the ash content can increase significantly. Results from the University of Wisconsin forage testing lab have seen samples with 15-18% ash... that’s a lot of extra dirt!
Second, if we cut closer to the surface, we can expect a reduced stand life, especially with a cool season grass forages. This is because in orchardgrass, the energy is stored in the stem base of the plant. Timothy’s energy reserves are stored in the corm, a bulb-like structure just below the soil surface. Repeated mowing of grasses at a low height will significantly lower the life of the stand. Research conducted at the Miner Institute in New York showed that orchardgrass cut at a height of 2” regrew at a much slower rate than a cutting height of 4”. Legumes like alfalfa can tolerate a shorter cutting height, because their energy storage is contained in the taproot. However, quality can be compromised with a shorter cut. The lower part of the plant often contains more stems than leaves, and you run the risk of getting more ash in your forage.

Here are some considerations for cutting height:

Alfalfa – can tolerate a lower cutting than grasses. Recent recommendations have been in the 2.5-3” range, to minimize ash content and maximize quality. Keep in mind that frequent cutting at early maturity will deplete carbohydrate reserves and weaken the plant.

Grasses– Keep the cutter bar higher to maintain the stand. Minimum of 4” cutting height during the establishment year, and 3” during production years.

Mixed stands – In this case, you need to manage for the predominant species. If you consider it primarily an alfalfa stand, mow at a minimum height of 2.5”. For a heavy grass mix, raise the cutter bar up to at least 3” if you want to keep the grass in the mix.

Source: Dwane Miller, Educator, Email: dlm228@psu.edu
Phone: 570-622-4225

One of the most popular ways to harvest a forage crop is round baling the crop at a high moisture and then wrapping it to preserve the forage. If done properly you can make some excellent forage for you beef or dairy herd at a very reasonable cost. Here is an article from PSU that gives some tips on making high quality Baleage.

Baleage – An Opportunity for High Quality First-Cutting Hay
Posted: May 25, 2016

Wrapping wet bales for baleage could help to ensure your hay fields are harvested at the correct stage of maturity. The cool, wet spring that has overtaken most of Pennsylvania has posed challenges for making good quality, first cutting dry hay. Forages become mature quickly and quality rapidly declines after seed set. Wrapping wet bales for baleage could help to ensure your hay fields are harvested at the correct stage of maturity, providing adequate quality for livestock.

First and foremost, good quality baleage must be achieved by baling at the proper moisture content. Rather than aiming for 16-20% moisture, which is the common target for dry hay, forage can be baled for baleage at 45-65% moisture. The proper moisture content allows for optimal fermentation after the bale is covered and sealed and oxygen can no longer penetrate the bale.

When individually wrapping bales, plastic should be about one mil (25 microns) thick low-density polyethylene and each bale should be wrapped a minimum of 5 times, but 8 is more ideal, with at least a 50% overlap. As the bale is wrapped, the plastic is stretched thinner than the original material, causing the need for multiple layers to ensure elimination of oxygen, sunlight, and excess moisture. If the bales being wrapped have sharp stems, more layers of plastic can be useful in preventing holes from being poked through the wrap, allowing air to infiltrate the bale. More
mature, lower quality forage or drier hay should also have more layers.

Wrapping within 4 hours of baling helps to ensure proper fermentation and reduce the exposure of the bale to air. Wrapping close the area where the bales will be stored helps to lessen the probability of plastic getting torn during transportation. Storing the wrapped bales in a well-drained area where water will not accumulate on the ground is essential.

Paying attention to smaller details can help to increase the quality of your wrapped forage. Mowing in the afternoon is ideal since the sugars are highest in the plant at that time, but if an afternoon mowing time is not possible, at least waiting until the dew is burned off is essential. The addition of bacterial inoculants can help to ensure proper and consistent fermentation throughout the entire bale.

Spring weather can be a challenge to harvest high quality forages, but if wrapping bales for baleage is an option on our operation, good, nutritious forage can be attained the first through your final cutting of the year.

Source: Jessica A. Williamson, Ph.D., Extension Forage Specialist, Email: jaw67@psu.edu, Phone: 814-865-9552

Northeast Ohio Agronomic Crops Progress Report
- Corn 95% planted and 70% emerged V-1 to V-5 good condition
- Soybeans 80% planted 50% emerged. most are just emerging
- Oats good condition, watch for Cereal Leaf Beetle
- Wheat finishing flowering with most of the crop rated good to excellent
- Forages 30% harvested on first cutting. Much of this in form of high moisture haylage.

