

[View as Web Page](#) [Subscribe](#) [Send to a Friend](#)

[Organic Growers School](#)



Supporting Sustainable Agriculture  
in the Southern Appalachians through  
Educational Programs and Outreach



...e-news

See YOU at the Fair (and not your dog)!



SEPTEMBER 25 & 26, 2010

at the  
BIG IVY COMMUNITY CENTER, Barnardsville, NC  
[get directions](#)

GATES OPEN 10am - 6pm daily

\$5/adult, \$3/children  
kids 2 and under get in FREE



The 4th Annual True Nature Country Fair is THIS WEEKEND!  
Enjoy [classes on all aspects of sustainable living](#), send your kids to the [SPROUTS kids program](#), groove to live music, compete in the [fiddle contest](#), learn to contra dance, [enjoy local and organic food](#), browse the trade show and [silent auction](#), and MORE! Want to volunteer? Give us a shout at 828.342.1849 . ONE IMPORTANT NOTE: DON'T BRING YOUR PETS to the Fair. We will have livestock on site this year and we don't want them spooked. Please leave Spot at home! Thanks!

A NOTE TO POTTERS: The local foods dinner at this year's [True Nature Country Fair](#) is called [One Bowl](#) and will feature hearty and healthy soups and stews, made from local and organic ingredients. We would love to serve up the entrees in handcrafted bowls, donated by local potters. Guests will keep the bowls as part of their dinner experience, and all proceeds from the dinner will benefit experiential education at the True Nature Country Fair. Interested in donating your work to this cause? Artists contributing four bowls or more will be our guest for dinner, and ALL participating

artists will have their name listed in the dinner program. Contact Karen Vizzina at 828.342.1849.

See this month's ASK RUTH for a run down of some of our awesome classes, or, click the link above to "classes on all aspects of sustainable living" to view the entire schedule. See you at the Fair!

## NEWS BITS

News Bits are reader submitted events, news, and opinion. Submit your bit via email to: [enews@organicgrowersschool.org](mailto:enews@organicgrowersschool.org)

### CHICKENS AND YOU

An introductory presentation entitled "Chickens and YOU: Keeping Micro-flocks of Chickens as Garden Helpers, Compost Creators, Biomass Recyclers and Local Food Suppliers" will be held October 11, 2010 at 7:00 pm at the Unitarian Universalist Fellowship Hall, located downstairs at the corner of Kanuga Rd. and Price St. in Hendersonville. Patricia Foreman, author of *City Chicks: Keeping Micro-flocks of Chickens*, and co-host, along with Andy Schneider, of the Chicken Whisperer Backyard Poultry and Sustainable Lifestyles Talk Show, will give the talk and power point presentation, which is sponsored by the Social Justice Team of the Unitarian Universalist Fellowship. Attendees will find out how to utilize their own "Chicken Have-More Plan" by learning to think outside the coop and inside the garden. The one-hour presentation is open to the public at no charge. For more info, contact Richard Freudenberger, Back Home Magazine, at 828.696.3838.

### GROWING GREAT GARLIC

A Hands-On Class about Growing Garlic  
at  
Red Wing Farm  
Saturday October 2, 2010  
1-5 pm  
Swannanoa, NC

It's almost time to plant your garlic! Garlic is an ancient medicinal, edible, nourishing food that you can grow for yourself in your home garden! Growing garlic is easy and gratifying.

In this hands-on class we will cover all the basics of growing garlic, including choosing varieties, preparing beds, planting, mulching, overwintering, harvesting and curing, and saving your own seed garlic. We'll also discuss growing spring garlic and harvesting garlic scapes. The cost of the class is \$40 and includes 2 heads of seed garlic to take home and plant. Yes, early October is the time to plant garlic! To register or for more information, email [redwingfarmer@gmail.com](mailto:redwingfarmer@gmail.com) or call 298-0957. Visit us at [www.redwingfarm.net](http://www.redwingfarm.net).

## GET YOUR INTERNS HERE

### OGS Apprentice Link

As you put your farm to bed, we know you're thinking about next season. After all, everything will be better next season, right? Especially if you have to work less for a decent labor force. Check out our intern matching program: [North Carolina Apprentice Link](#). It's totally free, and it takes only 10 minutes to create your profile. Once you've joined, you're in, and we ask you only for updates once each fall. As soon as your profile hits the web, your farm is visible to hundreds of potential interns searching for farm work in 2011. They'll apply with us, and our office will screen their applications. If we see a match for you, we'll send it on to your inbox. You take it from there.

