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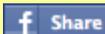


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Supporting Sustainable Agriculture
in the Southern Appalachians through
Educational Programs and Outreach



...e-news

19th Annual Spring Conference

19th ANNUAL

Organic
Growers
School
spring conference



Organic Growers School Spring Conference

March 3-4, 2012

University of North Carolina at Asheville

*A Weekend of Workshops for Beginning Gardeners
to Advanced Commercial Growers*

Featuring over 100 classes on all aspects of sustainable agriculture

Join farmers, gardeners, chefs, seed-savers, backyard chicken-keepers, homesteaders, permaculturists, herbalists, composters, beekeepers, orchardists, foresters, landscapers, cheesemakers, local food lovers, wild food aficionados, butchers, bakers, and sauerkraut makers for the largest gathering of its kind in the Southeastern US!

[Click HERE to register online.](#)

[Click HERE for the full schedule.](#)

REGISTER NOW!

**Register
NOW and
save \$15**

Scholarships
Available!

High School
Students:

Interested in a future in
agriculture?

The Organic Growers School
offers scholarship opportunities
for high school students and FFA



Questions about the

Spring Conference?

E-mail OGS Director Meredith McKissick at meredith@organicgrowersschool.org.

SEE YOU THERE!

members. [Apply online for OGS Youth Scholarships.](#)

Commercial Farmers:
Are you a farmer in Cherokee, Swain, Jackson, Clay, or Macon County?

The Organic Growers School is partnering with [Sow True Seed](#) to offer scholarships for farmers from far western NC. [Apply online for WNC Farmer Scholarships.](#)

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Lend a Hand to the Organic Growers School!

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News Bits

News Bits are reader-submitted news, events, and opinion. Submit your bit [via email](#).

OGS Apprentice Link: Upgrades & New Features

Farmers! Aspiring Farmers! Listen up! Our apprentice-to-farmer matching service, which grew by leaps and bounds in 2011 is seeing upgrades and new features for 2012. We are working on a new web interface for the program that will of course (find you a farm worker or a farm job) but also allow you to search more easily, save your favorites, manage your account easily, and much much more. We're expecting to roll out the shiny new site sometime after the New Year. Start thinking about your 2012 work season...don't let April happen and not have your hiring or job search finished. We can help. Farmers: If you have questions about setting up an apprentice program on your farm, call us at 828.582.5039 for advice.

FREE! Compendium of World Potato Varieties

Did you know there are thousands of potato varieties in the world? The International Potato Center has documented more than 3,800 varieties in the Andean mountains, the potato's ancestral home. Gardeners and farmers can now access the **Compendium of World Potato Varieties**, an impressive resource providing detailed descriptions of



625 potato varieties, including history, culinary value, storage quality, and growing conditions. [Download the Compendium, created by the potato experts at Washington State University, HERE.](#)

Organic Lawsuit Against Monsanto Goes Forward

In a development celebrated by the organic plaintiffs, Judge Naomi Buchwald announced that oral arguments on Monsanto's motion to dismiss the Organic Seed Growers and Trade Association (OSGATA) et al v. Monsanto will be heard in federal district court January 31, 2012 in Manhattan. Judge Buchwald's decision will establish if organic farmers are to see their day in court. The eighty-three family farmers, small and family owned seed businesses, and agricultural organizations comprising the organic plaintiff group represent over 300,000 individuals. The landmark lawsuit, filed in March 2011, challenges the validity of Monsanto's transgenic/GMO patents and seeks court protection for innocent family farmers who may become contaminated by Monsanto seed. [More information from the Organic Seed Growers and Trade Association HERE.](#)

Gardener's Corner

Ask Ruth: 100 Million Farmers?!?



Dear Ruth,

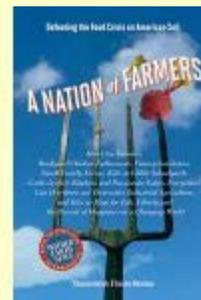
In "A Nation of Farmers" the authors project that in 20 years we will need 100 million farmers in the U.S.A. How realistic is that projection?"