Another Example of the Disconnect
By: John F. Grimes, OSU Extension Beef Coordinator

By now you surely have some awareness of the unfortunate incident that happened at the Cincinnati Zoo this past weekend. A three-year-old boy fell into a gorilla enclosure at the zoo which eventually led to an endangered-species gorilla being shot and killed by rescuers. Thankfully, the child is alive today. As expected, there has been a large amount of news coverage about this event and a huge reaction of wide-ranging opinions on social media.

So why am I discussing this event in a newsletter that you read for timely information on beef production and industry-related issues? It is the most recent and highly visible example of the disconnect between humans and their understanding of animal behavior. I believe the Cincinnati Zoo incident can be a valuable lesson for all parties involved in animal agriculture.

We live in a society where a very small percentage of the population is directly involved in production agriculture and a majority of the public has little understanding of the process of food production. Today, anyone with a “smart” phone can record footage and become a reporter. Social media outlets such as Facebook and Twitter allow anyone that can type, the opportunity to offer “expert” commentary on the news today. Reaction to the zoo incident has been swift and judgmental at the least.

Look at the general reaction from the public and you can see the disconnect I mentioned. Various animal rights groups have criticized the zoo for their perceived rush to destroy the gorilla rather than continue to implement more peaceful methods to try to separate the boy and the gorilla. An angry mob has taken to the internet criticizing the parenting skills of an anonymous person and screamed for justice for the gorilla. Zoo safety procedures have been called into question.
These groups and individuals can have their opinions but I would question their true understanding of human and animal behavior. Put yourself in the same situation at the zoo. If your child was in the grasp of that same gorilla, would you prefer the handlers use distractions and patience to separate the child from the gorilla or a swift remedy to the situation that defers to the safety of the child? It is my understanding that this zoo enclosure has been in place for nearly four decades and nothing similar to this event had happened until this past weekend. I’m not sure this indicates negligence on the zoo’s part. While very few individuals are fully aware of the human actions that led to this incident, I would offer a little advice for those rushing to convict the parents of the boy. Now would be a good time to remember the old proverb that goes something like this: “People who live in glasses shouldn’t throw stones.”

I personally cannot relate to any mindset that thinks animal life should be more highly protected than a human life. However, our society increasingly narrows the gap between the treatment of humans and animals. Movies, television, advertisements, etc. have occasionally portrayed animals with human characteristics (Horses can’t talk and cattle can’t drive a truck!). Millions of dollars of products and services are bought and sold that will allow you to treat your dog or cat as well as you could treat your own child. Many of us have seen examples where animals were treated equally or better than humans in certain situations.

What can we as livestock producers learn from the Cincinnati Zoo incident? While we cannot prepare for every possible scenario, we must have facilities that minimize the risk of injury to humans and animals. Fencing must contain your animals where they are supposed to be located and should account for any size and gender differences between animals. When you are interacting with individuals on the farm or in a public situation, seize the opportunity to educate them about proper animal husbandry production practices that relate to modern food production. Be prepared to implement safety procedures when the opportunity for human-animal interaction exists on your farm or at a show where you may be exhibiting animals.

As a livestock producer, there may be times when individuals come to your farm to observe your operation or you have an opportunity to visit with individuals unfamiliar with animal agriculture. Be prepared to offer a positive view of production agriculture and educate the public about the steps our industry takes to produce a safe, wholesome food product. You never know when the public or a camera may be watching.

**New Fact Sheet Could Help Producers Keep Specialty Crops Safe from Herbicide Drift**
By Kurt Knebusch | Posted on 5/31/2016

Ohio’s corn and soybean growers could soon be spraying a lot more of two powerful herbicides on their fields. That’s why experts from Ohio State University Extension are offering tips on how to keep those herbicides from getting on other crops, especially valuable specialty crops such as grapes. Doug Doohan and Roger Downer, both of the Department of Horticulture and Crop Science, are the authors of *Reducing 2,4-D and Dicamba Drift Risk to Fruits, Vegetables and Landscape Plants*, a new fact sheet that explains how herbicide sprays can drift onto nontarget fields, the special concerns about the herbicides 2,4-D and dicamba, and how to prevent unwanted damage to crops.

