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GCIA News Briefs

FALL 2024

INSIDE

- 2024 Upcoming Ag Events 2
- 2024 UGA Turfgrass Field Day Update 3
- GCIA welcomes Alex Gilreath 3
- Pesticide Clean Day Event 4
- ITGAP visits Australia for third party quality inspections 5
- CAES experts study oil production to boost Georgia's peanut power 6
- 2024 GCIA Peanut Inspector Training Brief 7
- Officers, Directors & Staff 8

From the director's desk

By: Billy Skaggs

Having now served as GCIA's Executive Director for going on ten months now, I know one thing for sure – the only thing that is constant is change! Over the course of 2024, we have been through a number of changes here at Georgia Crop, and frankly, I'm hoping things will begin to settle out.

For our staff, I'm sure a new director was change enough... but the fact that we have all worked together for so many years hopefully made this change a little easier to accept. I am blessed to be in this role and certainly could not do it without the hard work of our team. So, to all our employees, I say thank you!

Speaking of employees, we have seen the make up of our team change throughout 2024. Back in the summer, Mary Jo Kennedy, certification specialist, left the organic department for a new opportunity at UGA. While Mary Jo had only been with us for a couple of years, she was a valuable member of our team. We wish her good luck in her new role.

In July, Alex Gilreath came on board in the role of Certification Program Associate. Alex is excited to learn about certified seed and turfgrass and is doing a great job so far. You can read more about Alex later in this newsletter.

At the end of August, our longtime operations manager and bookkeeper, Marie Sidwell, retired. Marie had been a staple at GCIA for well over 30 years and was always a big help to our former director, Terry Hollifield. We thank Marie for her many years of service and wish her well in her retirement.

Marie's retirement meant we had some big shoes to fill, and I am happy to say we have done exactly that. Julia Crew is our new accounting specialist and already off to a fast start. Julia has an extensive background in accounting, payroll and human resources. With the budget development process right around the corner, it's good to know we have the support we need.

The latest addition to the GCIA team joined us on October 14th (one day prior to the writing of this article). Daniel Tinsley has been working with us as a contract organic inspector and reviewer for several years now, and we very pleased to bring him on in a fulltime capacity.

So, as you can see, change has been constant for us at Georgia Crop this year. And while challenging, I'm optimistic for our future!

I invite you, our members & friends, to reach out to our new folks and say 'welcome aboard!' And to our board of directors, thank you for your support and encouragement as we have navigated through the changes and challenges the year has brought us.



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To check out the latest AOSCA newsletter, click [HERE](#).

2024 Upcoming Ag Events:

- GCIA Turfgrass Authorized Representative Training
– Nov 14 starting at 10am and will be conducted by ZOOM. *Contact Becki Hicks for more info and to register: call 706-542-2351 or email becki.hicks@georgiacrop.com.



- Georgia Agribusiness Council Harvest Celebration
– Nov 17; <https://www.ga-agribusiness.org/Events.aspx>



- Southeastern Regional Fruit & Vegetable Conference – Jan 9-11; <https://seregionalconference.org/>

- 48th Annual Georgia Peanut Farm Show – Jan 16; <https://gapeanuts.com/farm-show/>



2024 UGA Turfgrass Field Day Update

Pictured are Billy Skaggs (Executive Director), & Alex Gilreath (Certification Program Associate) attending the UGA Turfgrass Field Day at the UGA Griffin Campus back in August. They networked with growers around the state and advocated for turfgrass certification so that the consumer can get the best quality product money can buy. In addition, they had the opportunity to inform people that were not as familiar with what we do here at GCIA. Overall, it was a great day to make a connection with everyone sharing ideas and thoughts around the turfgrass sector.



GCIA welcomes Alex Gilreath



In July, Alex Gilreath came aboard on the GCIA team as the Certification Program Associate. Alex was born and raised in Winder, GA where he was a graduate of Winder-Barrow high school in 2015. He grew up farming cattle and assisting his family in forage production and still does today. He then travelled to Tifton, GA and received a B.S. degree in Diversified Agriculture from Abraham Baldwin Agricultural College in 2019. After graduation, Alex started working with foundation seed & turfgrass at Georgia Seed Development and was there five years before coming to GCIA. He has a positive attitude and is eager to continue making an impact on the agriculture industry for years to come. Alex and his wife Faith reside in Colbert, GA with their English Cocker Spaniel, "Cash". In his spare time, Alex is an avid outdoorsman who loves hunting and fishing. Alex and his wife also enjoy pulling for the Georgia Bulldogs on Gameday!



