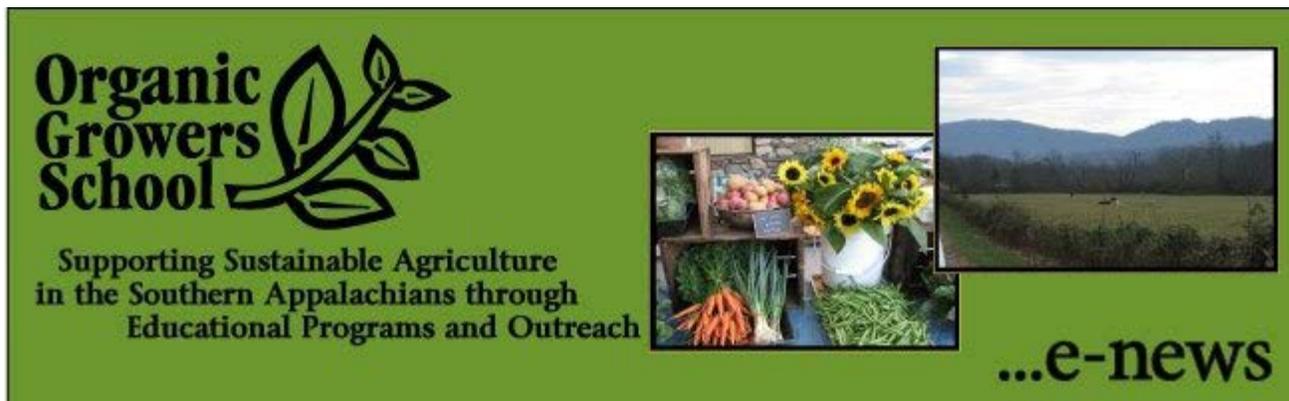


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## January 2010 Growers Notebook

### A New Season

by Meredith Leigh McKissick

Farmers and gardeners are likely the people most in touch with the changing seasons, the passage of time, and the triumphs and tribulations of patience and faith. But then why is it that every time I pull out the seed catalogs and spreadsheets, I'm so surprised at the dawn of yet another season on the farm? Certain feelings can always be expected each January as I stare at the blank void of a fresh, untouched crop plan and field map. I can feel tired, not sure where to start, or just plain un-inspired. This year, especially, as I picked up the broken, warped pieces of my high tunnel, one of many that failed under the snow that hit in early January, it was easy to feel beaten before I even start. But sure enough, as I start my work those dark little feelings begin to be dominated by a glimmer of hope, and a child-like excitement over things to come. A new plan, a different way of looking at the same problems, a slightly revised angle on my use of time and space, and poof, I'm back in the habit. It feels good, and it feels right. If ever I sit down and those warmer, better feelings don't come, it's time to get out of the business. Indeed the best trick in the hat when it comes to farming is the repetition. If you are sitting down now with little excitement, just thank your lucky stars that every year, we start again. Any farmer, or gardener who plants another garden, for that matter, is an idealist in her own right. Forever, hopeful, forever optimistic, no matter how many sore backs or lost battles. As you strike ahead in 2010, remember that we are artists, re-using a canvas. We are thousands and thousands of eyelids, always waking up. For anyone who finds nature as his office, this is one true, eternal solace: renewal.

Happy New Season!

### FARMERS: NC Apprentice Link can Help You Find Workers

If you haven't already found workers for your farm in 2010, now is the time to start looking. NC Apprentice Link is a new, web-based initiative that seeks to match farmers with prospective interns. It is FREE to use this service, and we are already matching farmers with workers for this season. The database NEEDS MORE FARMS, so you are encouraged to log in and create your free profile. Here are some advantages

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### Register NOW and SAVE!