-Perplexed in Leicester

Dear Perplexed,

I am about halfway through reading "[A Nation of Farmers](#)" and so far it has brought together a broad range of concerns that our country may be facing in the next 30 or 40 years. Our water supply, our food supply and our fossil fuel supplies - to name a few - are all intricately

bound to climate change uncertainties and ultimately to the basic necessities that we require as humans. The authors, Sharon Astyk and Aaron Newton, are challenging each of us to take the bulk of food production out of the hands of industrial agriculture by "farming" in our own yards and supporting small farms in our communities. The idea is that by growing as much food as we possibly can as individuals, and by supporting sustainable farming in our own communities...strong regional food systems will emerge. This re-visioned agriculture will be less dependent on fossil fuels, offer more food security and fresher food, and become the new foundation of a more sustainable food supply.



Children gardening on a rooftop, New York City, 1943

During both World Wars the concept of growing food in our yards - in vacant lots and public parks, and even on rooftops - was considered not only patriotic, but a moral imperative. According to the USDA, during World War II nearly 20 million Americans planted Victory Gardens, and in 1943 these "farmers" managed to produce 40% of America's fresh vegetables. During that period over 50% of households were growing gardens (not necessarily in their own yard).



2032, I estimate that 60 to 88% of households would have to be raising their own food. 100 million farmers (and this includes gardeners) by 2032 may not be a realistic figure, but the tide is beginning to turn.

During WWI, Uncle Sam expected you to raise two hens per each person in your family. Over the decades perceptions changed dramatically and currently most cities don't allow chickens within the city limits. Many community associations don't allow vegetable gardens that are visible from the street.

However, public awareness is changing. All over America, cities and towns are passing ordinances that allow urban dwellers to raise poultry and other livestock. Beekeepers are turning up everywhere, including the rooftops of New York City. Across the nation, school gardens are teaching children how to grow vegetables and how delicious veggies can be, and communities are coming together to create productive gardens in unused spaces. Local farmers' markets are booming. Towns in Maine are legalizing "food sovereignty" and claiming the "right to produce, process, sell, purchase, and consume local foods of their choosing." Things are happening!

Even the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization is encouraging a switch to more sustainable agriculture worldwide. According to Alexander Mueller, FAO Assistant Director-General for Natural Resources, "When you start looking at the issue of how we are going to provide food, water, light, heat and other services and products for 9 billion people, it becomes quite clear that agriculture is perhaps the linchpin. If we have the political will and farsightedness, we can make agriculture the engine of tomorrow's green economy. Climate-smart farming systems that make efficient use of resources like water, land, and energy must become the basis of tomorrow's agricultural economy."

In twenty more years, the population of the United States is projected to be somewhere between 290,737,000 and 415,231,000 or about 32% higher than in the year 2000). To achieve 100 million farmers by

Uncle Sam Expects You To Keep Hens and Raise Chickens



Two Hens in the Back Yard for Each Person in the House Will Keep a Family In Fresh Eggs

EVEN the smallest back yard has room for a few large enough to supply the house with eggs. The cost of maintaining such a flock is small. Table and kitchen waste provide much of the food for the hens. They require little attention—only a few minutes a day.

An interested child, old enough to take a little responsibility, can care for a few birds as well as a guinea pig.

Every back yard in the United States should contribute its share to a bumper crop of poultry and eggs in 1918.

In Time of Peace a Profitable Recreation
In Time of War a Patriotic Duty

Your State Agricultural College
or
The United States Department of Agriculture
Washington, D. C.

Victory Garden, Manhattan

Health concerns are probably the primary motivator for parents who want to provide their children and their entire family with healthy, clean food. Many of the safety guidelines for agricultural chemicals have been established for bodies the size of adult males, so it is quite reasonable to conclude that children and smaller women truly are more vulnerable to chemical exposure via our food.

Despite the current economic climate and the fact that organic foods are more expensive, the desire for organic foods continues to climb steadily. This is encouraging. It indicates that we Americans place enough value on organically-grown foods, and all that they stand for, that we are willing to part with our hard-earned dollars in order to have them – regardless of the unemployment figures, the housing



meltdown, and the banking crisis. Wow!

How does this all fit in with "A Nation of Farmers"?

Along with our concerns about food security, family health, shortages of water and fuel, environmental degradation, and the complexity of each of these issues...we are human beings. Every single day we depend on food - to fuel our bodies so that we can work, play, grow and thrive. And beyond the practicalities, we just plain love to eat. Good food

indulges every one of our senses. It brings us together in celebration, it forms memories, and it paces our days and encourages us to anticipate sharing that next scrumptious meal.

