

## Southwest Michigan Field Crops Updates December 2021

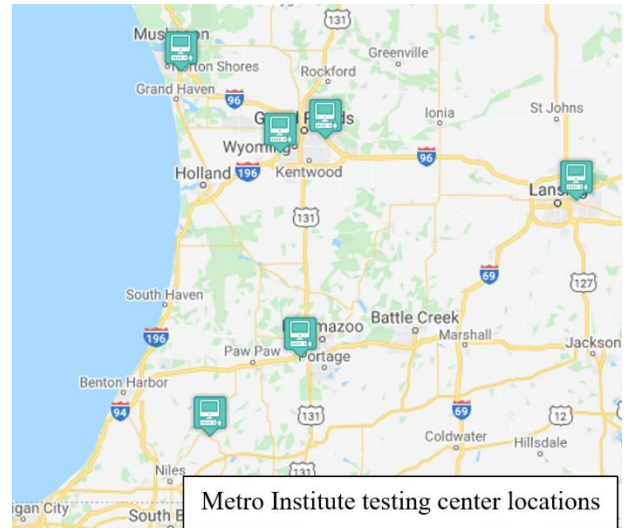
Here are updates from the MSU Extension Field Crops team in Southwest Michigan. If you have any items you would like me to include in future email updates—whether events you want others to know about or topics you would like to have addressed—please send me an email or call the office.

## Pesticide License Renewal Update

These last two years have been a wild ride on many levels, and one of those has impacted many in the ag community—the ability to obtain or renew a pesticide applicators license. Gone are the days it appears when you could come to the local Extension office and take the bubble sheet test on a few days each year. With the “new normal” that COVID has brought, MDARD is no longer able to maintain the workforce or equipment for the old model, so they are making efforts to move everything online.

One of my MSU Extension colleagues [wrote an excellent article](#) earlier this fall summarizing the various options for renewing your pesticide license, but here are a few highlights.

- Computer-based testing is available through [Metro Institute](#), a third-party business working with MDARD, either at one of their testing facilities or now available remotely via your home computer. The closest testing facility options in the SW are Kalamazoo Valley Community College (Kalamazoo) and Southwestern Michigan College (Dowagiac).
- Select in-person training and testing opportunities will be available throughout the state, similar to what was offered pre-COVID but with a few changes: 1) only Core and Standards will be available (not commercial categories); 2) the morning training is only offered by MSU’s campus-based IPM specialist rather than county-based educators; and 3) the training is NOT optional—you must sign up for the training (\$25 to MSU) and the testing (check payable to MDARD).
- Registration for in-person training+testing sessions will be through MSU’s events management system, so you will need to check the [MSU Extension website](#) for planned offerings as we get closer to the new year.
- We have been approved to offer a training+testing session during the Branch County Farmers Day on Presidents Day in February. Registration and more details coming soon.
- Accumulating RUP credits for recertification is still a good way to renew your license, and most of the MSU Extension winter programs will be offering credits. Check the Calendar below for details.



## “Farm Land Value Survey” for 2021

When people contact Extension to find out what rental rates are currently for farmland, I have three sources I use to give them a rough estimate: the USDA-NASS survey data, and both the MSU and Purdue annual surveys they conduct. However, MSU has not completed this survey since 2019 due to a retirement on campus, but efforts are being made to rectify that.

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Michigan State University's Department of Agricultural, Food and Resource Economics has collected land value information since 1991. We need your help to continue this report. Please respond to the questions that are applicable to your location and with which you are comfortable. We ask for estimates of the **market value** and **cash rental rates** for farmland used to grow agricultural field crops and tree fruit.

Responding to this questionnaire will require approximately ten minutes of your time. While your participation in this survey is voluntary, we value your informed opinion and would appreciate receiving your response as soon as possible. Your response will be kept confidential, and you will remain anonymous on the report of the survey findings.