Early Bird Registration is STILL OPEN for the 2010 Organic Growers School Spring Conference, March 6&7, 2010 at UNCA in downtown Asheville, NC. For just \$40 per day, you can choose from over 65 classes and workshops, and enjoy the seed & plant exchange, silent auction, trade show, and more. Extra classes include cooking and half day workshops, as well as on farm workshops. Register by 5pm on February 12<sup>th</sup> for Early Bird rates to apply. Now in it's 17<sup>th</sup> year, the OGS Conference remains a great way to kick of the spring season!

- [Download the class schedule, children's program](#) and other information online.

- Quick and easy [online registration](#) available with a credit card

- Call 828-582-5039 to request a mailed registration packet, or [download a printable registration form](#).

The mission of the OGS Spring Conference is to provide practical, region-appropriate and

**NOTE:** We had several inquiries from Tennessee and Virginia farmers about using this service. Please create your profile no matter where you're located. We won't build a TN or VA network until we have farmers to populate it!

- **We ask the questions for you:** Our apprentice application covers everything from past work experience to smoking and eating habits. When we send interns to you, you'll have a ton of information about the individual at your fingertips, before you even make contact.

- **We pre-screen, ensuring the closest match:** Spend less time calling and interviewing prospective workers, only to find that they are not a good match for your farm. Our service covers that initial screening process for you. We will ONLY send you interns that are matched to the desires you've listed in your profile.

- **Its FREE:** Why not? If you can find a good worker with little work on your end, that's a win-win situation!

**Start now!** Create your free profile at [www.organicgrowersschool.org/content/1876](http://www.organicgrowersschool.org/content/1876)

## Gardeners Corner: Ask Ruth



Dear Ruth,

I am planning this year's garden and want to buy my seeds. Can you explain the different seed types?

Roy H.  
Asheville, NC

Dear Roy,

Buying your garden seed is the perfect way to dispel the winter blues, and encourage an optimistic frame of mind! When navigating seed choices for your 2010 garden, the major categories include: organic, conventional, open-pollinated, heirloom, treated, and GMO.

- **Organically-grown seeds** can be either heirloom, open-pollinated, or hybrid type. They are *never* GMO or treated seeds. Organically-grown seeds are the optimal choice because these seeds have been raised using the same guidelines as other organic crops, i.e. with **no** synthetic fertilizers, pesticides or herbicides and utilizing methods with the least impact on the natural world, all living things, and the environment. Certified Organic growers are required to use organic seed.
- **Conventional seeds** would refer to *any* seed that is not organically-grown, including open-pollinated, heirlooms, hybrids, and GMOs.
- **Open-pollinated seeds** are treasured by gardeners, both young and old. The beauty of open-pollinated seed is that it can be harvested at the end of the growing season to use as your seed stock for the next season. Here's how: let some of your open-pollinated plants "go to seed". Harvest the seed when it is ripe, process the seeds, and store them in an airtight container until planting time. As long as you have not allowed the seed to cross-pollinate with another

affordable education on farming, gardening, and sustainable living. For more information about this event, now the largest of its type in the Southeastern US, visit [organicgrowersschool.org](http://organicgrowersschool.org).

## CRAFT-WNC 2010

If you are a farmer interested in training serious, aspiring growers, or if you are an apprentice or future farmer, check out CRAFT-WNC. CRAFT is a coordinated effort to bring established farmers and students of farming together for a season-long training in the art and science of farming. Membership is open for the 2010 season, and if you join before Jan 31, you have the chance to be a part of the core team that plans CRAFT training and social events. Information and membership forms are available at [www.organicgrowersschool.org/content/1874](http://www.organicgrowersschool.org/content/1874).



CRAFT-WNC is a program of the Organic Growers School, a 501c3 non-profit organization.