The fact sheet is also intended, Doohan said, to raise awareness of Ohio’s specialty crops, which include not just grapes but apples, berries, peaches, herbs, hops, pumpkins, tomatoes and nursery-grown trees, to name a few. The grape and wine industry alone, according to recent figures, contributes some $786 million to the state’s economy.

“Creating and maintaining a heightened awareness of the specialty crop industry is probably the most important way to reduce the risk of future herbicide damage and the lawsuits that sometimes follow,” Doohan said.
Weed control for GM crops
2,4-D and dicamba are the cornerstones of two new proposed weed control systems: Dow AgroSciences’ 2,4-D-based Enlist Weed Control System for genetically modified corn and soybeans and Monsanto’s dicamba-based Roundup Ready Xtend Crop System for GM soybeans. Both systems were developed because more and more weeds have grown resistant to glyphosate alone. Glyphosate is the main ingredient in Roundup, for example, which is sprayed to kill weeds in widely grown Roundup Ready GM crops including corn and soybeans.

Both new systems are awaiting regulatory approval. But Doohan said both - and 2,4-D and dicamba as part of them - are “likely to be used much more extensively and intensively throughout the Midwest, starting in the near future.” Included, he said, would be most of Ohio’s 4-plus million acres of soybeans.

The fact sheet is free at county offices of OSU Extension and go.osu.edu/ReducingDriftRisk.

Farming 101- Keep them Separated!
Source: Farm & Dairy
http://www.farmanddairy.com/top-stories/personal-and-business-records-keep-them-separate/

Just as it is important to keep records of your farm finances, it is important to have a record of your personal finances. It is even more important to record them separately. Here are five reasons why.

- Determine profitability- Family living expenses such as personal utilities, food and medical expenses, can distort financial statements. Keeping personal and business costs separate gives you a more accurate reading of how your farm business is doing financially.
- De-stress tax season- Taxes can be stressful enough. Having separate processes for personal finances in place and farm finances will reduce the likelihood of errors in your farm tax return. Errors mean penalties and interest charges.
- The corporate veil- Having a separate legal entity for your farm business reduces the chance of having your personal investments compromised. If personal and business finances are not kept separate, farm owners run the risk of being personally liable — putting personal assets, investments and bank accounts in jeopardy in order to pay the farm business debt.
- Bookkeeping- You may think it sounds easier to keep all your records in one book, but it mostly creates a bigger financial headache for your bookkeeper. Mixing expenses makes it harder for the bookkeeper to separate them out later. Organized records help you know where your business stands financially.
- Building credit- Establishing a bank account and Employer Identification Number for your farm business helps the farm build its own credit history. If you, as an individual, have a poor credit score, it may make it harder for your farm to obtain loans. Personal debt like mortgage, student debt and auto loans can drag down your farm’s credit history.

Source: Darren Frye, CEO, Water Street Solutions, 5 reasons to keep the farm business books separate and Ohio State Extension. (Farm and Dairy is featuring a series of “101” columns throughout the year to help young and beginning farmers master farm living. From finances to management to machinery repair and animal care, farmers do it all.)

Dating on the Farm

Whether you are planting, harvesting or taking care of livestock, the farm always comes first. When you are in a relationship or married as a farmer, it can be tough to find time to see your significant other or spouse. Sometimes, your relationship is neglected when you are giving all of your time to your farm. We surveyed over 100 farmers and
they shared their best tips for dating as a farmer! We collected our favorite responses.