Why look at all the applications if you're only looking for two workers? Let us do the grunt work for you! It's free and super easy. [Visit NCAL on the web today.](#)

## 18th Annual Spring Conference



If you have not already marked your calendar, do it now! **The 18th annual Organic Growers School Spring Conference is scheduled March 5 & 6, 2011 at the University Carolina-Asheville.** We are designing the exciting class schedule right now, and we welcome exhibitors and sponsors for the event. Keep an eye on our website for surprises that we have in store, and look forward to a great networking and educational experience in 2011! **NEW TRACKS this year: URBAN FARMING, PRIMITIVE SKILLS, GROWING FRUIT, and MORE!**

## Gardener's Corner

### Ask Ruth

Follow-up to the Prichard's question last month about gardening on a



**25% slope:** After reading last month's newsletter, Barry Rubenstein responded by saying that the slopes I mentioned on their farm are not very steep; they're only about six degrees. Barry recommended terracing your garden areas. I agree with Barry that terracing will offer you the best-case scenario. As I mentioned last month, the problem with steep slopes is that water runs down the hill quickly – taking your nutrients, eroding your topsoil, and leaving your garden dry. To clarify – even though it is *possible* to grow on a steep slope, it is not *ideal*. Your garden areas will retain more water, be more productive, and be easier to maintain and harvest if you create terraces or moderate the slope substantially.

If you still plan to create keyhole gardens on this steep slope, remember that constructing swales above the planting areas will help retain water in the soil. Plant your rows going across the hill, rather than down. Utilize cover cropping. Eliminate weed seeds before they mature. Use drip irrigation or a soaker hose,

and water in short intervals - allowing the moisture to soak into the soil (rather than run down the hill) before adding more water.

### Find fun & inspiration this weekend!

The Organic Growers School puts on the **True Nature Country Fair** this weekend, September 25 & 26, at the Big Ivy Community Center in Barnardsville, NC. That's about 20 miles north of downtown Asheville. The Fair site runs along a creek, has nice big trees, and the parking is easy. Daily admission to the Fair is \$5 adults/\$3 Kids, and \$5 per class/guided walk that you take. What a great opportunity to enjoy the beautiful weather, take classes, hear music, see demonstrations and cool stuff, and have a good time!

**In traditional OGS style,** True Nature Country Fair is offering a slate of *exciting classes to inspire farmers, gardeners, and natural living*. Over 50 classes will be offered on Saturday and Sunday. The **Educational Tracks are:** In The Garden / Medicinal Herbs / Homesteading / Renewable Energy & Green Building / Health & Healing / Honoring Our Elders / Permaculture, and in the festival tent...Be Informed. The full class schedule can be found at

[http://sfc.smallfarmcentral.com/dynamic\\_content/uploadfiles/212/full%20event%20schedule.pdf](http://sfc.smallfarmcentral.com/dynamic_content/uploadfiles/212/full%20event%20schedule.pdf). There are so many interesting presentations that it will be hard to decide which classes to attend.

*Just to entice you, I have included a few snippets about this years classes at True Nature Country Fair:*

- Rodney Webb & Glenn Esterson will discuss techniques for incorporating **mushroom cultivation** into your garden or farm, on any scale, and conduct a hands-on inoculation demonstration.
- Two different enthusiasts, Martin Webster and Benjamin Portwood, will give **composting** classes. Remember, the leaves are about to fall off the trees and create scads of free composting material. Be ready. These guys know their stuff.
- **Raising Urban Chickens**, or raising a backyard flock anywhere; will be presented by Cathy Williams. Everything you need to know to get your little flock going, including breed selection and coop design. Imagine gathering your very own eggs!
- **Hempcrete** is a renewable, breathable, and carbon negative building material that can last hundreds of years. Get the lowdown with David Madera.
- In "What is **Homeopathy** and How Do I Use It?"... Margaret Bennett sorts out the basic principles and practical applications of homeopathy.
- Barbara Meister Vitale, adopted by the Lakota people in 1980, will share the traditional Native American way of "Walking the **Sacred Path of the Plant Kingdom**" and becoming one with the Herb Nation on the road to healing.
- The **Permaculture** Track features everything from Intro to Permaculture, to abundant backyard production techniques with Chuck Marsh, to esoteric classes that explore the deep relationship we humans can have with our bio-region, *and more!*
- Busha Green will talk about garden planning & production that will allow us to **eat fresh garden food all twelve months of the year**. Sounds great, doesn't it?

**And a few more...**Solar Food Dehydration, Mead Making, Garden Insect & Disease Control (always popular), Beekeeping, Goats, The Family Cow, Green Building, Seed Saving, Energy Issues, Natural Dyeing, Wildwood Wisdom, Ayurveda...and still more!