## This Month's Picks

Each month we feature a recipe, website, or other reader-submitted news. If you'd like to submit, email us at [ogs.readernews@gmail.com](mailto:ogs.readernews@gmail.com)

### Gluten Free Pumpkin Cheese Roll

3 eggs  
3/4 cup sugar  
2/3 cup pumpkin  
1 teaspoon lemon juice  
3/4 cup gluten-free flour ix (Bob's Red Mill is good or you can also combine sorghum, garbanzo bean and tapioca flours  
1 teaspoon gluten-free baking powder  
2 tsp cinnamon  
1 teaspoon nutmeg  
1 teaspoon ginger  
1/2 teaspoon salt  
1/2 teaspoon xanthan gum  
**FILLING**  
8 oz. cream cheese  
1 cup powdered sugar

variety, the saved seed will be “true” to the original seed. By growing out and saving open-pollinated seeds every season, you will always have a ready supply of seeds for your next growing season. You could call this food security, or simply view it as completing the circle of your harvest season. Open-pollinated seeds are usually also heirloom seeds, but there are some open-pollinated seeds on the market that have been recently developed, and therefore are not considered heirloom seeds.

- **Heirloom seeds** can be traced back many generations and are sometimes called heritage seeds. They have a very rich genetic history, and some well-known seed companies got their start as recipients of a particular heirloom seed that was passed down in their family. *All* heirloom seeds are open-pollinated and can be saved from year to year. Varieties would generally be at least pre-World War II to be considered heirloom. Some heirloom seeds, like Black-Seeded Simpson Lettuce, can be found on almost any seed rack. Other more obscure seeds have been saved from extinction by organizations like seed exchanges. Heirloom seeds from your particular region are especially desirable because they will likely be well adapted to local conditions.
- **Hybrid seed varieties** created when inbred seed lines are crossed producing seed varieties that offer more potential than either of the parent seeds, with characteristics such as higher yield, more disease resistance, and greater uniformity. These qualities can offer distinct advantages to organic gardeners, especially in regard to disease resistance. The down side: because hybrid seeds are not open-pollinated, their enhanced qualities are not passed on to subsequent generations of seeds. Farmers wishing to grow a particular hybrid variety *must* buy new seed each year. Seeds harvested from hybrid plants will not be “true”, and could even embody the worst characteristics of the parent seeds.
- **Treated seeds** conventional seed that has been treated, generally with the addition of a fungicide. Treated seeds are dyed so they are easy to identify (for example -corn seed that is dyed pink). Treated seed is *not allowed* for Certified Organic growers.
- **GMO seeds** are a recent and extremely controversial development (the first genetically engineered plant was created in 1982). GMO stands for Genetically Modified Organisms. GMO seeds are *not allowed* in organic agriculture, and there is widespread concern among organic farmers that pollen from GMO crops could permanently contaminate organic and heirloom seed supplies. As I understand it, GMO seeds require a legal agreement between the seed company and the grower; so regular gardeners are unlikely to accidentally purchase GMO seeds. Seed sellers should be happy to answer any questions regarding seed types. Many seed companies have taken the “Safe Seed Pledge” stating that they do not knowingly buy or sell any GMO seed. *The creation of GMO seeds involves unnaturally manipulating existing seed genetics with the addition, insertion, or removal of genes. Production of herbicide resistant GMO varieties of soybeans, canola, cotton, and the rise around the globe, particularly in third-world countries*

4 tablespoons butter  
 1 teaspoon vanilla extract  
 Beat eggs for 5 minutes until light in color and thick. Gradually add sugar. Stir in pumpkin and lemon juice.  
 Mix dry ingredients together and fold into pumpkin.

Pour into well greased and floured pan (15 x 10)- cookie sheet. Bake at 375°F for 15 minutes.

Remove from oven and turn onto clean kitchen towel that is sprinkled with powdered sugar.

Roll cake up (with towel) in jelly roll fashion and let cool.

Unroll cake and spread with filling and re-roll. Chill, slice and serve.

*-Recipe submitted by Amie Tabben  
 Amie's DeeLishUs Gluten Free Goodies*

## OGS presents A SALON REVIVAL!!!

**NEW THIS YEAR!** In conjunction with our [Spring Conference](#) that is moving to downtown Asheville, OGS is teaming up with local businesses and other active non profits to host a "SALON REVIVAL": **open panel discussions on hot topics in food and agriculture.**

**Three Salons will be held on the evening of March 6, 2010** (right after our conference closes for the day) **from 6:00-8:00 pm.** Reserve your **FREE seat** at one of the following events by emailing [meredith@organicgrowersschool.org](mailto:meredith@organicgrowersschool.org), or calling 828.582.5039. You can also reserve your seat when you register for the conference.

