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[Organic Growers School](#)



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



...e-news

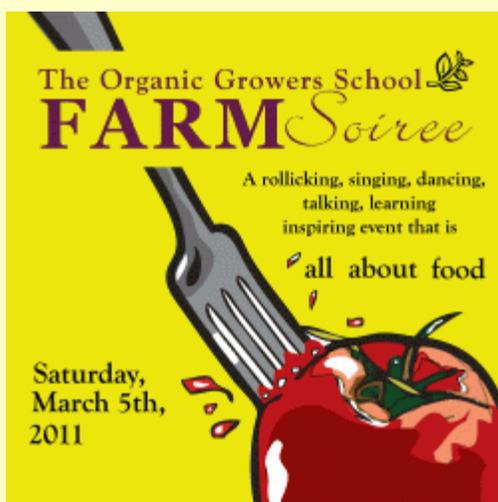
January Growers Notebook

News, Tips, & Advice on Things Organic

18th Annual Conference Promises to put a Spring in Your Step



Excitement is building for our [18th annual Spring Conference](#), which stands to draw over 1500 people from 17 states and Canada to the University of North Carolina at Asheville on March 5 & 6. If you haven't already checked out the [schedule](#), be sure to download it so you can start planning your Conference Weekend! Registration is [OPEN NOW](#) and early bird rates of just \$40/day will continue until February 17th at 5pm. In addition to the [awesome class line up](#), we're offering a renovated trade show, a great [kids program](#), seed and plant exchange, silent auction, and [more](#). Volunteer/Work Exchange opportunities are available. [Apply online](#).



One of the most exciting additions to this year's line-up is our [all new benefit concert and social FarmSoiree](#). For years, conference speakers and attendees alike have been begging for a concerted effort to bring everyone from the conference together in one place for some post-conference meet and greet. So, we've had our noses to the

grindstone planning a knock-your-socks-off event that will fulfill your need for a social whammy on the conference weekend. Here's the scoop: FarmSoiree will take place at the **Orange Peel** Asheville's favorite music venue, from **8pm-12am on March 5th**. We're lucky to have the musical talent of one of Asheville's finest bands-- The **Firecracker Jazz Band** addition to their jazzy accompaniment,

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CRAFT is enrolling for 2011: It's going to be a big year!

we'll enlighten you, challenge you, and make you think in a hurry with our [Ignite \(TM\) Agriculture](#) presentation.

Ignite (TM) is a unique presentation style that is sure to please. Ignite speakers are challenged to get their message across in just 5 minutes, with the aid of 20 picture slides that auto-advance every 15 seconds. Ignite's slogan is "Enlighten Us. But Make it Quick", because speakers have to poetically and artfully engage the audience in such a short amount of time. You may have heard of Ignite presentations in other cities, but the Organic Growers School is the first to license the presentation style in Asheville, under the name "Ignite Agriculture". During the March 5th FarmSoiree, Ignite will be following a theme of **food**, and we'll be hearing from at least 8 presenters who represent many different perspectives in the community. It's sure to be an interesting, fun-filled, and compelling experience, so be sure to [get your tickets now](#). The show welcomes all ages, and costs \$15/adult and \$7/child. ***If you [purchase your ticket WITH a Conference registration, you get in the door for just \\$12](#). Special thanks to the [Orange Peel](#), and a boatload of volunteers for making this event possible!

LASTLY, the ever faithful Tom and Ruth have highlighted their conference picks, below. **See you there, green thumb!**

Farmer's Corner: Ask Tom



Fellow Farmers –

The Organic Growers School Spring Conference is coming up on March 5 and 6 at UNCA. Our goal is to provide great organic growing information for the mountains at an affordable price. The OGS started as a "farmer only" event. Organizers found incredible organic interest by gardeners and consumers so we broadened the school to include classes for them as well. While farmers are outnumbered now, cultural information for professional growers is still a high priority. Take a look at the offerings [online](#).

