Hello, Harford County!

As I was shopping last week in preparation for my family’s Thanksgiving dinner, I couldn’t help but notice the astronomical price of the pecan pies – at one store, more than $30 for a twelve inch pie! Fortunately, my family is more of the apple and pumpkin variety. Nonetheless, I was flabbergasted at the inflated price, which prompted me to do a little research.

Apparently a warning of the high price of pecans was previously published by some of the agriculture newspapers, but if you missed those stories as I did you’ll be interested to find out the reasoning.

Drought in the south severely affected pecan harvests; this year’s yields were down about 43% in Texas and 55% in Louisiana as compared to yields last year. Since between 80 and 95% of the world’s pecans are grown in the southern United States, the drought has hit the world’s supply hard.

To add to the problem of decreased supply, demand from Asia has been increasing steadily over the past few years – increasing almost 900% between 2000 and 2009. The Chinese especially enjoy them around the Chinese New Year, which falls early this year and thus closer to our American winter holidays.

To further complicate the market, the Chinese prefer their pecans like we eat pistachios—roasted in the shell. This is contrary to how most U.S. consumers buy pecans—shelled. Chinese buyers get the nuts directly from farmers, so many pecans never even make it to U.S. processing facilities.

While high prices might mean headaches for pecan lovers at home, the situation has increased profits for American pecan growers. That’s good news for the folks who were hit hard with the drought this year.

If you’re a fan of pecan pie, you might save a little money making your own this year. Although the price of pecans themselves is higher than average, with a little work from your oven and your rolling pin you can make your own pecan pie for less than $15.

Whatever type of pie graces your family’s holiday table, I wish you and your family a season full of joyful memories and look forward to a prosperous year in 2014!

Sincerely,

The Harford County Extension Office will be closed on December 25 in observance of Christmas and on January 1 to celebrate the new year.
University of Maryland Extension will conduct a class called “Managing for Today and Tomorrow” during the winter of 2014 at four sites in Maryland and Delaware, including Harford County. Managing for Today and Tomorrow, an Annie’s Project class, is a program designed to help women become involved in the journey of transitioning the farm legacy. Special focus will be placed on the woman’s role in transition planning, which is the process of creating and implementing an overall strategy to move the farm business from one generation to the next. Topics for the session cover succession planning, estate planning, retirement planning, and business planning. Participants do not need to have completed Annie’s Project to enroll in this class; new students are welcome! The Harford County course will be six Thursday evening sessions and will be held at Harford Community College in Bel Air, MD. Class will run from 6:00 p.m. – 9:00 p.m. Thursday evenings, January 16 through February 27, 2014; no class will be held on February 6. The cost of the entire course, including meals and materials, is $60. Registration will be on a first-come, first-served basis as limited space is available. For more details and to register, visit www.extension.umd.edu/annies-project or www.2014anniesmtt.eventbrite.com. Specific details regarding the Harford County class syllabus will be available later this month.

Producer’s Digital Toolbox Workshop

Producer’s Digital Toolbox is an introduction to the basics of popular social networking sites (Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn), how to list your business on digital databases such as Google Maps, and capitalize on the hardware and digital tools available through the internet. The workshop will be hosted at the Baltimore County Agriculture Center, 1114 Shawan Road in Cockeysville, MD. Registration is required in advance; registration cost is $40 per person and includes lunch and course materials. Please register by December 9 at digitaltoolbox3.eventbrite.com. For more information about this program, please contact Shannon Dill (sdill@umd.edu) or Ginger Myers (gsmyers@umd.edu). This class is open to all interested, and if special assistance is required please contact the coordinators at least two weeks prior.
Harford County Agricultural Marketing Cooperative Grants

The Harford County Agricultural Marketing Cooperative, Inc. is proud to announce the availability of grants for 2014. The Cooperative was created to improve the economic viability of production agriculture in Harford County and, among other endeavors, is a vehicle for the distribution of up to $75,000 provided by Harford County Government. Grants will be open to all farmers in Harford County. Priority will be given to a new product from the existing operations and to new marketing for new or existing products or services. Additional weight will be given to a new enterprise over the expansion of an existing enterprise. Grant funds are generally intended to fund immediate needs of the proposed project and can fund a variety of things including marketing or equipment for a product. A three-year commitment to continue the enterprise is required. The Cooperative’s Board of Directors may monitor the enterprise during the initial three-year period. If you farm in Harford County and are interested in applying, please contact Bill Tharpe, 410-838-6181, x114 to obtain an application. The deadline for receipt of all completed grant applications is January 17, 2014.

