

[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

March 2011 Grower's Notebook

News, Tips & Advice on Things Organic

THANKS for an Awesome Spring Conference!



The 18th annual Organic Growers School Spring Conference saw 1679 attendees over the course of one fabulous (albeit rainy AND snowy) weekend! OGS would like to thank all the attendees, speakers, sponsors, volunteers, vendors, and others who made this event possible. As always, we're dying to hear your feedback, and [you can still fill out an event evaluation](#) online until April 1st. We record your

comments word for word into a huge report that we then use to plan next year's event. We'll start that process very soon, and you can go ahead and mark your calendars for March 3 & 4, 2012, when we'll be gathering again for our 19th annual event. See you there, green thumbs.

Some photos from the event:



Alex Kilgore teaches Friction Fire Basics



REEMS CREEK
Nursery & Landscaping

Organic Gardening Supplies
Veggie Transplants & Herbs
Organic & Open-Pol. Seeds
Organic Potting Soil
Compost & Soil Amendments
Fruit Trees
Blueberries & Small Fruits
Native Plants & Water Plants
Full Service Garden Center

*~just 10 minutes North of downtown Asheville~
Since 1979 - We're Local!*

70 Monticello Road
Weaverville, NC
828-645-3937
www.reemscreek.com



Participants learn to make tempeh

CRAFT

2011 Tour Schedule Released

CRAFT ([Collaborative Regional Alliance for Farmer Training](#)) is rocking and rolling for the 2011 season, with some returning core farm members, and some exciting new members for this season. See the awesome tour line-up below, and if you still haven't joined, [you can do so online at any time](#). If you have questions about the program, just contact Andrea at 828.338.9508 or [via email](#).

CRAFT 2011 Tour Schedule

<p>April 16th Production Planning & Greenhouse Management Full Sun Farm</p>
<p>May 14: Cut Flower Production & Management at Sweet Earth Flower Farm</p>
<p>June 11 Cost-Effective Ways for Reducing your Farm's Carbon Footprint at Thatchmore Farms</p>
<p>July 16 Marketing Basics, Creating & Selling Value-Added Products Imladris Farm</p>
<p>August 20 Managing Farm Diversity & Agritourism Snapshot Green Toe Ground Farm</p>
<p>September 10 Commercial Permaculture at Useful Plants Nursery</p>
<p>October 8 Sustainable Timber Harvest</p>

Apprentice Link

Success in Linking Farms with Workers

What if we told you that you could significantly increase the job applications coming in to your farm just by taking 10 minutes of time in front of the computer? Yes, it's true. Creating a profile on our website's apprentice-to-farm matching database is worth the effort. One participant farmer recently wrote to say "This is a great service. We filled our crew much faster than normal, applications have doubled, and 3/4 of our workers came via Apprentice Link referrals." Now there's a snapshot of success! It's FREE, and it takes little time to set up a profile.

If you're looking for farm work, you can use the service, too! Just like the farmers, farm workers can fill out an applicaiton in just a few quick minutes. Then, our office will match applications to appropriate farms twice weekly. It's as easy as that.

Also, if you are a farmer with questions about setting up a work program on your farm, give us a holler at 828.582.5039 or [send us an email](#). We have the resources and technical knowledge for helping you set up a program that is both legal and successful.

[READY TO JOIN APPRENTICE LINK? CLICK HERE TO GET STARTED](#)

Mountain Harvest Organics

November 12: Year One- Lessons Learned + Season Extension Basics
Patchwork Underground



News Bits

News Bits are reader submitted news, events, and opinion. Submit your bit to enews@organicgrowersschool.org

Spring Bamboo Classes

Spring Classes at the Oshima Bamboo School are now available online. [Click this link to find out more.](#)

-submitted by Stefani Oshima, Hendersonville, NC

A Story of Sustainability

With all volunteer labor, UMass Amherst is transforming a 12,000 square foot conventional grass lawn into a sustainable permaculture garden that supplies food to the campus community. Phase I involved moving over 250,000 pounds of organic matter by hand and intentionally using no fossil fuels on-site. Phase II - the garden design - is now complete and we will begin planting in April.