I see many classes that will help me in my continuing search for enterprises that will spread my work around the year, and help me evaluate new enterprises. Consider these examples:

- Doug Ruley and Laura Lengnick will be talking about climate change and carbon on the farm. (Session 2C). Personally, I think that the austerity mood in DC will eventually end, as well as the big commodity program payments to Midwestern farmers—but, politicians will be looking for a way to let those constituents down more easily. Paying for on-farm carbon sequestration could be just the ticket. Farmers can manage their



A big year lies ahead for OGS' Collaborative Regional Alliance for Farmer Training. Thanks to some solid area partnerships, and grants from the National Institute for Food and Agriculture and the Beattie Foundation, we've got a battery of new initiatives to pair with our on-farm training. Here's what's in store:

On farm tours, as always, will form the backbone of the 2011 CRAFT training, allowing participating farmers and students of farming to learn via experience. In addition to the on farm curriculum, CRAFT members will have access to business planning resources, financial training, and marketing consultation thanks to our partnership with the Appalachian Sustainable Agriculture Project (ASAP), and Mountain BizWorks (MBW), two powerhouse area non profits who have joined us in a multi-year project to aid new and growing farms. Together, as the Appalachian Farm Alliance, our three organizations aim to make the path to farm success clearer, easier, and more well-worn. (see the first course offering through this grant, below!)

soils to burn up carbon or to build it up. Soils work better with high carbon content so why not **subsidize farmers to take atmospheric carbon and put it into their soil**. Some companies are already paying forest land owners for carbon credits. This is an area to keep an eye on, especially for organic growers.

- For livestock operations feed is often the largest expense. Why not improve your profit by grazing year-round instead of spending all that time cutting and baling hay? Matt Poore (Session 3D) will look at ways to cut back on feed expenses with **year round grazing**.
- I've heard farming described as just an excuse to buy tools. Check out some of the **best farm equipment** with organic growers Daniel Parson and Alex Brown.
- Many consumers eat more fruit than vegetables. Blueberries rarely go unsold on our stand. Many more types of fruit are adapted to our region than we bring to market. Richard Moyer (Session 1G) is farmer and life-long fruit enthusiast who can advise us on which **fruit are suitable to commercial production** and might also fit into slow times for farm labor. In Session 4G, farmer Annie Louise Perkinson will talk about adding fruits to your marketing mix.
- Chuck Marsh (Session 1J) is a great speaker and his look at backyard **economics from a permaculture perspective** is easily scaled to the farmstead level. A wise man once said about farming that how much you don't spend is as important as how much you sell. Chuck is a great advisor on plugging economic leaks and growing unusual crops that might be a market niche for your farm.
- Rob Lamb (Session 4L) will look at ways to **manage your woodlot for income and savings**. Using your forest lands in a way that allows them to pay their share of the land payment is a great opportunity for diversification on most small farms.
- I don't know much about chickens but if you are interested in **chicken production** Track O looks like the place to be. I do know that eggs are one of the most popular items at our markets.
- While the red tape related to wine sales is major, it's a value added product even if its only consumed by you and used as gifts. Why not displace some of those fancy beers with Chateau du Back Forty? Kaleb Wallace offers a **half-day workshop on wine making** (Session P).
- If you have any interest at all in alternative energy, you need to see James Nowak's workshop on **biomass gasifiers**. It's very hands-on. Imagine a machine that you shovel wood chips into and you can run a generator from the product (or a tractor for that matter). While this [You-tube](#) Video isn't James, it will give you the general idea

One problem with the OGS SpringConference – too many choices – but that's a good problem to have, in my view. See you there!

-- Tom

Join CRAFT today!
There is a place for everyone. [Details and registration online.](#)

ANNOUNCEMENT!

The first opportunity from the Appalachian Farm Alliance is a training course in using **Excel Software for your Agriculture Business**. Take your knowledge of Excel to the next level! In this three-week course, you will learn to:

- create professional spreadsheets
- Make charts
- Protect your documents
- Utilize advanced formatting features
- Sort data into useful information
- Learn advanced printing features

NEXT COURSE
February 1, 8, and 15
from 6-9pm in
Asheville NC at the
offices of Mountain
BizWorks.

Pre-Registration is required. Contact 828.253.2834 or register [via email.](#)

Funding for these new initiatives has been provided by the Beattie Foundation, and by the Beginning Farmer and Rancher Development Program of the National Food and Agriculture, USDA, Grant # 2010-49400-21817.

