

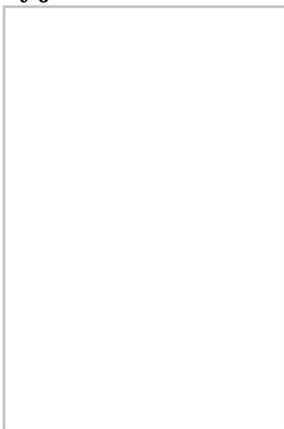
**Holiday 2009 Growers Notebook: News, Tips, & Advice on Things Organic**



**MEET CRAFT: Green Jade Herbal**

The weather is getting cooler, but the farming isn't done yet and CRAFT farm tours are still going! Last month, we met at Green Jade Herbal in Asheville with owner Elizabeth Bloomquist to learn about value-added processing and marketing with herbs. The air was nippy as we toured her herb gardens and learned how much you can do with a little bit of land and a frequent harvest schedule. To keep her herbs producing, Elizabeth and her five interns clip their plants daily. The frequent picking works well since, for these hardy herbs, it seems the more you pick, the more they grow. "You want to make sure they always look like they just came out in the spring." Indeed, we saw one thyme plant that hadn't been picked for three days, and unlike all the other thyme, it was tall and flowering.

Elizabeth's farm is based on a low-input philosophy – all the detailed work is in the drying and packaging. "We didn't have a lot to put into the farm when we first started, so it's been interesting to see how you really can start with nothing and have a working farm. We started out with about \$30 worth of seeds and one bag of soil mix." When we found out the herbs she grows don't require fertilizer and are maintained on a no-till basis without irrigation, awe and envy grew among the attending the vegetable farmers. But the value of small-scale, local farming shone as Liz described the painstaking detail they take in processing all the herbs. "We dry all our herbs in baskets or on screens. Each leaf is processed by hand, and there is never going to be any surprises for the customer – brown leaves, bugs, weeds, or anything else that you might get from a bulk supplier." All of Liz's products come straight from the farm – they don't, for example, purchase bulk quantities of calendula if they are running low. "It's hard to get the quality you need from bulk orders. No matter how good the company



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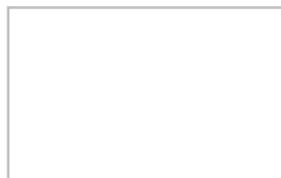
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**17th Annual OGS Spring Conference is March 6&7, 2010 in downtown Asheville, NC**

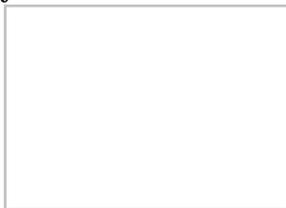


This coming spring, 1300+ farmers, gardeners, consumers, chefs, and activists will converge for the annual OGS Spring

Conference. To be held at the University North Carolina at Asheville, the conference will feature over 100 classes and hands on workshops on all aspects of sustainable living, plus a trade show, silent auction, seed and plant exchange, and childrens program. In addition to the amazing lineup of events, OGS is partnering with local green businesses and active area non profits to host "salons" on controversial, hot topics in the organic and local foods movement. The word "salon"

is, sometimes you just can't get whole calendula flowers, even though it says, 'whole calendula flowers.'" Elizabeth and her interns don't bulk up on their own supplies either. "We do all of our processing every single week. We don't dry lavender all spring, for example, and then process it all one week for the rest of the season. Having freshly ground herbs every week makes a big difference for the customer. They can actually smell the herb."

