

Oklahoma Country

SPRING 2007

THE MAGAZINE OF
THE OKLAHOMA FARM BUREAU



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**Even Superman
May Be Jealous**

**Oklahoma's Newest
Miss America**

**Farm Bureau Helps
With 'Makeover'**



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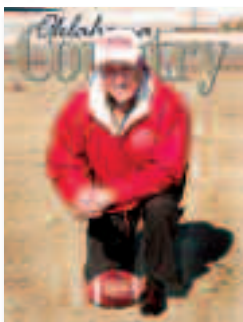
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Cover Image

Buddy Batten wears a cap and jacket members of his team received at a recent reunion, which commemorated the Red Ravens national championship.



Hidden number worth \$50!

One member family's Oklahoma Farm Bureau membership number is hidden somewhere in this issue of OKLAHOMA COUNTRY, and could earn that member family \$50.

To claim the cash prize, the member family must find its own hidden membership number and contact Mike Nichols before the last day of the month Monday through Friday, 8:30 a.m. to

4 p.m. at 405-523-2300.

The OFB membership number hidden somewhere in OKLAHOMA COUNTRY must match the number on the face of your individual OFB membership card for you to claim the cash prize. The membership number that appears on your magazine's mailing label is not the hidden number, but must match the hidden number for you to claim the cash prize.



BY STEVE KOUPLEN
*President,
Oklahoma Farm Bureau*

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Since the beginning of time when God gave man dominion over all the creatures that occupied the earth, we have been domesticating animals in production agriculture for the purposes of providing food and fiber for our own benefit.

Through research, advanced technology and a lot of hard work, over the years we've developed a highly efficient, humane and state of the art system of producing food and fiber not only for ourselves, but for people all around the world. Our system of production is the envy of the world and is emulated in countries all around the world.

Yet today, animal agriculture in our country is under attack. This attack is not bioterrorist in nature. This attack is not a result of any terrorist organization from the Mid East. This attack is from sources from within our own country – individuals and organizations that purpose to correct injustices against the animals we raise and the environment we live in.

We are accused of using inhumane methods of producing our animals; we are accused of polluting our weather and environment. And they will stop at nothing until we are forced out of business.

These sources have millions of dollars to work with as well as the use of political authority and the ballot box through the initiative petition process. Already, two states – Arizona and Florida – have passed initiative petitions to ban the use of swine farrowing crates in their states.

They pressure large retail and wholesale agricultural processors and merchandisers to alter production techniques of those of us producing animals. Smithfield Foods, for example, has announced it would phase out the use of farrowing crates in its facilities.

They even proclaim raising animals for food generates more greenhouse gases than all the cars and trucks in the world combined. In other words, to combat global warming, kick the meat eating habit!

They even seek litigious relief to the point that a huge area of our state could be declared a hazardous waste superfund site.

So how do we address these challenges? With the truth and common sense. We tell our story at every opportunity and educate a consuming public that really doesn't understand our industry and is being misled as to the realities of animal agriculture.

Let's all work together to insure that these challenges don't endanger the future of our producers, and that consumers can be confident with the excellent products we produce.

Why is protecting the environment important to us? Because our grandchildren play in the creek too.



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BY MATT WILSON
*Executive Director
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Oklahomans have a sense of humor that survives any tragedy.

Two things we know when the calendar hits April – the deadline for filing your taxes is just around the corner, and tornado season is in full swing in Oklahoma.

An article in this edition of Oklahoma Country provides you with some practical tips to survive our state's usually stormy springtime weather, and what to do if storms strike your property.

Admittedly, I'm not an Oklahoma native. But after calling the state home for so many years now, I believe I can recognize a native Oklahoman just by listening to them talk about storm season.

Don't get me wrong, I'm totally aware of the serious and sometimes deadly nature of Oklahoma weather. But, I've also noticed that Oklahomans have a sense of humor that survives any tragedy.

With that in mind, here's my list of favorites I've heard that help me know "you grew up in tornado alley" if. . .