- Be flexible. Things will come up - for both of you. Sometimes your time together will take a back seat to the farm.
- Have dinner in the truck. It may not be the most romantic place to share a meal, but if you want to make time for each other, sometimes that means a peanut butter and jelly sandwich picnic in the truck.
- If you actually go in to town for a date, don’t be discouraged if your date includes a run to the parts counter or the hardware store. Think of it as bonding time.
- Find ways to be creative. Write each other notes. Send text messages throughout the day. Being busy doesn’t mean you have to neglect each other.
- Sometimes your date might include milking cows or hanging out together in the tractor. If you tag team the work, it may give you more time together.
- Be willing to pitch in even if it’s with something you don’t usually do. You will get more time together and you may even learn something!
- The smell of dirt and diesel will eventually become attractive!
- No free time? Have a date night in the field. There’s room for two - so take a ride in the combine or tractor together.
- If Mother Nature gives you a little rain and it postpones work in the field, take advantage of that time.
- If you are a farmer and your significant other is not a farmer, they have to be ready for anything. Being open is important because when you are a farmer, there’s no such thing as a schedule... or being on time.
- Be ready to miss events like weddings, parties, cookouts and other get togethers. The farm comes first.
- Throw something in the Crock Pot before you head out for your day. Sometimes a hot meal at the table together, no matter how late it is, is a great way to spend some time together.
- Embrace a late night date. Dinner at 6 is not going to happen, so have a snack and meet up after you are both done with the chores.
- Learn to appreciate the passion for the farm as a common interest.
- Be ready for anything! Life as a farmer is never boring and always an adventure. It may mean getting creative when you reconnect with your spouse after a long day on the farm, but it can be fun.
- Sometimes your quality time together will actually be talking about the farm or listening to each other work through stress or problems. It may not be romantic but it’s realistic.
- Know that weeklong vacations or romantic getaways are unlikely. Celebrating holidays or anniversaries may not happen on time. Realistic expectations make everything a little easier to handle.
- Embrace the idea that sometimes catching a sunset in the back of a pickup is pretty darn romantic.
- Wake up early or stay up late to see each other.
- You can’t always plan ahead so a cute outfit may not be an option. Having a date in jeans and boots isn’t the worst thing in the world!

**Bruce McPherson Named Ohio State Provost**

After a national search, Ohio State University President Michael V. Drake has named Bruce A. McPherson executive vice president and provost, effective today, June 1. McPherson was named interim provost in November, and has been vice president for agricultural administration and dean of the university’s College of Food, Agricultural, and Environmental Sciences since August 2012.

As Ohio State’s chief academic officer, he will oversee and help to advance the educational mission of one of the nation’s largest and most comprehensive universities. “Bruce is the special type of leader who inspires those around him to always bring their very best effort,” Drake said. “Under his leadership as provost, we are confident that the university will continue to advance its national influence and impact in faculty research, cutting-edge teaching and learning initiatives, and exemplary community and civic engagement.”
Land Grant Roots
An alumnus and Ohio native, since McPheron returned to Ohio State in 2012, he has placed emphasis on positioning Ohio State to be a leader on issues of significance to communities at home and across the globe. He is a member of the executive team of the university’s Discovery Themes, aimed at solving the world’s most pressing challenges through research and discoveries.

Nationally, McPheron is a fellow of the American Association for the Advancement of Science and has served as chair of the Policy Board of Directors of Agriculture for the Association of Public and Land-grant Universities. As dean of the College of Food, Agricultural, and Environmental Sciences, McPheron launched the Field to Faucet initiative, a statewide effort led by Ohio State faculty and staff to ensure clean drinking water for all Ohioans. He also convened the Vice President’s Conversation on the Future of Extension, the college’s outreach arm serving all 88 counties in Ohio, to successfully address critical issues facing Ohioans by 2035.

Leadership
McPheron has earned multiple national awards for excellence in leadership and is the sole person to hold elected leadership roles on three APLU agricultural boards. “Ohio State is focused on ensuring that our best thinking crosses disciplines to have an impact on the world around us,” McPheron said. An entomologist by training and an active Twitter user under the handle @medflygenes, he is widely recognized for his scientific expertise. His research focusing on the use of genetic tools to examine population structure in pest insects has been adopted by state, federal and international agencies. McPheron has taught a wide range of classes in entomology and has traveled internationally sharing his research. McPheron earned a bachelor’s degree at Ohio State and master’s and doctorate from the University of Illinois. He has almost 20 years of leadership experience in higher education, previously serving as dean of Penn State University’s College of Agricultural Sciences.