We can all agree that we want both land owners and land renters to have a good idea of the going rate in their region to avoid unnecessary frustration during contract negotiations, so this is your opportunity to make sure everyone has the best estimates to work with. Please [CLICK HERE](#) to access the survey, and again, thank you for taking the time to complete this. Should you have any questions, you may call or email Matthew Gammans at [gammansm@msu.edu](mailto:gammansm@msu.edu) or 616-204-4506.

## Harmful Algal Bloom Knowledge Survey

I received the following request from Hattie Folsom, an Albion College senior in their biology department. Please consider assisting her with this research project.

I am researching harmful algal blooms using a survey which will examine the knowledge and practices within farming communities relating to harmful algal blooms and fertilizer use. This study has been approved by the Institutional Review Board (IRB) at Albion College, which oversees research involving people. There are no risks to participating, and the survey will take less than 10 minutes to complete. The survey is completely anonymous and can be completed online by clicking the link at the bottom of this email. The data collected in this brief survey will provide valuable information that can further the scientific understanding of harmful algal blooms.

I am using a surveying technique called "snowball sampling" in order to increase the number of respondents. This technique uses the help of respondents by requesting you to pass on the survey to other farmers. So, please send the link attached to this email to other farmers, both agricultural and livestock, who might be interested in completing the survey. Thank you for your participation - your responses are very valuable. If you have any questions, feel free to contact me at [htf10@albion.edu](mailto:htf10@albion.edu).

<https://docs.google.com/forms/d/19dm65d9nEFsWlVxRyYrHZLwCDf5Phl7Kbsh1UTE7NGg/edit>

## USDA Designates 12 Michigan Counties as Primary Natural Disaster Areas

The following is excerpted from a recent USDA announcement affecting several counties in southwest and south-central Michigan.

This Secretarial natural disaster designation allows the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) Farm Service Agency (FSA) to extend much-needed emergency credit to producers recovering from natural disasters through [emergency loans](#). Emergency loans can be used to meet various recovery needs including the replacement of essential items such as equipment or livestock, reorganization of a farming operation or the refinance of certain debts. FSA will review the loans based on the extent of losses, security available and repayment ability.

### Triggering Disaster #1

**Frost and freeze that occurred April 2 through June 25, 2021**

**Application Deadline:** June 20, 2022

**Primary Counties Eligible:** Michigan: Allegan, Berrien, Cass

**Contiguous Counties Also Eligible:** Barry, Kalamazoo, St. Joseph and Van Buren. Indiana: Elkhart, LaPorte and St. Joseph

**Triggering Disaster #3**

**Excessive rain that occurred from June 1 through July 10, 2021**

**Application Deadline:** June 20, 2022

**Primary Counties Eligible:** Branch

**Contiguous Counties Also Eligible:** Calhoun, Hillsdale, Kalamazoo, St. Joseph. Indiana: LaGrange and Steuben

**More Resources**

On farmers.gov, the [Disaster Assistance Discovery Tool](#), [Disaster Assistance-at-a-Glance fact sheet](#), and [Farm Loan Discovery Tool](#) can help you determine program or loan options. To file a Notice of Loss or to ask questions about available programs, contact your local [USDA Service Center](#).

## Safety Tip



**Not all pipelines are installed to the same depth. This is why it's important to call 811 or visit ClickBeforeYouDig.com and submit a locate request prior to any soil disturbing activities.**

More resources at

**[PipelineAgSafetyAlliance.com](http://PipelineAgSafetyAlliance.com)**

Let's  
Grow  
Safely Together

## Crop Machinery Cost and Investment

The following discussion about farm machinery investments and farm size comes from Purdue ag economist Michael Langemeier in a recent post on their [Center for Commercial Ag website](#). The full article can be read online.

The continued increase in size of tractors, combines, and other machinery has enabled farms to operate more acres and reduce labor use per acre. However, this increase in machinery size also makes it increasingly important to evaluate the efficient use of machinery. A recent article documented the increase in machinery cost estimates during the last couple of years. This article will discuss machinery cost and investment benchmarks and illustrate the computation of crop machinery cost and investment for a case farm in west central Indiana.