This year's **Walking Adventures** are...Your Backyard Apothecary, Wild Plants, Getting to Know Your Mountain Trees, Beneficial Birds, *and* Weeds, Folklore, & Useful Plants.

**Additional activities at the Fair include** an Old Time Music & Fiddle Contest, fun at the Kids Tent, Displays, Goat Cart Rides (really!), a Silent Auction, and Vendor Booths. **Plus...**a *local foods feast* called **One Bowl** will feature a scrumptious meal made with ingredients from area sustainable farms - on Saturday evening at 6 p.m. A bunch of your favorite farms and great cooks are collaborating to create this delicious meal. The One

Bowl dinner is \$20, and includes a pottery bowl handmade by a local potter. Reservations recommended, contact Karen at 828-342-1849 or [earthstarnc@earthlink.net](mailto:earthstarnc@earthlink.net).

## MEET CRAFT

### Flying Cloud Farm CRAFT Tour

#### **Flying Cloud Farm Tour: A reminder of the importance of CRAFT** by Hannah Furgiele

*I work from home, so most of what I do is in the solitude of my dining room with a computer or a phone. When people ask me what I do for work, I try to explain that I help to coordinate a program that supports sustainable agriculture through farmer-to-farmer education. Often times, I feel that the work I do is very abstract and the results sometimes intangible. It is easy to feel isolated without the day-to-day physical interactions that some office environments invite. But, when I get out on a tour, and hear and see the excitement, the curiosity, the incredible work that is being done in our community to preserve farmland, the wild, and our food security, I feel connected to something so much more than myself. When I see young apprentices asking questions to the established farmers, I feel confident that CRAFT is truly supporting a grassroots initiative that increases the sustainability of our food system and agricultural methods through providing individuals interested in, or participating in alternative forms of agriculture. (By "alternative" I simply mean methods other than conventional.) So, when I arrived at Flying Cloud Farm on September 4 for the tour about "insect, disease, and weed management," my focus was more on the collaborative nature of CRAFT, the wealth of knowledge that local farmers possess, and the beauty that has been preserved because one family decided it should be.*

*Driving back home after the tour, I felt hopeful for the future of farming in Southern Appalachia. I felt that the smaller group at this tour created a dynamic discussion that allowed everyone to chime in at different times sharing their passion, connectedness, and commitment to farming. I felt the tour was a great success.*  
-Hannah



The September tour was one of the smaller gatherings I have attended, but as I walked along with the farmers and apprentices, I was moved by the dynamic that was created through a smaller group. We gathered initially in the driveway of the main farmhouse, while Annie and Isaiah Perkinson introduced the farm. Flying Cloud Farm has been in Annie's family for a couple of generations, though prior to her decision to farm full-time, along with her husband Isaiah, her family had employed other people to manage the farming operations. The land surrounding the valley where Flying Cloud Farm rests was owned by Annie's family and just recently was put into a conservation trust, along with the farm, so that the mountains will be preserved for the wild, and the farmland

will be preserved for farming. Annie's brother works in farmland preservation with Southern Appalachian Highlands Conservancy. As you can tell, her family is deeply committed to land preservation.

In addition to the level of commitment to the land, there were some other impressive elements to Flying Cloud Farm. Isaiah's creativity and skills at building, designing, and creating useful farm equipment as well as the construction of a new farm stand along the driveway by the main road that leads to Flying Cloud Farm are among them. It seems that he can take anything and make it work in their favor on the farm. The farm stand was a recent project, and will support their roadside sales. You can see below the old one, which was still in use at our tour. It is based on an honor system, and though they have had to improve some of their methods to ensure success, they have created a nice way to add some extra income from passerby's, while offering their neighbors a very local source of produce.

Flying Cloud Farm pieces together several different plots of land that run along the long, flat valley in Fairview, NC. They produce vegetables, fruits, berries, and flowers that are sold through local markets, a 100 member CSA, the self-service roadside stand, and through a 'you-pick' system.

As we walked through the farm, we saw the blackberries, some of which were ten years old, the horses that are owned by Annie's mother, and the bamboo grove that had different types of housing for the interns that lived and worked at Flying Cloud. The interns were provided different



options: one lived in a tent, one in a yurt, and one in a small rustic cabin with a sleeping loft. They were also provided an outdoor kitchen, shower, and a composting toilet. The old barn lay beyond the bamboo, and its loft provided ample storage for the winter squashes, pumpkins, dried amaranth, and hay.

In addition to a rich history of the area, Annie and Isaiah focused on weed management and insect control at Flying Cloud Farm. They walked us through the tractor equipment that was most useful for weeding, explaining the name and function of a wide variety. It was impressive to hear everyone talk about their favorite tools and why, and the impromptu discussions that happened with this topic.