Manure Sidedress of Corn Research Plots from 2011-2015
By: Glen Arnold

Dairy and swine manure sidedress plot research has shown livestock manure to be an excellent replacement for purchased sidedress nitrogen. For the study below, 28% UAN nitrogen rates and manure nitrogen rates were 200 units of nitrogen per acre each year. The swine manure application rate was 5,000 gallons per acre to get 200 units of nitrogen. The dairy manure application rate 13,577 gallons per acre to get 130 units of nitrogen per acre. The dairy reps received additional nitrogen as incorporated 28%UAN just prior to the manure being applied to reach the 200# goal. Manure was applied using a manure tanker and Dietrich injection units with covering wheels attached.
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<th>2011 Yield (Bu/ac)</th>
<th>2012 Yield (Bu/ac)</th>
<th>2013 Yield (Bu/ac)</th>
<th>2014 Yield (Bu/ac)</th>
<th>2015 Yield (Bu/ac)</th>
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<tr>
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Pre-emergent manure applications were made within five days of the corn being planted. Post-emergent manure applications were made at the V3 stage of corn growth. The 2011, 2012 and 2014 growing seasons experienced periods of drought. The 2013 growing season was very good with adequate moisture through July. The 2015 growing season was very wet.

Stand populations were approximately 31,000 plants per acre across all treatments. The manure did not appear to reduce the plot stands in any year. All manure was applied with manure tanker and Dietrich tool bar. The incorporated manure applications were approximately 20 bu/acre higher than the 28%UAN treatments over the five-year study. The moisture from the manure was beneficial to the crop in the dry years.

The surface applied manure treatments were similar in yield to the incorporated 28%UAN treatments but this is mainly due to the results of year #1. In subsequent seasons, the surface applied manure treatments were well
below the incorporated 28%UAN treatments.

U.S. Supreme Court Upholds Landowner’s Right to Appeal "Waters of the U.S." Determination

A landowner may immediately appeal an agency’s determination that property contains “waters of the United States” that is subject to the federal Clean Water Act, according to a decision issued today by the United States Supreme Court.

The court’s holding in Army Corps of Engineers v. Hawkes Co. centered on a decision by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (the Corps) that property in Minnesota owned by the Hawkes Company (Hawkes) contained wetlands that were subject to the Clean Water Act. Hawkes planned to mine peat on the property, and would have to comply with Minnesota regulations. The Corps decided that Hawkes must also comply with federal Clean Water Act regulations, based on its “jurisdictional determination” that the property contained waters of the United States because its wetlands had a “significant nexus” to the Red River of the North, located 120 miles away.

Hawkes challenged the Corps’ jurisdictional determination in federal district court. The Corps requested dismissal of the case, arguing that its jurisdictional determination was not a “final agency action” that Hawkes could appeal in court. Rather, the Corps asserted that Hawkes should apply for a Clean Water Act permit and challenge the results of the permit request if dissatisfied or should proceed without a permit and challenge the jurisdictional determination in a likely enforcement action.

The federal district court agreed with the Corps and dismissed the case. Hawkes then appealed to the Eighth Circuit Court of Appeals, which reversed the district court’s decision. The Corps requested review of the appeal by the United States Supreme Court, which accepted the case.

The Supreme Court concluded that the Corps’ jurisdictional determination is appealable according to the federal Administrative Procedures Act, which allows an aggrieved party to appeal a “final” agency action. An action is final if it determines legal consequences, “marks the consummation of the agency’s decision making process,” and when there are no adequate alternatives for relief other than judicial review. All three circumstances existed in the Hawkes case, said the Court, stating that parties should not have to await enforcement proceedings that carry the risk of criminal and civil penalties before challenging a jurisdictional determination or be forced through a lengthy and costly permitting process before being able to challenge the Corps’ jurisdictional determination.

Read the decision in Army Corps of Engineers v. Hawkes Co. here.

Growing African Violets
By the Ashtabula County Master Gardeners

While shopping in an area food store, a beautiful purple bloom with white trim called to me. As I walked closer, I was smitten! The dainty bloom was attached to an African violet, the most popular houseplant to grow because it is so adaptable.

The flower reminded me of my dearest Aunt Sophie and I loved both at first sight. She looked healthy, passing a careful inspection for insects, disease or leaf damage. "Leave sick plants in the store" is a motto to live by. Luckily, she passed inspection and willingly hopped into the cart. The purchase was made; Aunt Sophie was placed in a plastic bag to be kept out the chill and home she came.