Crop machinery cost per acre is computed by summing depreciation, interest, property taxes, insurance, leasing, repairs, fuel and lubricants, and custom hire and rental expense; and dividing the resulting figure by crop acres or



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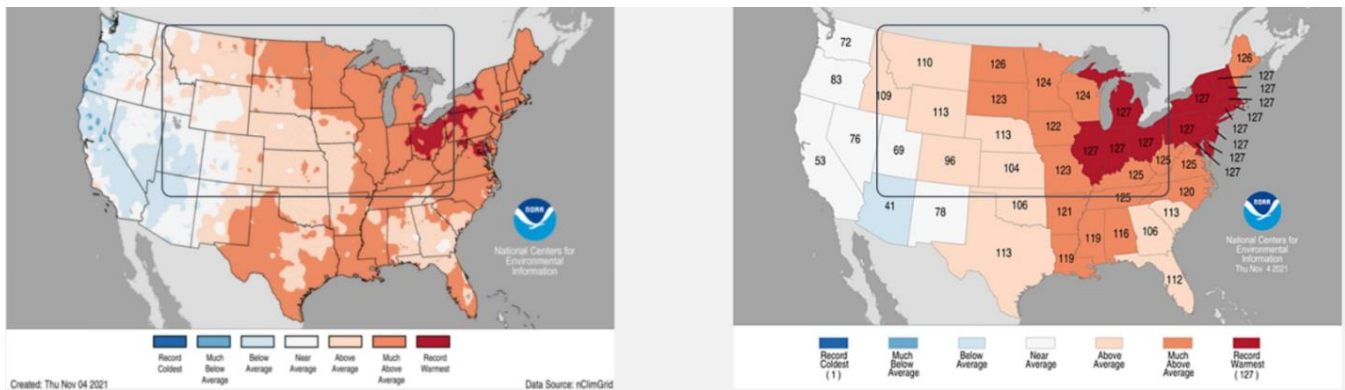
harvested acres. Interest should include both cash interest paid and an opportunity charge on machinery and equipment that is owned. In regions where double-cropping predominates, using harvested acres is preferable.

Crop machinery investment per acre is computed by dividing total crop machinery investment (i.e., investment in tractors, combines, and other machinery) by crop acres or harvested acres. Again, in regions where double-cropping is prevalent, using harvested acres gives a more accurate depiction of machinery investment.

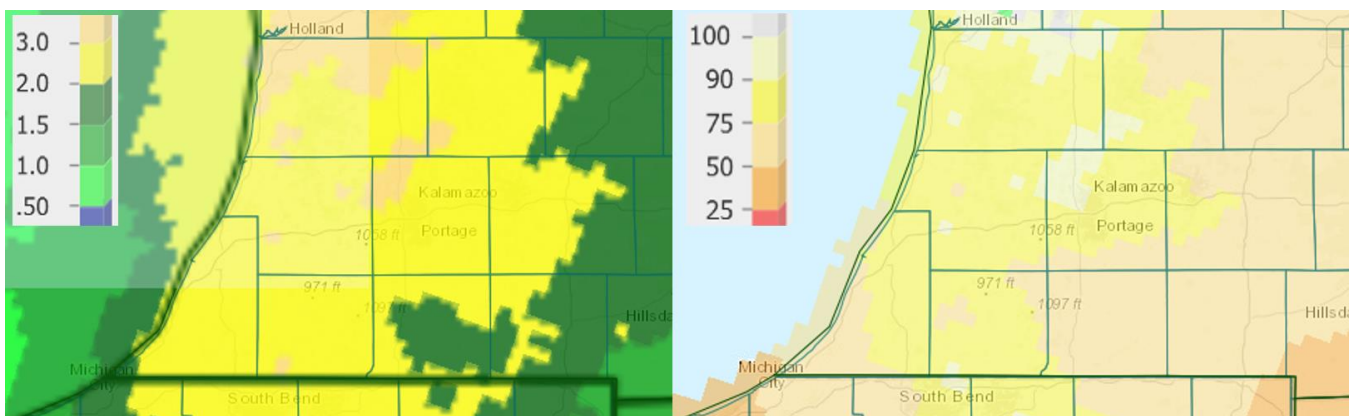
Machinery investment per acre typically declines with farm size. Thus, it is important for farms to compare machinery investment per acre with similarly sized farms and to examine the trend in this benchmark for a particular farm. A farm with relatively high machinery investment per acre needs to determine whether this high value is a problem. If the farm faces serious labor or timeliness constraints, this benchmark may be relatively high. However, if this benchmark is high due to the purchase of assets used to mitigate income tax obligations or for some other reason, the farm needs to think about their long-term strategy with respect to purchasing machinery and equipment.

