

Class to help small farmers Aug. 31

by Christopher Barker/Editor
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It may be a sign of the times that so many local residents are interested in making money with small farms.

A “beginners school” for small farmers in Bartow County last February produced “such a good response, we couldn’t accommodate all who wanted to come,” said Mary Carol Sheffield, Paulding County agent, agriculture and natural resources, for the University of Georgia Cooperative Extension service.



She predicts another beginners school for small farmers at White Oak Park in Dallas Aug. 31 will have space for about 80 people, “which is a benefit of doing it at White Oak Park.”

Registration for “Too Much to Mow; What Can I Grow?” is at 8:30 a.m., and the class led by UGA Cooperative Extension specialists and agents, U.S. Department of Agriculture-Natural Resource Conservation Service, Georgia Department of Agriculture and the Paulding County Farm Bureau is from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m.



The registration deadline is Aug. 24. Interested farmers can contact the Extension Office at 770-443-7616 for registration forms or the Rolling Hills Resource Conservation and Development Council at 770-749-0444 (www.rollinghillsrcd.org).



The class hosted by Paulding County University of Georgia Cooperative Extension, in cooperation with Bartow, Cherokee, Floyd and Polk counties and Rolling Hills RCD, will cover marketing and feasibility studies related to farms and agriculture; legal



forms for businesses; Georgia Department of Agriculture licensing, rules and regulations; liability insurance for farmers; and U.S. Department of Agriculture farm bill and conservation incentives, said Sheffield.

The keynote speaker will be from Georgia Organics, “probably discussing organics and sustainable farming and the market for sustainably farmed products and locally grown products,” Sheffield said.

The event is for residents “looking at making a business of farming, whether it’s on 5 acres, or for anyone who already has a 30- to 50-acre farm looking for ways to improve profitability,” she said. “The program is aimed at presenting new or existing farmers with topics that will assist them in their daily management and long-term operations.

“We had a varied audience at the one in Bartow County, and all benefited from it,” Sheffield said. “Rules and regulations change.

“Most people [at the classes] are farming as a second business,” she said. “It’s not their livelihood. In this economic situation, people might own land and want to know what to do to make money. They may have more time because their hours were cut at work, and I think that might have increased interest in it.

“And I think there’s increased interest in locally farmed food,” Sheffield adds. “There’s a new farmers market in Hiram” on Tuesday evenings, “and the Dallas Farmers Market has expanded. Our local markets sell produce raised in a 25-mile radius.”