

# The Renewable Resources Extension Act (RREA) Program at Alabama A&M University



The Renewable Resources Extension Act (RREA) program funds allocated to Alabama A&M University are administered by the Urban Affairs and New Nontraditional Programs Unit of the Alabama Cooperative Extension System. In FY 2008, RREA funds were used to train woodland producers about agroforestry options and water catchment systems to irrigate these crops. The effects of the drought in the southeastern U.S. have devastated mushroom producers. These conditions not only inhibit fruiting, but also prevent newly inoculated logs from running and the logs dry out before production is realized. In response, a rainwater catchment training program was developed to supplement the shiitake mushroom program.

## Shiitake Mushroom and Rainwater Collection Education

The RREA program sponsored the Economic Opportunities in Forest Medicinal Plants and Mushrooms Conference and the Shiitake Mushroom/Rainwater Catchment Field Day. Presentations on shiitake mushrooms and rainwater collection were given at the sponsored meetings and at the Small Farm Risk Management Farm Tour (fall), the Organic Production in Alabama Conference, and the Small Farm Management Farm Tour (spring), reaching 363 potential producers. Shiitake mushroom demonstrations were conducted for 140 participants who inoculated 160 logs to take home. Three tours of shiitake mushroom production and rainwater catchment systems were conducted for 158 participants.



Field Day participants inoculate and take home a shiitake mushroom log.

## Program Results

One program participant established a new shiitake operation and a 1,000-gallon water collection system. Another participant will be establishing a water collection system for forest medicinal crops in 2009. Three new producers established 610 shiitake logs in Guntersville, Samantha, and Huntsville. One extremely limited-income producer established 50 logs in the spring and added 375 logs in the fall. She harvested seven pounds of mushrooms from her first harvest from the 50 logs and sold them for \$100.00.

Four rainwater collection systems harvested more than 6,000 gallons of water that will be used for shiitake mushroom production next spring. The rainwater collection system established in Birmingham has had 120,000 visitors who viewed the demonstration with its informational signage and onsite handouts. Evaluations show that knowledge learned about shiitake mushrooms and rainwater collection at two of the conferences was between 40 and 50%.

The publication, "Rainwater Harvesting for Irrigation Water," is in press, and "Extraction and Quantification of Lentinan from Caps and Stems of Log Versus Sawdust-Grown Shiitake Mushrooms" was submitted to HortScience and is also pending publication. A newly revised shiitake production web site has been posted at <http://www.aces.edu/urban/Shiitake/>.

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