The questions never slowed as the tour headed back inside to warm up by the fire. Over hot tea, Elizabeth shared her knowledge on labeling, processing, certified kitchens, and regulatory jurisdictions. A wonderful afternoon wound down over a hot meal and discussions of the next night's first frost. If you've never seen Liz's spectacular display at the farmer's



market, you should check it out at the Asheville City Market, the Asheville City Market South, or at the Yancey County Farmer's Market in Burnsville. Not only is her display beautiful, but the freshly dried herbs provide a wonderful aroma

too! You can contact Elizabeth or browse her product line of herbs, herbal remedies, aromatherapy and skin care products at <http://www.greenjadeherbal.com/index.html>

**CRAFT Membership for 2010 is NOW OPEN.** You can download membership forms from our website at <http://www.organicgrowersschool.org/content/1874>. Join by Jan. 31, 2010 and you can be part of a core team that decides what we'll be learning, and how we'll be learning it. Thanks to all the enthusiastic farmers and interns from CRAFT 2009.



Gardener's Corner: Ask Ruth

Dear Ruth,

I didn't get it together to plant a fall garden, but the weather has been so nice I want to work in my garden. Can I do anything now toward next years garden?

Chuck  
Waynesville, NC

Dear Chuck,

Absolutely! Run out this very second and **plant your garlic**

comes from the revolutionary period in Europe in which activists, thinkers, and general citizens would gather to share ideas, and plan the revolution.

Conference registration will open in January, and the class schedule will debut in December. Stay tuned to

[www.organicgrowersschool.org](http://www.organicgrowersschool.org) for the much anticipated class line-up. We'll be covering everything from food safety legislation to Christmas Tree Production, and introduce you to growers and thinkers who are truly championing the sustainability revolution.

Interested in sponsoring, exhibiting, volunteering, or otherwise participating in the Spring Conference? Visit the event page at our website:

[www.organicgrowersschool.org/content/1505](http://www.organicgrowersschool.org/content/1505)

#### NewsBits

(NewsBits are reader Submitted news and happenings. To submit your news or events, email [ogs.readernews@gmail.com](mailto:ogs.readernews@gmail.com))

#### **Senate will hear s510 Food Safety Modernization Act Soon: Act Now!**

On November 18, the House of Representatives passed this act which has been developed to decrease food-borne illnesses by strengthening federal food safety oversight. This bill will effect small producers and value added producers negatively without several changes that take small and mid-sized farms and food businesses into consideration. Please call your senator today to recommend the following amendments to the bill, provided by the National Sustainable Agriculture Coalition:

- 1. The bill should exempt small to mid-sized farms and food businesses from any requirement to have "Hazard Analysis and Risk-based Preventive Controls." These costs and procedures involved in complying with these requirements are prohibitive for small farmers and food businesses, and are only easily absorbed by industrial food

**Plant fruit trees and small fruits.** They will grow roots over the winter and be better established when spring arrives. There is still time to **sow a good crop of winter rye**. Winter rye is harder to incorporate into the soil come springtime, but rye will definitely provide the wonderful benefits of "green manure". Remember, cover crops are one of the fastest roads to soil improvement and they prevent topsoil erosion. With serious weather looming, it's time to cover your lettuces and cole crops (cabbage, kale) with **floating row cover** for winter protection.

**Spread raw manure and lime** After you spread them, be sure to incorporate them into the soil. This prevents runoff that can pollute our waterways, and captures all the nutrients and benefits so they won't be washed away by winter precipitation. Lime requires a few months in the soil before it is available to your crops, so liming in fall is a great idea. (NC Cooperative Extension offers free soil testing!). The manure will be adequately broken down by springtime for safe planting.

**Utilize your fallen leaves** your neighbor's leaves too. Consider those leaf-piles sitting on the curb as a free resource just begging to be composted. If you don't have time to actually compost your leaves, consider piling them up in some back corner of your property and let nature take its course. Eventually they will **compost** themselves and will make a wonderful soil amendment. (Avoid using magnolia leaves. They take eons to compost.) If you have a mulching lawnmower, rather than raking leaves up in fall...mow your dry leaves. The mower will crunch them up and in the process add nutrients to your grass.

Consider **tilling** a small portion of your garden now, for utilization as an **early spring planting area** Usually in late winter/ early spring the soil is too wet to work. Finding an opportune gardening window can be challenging when you are juggling work schedules, kids' soccer games, and gardening aspirations. Typically, it rains the day before you plan to work in your garden, forcing you to *once again* postpone gardening until the ground is dry enough to work (soil that is wet when worked can take over a year to recover its former structure).