Commercial Growers: Got a Question for Tom? [Email it to us.](#)

News Bits are reader-submitted news, events, and opinion. [Submit your bit via email](#) by the 10th of each month.

Gardener's Corner: Ask Ruth



Greetings Gardeners,

January's weather has been brutal. Hopefully this newsletter finds you snuggled in a chair with your seed catalogues and a cup of tea. It may feel a bit early to think about your garden for 2011, but inspiration is on the way! The OGS Spring Conference is coming right up (March 5 & 6, 2011 at UNCA) and is guaranteed to get your juices flowing. Just a reminder...the early-bird discount deadline is January 17.

Every single class I have ever taken at the Organic Growers School has been worthwhile, and usually they are downright spectacular. Below are some gardener-gearred classes that I'm particularly excited about this year:

- **Making a Square Foot Garden** with Ron Arps (session 1A) or **BioIntensive Agriculture for Urban Spaces** with Angel Cruz (session 3A): No more excuses for the space-constrained homeowner! You can grow your own veggies using special intercropping and other techniques developed by Mel Bartholomew and/or John Jeavons. Or, if you're already gardening on a regular scale, you can use these techniques to maximize your yields, and conserve water and other resources.
- You can always count on Chip Hope to inspire you; his enthusiasm is catching. This year he'll give you creative homesteading tips in **Heirloom Apples and your Incredible, Edible Yard** (session 4B). Chip will also cover some basic sustainable growing techniques to help build your garden's resiliency.
- **What's In Your Compost** with Brian Rosa (session 3C) is a look at heavy metal build up in bagged compost. Find out whom this affects, get educated and protect your soil!
- Expert homesteader Kathleen Lamont will talk about **Long-Term Food Storage & Preserving the Harvest** (session 1I) including canning methods, dehydrating, freezing, and root cellaring. Take this class and enjoy your harvest even during the worst winter months. She's also full of tips for making your garden work for you all year long!
- Loyal OGS Speaker Juliet Blankespoor will present on **Growing an Herb Tea Garden** (session 4K). Juliet is praised for her humor and knowledge, and will help you understand the practical uses of common tea herbs, as well as how to design and implement your own tea garden.
- **Alternatives to Invasive Exotics** with Deborah Green (session 4M) will help you think about giving your home landscape the look you want ~ without introducing invasive species. Meet some of the many wonderful native plants in the world!
- **Growing Oyster Mushrooms** with Leslie Sigmon ~ This Half-Day session focuses on producing tasty mushrooms using a simply bale of hay and other commonly available materials. Imagine harvesting mushrooms from your own back yard! Hey, anything you can do to add to your repertoire, right?
- **How to deal with bugs is the perennial question every**

Organic Farm for Lease

We're looking for young farmers who might be interested in leasing a small parcel of Ayrshire Farm, the first certified organic farm in NC, located 6 mi west of Pittsboro. Contact dfwalker99@hotmail.com for more info if interested.

Find Ayrshire Farm on Facebook!

The International Center for Poultry presents HERITAGE POULTRY HUSBANDRY 101

Workshops for Small, Sustainable Poultry Farmers!

Location:
North Carolina Cooperative Extension Service
Buncombe County Center
94 Cove Ave.
Asheville, NC 28801

1. "Raising Heritage Turkeys for Holiday Market" –Tuesday, March 1st & 8th (6:00PM – 9:00PM)

2. "Raising Heritage Chickens for Profit" – Tuesday, March 15th & 22nd (6:00PM – 9:00PM)

3. These workshops are also offered Feb 18th-19th at the Cabarrus County Extension office in Concord, NC.

We must have a minimum of (10) pre-registered attendees for each workshop, and certain fees apply. Call 209.890.5326 or [email us](#) by Friday, February 4th, 2011 so that we can confirm all the workshop details.

NC REAL Sustainable

gardener ponders. Our super-knowledgeable Linda Blue addresses this critical dilemma in her session (2B) Pest Management - Options for the Home Garden.

When I look over the schedule...it's really hard to choose which classes I want to attend. Every single track entices me. All the cooking classes sound great, plus I would love to learn how to "Make Fire By Friction" and how to "Build My Own Wood-fired Oven". Of course, these are just a few samples out of the smorgasbord of learning opportunities at this year's OGS Spring Conference. Make sure to download the schedule and pick out your own favorites.