Pesticide Clean Day Event

Date & Time November 6, 2024 9:00am – 3:00pm	Location UGA Griffin Campus (Spalding Co.) 100 University Drive (Parking Lot) Griffin, Ga. 30223
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Georgia Dept. of Agriculture Clean Day is a program that gives everyone an opportunity to discard old, unusable, or cancelled pesticides to a hazardous waste contractor for disposal. Pesticides in leaking containers or disposed of improperly may cause environmental damage by contaminating water supplies or harming people and wildlife. Some pesticides that have been used in the past are now in need of proper disposal. Participation in the Clean Day Program remains free of charge to all private and commercial applicators with the understanding that the event is designed / intended for farmers, lawn care, golf courses, and pest control companies. The Georgia Department of Agriculture will be requiring pre-registration for the event. For more information about the event please contact your local extension agent, visit our website: <https://agr.georgia.gov/pesticide-waste-disposal-container-recycling> or contact Rick Hayes Coordinator for the event at ricky.hayes@agr.georgia.gov (Office: 404-656-4958) (Cell: 404-535-1614)

This is an excellent opportunity to dispose of pesticides that you have been holding because you had neither an economical nor legal means to dispose of them. Canceled and suspended pesticides cannot be used and must be disposed of often as hazardous waste. Some reasons to participate in this program are:

1. No disposal fees for those who participate in the program.
2. The disposal contractor secures all permits and approvals.
3. Disposal contractor takes possession of the waste and thereby becomes the generator.
4. All materials eligible for destructive incineration will be destroyed.
5. Minimization of ongoing liabilities from continued storage of these wastes on your property.



ACCEPTABLE MATERIALS

- Insecticides
- Growth Regulators
- Fungicides
- Harvest Aid Chemicals
- Nematicides
- Bactericides
- Herbicides
- Miscellaneous pesticides

EXCLUDED MATERIALS

- Compressed Gases
- Solvents
- Paints
- Antifreeze
- Motor Oil
- Explosive Materials
- Fertilizers or Nutrients that are neither hazardous nor do not contain pesticide

All canceled, suspended, unusable and unlabeled materials classified as pesticides may be turned in for collection. Please refer to the brief list below to determine what types of materials will or will not be accepted at the event. Please list all pesticides to be turned in on the pre-registration form to estimate types and volumes to be collected. Any pesticides without a brand name, trade name, or active ingredient on the label may require analysis to determine the contents. Please label all unidentifiable pesticides as "unknown" on the pre-registration form.

- PRE-REGISTRATION IS MANDATORY FOR PROGRAM PARTICIPATION. Visit our website for pre-registration forms. <https://agr.georgia.gov/pesticide-waste-disposal-container-recycling>
- ALL PESTICIDES BROUGHT TO THE COLLECTION SITE MUST BE LISTED ON THE PRE-REGISTRATION FORM.
- ITEMS NOT REGISTERED WILL BE REFUSED AT THE COLLECTION SITE.
- EMPTY CONTAINERS OR RINSATES WILL NOT BE ACCEPTED.
- NO COMPRESSED GASES CAN BE ACCEPTED. (METHYL BROMIDE, CHLORPICRIN, VIKANE, ETC.).

Ag Dealers special arrangements can be made to accommodate you. Your pesticide waste disposal will be weighed and billed on site.

Please Contact Rick Hayes for special instructions! ricky.hayes@agr.georgia.gov

ITGAP visits Australia for third party quality inspections

By: Mick Sutton of AUSGAP



From the 16th to 20th of September Mr. Billy Skaggs, GCIA Executive Director and ITGAP Program Administrator, visited Australia to inspect and provide training to AusGAP certified farms in New South Wales and Queensland. Mr. Skaggs was initially scheduled to visit in the Spring (Autumn in Australia), however, after being promoted to GCIA Executive Director on January 1, the trip was postponed to allow time for the transition.

While he hadn't been in Australia for two years, Mr. Skaggs was confident the AusGAP growers and the program as a whole were running on all cylinders. He was especially appreciative of the AusGAP staff, Mick Sutton, and Megan Ford.

"I hated to push my trip back from Spring to Fall, but I really didn't have much of a choice. That said, I speak with Mick frequently, and he and Megan do an awesome job of keeping ITGAP informed of what's happening on the farms. Their inspections and quarterly reports are well done and very informative."

During Mr. Skaggs' visit, job one was to ensure genetic purity had been maintained for AusGAP certified paddocks and that producers understood what it takes to remain compliant.