Permaculture is a sustainable design system that is based on ecological principles and permaculture gardens restore ecosystem health and provide an abundance of food and resources for their communities. The UMass Permaculture Garden will supply over 1,000 pounds of vegetables, herbs, fruit and berries to our dining commons annually, starting this spring.

To view an informational video about this project, [click here.](#)

Apprentice Link



farm labor matching services for southern appalachia

More Conference Photos:

Did you take pictures at the event? Send them our way via email:

enews@organicgrowersschool.org



Catching up & trading lessons learned is a must in between OGS classes.



Participants learn to make artisan bread from scratch. They even cooked it in a wood fired oven in the

-submitted by Ryan Harb, UMass Amherst

New Organic Section of Extension Website

There is now an Organic Agriculture section of the eXtension website, found at http://www.extension.org/organic_production. This site features many archived webinars, as well as over 200 articles and videos, all peer-reviewed and checked for NOP compliance. Check it out!

-submitted by John McQueen, Corvallis, OR



Several participants learned to grow oyster mushrooms like these!



OGS Kids Program participants not only fed rabbits, but also milked goats, learned about falconry, and even ate a few bugs!

parking lot!



Diane Saccone of Reems Creek Yoga taught "Yoga for Farmers", focusing on ways to treat your body right during the most physically rigorous parts of the season.



Just one of the many visitors to the Seed & Plant Exchange



Gardener's & Farmer's Corner

Ask Ruth



Hi Ruth,

I am a gardener in Asheville looking for good starts for my spring garden. Do you know of anyone producing quality vegetable starts for sale in the area come spring?

Thank you,
Traci Smith

Dear Traci,

One of the best places to find excellent veggie transplants is at local **Tailgate Farmer's Markets**. Many local farmers grow extra transplants to sell to Tailgate Market customers, and many of these farmers use organic practices (just ask the farmer whether their starts are organic). These plants are gorgeous, and at these markets you can find unusual varieties ~ especially heirloom tomatoes, different peppers, and the farmer's own favorite cultivars. Most markets will be opening around mid-April. Initially you will find cool-weather transplants like broccoli, cabbage, kale, and lettuces. A little later on ~ the tomatoes, peppers, etc. will arrive.

Wherever you live, look for these local tailgate markets and contentiously support the farmers represented there. Get your veggie starts at the market, and regularly return during the season to buy those weirdo things you did not plant, the staples you overlooked, and the produce your garden was not large enough to accommodate (watermelon, sweet potatoes, etc.).



LINKS to find Tailgate/Farmers Markets:

Local: ASAP Local Food Guide:

<http://www.asapconnections.org/farmersmarket.html>

and Tailgate Market Fan Club:

<http://tailgatemarketfanclub.wordpress.com/market-list/>

National: Local Harvest: <http://www.localharvest.org/farmers-markets>

Another great source of transplants will be the **22nd Annual Asheville Spring Herb Festival** on April 29, April 30 & May 1 (Friday, Saturday and Sunday) at the WNC Farmers Market, 570 Brevard Road

in Asheville. This super-popular event is free and has over 55 vendors and around 25,000 attendees. Even though the main focus is herbs, there are always lots of really nice transplants, especially heirloom tomatoes. Check it out at <http://www.ashevilleherbfestival.com/festivalinfo.htm>.

Local garden centers and natural groceries often carry quality vegetable starts, and many of these have been produced locally. Reems Creek Nursery raises most of their veggie transplants ~ their plants are raised using organic soils and organic fertilizers, and they will have lots of different tomatoes and peppers... transplants they buy from other sources are separately displayed. Transplants from Appalachian Seeds and Wildwood Herbal can be found at some area garden centers and natural groceries.

