

Mizzou Weekly

March 8, 2012 Volume 33, No. 23

MU professor harnesses Missouri trees to make his own maple syrup



AMERICAN TRADITION: Richard Guyette, professor of agroforestry, has tapped 80 trees so far this year to make maple syrup for friends and family. Here Guyette reseats a bucket after harvesting the sap from a maple tree on his property. Photo by Mike Burden

MISSOURI MAPLE SYRUP

Fire management, logging practices have made state maples more common

When you drizzle syrup on your pancakes, which state comes to mind? Most likely you think of Vermont.

Think again. Grade A maple syrup is made right here in Missouri. Richard Guyette, an associate professor of agroforestry, has harvested, boiled and bottled the sweet stuff for the past 36 years on his property near the Baskett Wildlife Research and Education Center in Ashland, Mo.

In recent decades, Missouri sugar bushes, or stands of several maples together, have become more common due to changes in fire management and logging practices. This has allowed more maples to flourish, especially along the river hills, Guyette said.

Sugaring in America goes back to the early settlers. It requires having the right trees, climate and tools for production.

Though dependent on weather, the Missouri season for sugaring lasts roughly from February to mid-April, giving plenty of time for hobbyists like Guyette to discover the thrill of cultivating their own maple syrup.

Until the early 19th century, many rural Missourians made sugar from maple sap. But then changes to the import tax on sugar made it cheaper for them to buy imported cane sugar.

Competition from states with a longer growing season caused further decline in local syrup production. A handful of Missouri farmers today are looking to bring sugaring back as a hobby or business venture.

Guyette started sugaring in the 1970s because he had good maples on his property.

“There was this back-to-the-land movement,” he said. “Maple syrup seemed to fit right into that.”

So far this season, Guyette, his wife, Mary Lottes, and friend Kevin Hosman have harvested 234 gallons of sap from 80 trees. Some of the trees have produced each year since Guyette first tapped them.

Sap in February is the highest grade, he said. It is lighter in color and has the most delicate flavor.

In March, the syrup is darker and has a stronger flavor. The stronger stuff is good for cooking, especially for beans, pies and popcorn. Guyette makes “maple maze” popcorn with March syrup. He also uses it to prepare meats and combines it with Worcestershire sauce for steaks.

After harvesting and filtering the sap, the syrup is boiled over a roaring fire in a small building Guyette calls the Sugar Shack. The shack is the hub where people gather to share in the fun.

Indeed, much of the sugaring process is about spending time with family and friends, Guyette said.

“Sugaring is a communal event for friends who chose to join in the labor of tapping, harvesting and cooking,” Guyette said. Reward to helpers is a bottle or two of pure Missouri maple syrup.

“It’s a labor of love,” Guyette said. “If you’ve got kids, family and friends, usually you can pay them off with a little bit of syrup.”

— *Mike Burden*

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Preparing maple syrup the traditional way

Making Missouri maple syrup is a great outdoor project for late winter and early spring. Below are the key steps to this American tradition.

Identify maples. Best to approach this task while the trees are still adorned with their characteristic three- or five-lobed leaves. You should only tap healthy trees larger than 12 inches in diameter at breast height.

Tap during season. When to tap in Missouri is open to question, but late January through mid-April is the usual season.

However, the freeze-and-thaw cycle is the most important indicator of when to tap, so cold nights followed by warm days are necessary for success. The osmotic pressure created by that cycle forces the sap out more quickly.

Tools to tap. You'll need a few tools to do the job properly: a tapper, spouts, a small mallet to seat the spouts, a clean bucket and a sharp 7/16th fast-cutting tapping bit (not a carpenter's speed bit). Taps should slope slightly upward to promote drainage.

Filter the sap. Rate of flow depends on various factors, including soil moisture, tree health and weather. If you're new to sugaring, check your buckets often.

Be sure to filter the tree sap when collecting it into a bucket and when pouring it into a pan to boil. You don't want any debris or bugs in your mixture. The goal is pure maple syrup.

Boil. You can boil the sap on a stove or, more traditionally, over an open fire outdoors. Your target temperature is 218 degrees Fahrenheit. Don't overcook, or you'll end up with maple sugar, not syrup.

Need more help?

Check out *The North American Maple Syrup Producers Manual*, available for \$31 at The Ohio State University Extension's eStore: estore.osu-extension.org/productdetails.cfm?sku=856 (<http://estore.osu-extension.org/productdetails.cfm?sku=856>).

— *Mike Burden*

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Mizzou budget outlook slightly improved, but difficult decisions still to come

Staff Advisory Council

Budget deficit may decrease to \$2.2 million

Tim Rooney, MU budget director, was cautiously optimistic about the university's finances during a presentation March 8 to the Staff Advisory Council.

Rooney's sentiment was based on two recent occurrences.

First, a day earlier the House Budget Committee passed Gov. Jay Nixon's \$23 billion state budget for fiscal 2013.

Initially, Nixon had proposed a 12.5 percent cut to state higher education funds to balance the budget.

But the governor amended his agenda due to a \$40 million settlement involving the nation's five largest mortgage banks. The amendment would lower state cuts to public universities and colleges to 7.8 percent for fiscal 2013.

Second, in recent weeks key lawmakers have pushed to reduce the cuts to less than 7.8 percent.

Rooney began his presentation by pointing out that state appropriations have dwindled dramatically throughout the decades.