### Weather and Crop Update

Temperatures in October were well above average, particularly the minimum (nighttime) temperatures which set a record. Although this helped to dry down standing crop, it did not have much of an impact on getting soils dried out as precipitation kept things plenty wet. As temperatures dropped in November, the situation hasn't changed all that much even though we were up to 2 inches dryer than normal. If we could just move on to winter temperatures and get the ground frozen, we might be able to get the rest of the crop harvested without rutting up the fields.

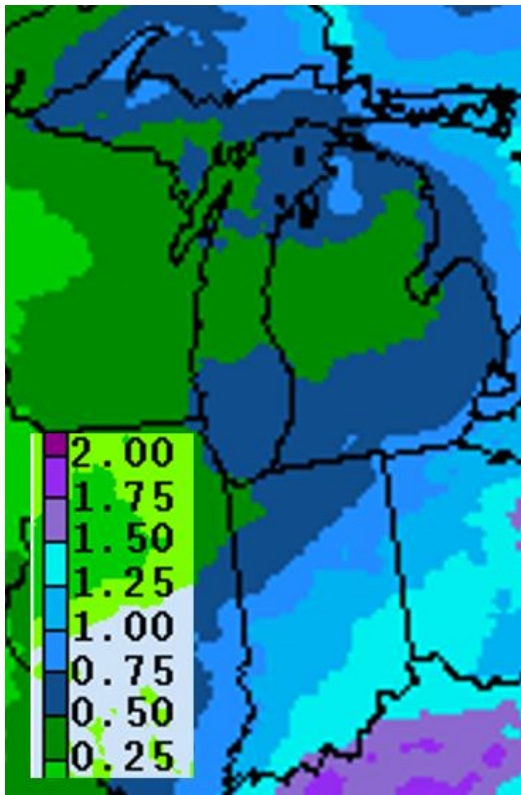


Mean temperature percentiles (left) and statewide minimum temperature ranks (right) for October 2021. A rank of 127 means the nighttime temps in October were the highest on record on average for Michigan this year.