- You think people that live in earthquake and/or hurricane prone areas are crazy.
- You know the TV weathermen by their first names, i.e. Gary, Mike.
- You don't get worried unless the sky looks "green."
- You might go indoors when there's a tornado, but you won't seek shelter for anything less than an F3.
- You stand under your carport or open your garage door to watch hail and thunderstorms.

- You've never exactly memorized the tornado precautions, but you've heard them enough that you know them by heart.
- You know what Doppler radar, hook echo, wall cloud, and rain-wrapped all mean.
- Watching the weather is entertaining. And red on the Doppler radar is exciting.
- The phrase "Tornado on the ground, take your immediate tornado precautions" sends exciting shivers up your spine.
- You can feel/smell tornado weather brewing a few hours before the storm actually begins.
- When you hear the tornado sirens go off, you go outside to watch the storm and take pictures.
- You're sure there's a giant tornado magnet hidden somewhere in trailer parks.
- The weather is a completely acceptable subject for conversation, at any time, for any occasion.
- There's a feeling like you've lost something if you make it all the way to June without a tornado warning near you.
- You watch the movie "Twister" so you can point all the inaccuracies.
- There's enough stuff in your cellar that you could live there for three months.
- You laughed at everything in this list. But you also respect a tornado's power, and know that after it's over, clean-up and re-building has to begin.

The hermit crab enjoys a life span of 75 years.
Apparently, every day can be a day at the beach.

Here's to a good life.SM



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BY JOE BENTON
OSU Extension Director
Pottawatomie County

Mulching for water conservation

Many have already put gardens in, planted trees, shrubs and flower beds. One of the biggest issues facing Oklahomans is water. Quality and quantity are important to all of us. We, as gardeners, need to do our part in supplying proper irrigation and conserving water when possible. This doesn't mean we have to stop watering, but we need to do what we can to conserve by using best management practices.

Not only does mulching save water, it's also great for the plant. It's also something that you can do even after you have already planted.

First, I want to discuss some research. Soil temperatures were taken on a July afternoon at 1" and 3" depths. Two plots, one with no mulch, the other with 2-3 inches of an organic mulch. The temperatures at 1" and 3" were 117° and 102° respectively in the unmulched plot. The plot that was mulched with temperatures taken at the same time at the 1" and 3" soil depth were 88° and 86° respectively. Think about what the difference of these temperatures could mean to moisture evaporation and general health of the root system between the unmulched plot and the mulched plot.

Mulching is one of the best things you can do for the health of trees, shrubs, vegetables and flowers if done properly.

Proper mulching is especially important for plants under stress, or newly planted ones without extensive root systems. To correctly apply organic mulches, such as the common shredded pine bark, to trees, start six inches from the base working out to the desired diameter. Depth should start at one inch at the inner circle, increasing to no more than four inches (two inches for clay soils) at the outer edge of the circle. Final depth may be reduced if landscape fabric is placed under the mulch. Depth of layer is influenced by mulch texture.

Annual additions to mulch only should be made to maintain proper depth. Removal

defeats one of the purposes of mulch, which is to decay and mix with the soil. Fluffing the old mulch, before adding more, will prevent it from forming a hard surface that deflects water, rather than retaining it.

Avoid excessive mulch material piled up against the base of a tree or shrub, forming a mulch "volcano," keeps moisture in direct contact with the bark. The moisture penetrates the bark and suffocates the cells of the phloem, which is the layer of living tissue that transfers food up and down the plant. When this supply of food from the leaves is limited, the roots die back. This leads to less water being taken up, and the tree or shrub goes into general decline, leaf drop, and premature death.

Secondary problems, like borers and fungi, move into plants weakened by improper mulching. In sugar maples, the fungal pathogen *Phytophthora* will move in because of the high moisture around the trunk. This may create a canker symptom (sunken discolored and dead area) that girdles the trunk at the base, and hastens the decline of the tree.

If trees or shrubs have been mulched too heavily, remove excess mulch using a shovel, trowel, or whiskbroom while taking care not to injure the trunk. A hard stream of water may be used to remove excess mulch and soil from the trunk and flared base. Cut off



secondary roots that may have grown into the mulch. The trunk and flare should be visible. New mulch can then be applied properly.