USDA Value-Added Producer Grants

The Value-Added Producer Grant program is designed to help agricultural producers create new products, expand marketing opportunities, support further processing of existing products or goods, or to develop specialty and niche products. Grants may be used for working capital and planning activities. The maximum working capital grant is $200,000; the maximum planning grant is $75,000. Eligible applicants include independent producers, farmer and rancher cooperatives, and agricultural producer groups. Funding priority is given to socially disadvantaged and beginning farmers or ranchers, and to small- to medium-size family farms, or farmer/rancher cooperatives. Grant applications are due by February 24, 2014. More information about how to apply is available by contacting the Maryland USDA Rural Development office at 302-857-3580.

UMD Equine Studies at Maryland Horse World Expo

Get ready for the 18th annual Maryland Horse World Expo, the big event for equine enthusiasts in the state! Be sure to stop by the University of Maryland Equine Studies booth in the Cow Palace. We’ll be debuting our 2014 Schedule of Equine Extension Events and will have our equine faculty on hand to answer all your horse-related questions. Prospective students will also be able to meet current students and chat with our equine faculty. Come see us!
A skid steer is one of the most versatile pieces of equipment on a farm or ranch because it is designed to maneuver easily in tight spaces and has a variety of attachments to complete multiple jobs. Injuries from skid steer incidents can be extremely severe and include amputations, crushing injuries, mangled limbs, and death. Operators may recognize specific hazards but often fail to consider secondary factors, such as ice, mud, and slick work areas, that may increase the risk of an incident. The most common types of incidents from skid steer usage include:

- running over bystanders, including children or the operator
- entrapment or crushing, which can happen when the operator or helper is caught between an attachment and the frame of the skid steer
- entrapment of the operator when a load rolls or drops onto him or her while he or she is in the operator station
- rollover, which can occur when the skid steer is operated on a steep slope or uneven terrain
- tipping of the skid steer due to a heavy load or attachment in the front
- falls while improperly mounting or dismounting the skid steer
- injection injuries caused when pressurized hydraulic fluid is injected into a person’s body
- crushing or pinching injuries to hands and fingers as a result of improper hooking and unhooking of an attachment

Center of Gravity. The center of gravity for a skid steer constantly shifts depending on the job and attachment. Typically, the weight of the skid steer is concentrated at the rear of the machine between the wheels. However, weight at the front of the skid steer, as when moving items with a bucket or an attachment, shifts the center of gravity forward and higher.

Precautions. When you are carrying a load, whether in the bucket or an attachment, carry the load low to maintain a lower center of gravity and to increase stability and improve visibility. When traveling uphill, remember to keep the heavy part of the machine and load pointed uphill. If you have an empty bucket, you should back up a hill, but if the bucket is full, drive forward up the hill. Recommended travel for a skid steer is up and down a slope rather than across.

Recommended Safety Features. The “zone of protection” on a skid steer includes the rollover protective structure (ROPS), a falling object protective structure (FOPS), side screens, and an operator restraint. All of these features are meant to reduce the risk of operator injury or death. The ROPS protects the operator in the event of an overturn, and the FOPS provides protection from objects that fall on top of the operator cab. Side screens are designed to protect the operator from being caught between the lift arms and the skid steer frame and to keep protrusions (e.g., limbs) from striking the operator. When the seat belt or seat-bar restraint is used, the operator remains securely in the operator seat. If your skid steer is an older model, contact your local dealer to discuss the possibility of retrofitting your skid steer with these safety features.

Some skid loaders used on farms or ranches may not have reverse signal alarms and beacon lights. However, these safety features can be installed aftermarket. These features provide notice of your skid steer movement to other workers in the area, possibly preventing a run-over or pinning incident.