Once we get a taste for really fresh food - grown in our own gardens - there's no going back. Savoring that first batch of freshly-dug new potatoes, sugar snap peas eaten off the vine, and juicy tomato sandwiches with the fragrance of basil still lingering in the air...these are things money can't buy. The satisfaction of harvesting directly from your garden into your mouth or cookpot is hard to beat. The magic of seeds sprouting (a miracle every time!) brings delight to tiny kids and old guys in overalls, and everyone in between. It doesn't matter where you live either! You can grow food on a farm in the country, on your balcony, in the heart of downtown between the sidewalk and the road, on a vacant lot, or in the big yards of suburbia.



There is an art to gardening, but honestly it's also FUN. Kids love it. There is no sense in being intimidated about messing up with gardening. Dirt + seed + water + sun = food.

Ask questions relentlessly. If we are going to be "a nation of farmers" lets get cracking!

Just start wherever you are, and decide to kick it up a notch each year. Plant your first seed. Hang a tomato from your porch instead of a petunia. Learn to can. Add some fruit trees. Become a hot pepper fanatic. Make a permaculture paradise. Plow up a bigger plot. Build a chicken coop. Spread the word...share the fun and delight with your children, your family, and your friends. Eat well. Live deliciously.

Maybe we will have 100 million farmers by 2032!

--Ruth



Ruth Gonzalez is a former market farmer, gardener, local food advocate, and founder of the Tailgate Market Fan Club where she blogs at <http://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 Ruth © 2010 Ruth Gonzalez & Organic Growers School

Gardeners: Got a question for Ruth?

[Email it to us](#)

Spring Conference: Ruth's Picks

Every gardener and farmer learns something new every single year. I refer to my books and seed catalogues for information all the time. The OGS Spring Conference has new and exciting learning opportunities for gardeners every year.

Some of my favorite gardening picks from this year's [Organic Growers School Spring Conference lineup](#):

- Starting Your First Vegetable Garden with Elizabeth Ayers
- Diversifying the Vegetable Garden with Herbs with Juliet Blankespoor
- The Backyard Mountain Orchard with Chuck Marsh & Debbie Lienhart
- Secrets of the Soil: Boosting Fertility with Andrew Goodheart Brown
- Effortless Edibles in the Landscape with Sheila Dunn
- Artisan Bread at Home with Steve Bardwell
- Enjoying Tomatoes Year-Round
- Gardening With Chickens with Harvey Ussery



Get inspired about gardening and farming at the 19th Annual Organic Growers School Spring Conference! This year's conference is March 3 & 4 at UNC Asheville. [Register by February 15 to save \\$15 per day.](#)

[Check out the whole schedule, plus the Half & Whole Day workshops, and the Kids Program HERE.](#)

Farmer's Corner

Ask Tom: Knots for Farmers

Dear Tom –

One of your workers impressed me with her knot tying and said it was part of her Thatchmore Farm training. Why do you spend time on that topic?

-Curious in Meadow Fork

Dear Curious –



Yes it's true. I torture our crew with knot tying nearly every day while we are gathering to start the day. It's surprising how useful knots can be on the farm and how frustrating it can be when faced with someone's snarl of ropes intended to approximate a knot. Here are some of the more common knots on our farm and how they are used.

Bowline – a loop that does not slip if you need to start a trellis around a stem or lead livestock without strangling them.

Trucker's hitch – a knot with a built-in pulley for tying a load on a truck or trailer. Also known as the "Haymaker's" or "Harvester's" knot.

Taunt line hitch – anchoring your tent to your truck or tying up your farm sign at market. It slips easily in one direction but resists movement when pulled from the other direction.

Slip knot – useful at the top of a trellis string.

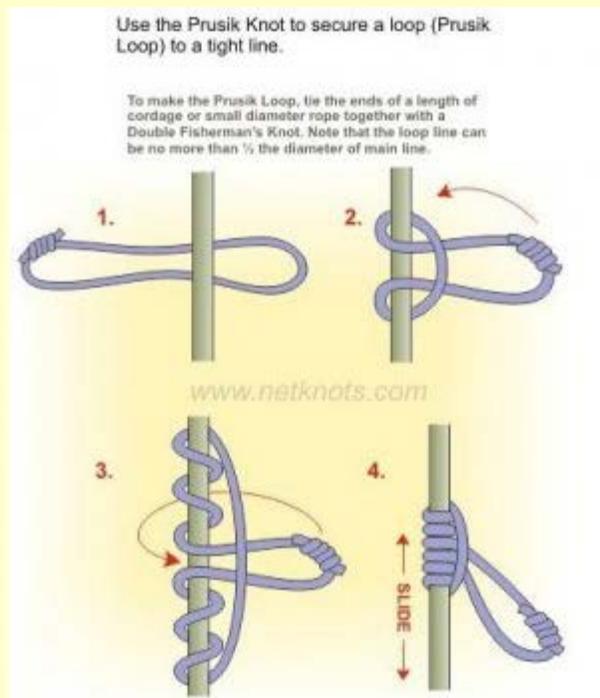
Figure eight on a rope – makes a loop that tightens and stays tight (not for livestock).

