Maple grove with tubing collection system at the Letcher County Cooperative Extension Office in Whitesburg.

When you support Extension, forest owners tap into maple trees to create a value-added product.

Contact:
Forestry Department
Thomas Poe Cooper Building
730 Rose Street
Lexington, KY 40546-0073
(859) 257-7597
forestry.extension@uky.edu

Extension Guides Forest Owners into Maple Syrup Production

Kentucky maple syrup production takes place from mid-December to mid-March. Production requires daily monitoring of sap and long hours to reduce water content during winter months when other agriculture production is idle.
A three-county regional festival is planned for December 2017. The festivals will include vendors, crafters, and maple production and marketing supplies.

Heavily forested Eastern Kentucky has a large percentage of maple trees that have little commercial timber value. In 2010, Letcher County Extension and the UK Forestry Department embarked on a maple syrup production project due to the abundance and easy utilization of the maple trees, the appeal to the tourism industry, and hope for an additional agricultural enterprise for the economically challenged coal region.

The Letcher County Extension Office installed a maple syrup demonstration. Maple trees were tapped and various sap collection methods were displayed. The honey house, at the Extension office, provided a facility for new producers to prepare their syrup. The county agent and forestry specialist hosted numerous workshops, radio programs, and TV shows on the subject. To increase the likelihood that clientele would consider it further, the office hosted a producer tour of the New England maple syrup industry. A partnership with the Letcher County, Harlan County and Wise County (VA) Extension offices developed the maple syrup enterprise into a regionally targeted program. The goal was to grow the number of producers to support multiple local festivals to magnify the impact during a time of the year when most agricultural enterprises are idle.

Guest lecturers, candy making demonstrations and equipment suppliers participated in the three-county maple syrup workshop series. Extension produced and distributed a multi-state newsletter containing research-based information. Extension trained 73 clients on maple syrup production and value-added opportunities between 2015 and 2016. Twelve clients have reported tapping trees and making syrup in spring 2016.

Each maple tree can produce five to 15 gallons of sap when night temperatures reach 20° F. A tube system collection method avoids debris in the sap.

Forty gallons of sap is required to produce one gallon of maple syrup. The sap cooks for approximately ten hours until it reaches a temperature of 216° F and 67% sugar content.

Guest lecturers, candy making demonstrations and equipment suppliers participated in the three-county maple syrup workshop series. Extension produced and distributed a multi-state newsletter containing research-based information. Extension trained 73 clients on maple syrup production and value-added opportunities between 2015 and 2016. Twelve clients have reported tapping trees and making syrup in spring 2016.