Interlocks and Attachments. An interlock device is an electrical hydraulic system lock that is tied in to the operator restraint system to mechanically lock the lift arms. Never disable this interlock, and require everyone to use it, because it prevents the engine from starting or the hydraulics from engaging if the operator restraint is not properly fastened or positioned. To avoid the potential risk of a crushing injury, ensure that all operators engage the hydraulic cylinder lift-arm lockout device when the boom is in the upright position for any repairs or maintenance. The lockout
A farmer or rancher may change attachments on the skid steer multiple times per day to complete different tasks. The safest way to secure the attachments to the skid loader is to turn off the skid loader, properly exit the machine, and secure the locking levers. If another person plans to secure the locking lever, you still must shut off the machine to avoid the potential risk of an injury to the helper. All skid steer operators should be trained to properly secure the locking levers. If the locking levers are not properly locked, the attachment can become unfastened while in use or when the arms are raised, posing a risk to the operator and other workers.

**Hydraulic System.** The hydraulic pressure system, which often exceeds 2,000 psi, is an often overlooked hazard. Hydraulic hoses can develop pinhole leaks. Never use your hands to search for a leak because hydraulic oil injected into a person’s skin requires immediate emergency medical treatment. Amputation of a hand or an arm may result from lack of medical attention. The recommended method is to use a piece of cardboard or mirror to pass over the suspected leak. Fix all leaks immediately, but remember that hydraulic hoses and fittings can be hot enough to cause burns. Sense for excessive heat by placing your gloved hand near the component. When connecting hydraulic hoses, they should be routed to avoid pinching of the hose between the lift arms and the bucket or attachment. Always shut down the skid steer and relieve the system pressure before connecting or disconnecting hoses.

**Personal Protective Equipment.** The use of personal protective equipment (PPE) is a necessary part of your safety plan for your farm or ranch. Anyone operating a skid steer should wear a bump cap or hard hat, steel-toed shoes, long pants, and gloves. Depending on the job and the machine, hearing and eye protection may also be necessary. Eye protection should be worn when checking hydraulic hoses and connections or any other components that generate the potential for flying particles or sprayed or splashed liquids.

Remember these tips, and stay safe!

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**UM-PMT Withdrawn: How will this affect 2014 plans?**

*By Patricia Hoopes, Nutrient Management Advisor, UME-Harford County*

MDA withdrew the UM-PMT (University of Maryland- Phosphorus Management Tool) from regulatory consideration! How does this affect nutrient management plans for 2014? Phosphorus Site Index (PSI) studies will be done on fields with excessive phosphorus (over 150 FIV -P) to generate recommendations. In addition, the University of Maryland – Phosphorus Management Tool (UM-PMT) will be applied and a table generated to compare recommendations. (For an example, see below.) The PSI recommendations, not the UM-PMT recommendations, will be used in 2014. The table will serve strictly as a means of comparison allowing clients to clearly see the consequences of the new tool.

In the future, it is expected that the UM-PMT will be the regulatory P risk assessment tool used. Currently, MDA is suggesting a “phased-in-implementation” of the UM-PMT; the University is waiting for further developments and news from MDA. Remember that the UM-PMT requires additional results from the soil lab test. The new list of soil labs details the needed information. Please call Tricia Hoopes or stop by for a copy of the updated soil labs list.

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<th>Farm and Field ID</th>
<th>PSI Category</th>
<th>Recommended Manure Application (tons or gallons/acre)</th>
<th>Recommended Commercial Fertilizer (pounds P₂O₅/acre)</th>
<th>Recommended Manure Application (tons or gallons/acre)</th>
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All individuals involved in keeping or caring for all types of poultry are required to register their flocks and premises with the Maryland Department of Agriculture. This program helps protect the Maryland domestic poultry industries from the spread of diseases such as avian influenza. The registration requirement applies to people who keep any number of birds, including small households, all forms of live poultry production, production facilities/farms, suppliers, dealers, haulers, wholesalers, live bird markets, and participants in Maryland fairs and shows. By definition, poultry includes chickens, turkeys, ratites, waterfowl, game birds, and domestic/captive pigeons. Registration is not required if five or less birds are housed for less than 120 days in a 12 month period. You are already registered if you are a contract poultry grower, if you have a layer flock enrolled in the MDA Egg Law program, or if your flock is MDA certified. Exotic bird registration is voluntary; however, if your birds are associated with high-risk activities, registration is recommended. High-risk activities include showing, trading, breeding, multiple bird households, and activities which involve comingling of poultry with other birds. If you have questions on the poultry registration program, call 410-841-5810 or check the MDA website at mda.maryland.gov/AnimalHealth/Pages/animal_health.aspx.