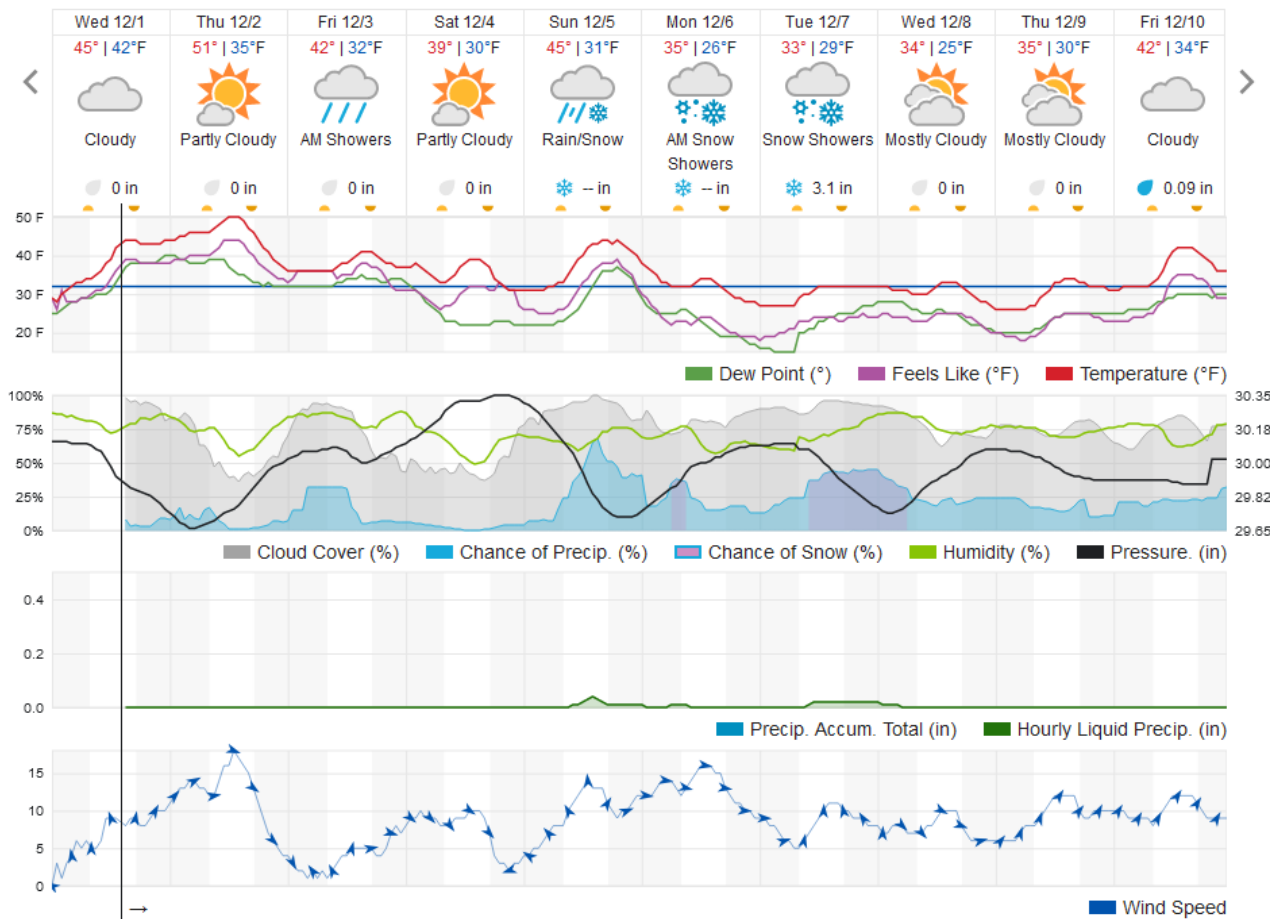


Precipitation totals (left) and percent of normal (right) for the past 30 days as of December 1.

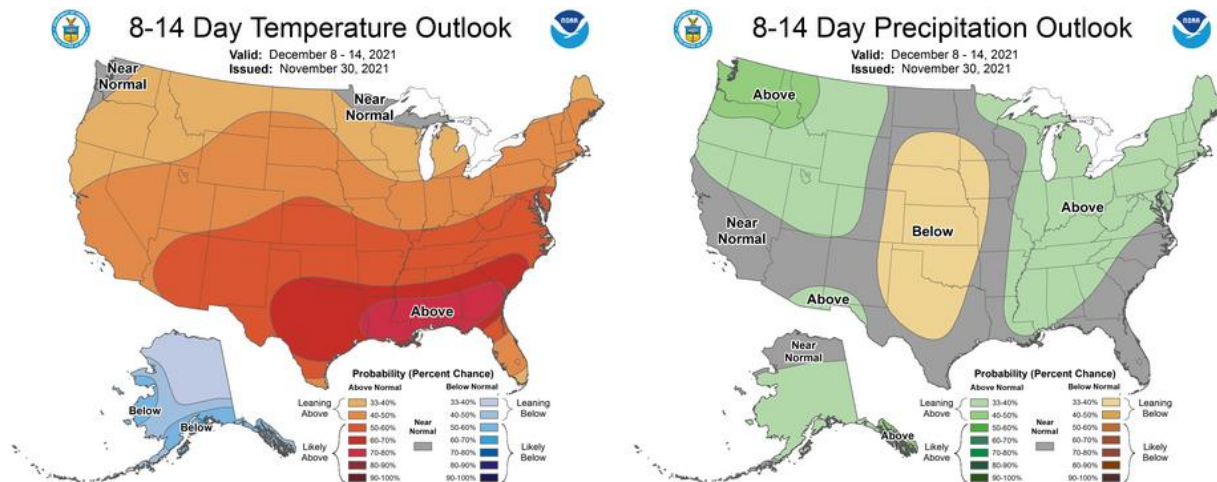
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Precipitation forecast for December 2-9 with most of this predicted between Sunday and Wednesday.