Currently, I am also busy helping to plan the first annual [FarmSoiree](#) after-party, which is happening on Saturday night (March 5) after the day's conference activities. I hope you'll join us at the Orange Peel for a fun-filled evening featuring an engaging **IgniteAgriculture** presentation, and music by one of my favorites ~ the **Firecracker Jazz Band!**

See you in March,

Ruth

Gardeners: Got a Question for Ruth? [Email it to us.](#)

Apprentice Link Can Help You!

We say it every winter month, "[Check out Apprentice Link!](#)" But here's the thing: We really mean it! It's the time of year to gear up if you're looking for farm help this season, and the more usage our online labor-matching database receives, the more useful it becomes. Let's face it, we're not going anywhere in this effort to bring people together unless we all make an effort. Since 2009, Apprentice Link has grown by leaps and bounds, and thanks to partnerships with local community colleges, an expansion of the service to include NC as well neighboring states, we've got more applications from interested interns than we have farmers to take them!

Also, we've been in communication with state departments of labor and are happy to talk with you about structuring your on-farm apprentice program. **We can help you decipher labor regulations!** Just call us at 828.582.5039. Lastly, if you're interested in learning about labor regulation, we'll be offering a session at ASAP's **Marketing Opportunities for Farmers Conference** on February 26th called "Structuring Labor on the Small Farm." OGS Director Meredith McKissick will cover employee v. contractor status, recommendations on setting up internships and acquiring dependable workers, and wage and hour laws governing NC farms. More [information about this conference is available online.](#)

A Reader's Response to Vermi-Composting Article

Pat Momich of Madison County responded to the Ask Ruth article about composting with redworms by writing:

I got excited about worms a couple of years ago and started a worm bin. Once I had lots of wonderful worm casings, I started to think about how to separate the worms...and I began to wonder about non-native worms in the garden.

I did a little research and found several articles about the "ecological carnage" brought about by European worms. I also wrote a couple of researchers at the University of

Agriculture Entrepreneurship

This course is designed to strengthen the business savvy of area farmers to help them develop and manage a profitable, environmentally sound small farm or agricultural business. The course uses hands-on experiential teaching techniques and provides opportunities for consultation with instructors and guest speakers from the academic, small business, environmental, and agricultural sectors. The course provides intensive, interactive, professional-level small business and technical training to develop specific critical thinking and problem-solving skills needed for successful entrepreneurship. Emphasis is placed on market research, financing, time management, and the day-to-day activities of owning/operating a sustainable farm as a competitive, small business. Upon completion, the participants should be able to write and implement a viable business plan and obtain financing for an agricultural enterprise. (24 hrs) No fee exemption

Course Fee: \$65

Tue, Jan 18 - Mar 08,
6:00PM-9:00PM
127 Ramsey, Madison Site
Course #: SEF-1055-200
[Register online](#)
Questions? Contact Jill Sparks at 828.254.1921 x5849 or jsparks@abtech.edu

JOB ANNOUNCEMENT: North Asheville Tailgate Market

The North Asheville Tailgate Market is accepting applications to fill the part-time position of Market Director. A position description is available [online](#). Please submit an electronic resume to that website no later than February 9, 2011.

Louisville, KY via email and this is how the researchers responded:

Dr. Mary Ann McLean wrote, "...there are indications that exotic species of worms compete with native species of worms. However, this species [red worms (*Eisenia foetida*)] has a relatively high temperature requirement (hence its use in composting) and is seldom able to live in other environments...So it is unlikely to survive in your garden and unlikely to be ...a threat to your ecosystem...At present there are >40 species of earthworms known from NC and about half of them are exotics."

Margaret Carreiro wrote, "If I were you, I would NOT add any live worms from your compost to your garden..."

[Here is an article that expresses concern about exotic earthworms](#)

I really enjoyed my worms, but since I'm keenly aware of the exotic species threat to the environment. I didn't want to take a chance, so I gave my wonderful worms to education. One possible solution that would allow you to have worms without impacting the soil ecology is to freeze the castings (to kill worms & their eggs) before taking it to the garden.