Porcine Epidemic Diarrhea Virus Confirmed in Maryland

The Maryland Department of Agriculture (MDA) has confirmed a case of Porcine Epidemic Diarrhea (PED) in southern Maryland and is alerting swine producers across the state to take proper precautions to protect their herds. PED only infects pigs, poses no known public health threat and is not a food safety concern. Mortality rate, however, can be as high as 100 percent in suckling and early weaned pigs. PED was first diagnosed in Great Britain in 1971, and Europe has had periodic outbreaks ever since, but the disease was not confirmed in the United State until this past May. It was confirmed in Maryland on November 7. Primary clinical signs of the disease are: severe diarrhea in pigs of all ages, vomiting and high morbidity and mortality. It is generally spread among pigs and by infected feces transported into pig areas by trucks, boots, clothing, and the like. Once infected, the incubation period is very short (12-24 hours) and the virus is shed for 7-10 days. Producers who raise swine are encouraged to follow strict biosecurity methods and undertake disinfection procedures, which include the following: limiting traffic (people and equipment) onto the farm; thoroughly cleaning and disinfecting anything coming onto the farm; enforcing downtime requirements and maintaining a log of visitors; taking care when disposing of dead stock particularly if using a communal disposal method; isolating newly arriving animals and continuing vet to vet discussions about animal health at the herd of origin; and showering into the facility where practical and changing into clean boots and coveralls (veterinarians should also be careful not to track the virus between herds on their person, equipment or vehicles). PED is NOT a “reportable” disease, which are diseases of great public health concern that must be reported to MDA. However, producers who suspect their pigs are sick should contact their veterinarian immediately.
A fee-based, performance-testing program for corn hybrids is offered to seed corn companies by University of Maryland Extension and Agricultural Experiment Station at the University of Maryland. The results from these replicated trials provide agronomic performance information about the corn hybrids tested at five Maryland locations considered representative of the state’s geography and weather conditions. The full results report is available online at the mdcrops.umd.edu homepage.

**Online Veterinary Hospital Locator**

*Source: Maryland Department of Agriculture*

The State Board of Veterinary Medical Examiners has launched an online mapping application that helps pet owners find nearby licensed animal hospitals in just a few clicks. The Veterinary Hospital Locator provides consumers with information about veterinary hospitals, including who owns them, their hours of operation, and whether they provide emergency care. Access the Locator from the State Board’s web Page at mda.maryland.gov/vetboard/Pages/homepage.aspx. “A pet owner can spend a lot of time trying to find the closest animal hospital that offers the services and the hours they want. This new tool will help them conduct that search much more quickly and accurately,” said Board Chairman Dr. Chris Runde, a veterinarian in St. Mary’s County. “The map also helps veterinarians find other animal hospitals near them that they can refer clients to when they are closed or when a client needs a service their regular veterinarian does not provide.” The online map will be updated at least every six months.

**MidAtlantic Farm Credit Scholarship**

MidAtlantic Farm Credit will award four $2,000 scholarships, four $1,500 scholarships, and four $1,000 scholarships to students who plan to attend or continue to attend a two- or four-year college or technical school on a full-time basis. Applicants must be high school seniors or currently enrolled in a two- or four-year institution. They or their parent(s) or guardian(s) must be members of MidAtlantic Farm Credit. Selection will be based on the applicant’s record of scholastic achievement and extracurricular activities without regard to race, sex, religion, or financial need. Application form must be accompanied by applicant’s high school transcript showing all grades, SAT scores, GPA, and class rank. If the applicant is currently enrolled in college, he/she should include a current copy of his/her official college transcript. Two letters of recommendation from people other than family members are also required; recommendations may be written by guidance counselors, high school teachers, or community leaders. All scholarship applications and supporting materials must be received on or before January 17, 2014. Selection will be made by February 21. For complete details and a copy of the application, visit www.mafc.com/scholarships.php.
Don’t Miss the Opportunity in Your Woodlands

From “Branching Out,” University of Maryland Extension’s Woodland Stewardship Newsletter

After attending the funeral of a distant relative, you’re surprised to learn that he left his large shaggy mutt in your care. He knows how to sit, but not much else. You set up a dog run behind the house and make sure he’s comfortable, but you don’t have time to train him.