Regarding insect and pest control at Flying Cloud, Annie discussed the importance of soil health and preventative measures. Often times, she said, once the bugs are there, its really challenging to get rid of them, but if your plants are strong and healthy from a nutrient rich soil, they can withstand the damage of some pests and disease.

Overall, this tour was wonderful, full of information, and some great discussions on the side. I felt that it really was a great CRAFT Tour, and those present seemed to really get a lot of information and support from it. I look forward to our next tour at Mountain Harvest Organics!

CRAFT-WNC is a farmer-led initiative that provides a network for established farmers to train aspiring growers. Membership is rolling, and the tours for 2011 will soon be planned. To sign up for next season, or catch the tail-end of this season, [visit our website and JOIN TODAY.](#)



## Farmer's Corner

### Ask Tom



Dear OGS –

I intend to start a small farm operation in 2011. I am looking for ideas on the cost of equipment and supplies that I will need to get started as well as suggestions on how to finance them. Thanks.

-- Andi in Asheville

Dear Andi –

The approaches to start-up capital are probably as varied as the farms that use them. I will describe our approach and offer some ideas on how to proceed.

I estimate the cost of our infrastructure at about \$50,000 but we assembled it gradually as our farm operation grew. That number may sound high but irrigation systems, fencing, greenhouses, coolers, dry storage, tractors, fruit trees, plastic buckets, pick-up trucks, tailgate tables, and such add up. I describe our approach with a term that I heard from former Celo farmer Ruth Ostrenga – “flying low.” – or in other words spending as little as possible on equipment for a small scale operation.

Farming is a second career for me so we were able to assemble a down payment on our farm with proceeds from selling a house elsewhere. It came with a barn, well, and several outbuildings that were “financed” through our home mortgage. Our first year we grew on about a quarter acre so not much infrastructure was needed.

In my view, the trick in flying low is to have a plan for how large your operation will eventually be and to install infrastructure that can be expanded as the operation grows. A less desirable approach is to buy cheap equipment that needs to be torn down relatively soon at a waste of time and money. For example, if you are laying irrigation line, it makes sense to put a large enough pipe in the ground to accommodate future expansion in that direction. A propagation house can be placed in a way to accept future bays or more hoops as the demand for transplants grows.

For cooling we used old refrigerators for a few years until we could afford a reach-in cooler. It was eventually replaced with a used walk-in. Some growers cool produce in a spare room using a window air conditioner and special controller.

A packing shed can be tarp and laundry tub. The family pick-up can be the tailgate vehicle too. The house well can pressurize a small irrigation system. A walk-behind tiller can prepare an acre or so in the beginning, even if a tractor is needed eventually.. Most equipment is available used at a much lower cost if you have the patience to look for it.

Be sure and remember the option of renting equipment or contracting with a neighbor who owns the equipment that you need. Some growers have a neighbor disc their production area each spring and manage it with a walk-behind tiller until it is cover cropped in the fall.

To summarize our approach, we worked up to the \$50,000 in infrastructure very gradually as our farm grew. We financed our farm equipment from farm proceeds generally with some help from off-farm employment. We avoided debt and each year we continue to improve the equipment in our operation with farm earnings.

At the other end of the spectrum is "fly high" or obtain a loan to buy the equipment for full-scale operation immediately. Possible sources of financing are Mountain Bizworks, Self-Help Credit Union, or Carolina Farm Credit. Small business loans through more conventional lenders may also be an option. Most lenders will need to see a business plan and a good credit history. Without a track record, the sales pitch to the loan officer might be challenging but it's worth asking. When you do have a track record, a good relationship with a lender may be helpful. Many growers obtain a loan each year for operating capital and pay it off when the crop comes in.

We took the frugal, fly low approach to infrastructure but other options exist. It might make sense to put off large purchases for a few years until you have enough experience to know exactly what equipment that you will need. It might also be best to rent highly specialized equipment until you are sure that you will be growing the crop needing that equipment for many years.

The CRAFT organization ([www.organicgrowersschool.org/content/1874](http://www.organicgrowersschool.org/content/1874)) managed by OGS can be a great source of ideas on flying low. Every farm tour gives me ideas on how to do more with less on our farm.

Best of luck with your farm enterprise. We need new growers. Please let Organic Growers School know how we can help. Thanks

-- Tom

Organic Growers School • 926 Welch Road • Franklin • NC • 28734

<http://www.organicgrowersschool.org>

[Subscribe](#) | [Unsubscribe](#) | [Preferences](#) | [Send to a Friend](#) | [Report Spam](#)

powered by:  & 