"ITGAP, and by extension AusGAP, expect certified growers to produce the best, highest quality turf possible – meaning it's genetically pure and is free of noxious and objectionable weeds. This can only be accomplished when the growers and AusGAP work together collaboratively. ITGAP and AusGAP work hard to provide the farmers with the proper tools and resources to make good management decisions. From what was seen, the growers are putting in the necessary time and effort to scout their fields for potential problems."

Mr. Skaggs also took the time to deliver varietal morphology and inspection training to new and existing AusGAP clients, while emphasizing how ITGAP is the only internationally accepted and recognised verification program for turfgrass production. Around the world, golf and sports turf facility owners, architects and designers see ITGAP as a respected source for quality assurance.

"Working hand in hand, AusGAP has extended ITGAP's circle of influence by reaching new growers and, ultimately, new turfgrass consumers. In addition, the introduction of TifTuf Hybrid Bermuda grass and Sir Grange Zoysia grass has added value for growers. We're equally excited about the newest releases, Zoysia Australis and research and development plantings of new buffalo varieties."

When asked what he most enjoyed during his visit to Australia, Mr. Skaggs fired off a number of highlights including the growers' attention to detail and the quality of the turfgrass.

"I have encountered good folks all over the country. Everyone is very welcoming and hospitable. Of course, the AusGAP growers are great. They often have questions about how growers in the US are tackling certain challenges. While answering their questions is fun, I'm sure I'm learning just as much from them."

"I continue to be impressed with the quality of the turfgrass in Australia and this time was no different. The growers have TifTuf figured out for sure; it definitely stacks up against what our farms are producing in the US."

Mr. Skaggs was also keen to learn more about Zoysia Australis as it is an exclusive release only available in Australia.

"It was great to see Zoysia Australis in production. I was able to look at some of the early plantings last time I was in the country. It's exclusive release to Lawn Solutions Australia (LSA) members; US growers do not currently have it in production. So far, this variety is looking outstanding. I think it could be a nice alternative to buffalo in some situations. Frankly, I wish we had it in the states."

Mr. Skaggs expressed his appreciation to everyone who made his visit possible.

"A big thank you to Mick Sutton for making all the arrangements and for spending a few days with me visiting farms. Also, thanks to Joe Rogers from LSA for inviting me to be on the Turf Talk Podcast and to Simon Adermann (LSA) for spending a few days out in the field with me as well. I am very grateful for the opportunity!"

Following his trip, Mr. Skaggs will be providing a full report on his findings to AusGAP, Lawn Solutions Australia and the University of Georgia Research Foundation.



CAES experts study oil production to boost Georgia's peanut power

By: Maria M. Lameiras



A new study by experts in the University of Georgia's College of Agricultural and Environmental Sciences is seeking to increase the value of Georgia's peanut crops for new markets while reducing losses caused by aflatoxin, a consistent threat to the No. 1 peanut-producing state in the United States.

The four-year, \$490,000 grant will take a systems-based approach toward developing high-oil peanut varieties bred to withstand the unique climate and pest pressures of the Southeast. Funded by the U.S. Department of Agriculture National Institute of Food and Agriculture, researchers will determine at what point in the growing cycle peanuts are at their highest oil content to identify the best harvest time, develop management practices to help increase oil production, and examine the profitability of oil production under variables including drought, disease and market demand.

Assistant Research Scientist Nino Brown, a team of colleagues in the Department of Crop and Soil Sciences including Cristiane Pilon, Scott Monfort and Scott Tubbs, and senior public service associate Amanda Smith in the Department of Agricultural and Applied Economics will collaborate on research designed to give peanut producers expanded production options beyond the edible peanut market.

Combating the threat of aflatoxin

The study's goal is to assess the potential for Southeastern peanut growers to participate in the global peanut oil market, including the harvest of aflatoxin-contaminated edible peanut crops and the intentional planting and management of high-oil varieties bred to perform in the Southeast.

The domestic peanut oil market is currently small. Most peanut oil used in the U.S. is imported from countries including China, Africa, South America and India. While most of the peanut production in the U.S. is slated for the edible market — think peanut butter, roasted snacks and confectionary use — a percentage of U.S. peanut production goes toward oil production if a harvested load or field exceeds the aflatoxin threshold for the edible market.

In 2019, aflatoxin — a poisonous substance produced by the fungi *Aspergillus flavus* and *Aspergillus parasiticus* — was responsible for an industry-wide yield loss of 24% in Georgia. In 2021, Georgia farmers produced approximately 52% of the peanuts produced in the country, harvesting more than 3.3 billion pounds of peanuts.