Over the years, he becomes more detached and aloof. You sometimes wonder if he might have been able to help out with your cattle if you had put some time into his training. Much later, when he’s old and grey, a family member mails you a certificate they found in a stack of old papers. It turns out that he’s not a mutt after all, but a purebred Vuilbaard. This rare breed was developed to herd and guard cattle. As the missed opportunity sinks in, you realize that with a little work you could have turned a burden into an asset.

Woodland ownership often follows a similar pattern, except that many owners never realize their missed opportunity. Many woodland owners did not seek out the wooded land they own, but merely accepted it as part of a package along with the house they wanted or because it was tucked into the non-tillable low spots on the family farm. Because it’s viewed as a freebie or even a nuisance, its value and potential are never realized. A little planning can help you turn your woods from a burden into an asset.

Woodland can be a source of extra income. Selling timber is the obvious option, especially on parcels of 10 acres or more. Finding a buyer for smaller parcels is more difficult, but there is a growing number of loggers who operate on this scale. Always contract the services of a licensed forester to serve as your representative when selling timber.

Other income opportunities include the sales of firewood, shiitake mushrooms, and crafts from natural materials like grapevine wreaths. There is a second group of projects that will usually cost you some time and money but can bring a lot of enjoyment in return.

Wildlife is one of the biggest reasons that people enjoy woodland ownership. Whether your goal is hunting or watching, there are many things you can do to attract a higher diversity and number of critters. Possible projects include brush piles, managing for food or nest trees, creating a water source, or creating new natural areas.

There are other goals you can manage for as well, like increased water and air quality and reduced soil erosion. If you have at least five acres of woods, there’s probably a cost assistance program out there that will pay for a large percentage of any project in this group. Staff in your county Forest Service and USDA Service Center offices can also provide free technical advice.

The first step in any project is to write a plan. Even if you’re not about to jump into hands-on management, you should still have at least a written outline of your goals and the steps you will take to reach them.

For small scale do-it-yourself projects, you can write a simple plan yourself. A plan written by a licensed forester is preferred to larger projects and is required to participate in almost all cost assistance programs. It’s also the first step in qualifying for tax abatement programs and for Tree Farm certification.

Talking to your county forester and the folks at your USDA Service Center is the best way to figure out which program is the best fit for you and your property. Between the Natural Resources Conservation Service, the Farm Service Agency, and your state Forest Service, there’s probably a program available to help you pay for any project.
that enhances the quality of water, soil, or wildlife habitat, and even the cost of writing a plan. There are also a few that pay you for setting certain types of land aside.

Most programs also allow you to include your own labor in the expenses that you’re reimbursed for. In some cases this could mean that you would break even or come out with a few extra dollars in your pocket.

**Marking Property Access with Blue Paint**

*From “Branching Out,” UME’s Woodland Stewardship Newsletter*

Landowners in Maryland have an alternative way of marking their property to aid hunters, recreationalists, and others. Painting vertical blue strips on trees serves the same purpose as a series of posted signs. They indicate that the property is off-limits to people without permission. The University of Maryland Extension Bulletin EB357, *Landowner Liability and Recreational Access*, provides suggestions for using blue paint for property marking and is available online at extension.umd.edu/woodland. The blue paint strips must be at least two inches wide and eight inches long and positioned from three to six feet above the ground. They should be used along entrances, public roads, waterways, and adjoining lands. While there is no set distance that the marks should be placed, they should be close enough that one can see the next stripe. Consider using blue paint instead of using posted signs. Posted signed are subject to weather and vandalism. Paint marks last longer and do not mar your trees.

**Mark Your Calendars for Winter 2014 Programs!**

- **Central MD Vegetable Growers Meeting**—January 24, 2014 at Friendly Farms Restaurant
- **Harford County Midwinter Meeting**—February 4, 2014 at Deer Creek Overlook
- **Maryland Dairy Convention**—February 22, 2014 at Holiday Inn in Frederick, MD
- **Cowside Forum on Preventing Dairy Lameness**—March 6, 2014 at Level Fire Hall
- **Harford County Poultry Mini-Expo**—March 8, 2014 at North Harford High School

*More details will be released as these programs get closer.*

Mark your calendar now and plan to attend!

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