Check your garden area for wayward **tools**. Clean them and bring them indoors. Wipe the metal parts down with old oil, and coat wood handles with linseed oil. Jumpstart spring gardening by sharpening your hoes, spades, and shovels now.

Choose to **support area farmers**, and tailgate market vendors. Many will be attending tailgate markets or special holiday markets up until Christmas, and some sell in local natural groceries over the winter.

facilities. Because industrial farms and facilities have been the proven causes of the most recent food borne illness outbreaks, they should be targeted with these mandates.

- 2. The bill should allow for integration between the FDA standards with the organic certification rules. A farmer certified by the NOP should not have to risk his or her certification to comply with the new food safety rules set forth by this bill.
- 3. The bill should provide training and assistance for small farmers and limited-resource farmers to implement food safety plans on their farms.
- 4. The bill should align with federal conservation, environmental, and wildlife standards.
- 5. Farmers who sell directly to customers should not be required to be part of a federal "traceback" system, and farms should not be required to maintain records above and beyond those that track a product from the farm to its original sale.

Call your Senator today! This could mean the difference between local food becoming more widely available or harder to find!

Interested in advertising in this newsletter?

Call 828.582.5039 or email [ogs.readernews@gmail.com](mailto:ogs.readernews@gmail.com)

Thanks for writing and Happy Thanksgiving!

Ruth Gonzalez

Gardeners, Got a question for Ruth? Send it to

[ogs.readernews@gmail.com](mailto:ogs.readernews@gmail.com)



Farmer's Corner: Ask Tom

Tom,

We want to raise chickens for home use and possibly for sale. What sort of structure do you suggest to house them?

A - We do not raise livestock so I will offer a few leads and call on Meredith McKissick, the OGS Director for grower information. Your first decision is whether you prefer a stationary or mobile structure. Each has advantages and you might want to consider both for different stages in the life of your birds.

The University of Tennessee Extension has hundreds of farm building plans at

<http://bioengr.ag.utk.edu/extension/extpubs/planlist97.htm>

Under poultry plans is a 10 X 12 stationary coop. It also lists facilities (theoretically) up to 120,000 birds.

If you want to call your flock "organic" the National Organic Program rules require:

§ 205.239 Livestock living conditions.

(a) The producer of an organic livestock operation must establish and maintain livestock

living conditions which accommodate the health and natural behavior of animals,

including:

(1) Access to the outdoors, shade, shelter, exercise areas, fresh air, and direct sunlight suitable to the species, its stage of production, the climate, and the environment;

So that requirement may suggest smaller scale than 120,000 birds and access to the outdoors for your flock.

An approach used by many farmers is a chicken tractor or chicken trailer. The "tractor" is usually a cage that is regularly moved around a field to allow the birds access to fresh ground and to also allow them to eliminate pests and to fertilize the field with their manure. A chicken trailer allows the flock to be

transported more easily. It is usually accompanied by an enclosure that is moved periodically to restrict the flock and to help with predators.

Chatham County agent Debbie Roos offers several suggested publications at her site:

<http://www.ces.ncsu.edu/chatham/ag/SustAg/poultrylist.html>

several of which offer plans for chicken housing. Good luck with your project

-- Tom

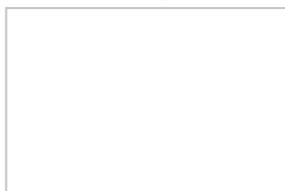
Farmers, Got a question for Tom? Email it to

[ogs.readernews@gmail.com](mailto:ogs.readernews@gmail.com)

### This Month's Picks

Each month we try to feature a recipe, website, quotation, or other "pick of the month", all reader-submitted. If you'd like to submit, send to [ogs.readernews@gmail.com](mailto:ogs.readernews@gmail.com)

Fall garden harvest submitted by Sarah Buchanan, Little Switzerland, NC



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