"Our peanuts are primarily for the edible market, which is of higher value, but if a trailer or semi-load of peanuts comes in from the field and aflatoxins are above a certain level, they are sent for oil crushing," said Brown,

adding that aflatoxin is removed during the oil extraction process.

Expanding oil markets

While peanut oil is currently considered a backup market for peanut producers in the U.S., there is a large global market for the product.

"Most peanuts grown internationally are grown for oil, about 60% percent," Brown said. "Domestically, we pay a premium for peanut cooking oil, which garners one of the highest per gallon prices for vegetable oils, yet we are importing it. It doesn't make sense. There is a really big market for peanut oil that U.S. producers are currently not taking advantage of. The market for edible peanuts seems like it has reached a limit — it might be as high as consumption is going to go."

Breeders can easily develop high-oleic varieties, which have a longer shelf life and are better for cooking. However, lower oleic acid varieties seem to be better for producing biofuels, Brown added.

"Peanut oil makes a very good biofuel. With the airline and auto industries trying to decrease fossil fuel consumption, peanut oil would be a great way to offset that. We can likely produce 200 to 300 gallons of oil per acre," he said.

Because edible peanut demand and prices appear to have leveled off, evaluating the potential use of peanuts for oil production is one way to ensure the sustainability of the peanut industry in Georgia. They will do that by maximizing oil production, finding better production strategies for dryland peanuts, and focusing on breeding to increase the oil percentage in new peanut varieties.

Brown explained that although growers can produce a lot of oil using current edible varieties, they need varieties specific to oil production to capitalize on the oil market. "That way we can play both sides of the game, and edible peanuts that are discarded due to aflatoxin can still be used for oil, but we will also have varieties specifically for oil production," he added. These varieties could be planted on land that has a history of high levels of aflatoxin or limited ability for irrigation.



CAES experts study oil production to boost Georgia's peanut power Continued.

Boosting peanut value

The impetus for this project has largely been grower-driven.

"The Georgia Peanut Commission and the National Peanut Board have been asking us to start working on this to give our growers more options," Brown added. "If we know a variety or a field is not going to be used for edible production, we can change some inputs and management practices to gear it more toward lower input costs. Production costs have gotten out of control and the price of peanuts has not tracked with production costs. Prices are flat. By diverting some of those acres to oil production, it may increase the demand and price for edible peanuts."

As climate risks such as more frequent and severe droughts become more prevalent, developing varieties for oil production that are suited to the region could be a boon for producers.

"In 2019, about 30% of all edible peanuts were rejected due to aflatoxin, a loss of about \$126 million," Brown said. "This research will help us to be prepared for those situations in the future and to protect our growers against drought and aflatoxin to produce more oil per acre and contribute to the biofuel economy. It is a multi-pronged approach to address a multi-faceted problem."

To learn more about CAES research and the communities it benefits, visit caes.uga.edu/research.



Pictured: Nino Brown, assistant research scientist in the CAES crop and soil sciences department, hoists a bag of harvested peanuts while explaining his research to participants of the 2022 Georgia Peanut Tour. **(Photo by Maria Lameiras)**

Source: [CAES newswire](#)

2024 Peanut Inspector Training By: Alex Gilreath

On July 30th, the Georgia Crop Improvement Association held its annual peanut inspection training in Tifton, GA. We met up with Dr. Bill Branch and Dr. Nino Brown as they showed us the different characteristics in peanut varieties that we would be inspecting across the State. Predominately, we would be inspecting Georgia-06G, a variety that was released in 2006 that has a very high resistance to TSWV. There are several new and upcoming varieties that we would be inspecting so they informed us on the diverse growth habits of each variety



and gave us specific details on each one. The new/newer varieties have great yield potential as well as resistance to certain diseases. Dr. Branch also had the varieties planted next to one another so we could see the differentiation of plant growth. We then were able to pull peanut plants out of the ground and examine the peanut shell/vine characteristics. Some peanut varieties have a distinct difference between them on physical shape, size, and density. Peanut varieties typically fall into one of three maturity categories— early, medium and late. We were educated on which varieties are more early maturing and ones that require more time to reach maturity. GCIA also invited our counterparts from across the southeast to attend. These attendees represented several other agencies, including Southern Seed Certification Services, Missouri Crop Improvement and Clemson University. In addition, we were joined by Georgia Seed Development. They were also educated on how we inspect peanuts and we were able to discuss any other business based on this subject matter.





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