*Topic 1: Making Organic Accessible: Healthy Food for ALL Citizens* facilitated by OGS and the Bountiful Cities Project. Hosted by the Dripolator Coffeehouse in Asheville.

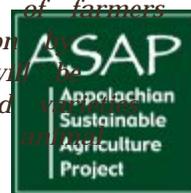
*Topic 2: Food Safety and Ag. Policy: How to be an Effective Advocate for Change.* Facilitated by OGS and the Carolina Farm Stewardship Association. Hosted by Firestorm Cafe and Books.

*Topic 3: Nourishing Tomorrow's Leaders: Battling Childhood Obesity with Farm to School Programs* facilitated by OGS and the Appalachian Sustainable Agriculture Project. Hosted by [Veggie](#) Organics.

*have probably heard the terms Roundup-Ready and Bt corn. Simultaneously, many countries do not allow planting or importation of Genetically Modified crops because their effect on human health has not been adequately researched. This politically charged topic brings many questions to the fore - including the health and security of our global food supply, the rights of farmers and families worldwide, and the control of seed production by multi-national corporations. As individuals, I hope you will be active in fighting the permanent introduction of GMO seeds into our seed stocks, and into our food for human and consumption.*

Note: You do not have to attend our conference to attend the FREE Salon Revival.

Thanks to our partners:



**Consider supporting local businesses** when purchasing seed for your garden. **Local area garden centers** offer a variety of open-pollinated, heirloom, hybrid, and organically-grown seeds. **Appalachian Seeds**, [www.appalachianseeds.com](http://www.appalachianseeds.com), is a local farm that offers a diverse selection of heirloom tomato seeds available online or from their farm in Morganton, NC. **Sow True Seeds**, [www.sowtrue.com](http://www.sowtrue.com), is a local seed company that specializes in open-pollinated seeds, both organic and conventional. Their seed can be found at local garden centers, natural groceries, online, and at their retail location in Asheville.



Be sure to visit the **Seed Exchange** at the **17th Annual Organic Growers School Spring Conference** **March 6 & 7, 2010** in a *new location* this year, at **UNCA** in Asheville, NC. Register now for earlybird rates.



Happy seed gathering,

Ruth Gonzalez

Ruth Gonzalez is a former market farmer, avid gardener, local food advocate, and founder of the Tailgate Market Fan Club. In her job at Reems Creek Nursery, Ruth offers advice on all sorts of gardening questions, and benefits daily from the wisdom of local gardeners.



Gardeners: Got a question for Ruth?

[Email it to us \(ogs.readernews@gmail.com\)](mailto:ogs.readernews@gmail.com)

## NEWS BITS

News Bits are reader submitted. You can submit, too by emailing [ogs.readernews@gmail.com](mailto:ogs.readernews@gmail.com)

## JOB OPPORTUNITY

Blue Ridge Food Ventures has a part-time position available for a Farm Outreach Program Manager. This person will work as part of a team to help farmers in western North Carolina develop value-added products, manage the Winter Sun Farms CSA program and promote Blue Ridge Food Ventures to a variety of audiences. The ideal candidate will have:

- Experience in running a business, with budgeting, cash flow and financial analysis experience.
- Familiarity with commercial food processing equipment.
- Experience working with farmers and

## Farmers Corner: Ask Tom



Dear Tom-

My greenhouse collapsed under the recent snow and the Quonset shape now looks more like a capital "M". Any suggestions on repairs?

