

Drainage Workshop Offers Field-Tested Approach To Improve Water Management

COLUMBIA, MO.

For farmers looking to boost yields, manage drainage and improve water quality, subsurface drainage systems might be a wise investment.

A hands-on drainage workshop will be offered Feb. 26-28 at the University of Missouri Bradford Research Center near Columbia and will cover the latest design and installation techniques involved with integrated water management systems.

Properly installed sub-irrigation and/or drainage systems can boost yields by 20 to 40 percent, according to Kelly Nelson, MU research agronomist at Greenley Memorial Research Center. Nelson has researched sub-irrigation and drainage systems at the center in north-eastern Missouri since 2001.

In Missouri, there is a rising demand for patterned, subsurface drainage systems. Advancements in materials, the design process and installation equipment have fueled a new approach to an old agricultural management technique.

The University of Missouri, the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Services (NRCS) and the Missouri Land Improvement Contractors Association have partnered to present these new developments for integrated water management design and installation.

Experts will cover all of the details of planning a subsurface drainage system, including engineering standards and specifications, design ta-

bles, sizing of pipes, drainage design, design of mains and laterals, drain tile spacing, and controlled drainage and sub-irrigation design principles.

A local farmer who installed a subsurface drainage system will share his experiences alongside a panel of NRCS representatives, a contractor with experience installing many systems and MU scientists who have researched subsurface drainage and irrigation systems for more than 10 years.

A new system can lead to planting and harvesting earlier, decrease soil compaction and increase fertilizer efficiency, especially in wet years.

“With integrated water-management systems you have built-in slides that work to reduce nitrate loss in the winter and then lower the water level as we move into spring to plant, and once the crop is established it can conserve water,” Nelson said. “When it comes to crop production, environmental stewardship and water conservation, a lot of our farmers are looking at these systems.”

The registration fee for the three-day workshop is \$30 before Feb. 19. There is no on-site registration and capacity is limited to the first 50 people. Spaces fill quickly.

For more information on MU sub-irrigation research, go to www.aes.missouri.edu/greenley/research/muds.stm. To register, call Debbie Dickens at 573-634-3001 or visit www.mlica.org. Δ

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