Some of the same mulching principles apply to flowers. Don't cover perennials, or you may smother them. This is especially true for shallow-rooted species such as yarrows and many bellflowers. This is one reason to not mulch perennial beds too early in the spring before shoots emerge. Just as thick mulch will prevent weeds, it will prevent these plants from growing too! Mulching over peonies more than an inch or two may keep them from blooming.

Weed fabrics and black plastic are not useful for perennials, except perhaps in the first year. As perennials grow, they spread or get larger, and such fabrics can kill them. Such materials are useful for annual flowers which will only be in one place for a year.

Many lay black plastic, make holes to plant the flowers, then lightly mulch over the top with bark or other material mainly for aesthetics.

I am often asked what mulching materials are best and there are many options. Remember that suitable organic mulch materials should not contain undesirable quantities of viable seed and harmful disease organisms. After that, I would use what is suitable for the job. Under trees and shrubs, the bark chips and larger physical sized mulches might work best as you won't have much of a need to disturb the area. However, in flower and vegetable gardens, smaller more easily moved mulches might be a better option. To name a few, sawdust, cottonseed hulls, bark or wood shavings, straw and compost are often used, however there are many others that work well. Fact Sheet # 6005 is available at all OSU Extension Offices concerning mulches.

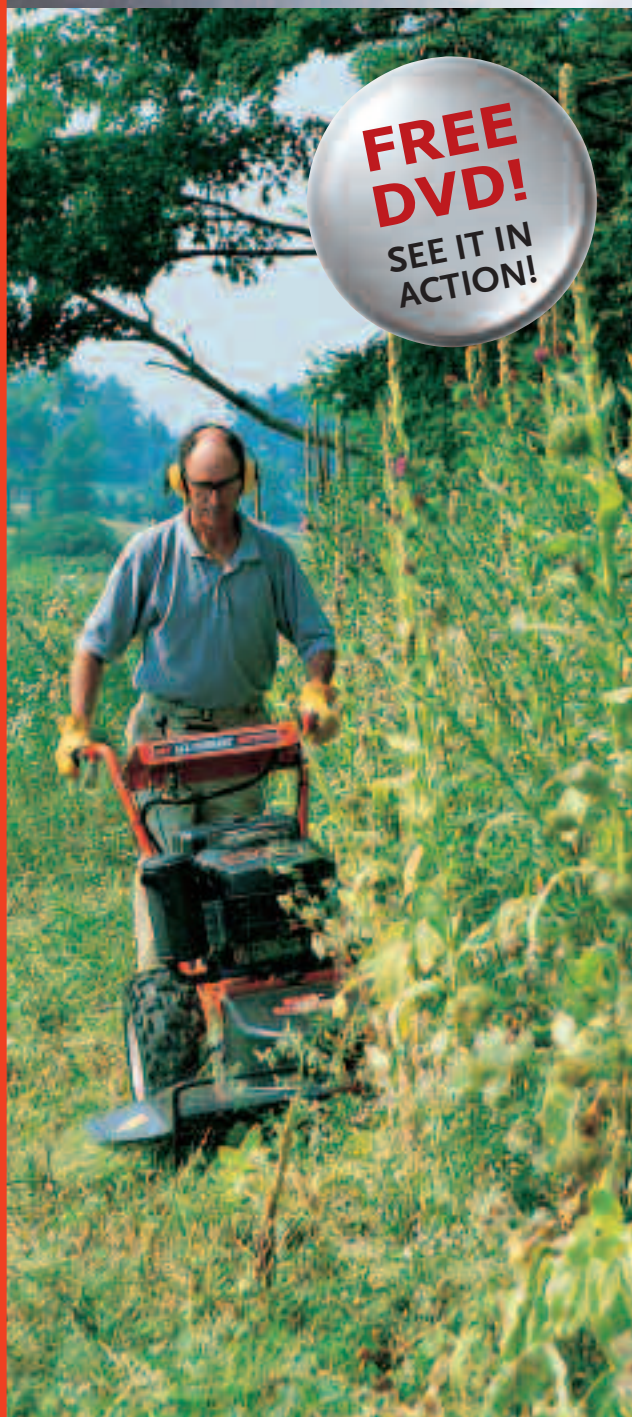
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