The 10-day weather forecast for Kalamazoo according to wunderground.com.



The 8-14 day outlook (Dec 8-14) for temperature (left) and precipitation (right) as of Dec 1.

### Crops

Many did not make the “in by Thanksgiving” goal for harvest this year, but we are getting really close. **Corn** in Michigan was 89% harvested as of Nov 28 which is about 5% ahead of average but 5% behind last year. There has been slightly more progress with soybean at 92% harvested—1% behind the 5-year average and 8% behind last year. **Winter wheat** is 96% planted and 89% emerged, but with the fall precipitation and late planting, ratings are not great with only 50% rated good or excellent and 25% rated poor or very poor.

## Calendar

Titles are clickable links to online content when highlighted and underlined

- Dec 7** **Cass County Conservation District Annual Meeting.** 3:00-6:30pm. Cass County Council on Aging, 60525 Decatur Rd, Cassopolis, MI. Contact the CCCD office ([admin@cassccd.org](mailto:admin@cassccd.org) or 269-445-8641 x 5) for more information.
- Dec 7-9** **Great Lakes Fruit & Veg Expo.** Grand Rapids. <https://glexpo.com>
- Dec 10** **Michiana Irrigation Association Annual Meeting.** 8:30am-3:30pm, Blue Gate Garden Inn & Conference Center, Shipshewana, IN. Contact Deanna Mumby (269-998-1177) for more info and to register by Dec. 6.
- Dec 14-15** **Indiana CCA Conference.** Indianapolis, IN. <https://indianacca.org/register>
- Dec 20** **Integrated Crop and Pest Management Update.** 9am-4pm. MSU Livestock Pavilion. Will be offered in-person and virtually. Cost is \$60 in-person (\$75 at door) or \$30 online, both include 2022 MSU Weed Control Guide. RUP & CCA credits (6 each) available. Register by Dec 15. <https://events.anr.msu.edu/ICPMU2021>
- Jan 10-12** **MABA 2022 Winter Conference & Trade Show.** Lansing Center, Lansing, MI. <https://miagbiz.org/events/56-2022-winter-conference-trade-show>
- Jan 20** **Michigan Soybean Regional Meeting.** 8:45am-12:30pm. GreenMark Equipment, 16700 Heimbach Rd., Three Rivers, MI. The Michigan Soybean Checkoff program is covering all costs, but pre-registration is requested to ensure an accurate count for lunch and materials. Contact Mike Staton ([staton@anr.msu.edu](mailto:staton@anr.msu.edu), 269-673-0370, ext. 2562) with questions. <https://events.anr.msu.edu/2020SMaRTMeeting>
- Jan 24** **MSU Extension Pest and Crop Management SW Regional Update.** 9am-3pm. Dowagiac Conservation Club, Dowagiac, MI. Registration available soon, cost is \$35. <https://tinyurl.com/msupcmu22>

