

23rd Annual
SPRING Organic Growers School 
CONFERENCE

PRESS RELEASE

January 14, 2016

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For Immediate Release:

Registration is open for the 23rd Annual Organic Growers School Spring Conference. The Conference, for healthy eaters, home growers, and farmers, takes place Saturday & Sunday March 12 & 13, 2016, at UNCA in Asheville, North Carolina.

Organic Growers School (OGS) will draw over 2000 gardeners, farmers, and foodies to Asheville for a weekend of workshops scheduled for March 12 & 13, 2016 at the University of North Carolina-Asheville in Asheville, NC. The annual event features classes for beginning backyard growers to advanced commercial farmers, plus a farm to table dinner, trade show, seed exchange, children's program, and pre-conference, events. The OGS Spring Conference is largest, locally-run, sustainability conference in the Southeast. The cost is: \$50 for Saturday, \$45 for Sunday with early registration discounts by January 31, 2016. Cost for registration is an additional \$15 after January 31st and at the door.

The event, which is open to the public, provides practical, regionally-appropriate workshops on organic growing, permaculture, homesteading, urban farming, and rural living. This year's conference offers more than 70 sessions per day in themed tracks including Gardening, Mushrooms, Soils, Livestock, Herbs, Permaculture, Sustainable Forestry, Homesteading, Cooking, Poultry, and Farmers Beginner to Advanced. New tracks for 2016 include Sustainable Living and Voices from the Field. A complete list of the classes can be viewed on the website but a sampling includes: Sustainable Hemp Production, How to Diagnose Vegetable Diseases, How to be a Fruit Nut, Mead Making, Intuitive Plant Medicine, Urban Orchard, Root Cellars, Mushroom Cultivation, Sustainable Poultry, Soils 101, Rooftop Farming and Tiny Houses.

Throughout the weekend, there are also half-day, limited space, hands-on workshops that host specialized instructors. These half-day classes focus on do-it-yourself subjects:

- Reclaiming the Apothecary with Melissa Fryer
- Create a Four Season Garden with Ira Wallace
- Spoon Carving the Old Way with Becky Beyer
- Permaculture Designs for Small Farms and Homesteads with Shawn Jadrnicek

- Self Reliant Animal Feed with Karl Warkomski
- Homesteading with Hoops, Hops, Hives and Habitats with Becki Janes
- Domestication of Wild Plants and Human Connection with Natalie Bogwalker
- The Art of Friction Fire with Tyler Lavenburg
- Hands-On with Cordage with Rachel Shopper
- Log Inoculation with Rodney Webb
- Orchardring with James Geoffrey Steen
- Holy Honey Bees with Skye Taylor
- Ferments and Broth with Janelle Lucido-Conate
- Bird Language with Luke Cannon and Clint Corley

The 2016 Spring Conference will feature these full-day **pre-Conference, workshops** on Friday March 11th

The Principles of Biodynamics, An In-depth Study with The Barefoot Farmer with Special Guest Jeff Poppen

Join the Barefoot Farmer for a full day of inspiration looking deeper into the knowledge of how people grew plants and animals before the advent of industrial agriculture. Nature knows best, and we can mimic her on our farms and in our gardens. This introductory workshop will take the foundational material and show how to grow a garden and tend farmland profitably, easily and sustainably, without extensive off-farm inputs. This workshop will first give a general overview of the basic building block elements of plants and how the biodynamic method ensures healthy plant growth through microbial interaction with the whole farm organism. Biodynamic principles that will focused on include: remineralization; legumes and cover crops; livestock and composting; and proper loosening of the soil.

Ten Medicinal Herbs to Know and Grow: A Sustainable Apothecary in your Garden and Forest with Patricia Kyritsi Howell

Plant an apothecary in your garden and learn the practical art of herbal self-reliance! Discover 10 essential herbs that will produce medicine, food, and beauty for you and your family. This in-depth, full day workshop introduces each herb, its historical and current uses, detailed, easy-to-follow guidelines for growing and harvesting, as well as medicine making instructions and recipes for incorporating these herbs into everyday life. Get inspired in your garden and learn how to grow and use these wonderful herbs from a renowned herbalist. Plants covered include: Ashwaganda (*Withania somnifera*); Boneset (*Eupatorium perforatum*); Echinacea (*Echinacea spp.*); Elder (*Sambucus nigra/Canadensis*); Holy Basil (*Ocimum sanctum*); Rosemary (*Rosmarinus officinale*); Sage (*Salvia officinalis*); Vitex (*Agnus castus*); Motherwort (*Leonurus cardiac*); Calendula (*Calendula officinalis*)

Backyard Chickens & Beyond, with Jim Adkins of the Sustainable Poultry Network

Are you interested in learning the entire process of breeding, hatching & growing your own chickens? This on-farm workshop will cover everything you need to know including: identify the poultry breed that best suits your farm; learn how to brood, properly feed & grow poultry, basic husbandry, disease control, and also the basics of processing & cooking. Join these sustainable poultry specialists for the A-Z of homesteading, backyard chickens; and you'll be off and running in no time.

New for the 2016 Spring Conference is an evening event entitled **Farm to Table Dinner: Dine with Pierre & OGS: A fundraising dinner to benefit Organic Growers School on** Saturday, March 12, 2016 at 5:30pm at the UNCA Campus, Asheville, NC.