- Perplexed Grower

Dear Perplexed Grower –

I've seen poly houses collapse or blow away on several occasions. Each time they have gone back up stronger than before. We lost two houses in the recent snow but others survived. My first suggestion is to look for the

points of failure so that the repair can eliminate that particular failure next time. With our changing climate I suspect more large snow events in the future.

Here are some common causes of polyhouse failure and possible preventive strategies to consider:

**Wind** – Greenhouses look remarkably like the leading edge of an aircraft wing. As high wind moves across the hoops there is pressure down (to collapse the structure) but also lift created (to pull up ground stakes and make it airborne). It pays to either secure ground posts with concrete or put tabs on the posts underground to resist an upward pull. Mobile home anchors might be a good idea, particularly for a retrofit.

**Rain** – Loose poly can create bags where hoops intersect the purlins. In a heavy rain hundreds of pounds of added load can take down a greenhouse. Keep the poly tight and also check the wiggle wire channels from time to time and make sure the screws attaching them to the frame are still solid.

**Snow** – The traditional approach that we used for snow protection is 2X4 posts under the center of the house every couple of hoops. In this exceptional snow storm that system failed in two ways. In some cases the supports were driven into the soil and allowed the structure to deform enough to fail. In other cases the 2X4 just splintered under the load. This failure was, by the way, with both of us unloading houses for all we were worth as snow was falling. For heated houses the strategy normally is to turn off the inflation blower and keep the house warm enough to melt snow as it falls. Another approach that we will consider next time if we get behind in removing snow is to pull the wiggle wire and get the poly off the frame.

So -- our lessons learned were use bigger boards than 2X4. In another house 2X6s deformed but did not fail. I plan to make better use of the poplars that are common on our farm and cut really beefy posts instead of relying on dimensional lumber. I also plan to put those posts on some sort of footing like a trex platform. (Pressure treated wood is not allowed in organic houses.) Trex is one brand of composite wood made from sawdust and recycled plastic. Composites won't leach toxics or rot.

**Repair suggestion** - I recommend cutting out the kinks and breaks in the old frame with a Sawzall or similar reciprocating saw. A circular saw with an abrasive metal blade also works but it's a little slower. Cut enough of the bend out so that the cross section of the pipe is round again. Large pipe wrenches or a section of larger diameter pipe can often be used to fix minor bends. The key to strong repairs is to find pipe that is slightly larger or smaller than your hoops. Cut enough for about a foot overlap on either side of the repair and slip the other pipe over (or inside) the cut ends.

Tek (self-tapping metal) screws can hold it in place. I have used this method before and never seen that same spot fail again. The double metal probably makes the repair stronger than the rest of the frame, even with the screw holes (which generally are not a good idea for hoops.)



I anticipate about 40 hours to reconstruct each of our houses. The cost of that time compares favorably to the cost of hauling off the old frame and buying a new one.

One other thought to consider as you reconstruct is to see if you can change the shape from Quonset to gothic. Gothic designs with a steeper roof shed snow better and I am hopeful they will reduce drips on the crops if the condensation will slide off the interior instead of dripping on our tomatoes (a leading cause of tomato leaf mold.)

Happy farming.

-- Tom

Tom Elmore owns and operates Thatchmore Farm, a certified organic vegetable operation in Leicester, NC. Catch him at the North Asheville Tailgate Market and the West Asheville Tailgate Market.

Commercial Farmers: Got a Question for Tom?  
[Email it to us \(ogs.readernews@gmail.com\)](mailto:ogs.readernews@gmail.com)

small farm production.

- Knowledge of the specialty foods industry.
- Ability to write grants and reports for different audiences.

#### Required Education and Skills:

The candidate will preferably have a degree in agriculture, business, foods, marketing or related fields. The applicant must be self-initiating and able to multi-task effectively in a complex environment. This individual must demonstrate effective human relations skills and be able to work collaboratively. A high level of computer skills with the Microsoft Office package, QuickBooks, email, and internet browsing are required. A valid driver's license is required and a moderate amount of travel in the region is expected. Please send a cover letter, salary history, complete resume and 3 references to:

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