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PRESS RELEASE

August 1, 2016

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For Immediate Release: Organic Growers School Announces Farm Beginnings® Farmer Training Information Sessions

Asheville, NC: Organic Growers School's **Farm Beginnings®** is a yearlong farmer training course beginning on October 15th, 2016, and is now open to applicants. OGS will be hosting regional drop-in information sessions for those interested to come and learn about what the program offers.



Farm Beginnings® was developed to directly address the needs of the regional farming community and offer a comprehensive farmer-led training course to better prepare the future generation of farming professionals in WNC. Farmer Programs Director, Cameron Farlow, and Farmer Programs Coordinator, Nicole DelCogliano, will be available for one-on-one conversations to answer questions, discuss the details of the training, and to help candidates understand if they are ready to take the course. "It's a commitment and a real opportunity, for those who want to farm as a livelihood, to understand what the year long training encompasses, because it's a lot, and for us to explain what the \$2500 price tag is giving you. If you want to farm, you can't afford NOT to take this class," says Delcogliano.

Farm Beginnings is a part of the national Farm Beginnings® Collaborative, and has been recognized as “a model that is creating strong new farm businesses across the country” by Kathleen Merrigan, former U.S. Deputy Secretary of Agriculture (in her 2012 remarks to the Beginning Farmer and Rancher Development Program directors). Last year, Organic Growers School launched a pilot of Farm Beginnings® with great success. It is the only Farm Beginnings program in the Southeast.

Farm Beginnings® is a 12-month training that uses a mix of farmer-led classroom sessions, on-farm tours, and an extensive farmer network, tapping into the knowledge of the most innovative & skilled farmers operating in WNC, with mentoring for success. From those such as Flying Cloud Farm, Aardvark Farm, Hickory Nut Gap, Bluebird Farm and A Way of Life Farm. The course is open to aspiring, beginning and expanding farmers in Western NC and surrounding Southern Appalachian states – Tennessee, Virginia, Georgia, and South Carolina.



According to graduate Quinn Asteak, from the 2015 class, “What I got from Farm Beginnings is a real understanding of what it actually takes to have a farm. Before going into the program I had a lot of lofty dreams about living a bucolic life. This class really taught me what it takes and the hard work that goes into farming by introducing us to real farmers and getting real numbers. It was also a really great way to connect to other local farmers and people who are just starting out, in order to create a network of folks who have the same passion and vision.”

The information sessions are drop-in and will be held:

- August 3rd, 9am-11am - Madison County Cooperative Extension, 258 Carolina Ln, Marshall, NC 28753
- August 3rd, 3p- 5pm - AB Tech Small Business Center, 1465 Sand Hill Rd, Candler, NC 28715
- August 8th 1-3pm - Buncombe County Cooperative Extension, 49 Mount Carmel Rd Asheville, NC 28806
- August 8th 4-6pm - Mountain Bizworks, 153 S Lexington Ave, Asheville, NC 28801
- Aug 9th from 9-11am - Mountain Horticultural Crops Research and Extension Center, 455 Research Drive Mills River, NC 28759
- August 10th, 3pm-5:30pm - AB Tech Small Business Center, 1465 Sand Hill Rd, Candler, NC 28715
- August 12th, 11am-1:00pm - Jackson County Cooperative Extension, 538 Scotts Creek Road, Suite 204 Sylva, NC 28779
- August 19th, 2pm-4pm - Mill Spring Agricultural, 156 School Rd, Mill Spring, NC 28756

The one-year course consists of 180+ hours of training time including: 60 hours of whole farm business planning sessions to take place; 45 hours of production training through field days on sustainable farms around WNC and on the Southern Appalachian Highlands Conservancy Incubator Farm; and 40+ hours of classes at Organic Growers School's Annual Spring and Harvest Conferences; plus 8 hours at ASAP's Business of Farming conference.

The in-class course work will take place at the newly renovated Southern Appalachian Highlands Conservancy's Incubator Farm's educational space in Alexander, NC. This program is a partnership between the Southern Appalachian Highlands Conservancy, WNC FarmLink and Organic Growers School, Farm Pathways project, started in 2015.

The application deadline is August 31st, 2016, and the program fee for the one-year course is \$2500 for up to two farm partners, similar to other national and regional year long training courses. Scholarships and payment plans are available. For more information and to apply for Farm Beginnings visit: www.organicgrowersschool.org/farm-beginnings

The Organic Growers School is organized annually by the Organic Growers School, Inc., a 501(c)3 non-profit organization.

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