Join Organic Growers School on Saturday night at 5:30pm, directly following the last class, for an exclusive reception and organic, farm-to-table dinner in an elegant setting on the UNC Asheville campus. Celebrate local food and farmers as we extend the joy and connection of the day. All proceeds benefit the important work of Organic Growers School, and tickets can be purchased on a sliding scale.

Very special Guest, Bill Whipple, aka Pierre Geaux, will host the OGS fundraising dinner with all the finesse of a French food snob. Pierre is a passionado for what the French call “Terroir” or local flavor. Recently released from detainment at Guantanamo Bay for telling US customs that he was a “Terrorist”, he found American cuisine there to be lacking in what he would say as, “Les choses interessant”. Despite this misunderstanding, Pierre is on a mission to teach Americans something about cuisine, and he encourages us to eat something “interesting” by exploring the local flavors of small farms. Pierre will be addressing the dinner audience with profound, esoteric, arrogant, and amusing insights related to food, culture, delight, and the heart.

Expect four delicious courses of expertly curated local foods: colorful samplers showcasing the best in local charcuterie, cheeses, and pickles, unique presentation and mouthwatering main dishes for all palettes, plus delectable dessert. The forthcoming menu is in the works, and promises to showcase spring’s freshness, and WNC’s bounty.

Additional long-standing traditions at the OGS Spring Conference weekend include the following:

The 12th annual Children’s Program for kids ages 4 to 12 which focuses on the importance of the natural environment and gardening.sources. This supervised full-day event is split into two age groups, 4-6 and 7-12, with a registration limit of 40 children. Activities include Nursery Dairy Goats, Pollinator Awareness, Starting & Saving Seeds Crafting & Grafting, Urban Gardening & Making Seedballs, Fibers & Felting with Wool, Appalachian Storytelling, and Herbs for Kids. Cost is \$30 per child per day.

- **The Tradeshow**, which showcases a wide array of exhibitors and products: local farms, gardening suppliers, and cottage industries that specialize in organic products, books and resources for organic growers and Permaculture practitioners, and several non-profit organizations with information on related topics. (A full list of exhibitors is on the Organic Growers School website and is updated regularly.)
- **The Seed and Plant Exchange** booth is open throughout the weekend and offers us the opportunity to preserve genetic diversity and protect regionally adapted varieties. Attendees may bring excess seeds and small plants to share, barter, or trade. Seed saving supplies and recommended readings will be provided.

Sabrina Wells, OGS Conference Coordinator , says “We are really excited about this year’s lineup. We have some exceptional teachers on the schedule and our classes really reflect what our attendees have been asking for.”

This event has grown exponentially, from a small gathering of 100 growing enthusiasts in 1993 to a regionally recognized conference drawing over 2000 attendees, exhibitors and speakers. “Our teachers reflect the best our region has to offer, from long time farmers on the cutting edge of biodynamics to renowned herbalists to the very best mushroom experts and thought provoking discussions on community food ,” says Executive Director, Lee Warren. Warren also says, “while this conference represents exceptional learning opportunities, we also work hard to ensure that our admission prices are some of the lowest in the country for this type of conference. We want to make sure as many people as possible have the opportunity to attend.”

As the largest grassroots conferences of its kind in the region, The Organic Growers School has served to reinforce Western North Carolina’s role as a regional leader in sustainable food and farming. Attendees come from 18 states and Canada, and have described the event as a ritualistic kick start to the growing season, and even “a peeling off of winter,” according to local attendee, Lara Ladendorf.

The major sponsors of the 23rd Annual Organic Growers School are Carolina Farm Credit, French Broad Food Co-op, Mountain Rose Herbs, Living Web Farms, Southern Exposure Seed Exchange, Reems Creek Nursery, Earth Tools, Organic Valley, WNC Woman, Living Web Farms, Mountain Xpress, WNCW, Plough to Pantry, Fedco Seeds, Biltmore, Mother Earth News Fair, Tyme in the Garden, Hendersonville Community Co-op, Chelsea Green Publishing, Lenoir-Rhyne University, Nouris and Flourish, Nature’s Nog, Fedco and IWANNA.

The OGS Spring Conference is organized annually by the Organic Growers School, Inc., a 501(c)3 non-profit organization with a mission to inspire, educate, and support people to farm, garden, and live organically. Organic Growers School is the premier provider of practical organic education in the Southern Appalachians. OGS envisions a mutually supportive network of prosperous farmers, productive gardeners and informed consumers engaged in creating healthy communities. The Spring Conference grew out of the volunteer efforts of a group of farmers and extension specialists who, in 1993, gathered to discuss the need for nuts and bolts, region-specific crop growing information applicable for farmers in Western North Carolina. From this meeting, the Spring Conference was born, along with a mission to deliver practical information about organic agriculture at a reasonable price.

OGS is proud to offer over 150 opportunities for individuals to attend the conference by means of a work exchange program. Persons interested in applying for work exchange/volunteer status should visit the OGS website, and fill out an application. Shifts are filled on a first come, first-served basis.

Interested participants may register on-line at www.organicgrowersschool.org, or request a mailed registration form from sabrina@organicgrowersschool.org or (828) 278-9332. Registration forms are also available at area retail stores and Cooperative Extension offices.

All other inquiries: Contact Coordinator Sabrina Wells at sabrina@organicgrowersschool.org or call (828) 278-9332.

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