Timber hitch – hauling logs – stays tight while pulling but is quickly tied and untied.

Clove hitch – tying a rope to a post.

Square knot – tying two ropes together.

Prusik knot – (pictured at right) Used by climbers to ascend a fixed rope (to climb out of a crevasse for example). I find it useful when painting the steep parts of the barn roof. I tie a rope to the opposite side of the barn and then hook a seat harness to the rope with a prusik knot. It allows me to move around by adjusting the knot quickly but will catch me if I slip.



Lashing – to make temporary or fairly permanent structures (pictured at left) or a catapult for your annual pumpkin toss.

Celtic Knot – for a door mat or just for fun.

Mast head knot – to dazzle your friends or if you are adrift in a rowboat some day.



Safety: Rope, and the sports associated with rope, can be dangerous. Wrongly handled, gripped, or tied, rope can kill, maim, or burn. You could be the victim! So, handle rope with care, inspect and test any knot you tie, and respect any rope subject to a heavy load.

Knots Weaken Rope: Angles, kinks, and knots, stress the fibers unevenly and weaken rope. For safety, assume that even brand new rope will perform at no more than 50% of its rated breaking strength. And, if the rope is old, worn, or damaged by sunlight or chemicals, expect considerably less. For some useful test results visit Dave Richards' [Knot Break Strength vs Rope Break Strength](#) on the National Speleological Society Website and Tom Moyer's website for: [High Strength Cord Testing](#), [Euro Death-Knot Testing](#), and [Rope Gear and Testing](#).



More Information:

- [Animated Knots](#)
- [Net Knots](#)
- [Square Lashing](#)

Pioneering Projects

If you are completely inspired, consider the [International Guild of Knot Tyers](#) (no kidding).

-Tom

Commercial Farmers: Got a Question for Tom? **Email it to us.**

Farmers and Farm Workers! Join CRAFT in 2012!

CRAFT: Training...Peer Support...Resources...Roundtables...Workshops

CRAFT stands for Collaborative Regional Alliance for Farmer Training and is a program of the Organic Growers School.

Membership is open to beginning and experienced farmers, apprentices and farm workers, and anyone else who has a strong desire and drive to begin farming.



CRAFT is a coordinated effort to bring established farmers, farm apprentices, and students of agriculture together for a comprehensive training program in sustainable agriculture. CRAFT gives established, successful farmers a stake in the training of our next generation of growers, and to give farm apprentices a rich educational experience that truly encompasses the ins and outs of farm operation.

CRAFT training is done mainly through a series of on-farm tours held by experienced growers in the region. These tours are held once / month from April – November and are focused on a specific aspect of sustainable farming.

In addition to the tours, members are given a comprehensive CRAFT handbook. This handbook is rich with regional information on all aspects of farming and much of the information is farmer generated: CRAFT farmer members are writing down their invaluable knowledge gained from many years of farming in the southeast Appalachians.

Lastly, CRAFT offers a series of winter workshops, both for beginning farmers and for experienced farmer members. These workshops are held as "roundtables" and are places for members to come together to discuss such issues as production planning, record keeping, labor issues, etc. For CRAFT members just getting into farming, roundtables focus on business planning, loans, gaining access to land and capital, etc.

Membership fees are \$20 - \$30/year and give members access to a wealth of summer tours and winter workshops.

To learn more about CRAFT and to join: [CLICK HERE](#).

Please contact [Andrea Van Gunst](#), OGS Farmer Programs Coordinator, or call Andrea at 828.338.9508 if you have any questions about CRAFT.

Businesses! Reach Organic Consumers and Growers

Gain exposure to OGS's community of organic gardeners, farmers, and consumers: connect with the Organic Growers School to discuss marketing opportunities for your business.

- Want to expose your business to the largest convergence of foodies, farmers, and conscious consumers in the southeast? [Become a Sponsor of the OGS Spring Conference](#)

Want to partner with OGS year-round and gain year-round exposure for your business? [Learn more about the Organic Growers School Growth Partner Program.](#)

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