

Plateau AgResearch and Education Center

Discovery

The Plateau AgResearch and Education Center serves as one of 10 outdoor teaching and research laboratories for the University of Tennessee Institute of Agriculture. At the center, faculty and students are learning first-hand about the fundamentals of nature and about our interaction with our world through agriculture. They are testing their ideas about improving the quality of life through enhanced and sustainable agricultural production and wise use of natural resources.

Specifically, the facility helps researchers discover and prove scientific fundamentals that will improve livestock production; enhance fruit, vegetable and nursery crops; and improve the profitability of a producers land.

Innovation

Research performed at the center has helped Plateau landowners turn their holdings from infertile, unprofitable properties to desirable pastures, lush fields and fruit-laden orchards. Soil fertility research in the 1940s and '50s, combined with efforts to mechanize labor-intensive farm work, provided a needed boost to the local ag economy. Today, from greenhouse-grown and vine-ripe tomatoes to no-spray roses and nutritious beef, the Cumberland Plateau is now home to a plethora of profitable agricultural enterprises.

Current projects include understanding the interaction between humans, animals and agriculture and conserving the rural environmental resources of soil, water, clean air and wildlife.

Application

Years ago, the center's research into the mechanization of snap bean harvesting propelled Plateau producers onto the map. Today the facility is known for its beef cattle research and for its contributions to cultivar variety trials for numerous vegetable, fruit and nursery crops. For example, no-spray disease-resistant roses, which are popular with nursery professionals and landowners, were evaluated in the center's fields.

Educational programs such as field days, on-site workshops and continuing education courses for agricultural professionals, veterinarians and students are but a few of the ways the Plateau AgResearch and Education Center supports those who benefit the most from the UT's land-grant mission.



Plateau AgResearch and Education Center



Our Facilities

Located on Tennessee's scenic Cumberland Plateau, about halfway between Nashville and Knoxville, the center assists Tennessee producers operating in the region's unique soils and climate. The center was founded in 1943 with 588 acres, but with more land purchases and donations, the facility grew to its present-day size of 2,100 acres. The facility's research is devoted to the production of livestock as well as fruit, vegetable and nursery crops.

Beef Cattle: The center maintains one of the largest cattle herds in the UT AgResearch system. Current research is examining:

- Forage variety testing and production including native grasses.
- Lowering animal stress.

Fruits and Vegetables: Remember the jingle for an old-fashioned soup? The center researches most of the vegetables that go into the recipe: potatoes, squash, cabbage, greens and green beans, to name a few. Fruit crops studies include pumpkins, strawberries, melons, apples, peaches and blueberries. Current projects include greenhouse production of tomatoes.

Other Activities: Field trials have helped select new and better varieties of nursery crops, including roses (for example KnockOut and other no-spray varieties) and hydrangeas. Other ornamentals include ornamental grasses, azaleas, crapemyrtles, red-buds and dogwoods. Also, the center serves students of the UT College of Veterinary Medicine and the UT College of Agricultural Sciences and Natural Resources by providing a hands-on learning environment.

The work performed at the Plateau AgResearch and Education Center and other UT AgResearch centers helps drive Tennessee's approximately \$75 billion agricultural-based economy, including food and beverage manufacturers and retailers and textile and forest products industries. They account for 16 percent of Tennessee's economic activity.

Our Local Impact

The Plateau AgResearch and Education Center annually hosts more than 10 events including Extension educational activities and industry gatherings. The region-

ally known Steak and Potatoes Field Day attracts hundreds of commercial beef, fruit and vegetable producers on the first Tuesday of August. The Fall Gardeners Festival, co-hosted by the Master Gardeners and UT Extension, draws hundreds on the last Tuesday of August. It highlights practices for home gardeners.

The center is also home to the Discovery Gardens, a Tennessee Master Gardener project designed to educate community members about the unique gardening conditions of the Cumberland Plateau. These gardens are open to the public.

Information from Plateau AgResearch and Education Center studies is particularly applicable to small, part-time, family farm operations.

Visit the AgResearch website at <http://agresearch.tennessee.edu>

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University of Tennessee Institute of Agriculture, U.S. Department of Agriculture and county governments cooperating.
UT Extension provides equal opportunities in programs and employment.