Pat Momich, Madison County, NC

Do You Have a Plan?

Thanks to the aforementioned collaboration with our Appalachian Farm Alliance partners, we're excited to announce upcoming Foundations business planning courses offered by Mountain BizWorks. For those of our readers who don't know Mountain BizWorks, they are a nationally recognized non-profit whose mission is to sustain local entrepreneurs. You'd be surprised, especially in the Asheville area, to find out how many of your favorite restaurants, salons, farms, and other businesses have started with a Mountain BizWorks Foundations class. For information on the below offerings of Foundations in the WNC area (four total offerings beginning in February) contact the person listed for each class, or contact Jo Ann Miksa-Blackwell at joann@mountainbizworks.org

Foundations courses cover the key elements of a business plan, including

- :: Business mission and vision
- :: How to figure start-up costs
- :: How to make cash flow projections
- :: How to calculate unit price
- :: Structure and where to go for licensure and permits
- :: Management capacity and employee issues

ASAP presents the 2011 Marketing Opportunities for Farmers Conference

February 26th, 2011
at Warren Wilson College
8am-5:30pm

Are you currently farming or seriously considering farming as a profession? Then join Appalachian Sustainable Agriculture Project (ASAP), local farmers, agriculture professionals, and marketing specialists for this day-long conference with business and marketing workshops designed just for you. Potential buyers of locally grown goods can also attend the full conference, or attend the lunch at no charge for networking only.

[More info online](#), or contact Anna Littman at 828.236.1282 x 110 or via [email](#).

OVERLOAD?

You may have noticed that NewsBits, as well as other class and event related articles are getting numerous in this newsletter. So, to prevent your brain from overdrive, we're entering all of them on our online calendar, [which you can visit anytime](#). If you're interested in submitting a calendar listing, you can either send it to enews, like you usually submit newsbits, or you can fill out the online calendar form. [Click here to get started.](#)

Conference

- :: Financial planning and resources
- :: What are the components of a successful marketing plan
- :: Where to go for small business financing

The classes will run for eight-weeks. Class fees are on a sliding scale. Space is limited and pre-registration is required.

[CLICK TO LEARN MORE ABOUT FOUNDATIONS](#)

FOUNDATIONS IN POLK COUNTY:

Start Date:
February 10, 2011
Time:
Tuesdays, 6:00-9:00pm
Location:
Mills Spring Agricultural Development Center
156 School House Rd
Mills Spring, NC
Cost:
Sliding Scale
Contact: joann@mountainbizworks.org

FOUNDATIONS IN ASHEVILLE:

Start Date:
February 17th, 2011
Time:
Tuesdays, 6:00-9:00pm
Location:
TBA
Cost:
Sliding Scale
Contact: joann@mountainbizworks.org

FOUNDATIONS IN FRANKLIN, NC:

Start Date:
February 22, 2011
Time:
Tuesdays, 6:00pm - 9:00pm
Location:
Center for New Mountain Business(Franklin)
Cost:
Sliding Scale
Deadline for Registration:
February 18, 2011
Instructor:
Sheryl Rudd
Contact: daphne@mountainbizworks.org

FOUNDATIONS IN HAYWOOD COUNTY:

Date:
February 24, 2011
Time:
6:00pm - 9:00pm
Location:
Bethel Eden Farm Market
2229 Pisgah Dr. (Hwy 110 S)
Canton NC 28716
Cost:
Sliding Scale
Contact: joann@mountainbizworks.org

[CLICK TO LEARN MORE ABOUT FOUNDATIONS](#)

Scholarships

Did you know that we offer conference scholarships for youth in high school FFA or home school programs? If there is a high school student in your life who would benefit from attending the Organic Growers School, contact us. Or, send the interested future farmer to our website to fill out a short application for the [Organic Growers School Mentoring Project](#).

We're also partnering with Blue Ridge Women in Agriculture to offer 2011 scholarships to female farmers in Appalachia.

Lastly, some of our sponsors are unable to attend on their conference passes, and a limited number of those passes are entered into a scholarship pool. If you think you may qualify or know someone who would benefit, contact [Meredith McKissick](#) before February 17th.

BUY TICKETS for FarmSoiree



OR





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<http://www.organicgrowersschool.org>

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