Some of the WNC Garden Centers/Suppliers (check also at smaller local garden centers):

B. B. Barnes: <http://www.bbbarns.com/>

Fifth Season: <http://www.fifthseasongardening.com/>

Jesse Israel & Sons: <http://www.jesseisraelandsonsnursery.com/>

Reems Creek Nursery & Landscaping: <http://www.reemscreek.com/>

Some of the Local Natural Groceries (and also at smaller local produce stands):

Earthfare: <http://www.earthfare.com/>

French Broad Food Coop: <http://frenchbroadfood.coop/>

Greenlife Grocery: <http://wholefoodsmarket.com/stores/asheville/>

Consider growing your own transplants Traci. Seeing baby green leaves breaking through the soil is pretty magical, and starting your own transplants will allow you to choose varieties that may not be available otherwise. Cool-season transplants can be started right now. Start tomatoes around the end of March, or sooner if you plan to grow them on in larger pots before transplanting outside.

Germination heat-mats really do work (since they warm the soil, the seeds will sprout more readily). I like to bottom-soak my seed flats in a vat of water mixed with liquid seaweed, or a seaweed/fish blend (seaweed enhances seed germination rates). Once the soil is thoroughly wet, poke a hole in the center of each cell or

pot with the eraser end of a pencil. Then press the seed into the soil, and lightly cover the seed with additional soil if required. You don't have to cover lettuce seeds. After you finish seeding, gently water the flat again with a watering wand. I don't recommend using those adjustable gun-like sprayers for watering. They are too forceful and will probably blast the seed into outer space.

Keep your newly planted seeds evenly moist ~ *but not swampy* ~ until they germinate. As soon as they germinate move them to the brightest possible spot in your house. If the weather is nice take them outside during the day, or put them in a cold frame. If you can afford it, grow lights will keep your seedlings from getting leggy. Cool-season veggies won't mind exposure to cooler temps, though they would probably enjoy having the protection of floating row covers when bitter weather looms. Tomatoes, peppers, eggplant, squash, okra, basil, and other warm weather plants should be in a warm environment until you can set them out after the frost date (about May 10). You can try pushing the frost-date window and set your tomatoes (and other heat-lovers) out earlier than the frost date, but you chance loosing everything if we have an awful frost.

Tom Elmore (Ask Tom) uses an old refrigerator (unplugged) to get his starts going. If it needs to be warmer than the average temperature of the day, he adds a light bulb or a small heater on a thermostat to the fridge. Check on the seeds daily. It is important to move the just-sprouted seeds into bright light as soon as they sprout, because they can get leggy in a few hours. As soon as the seed coats break, Tom transfers them to a coldframe. The fridge moderates the daily ups and downs of temperature and keeps mice and birds from gobbling up the seeds.

Tom also utilizes **soil blocks**, rather than plastic flats/packs when he plants his seedlings. Special tools stamp out cubes of soil in different sizes. You can stamp out very tiny blocks that are seeded, and when the seedlings are big enough, they can be bumped up into a larger soil block size, and finally set out like any transplant. The beauty of this method is that it avoids the use of plastic cells; these plastic cells are petroleum products that are often used only once and then discarded into landfills. Check out the soil blocker tools in this link to Johnny's ~ <http://www.johnnyseeds.com/c-455-soil-block-makers.aspx>.



Seeds for transplants can be found at the same garden centers and natural groceries listed above. I know of two local seed companies, Sow True Seed and Appalachian Seeds. The OGS Spring Conference had a number of seed vendors including Southern Exposure Seed Exchange, High Mowing Seeds, Johnny's Selected Seeds, Seeds of Change, and Sow True. Lee Barnes faithfully provides a seed exchange booth at the OGS Spring Conference. Lee is a wealth of information about seed saving and open-pollinated seed varieties. Of course, seeds are readily available from catalogues and online. Pat Battle mentioned Baker Creek as one of his favorite seed catalogues. If you want to harvest seed later this year to use next year, remember to plant open-pollinated seed varieties.

So Traci, the main objective is to get your garden going...using any or all of these approaches, and then to look forward to a delicious harvest. YUM!
Best of luck with your garden,

Ruth

Gardeners: Got a question for Ruth? Email it to us

enews@organicgrowersschool.org

Ruth Gonzalez is a former market farmer, avid gardener, local food advocate, and founder of the Tailgate Market Fan Club where she blogs at www.tailgatemarketfanclub.wordpress.com. 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.