Aunt Sophie joined the three “nuns" Sister Agnes, a pink beauty, Sister Theresa, a vivid purple and Sister Frances, pale lavender. Yes, African violets all. They have
brightened the spirits of this new retiree for many months. I knew little of the care that was best for the girls except to “keep them in an east window.” That I didn’t have. Somehow, they survived! I was proud! That seemed enough. A friend “babysat” the girls while I went south. Upon my return, it was obvious that the girls were fat and healthy, green and full of blooms. I had been gone only four weeks. Envy and jealousy set in. What was my friend doing that I was not? It was past time to learn what my African violets required and preferred to prosper and flourish. I wanted more and the girls needed more, so I got online and read.

First, they need good soil. A potting mix or special formulated soil mix for African violets is most important for good growth. Second, they need water and fertilizer. African violets like a “constant feed” which is a weak solution of soluble fertilizer (1/4 the recommended strength) for each watering. There is debate about top watering versus bottom watering and a lot has been written about that issue. What is agreed upon is not to get the leaves wet. Also remember that the plant does not like to have “wet feet,” which means the roots are water logged. Therefore, let the soil dry out between watering. When the soil is too wet, the roots are susceptible to disease. This has been one of my mistakes and I am now doing a “constant feed” system. Before I was afraid of fertilizer and the girls maybe got some three times a year. Clearly, they needed more.

Third, is light. African violets need good light to flower. An east or south window is preferred for lots of blooms. Again good light was one more thing that I was not providing and it showed with my plants having elongated stems and no blooms for months on end. It was so infrequent that I actually cheered when I saw a bloom! I am now improving the light situation. If your light is good and strong, rotate the plant so that the main root does not get off center and the leaves don’t get sun fade.

I just learned that African violets do better in small pots. I have transplanted all of mine and the soil is better, but the transplant shock is acute! One poor girl is now history and one is struggling. It is obvious that I am still at the 101 stage of my African violet knowledge. I truly have been lucky that three have survived. But my planting philosophy has always been, just try things, enjoy the learning process and improve your skills. It is only a plant after all. Still and all, I have upgraded my philosophy to include knowledge of the plant’s requirements at time of acquisition. Why should a plant suffer from my lack of information? I will let you know how things work out with the girls. I hope Sophie makes it.


Ashtabula County 4-H Camp is Filling Up-Get your Reservation in Today!
One of the highlights of our Extension program during the summer months is all of our 4-H activities. These activities are highlighted by our resident 4-H Camping week at the end of June at 4-H Camp Whitewood in Windsor, Ohio. Each year, we sell out camp with nearly 165 youth ages 8-14 attending this week long camp chaperoned by 35 teenager camp counselors.

This year’s camp will be held from Sunday evening June 26 through Saturday morning July 2, 2016 and the cost of camp is $300 per camper. This camping week is the culmination of a lot of hard work of our 4-H Camp Counselors who began their training program in January. This year’s theme is “The Knights of the Whitewood Table.” Our counselors are having a lot of fun developing activities around this medieval theme for the campers. I am so impressed with the maturity of our counselors and their leadership for our campers.

For campers interested in attending, you may want to have your parents act quickly as our latest update indicated there are only 20 spots left for our camp this year. This is no surprise to me as our camp staff and counselors conduct an exceptional camp! Registration can be completed on-line at http://www.4hcampwhitewood.com/. More information about this camp can also be received by calling the Ashtabula County Extension office at 440-576-9008.
Cloverbud Fun Days Scheduled for July 5-7
We do have something for our kids not old enough to attend our week long 4-H camp. Once again this year, two of our great 4-H Advisors will be conducting the “Cloverbud Fun Days” on July 5 to 7, 2016 for kids ages 5-8 years old. This program will be held at the 4-H Expo Building at the Ashtabula County Fairgrounds in Jefferson from 9:00 to 12:00 noon each day.

This fun day is packed with crafts, games, and just plain old fashion fun. This program is limited to the first 40 registrants so it is important that you register early as the program sells out each year. The registration fee for the program is $35 per participant. The $35 fee covers snacks, craft supplies and event insurance. Activities will include nature study, creative arts, songs, stories, games and much, much more! Pre-registration is necessary to insure adequate supplies and supervision for your children. For registration details, contact the OSU Extension Office at 576-9008 for more information.

PLEASE SHARE...this newsletter with farmers or others who are interested in agricultural topics in Ashtabula County. Past issues can be located at: https://go.osu.edu/ag-news. Please tell your friends and neighbors to sign up for the list. CONTACT: marrison.2@osu.edu

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