

**Specialty Crops Short Course**  
**Date: Thursday, May 7, 2026**  
**Central MS Research & Extension Center**  
**(CMREC); Raymond, MS**



8:00-8:45 Registration  
CMREC Foyer

8:45-9:00 Welcome

**General Session**

*Location: CMREC Auditorium*

9:00-9:30 **Marketing Made Easy for Agribusinesses: The Key Steps to Attract the Right Customers**  
Dr. James Barnes, *Extension Professor – Agricultural Economics, Department of Agricultural Economics, Starkville, MS*

9:30-10:00 **Farm Budget Basics**  
Dr. Elizabeth Canales, *Associate Professor – Agricultural Economics, Department of Agricultural Economics, Starkville, MS*

10:00-10:30 **Basics of Pesticide Use and Safety (30 min)**  
Mr. Brenton Breland, *Extension Agent – Agriculture & Natural Resources, MSU Extension – Pike County, McComb, MS*

10:30-10:45 Break

10:45-11:15 **Ornamentals as a Value-added Crop**  
Dr. Shaun Broderick, *Associate Extension/Research Professor – Horticulture, Truck Crops Branch Experiment Station, Crystal Springs, MS*

11:15-11:45 **Organic vs Conventional Production: Considerations and Challenges**  
Dr. Qianwen Zhang, *Assistant Research/Extension Professor – Horticulture, Truck Crops Branch Experiment Station, Crystal Springs, MS*

11:45-12:00 **Transition to Organic Partnership Program (15 min)**  
Jenny Ryals, *Research Associate – Horticulture, South Mississippi Branch Experiment Station, Poplarville, MS*, and Haley Williams, *Research Associate – Horticulture, South Mississippi Branch Experiment Station, Poplarville, MS*,

12:00-1:00 Lunch (provided)

## **AFTERNOON OPTIONS**

### **Fruit Session**

*Location: CMREC Room TBD*

- 1:00-1:30     **Getting Started in Fruit Production**  
Dr. Eric Stafne, *Extension and Research Professor – Horticulture, Coastal Research & Extension Center, Poplarville, MS*
- 1:30-2:00     **Exploring Alternative Fruit Options**  
Dr. Eric Stafne, *Extension and Research Professor – Horticulture, Coastal Research & Extension Center, Poplarville, MS*
- 2:00-2:30     **Disease Management Practices in Fruit Production**  
Dr. Rebecca Melanson, *Associate Extension Professor – Plant Pathology, Central MS Research & Extension Center, Raymond, MS*
- 2:30-3:00     **Insect Management in Fruit Production**  
Dr. Jermaine Perier, *Assistant Professor – Entomology, Central MS Research & Extension Center, Crystal Springs, MS*
- 3:00-3:30     Break

### **Vegetable Session**

*Location: CMREC Auditorium*

- 1:00-1:30     **Getting Started in Vegetable Production**  
Dr. Timothy Ayankoji, *Assistant Research/Extension Professor – Horticulture, North MS Research & Extension Center, Verona, MS*
- 1:30-2:00     **Introduction to Hydroponics**  
Dr. Qianwen Zhang, *Assistant Research/Extension Professor – Horticulture, Truck Crops Branch Experiment Station, Crystal Springs, MS*
- 2:00-2:30     **Insect Management in Vegetable Production**  
Dr. Jermaine Perier, *Assistant Professor – Entomology, Central MS Research & Extension Center, Crystal Springs, MS*
- 2:30-3:00     **Disease Management Practices in Vegetables**  
Dr. Rebecca Melanson, *Associate Extension Professor – Plant Pathology, Central MS Research & Extension Center, Raymond, MS*
- 3:00-3:30     Break

## Workshops

*Space for each workshop is limited. Check your registration packet to verify the workshop you are in.*

- 3:30-4:30     **Workshop #1: Strong Starts: Mastering Transplant Production from Seed**  
*Description:* Learn how to grow strong, healthy transplants from seed in this hands-on workshop designed for farmers, growers, Master Gardeners, and homesteaders. Workshop includes a live demonstration and a clear, practical presentation covering the key principles, tools, and conditions needed for success.  
*Location:* CMREC Room TBD  
Dr. Shaun Broderick, *Associate Extension/Research Professor – Horticulture, Truck Crops Branch Experiment Station, Crystal Springs, MS*
- Workshop #2: Setting Up a Hydroponic System**  
*Description:* Dive into the future of gardening with this hands-on workshop designed to teach you the essentials of growing leafy greens without soil. You'll walk away with the practical skills and confidence needed to build your own low-maintenance hydroponic system at home.  
*Location:* CMREC Room TBD  
Dr. Qianwen Zhang, *Assistant Research/Extension Professor – Horticulture, Truck Crops Branch Experiment Station, Crystal Springs, MS*
- Workshop #3: IPM Resources for Fruits and Vegetables**  
*Description:* Unlock the secrets of traditional and mobile integrated pest management (IPM) resources in this hands-on workshop that explores regional IPM guides for commercial vegetable and fruit production. Key resources to be discussed include the Southeast U.S. Vegetable Crop Handbook and the MyIPM mobile apps.  
*Location:* CMREC Room TBD  
Dr. Rebecca Melanson, *Associate Extension Professor – Plant Pathology, Central MS Research & Extension Center, Raymond, MS*
- Workshop #4: Pest Management Basics: A Close Up on Insect Pests!**  
*Description:* Familiarize yourself with common insect pests of vegetables and their identification features. Gain knowledge on where to scout and when to apply management.  
*Location:* CMREC Room TBD  
Dr. Jermaine Perier, *Assistant Professor – Entomology, Central MS Research & Extension Center, Crystal Springs, MS*

4:30            Adjourn