Ask Tom



I did not receive a question this month so I thought I would ask a question to our readers, "How do you manage paper and set priorities on your farm?" Below I describe a system that I use. **Please respond with suggestions or systems that work for you.** I am always looking for good ideas on how to minimize the paperwork time and improve productivity.

Like most farmers I suspect, Spring is a time when the pace starts to pick up and the "what shall I do today" of winter changes gradually to "how am I ever going to get everything done today." The long list from last year of "I'll save that project until winter" seems just as long as it was last fall. All the seed catalogs and winter conferences just make it worse "What a great idea – I could do that!" and that, and that ...

A few years ago I picked up a book by David Allen titled Getting Things Done – the Art of Stress Free Productivity (Penguin Books, 2001). I saw it mentioned in an article saying how much folks with computer-based time management systems liked his approach, because

it does not depend on paper as many systems do. One of his catch phrases that caught my attention was "How to feel fine about what you are doing and what you are not doing." Since my to-do list is virtually endless, I found myself wondering if what I (and my farm crew) was doing right now is the most important task for the success of our farm this season. I adapted his system to our farm and it seems to help.

Here is the basic approach:

- Have one inbox. No scraps of paper behind the pick-up truck visor. No stack next to the comfortable chair by the woodstove. No post-its on the bathroom mirror. Put them all in one place. Allen calls it an inbox but for me it is a folder in a portable file labeled ... Inbox. A related rule is that the inbox is always empty at the end of the day. That's a hard one for me but I see the value in doing it.
- Divide all your areas of activity into "projects." A project might be shiitake mushrooms or firewood gathering. Don't forget family and personal projects – learn to play the banjo or travel, for example.
- For each project create a plan of action. The plan is the list of steps that are needed to complete the project in the order that they need to be performed – cut the logs before ordering the spawn, etc.
- Create a folder for each project. This folder can be a physical file or an electronic folder.
- Identify for each project a "next action" to move the project forward. All the next actions go into a folder called "Next Actions." I review the next actions folder daily and mark the ones that I hope to accomplish today and mark through the ones that were done yesterday. When I mark through one from the shiitake project folder I bring up the next one from that folder into "Next Actions." I can usually scan the next actions in a minute or two and assemble the weekly to-do list.
- Create a "Someday Maybe" folder. When a next action stays on the next actions list for a while and never seems as important as other items on the list I demoted to the "Someday Maybe" folder. That's also where my really wild schemes go that I know are half baked when I write them down – like replacing the walk-in cooler with an ice house that freezes in the winter and cools all summer. I doubt I will work on that one in the next few months, but I don't want the idea to get away completely.
- This system also needs a calendar which can be a Personal Digital Assistant or just a paper calendar like mine. Allen recommends having a folder for each day of the month with all the things that you need for that day in the folder (agendas, directions, airline tickets ...). He also suggests a folder for each month after the current one. The contents of that monthly folder are divided into daily folders as time passes.
- One of the most important folders is the one with vision, mission and life purpose. I should have mentioned that one first to be in the proper order but I didn't want to scare you off right away. Of course it is important to know where you are headed in life and it is important that your "next actions" will eventually take you there. Once every week or two I look at mission and purpose folder to see how I am doing and sometimes create a new project or drop an old one to get back on course. That is also a good time to weed out the urgent but not important actions and to focus on those projects and actions that are truly important, not just on the farm but to your life purpose.

David Allen would probably drop his PDA if he saw what I have done to his system but it works for me. He also has great advice on setting priorities and mucking out the piles of paper in the first place. Your library probably has his book but it's also fairly affordable in paperback. If you want to go to the source, his site is <http://www.davidco.com/>

Don't forget this is just a prompt for my question to you: "How do you manage paper and set priorities on your farm?" If you care to respond please sent it to enews@organicgrowersschool.org . 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:  & [Content Corner](#)