In fiscal 1990, state funding paid for 70 percent of MU's general operating budget, and tuition revenue accounted for 27 percent. But by fiscal 2012, the state funded only 33 percent of the general operating budget, while tuition paid for 60 percent of the cost. Grants, private donations and other funds paid for the rest of the budget.

Faculty and staff have had to do more with less for years, Rooney said. Since 2001, student enrollment has increased 45 percent, while state funding has dropped 14 percent.

Rooney, however, was pleased by Nixon's budget amendment proposal and efforts by lawmakers to further diminish education cuts.

He said Mizzou has \$6 million in reserves to tackle a \$15.7 million deficit. Spending cuts may bring the deficit down to a projected \$2.2 million.

"It's not the greatest scenario, but it's an improvement from where we were a month or so ago," Rooney said.

"But a lot of difficult decisions still have to be made."

— *Trevor Eischen*

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Task force presents Faculty Council with recommendations for distance learning

FACULTY COUNCIL

Burden of proof for alleged faculty misconduct also discussed

Faculty Council had a busy meeting March 8 in Memorial Union.

The council heard recommendations from the Online Academic Programs Task Force, a proposal for a kiosk at Memorial Union and discussed the burden of proof in faculty bylaws for alleged misconduct.

The task force, made up of faculty, staff and administrators, recommended in a report that online courses be comparable in content to traditional classroom courses. The group is also examining if professors should be paid the same whether they create online or classroom courses.

Harry Tyrer, Faculty Council chair and professor of electrical and computer engineering, pointed out that faculty are “paid for online course creation but not for classroom course creation.” Tyrer asked for one standard.

Clyde Bentley, associate professor of journalism and a task force member, recommended creating an online advisory council to work with campus divisions to develop distance learning and degree programs.

Next up was Craig Roberts, a professor of plant sciences who led a discussion about a proposal to memorialize alumni killed in wars with a kiosk in Memorial Union. Roberts hoped that any kiosk would blend with the building’s Gothic architecture and interior décor.

“I don’t want something looking like a video game,” Roberts said.

Finally, the council examined the burden of proof in alleged faculty misconduct.

Previously, the council recommended “clear and convincing” as the standard of proof. But Chancellor Brady Deaton, in letter to the council dated Feb. 29, said he preferred “preponderance of evidence,” a lower standard. Members debated the differences.

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Mizzou launches improved Facebook site with in-depth university timeline

MU FACEBOOK PAGE

New site is better designed, easier to navigate

The University of Missouri launched March 9 its Facebook redesign that uses the social media site's timeline feature.

Visitors will discover a more accessible site chock-full of photos, videos, places to post, stories about Mizzou research and events, and a campus history going back to MU's founding in 1839.

"The site will help people learn more of what Mizzou has to offer," said Ryan Gavin, a senior information specialist.

MU Facebook has plenty of links to sites of MU's schools and colleges, and to MU Extension. Other links take visitors to online programs like execMBA and publications such as the alumni magazine MIZZOU.

The most popular aspects of the old site — Photo of the Week, video interviews with faculty, sports and research news — are back but with improved design elements and text readability.

"It's a lot cleaner than it used to be," Gavin said.

Creating the most buzz is the chronology of Mizzou history. Even people who pride themselves as university and alumni history buffs may not know, for example, that the founder of the Mayo Clinic William Mayo received his medical degree from MU in 1854. Or that Walter Williams, founder of the School of Journalism, wrote in 1914 *The Journalist's Creed*, which became the ethical standard for practicing the profession.

"People now have a place to go where Mizzou history has been consolidated," Gavin said.

Hotlinks on the Facebook page help visitors jump quickly to particular periods in MU history. Visitors without a Facebook account will not see the hotlinks but can still scroll manually through the years. Visit the site at facebook.com/mizzou (<http://facebook.com/mizzou>).

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Faculty, students win awards for diversity contributions

The Chancellor's Diversity Initiative honored two faculty members and two students with the 2012 Inclusive Excellence Award.

The award is given to individuals or groups who have made contributions to areas of diversity, such as gender, racial-ethnic background, language, religious belief, sexual orientation, disabilities and economic issues.

Here are this year's recipients:

- April Langley is an associate professor of English and interim director of the Black Studies Program.

In 2010 she was nominated to the Diversity Enhancement Committee. As interim director of black studies, Langley is responsible for student advisement.

- Troy Balthazor is an information specialist for the Great Plains ADA Center and an adjunct teacher in parks, recreation and tourism at the College of Agriculture, Food and Natural Resources.

He has taught disabilities courses at MU and facilitated more than 12,000 hours of student volunteer work with individuals with disabilities.

- John Steven Cummins is a second-year medical student.

He founded MizzouMed Pride, a student interest group that supports medical students, faculty and staff interested in improving their understanding of issues facing LGBTQ patients, health care providers and students.

- Mahir Khan is a junior majoring in biological sciences and vice president of the Muslim Students Organization.

As a member of the Muslim Speakers Bureau of Columbia, Khan reaches out to community groups and organizations to offer educational materials on Islam.

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Women's Health and Wellness Fair

The fifth annual Women's Health and Wellness Fair is happening 11 a.m. to 1:30 p.m. March 20 in Memorial Union's Stotler Lounge.

Thirty exhibitors will be on hand to share information about exercise and fitness, women's support organizations, breast cancer, nutrition and public health.

The event is free and open to the public.

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