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- Jan 26-27** **Great Lakes Crop Summit.** Soaring Eagle Casino, Mt. Pleasant, MI.  
<http://www.greatlakescropsummit.com>
- Feb 2** **Ag Action Field Crops Replacement Meeting.** Due to COVID-related issues with our normal venue for Ag Action Day, we will not be running this meeting in 2022, but we are planning a separate meeting for field crops growers at the ISD in Lawrence, MI...stay tuned for details.
- Feb 2-3** **Southwest MI Hort Days.** Lake Michigan College's Mendel Center, 1100 Yore Avenue, Benton Harbor, MI. Sessions for vegetable tree fruit, grape, blueberry. Lunch both days is included. Preregistration will be available online or by mail. Contact Renee Tinkey at 269-944-1477 ext. 201 or [tinkeyre@msu.edu](mailto:tinkeyre@msu.edu) or watch [www.michigangrapesociety.org](http://www.michigangrapesociety.org) for more information.
- Feb 8** **MSU Extension Pest and Crop Management SE Regional Update.** 9am-3pm. Family Center at Immaculate Conception Parish, 21 Ann St., Milan, MI. Registration available soon, cost is \$35.  
<https://tinyurl.com/msupcmu22>
- Feb 7** **Field Crop Webinar Series Begins.** 7-8pm Monday evenings through March 28. Participants can register for single sessions (\$5 each) or the entire 8-week series (\$20). One RUP credit will be available for each live session. Register online beginning in January at <https://events.anr.msu.edu/FCWS2022>. Contact Eric Anderson ([eander32@msu.edu](mailto:eander32@msu.edu), 269-359-0565) with questions.
- Feb 16** **Michiana Irrigated Corn and Soybean Production Workshop.** 8:30am-3pm. Blue Gate Restaurant, Shipshewana, IN. Call Purdue Extension (260-499-6334) or print out flyer and mail in form to register. <https://www.canr.msu.edu/events/2020-michiana-irrigated-corn-and-soybean-workshop>.
- Feb 21** **Branch County Farmers Day.** 10am-3pm. Full range of educational offerings and vendor displays. Pesticide training+testing session will be available. Call the Branch County Extension office (517-279-4311) for more details.

## MSU Extension Digest Briefs

### NEW EDITION OF COVER CROP FIELD GUIDE RELEASED

PUBLISHED ON NOVEMBER 24, 2021

The Midwest Cover Crops Field Guide has been revised to include updated and new information on cover crops and their use.

### SOMEWHERE FOR THE POLLINATORS TO GO: A CASE STUDY OF ESTABLISHING LARGE-SCALE POLLINATOR HABITAT

PUBLISHED ON NOVEMBER 22, 2021

Establishing pollinator habitat through the Bee & Butterfly Habitat Fund's Seed a Legacy Program in southeast Michigan.

### PRODUCTION OF BIOCHAR

PUBLISHED ON NOVEMBER 18, 2021

Webinar Thursday November 18

### 2022 MI AG IDEAS TO GROW WITH CONFERENCE MOVES TO ANR MONTH!

PUBLISHED ON NOVEMBER 15, 2021

A virtual experience offering educational knowledge and resources for farmers and homeowners

### SUPPLY-CHAINS, CARBON CREDITS, AND MARKET OUTLOOK HEADLINE MICHIGAN AG CREDIT CONFERENCE

PUBLISHED ON NOVEMBER 10, 2021

Over 80 attendees from Michigan's agricultural banking and credit industry came to East Lansing to attend the event.



PLANT-EATING NEMATODES AND THE KEY TO FIGHTING THEM

**PUBLISHED ON NOVEMBER 3, 2021**

Plant roots interact with many bacteria, fungi and microscopic organisms within the soil that can impact how well the plants grow. Some of these microscopic organisms are nematodes, and they are an especially important part of the life in the soil.

HEROES TO HIVES PROGRAM TEACHES BEEKEEPING TO U.S. MILITARY VETERANS

**PUBLISHED ON NOVEMBER 3, 2021**

Registration is open for current and former U.S. service members to enroll in the Heroes to Hives online course.

REGISTER FOR MICHIGAN'S 2022 DRAINAGE DESIGN WORKSHOP

**PUBLISHED ON NOVEMBER 2, 2021**

Learn about drainage concepts and how to design drainage systems for crop production and water-quality protection on March 8-10.

FERTILIZER COST COMPARISON TOOL (FORAGES)

**PUBLISHED ON OCTOBER 29, 2021**

A decision tool to help forage producers weigh through purchasing fertilizer products.

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