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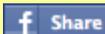


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Organic Growers School

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 living

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.](#)

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Questions about the Spring
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E-mail OGS Director Meredith McKissick at
meredith@organicgrowersschool.org.

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The Organic Growers School Spring Conference Silent
Auction is a fundraiser to support all of the
educational work of the Organic Growers School.

We welcome all kinds of donations from seeds to
books to gift certificates.

Consider a tax-deductible donation to support
sustainable agriculture!

Contact meredith@organicgrowersschool.org to find
out how you can participate.

Thank you Volunteers!



All volunteer shifts at the Spring
Conference are FULL! Thank you,
volunteers!

[If you would like to be on the waiting list
for a volunteer shift, click here.](#)

Featured Scholarship Recipient: Isaac Mathews

*"I want to be able to come and learn all I
can so I can grow and sell vegetables at
the farmers market next year. My Saanan
goat, Hera, is bred and I am looking
forward to raising goat babies on my own
for the first time this year."*



[Read Isaac's story and more about his goat milk soap business and vegetable garden here!](#)

Congratulations, Isaac! We look forward to seeing you at the Organic Growers School Spring Conference!

Gardener's Corner

Ask Ruth: Unseasonably Warm Weather and How to Build Soil Quickly



I received a few questions from readers this month...I will tackle two of them this time around.

Question #1

Dear Ruth,

Will all this warm, mild winter have any effect on my spring and summer garden that I should be preparing for?

~Gretchen in Hendersonville

Dear Gretchen,

We don't know what the rest of winter will be like, and many of us speculate that this mild winter will be followed by very mean weather in February, March, and even

possibly April.

But yes! Everyone worries that a warm winter will bring with it the consequence of lots of unwanted pests because the weather was too mild to kill a lot of them. So keep your eye out for insect damage a little earlier than usual, and be ready to address possible larger numbers of pests...including pests like fleas. Something is even eating my collard greens right now, in February!

Landscape plants may bud out earlier than normal, so be prepared to protect your favorites –especially early flowering plants and Japanese maples.

The upside of this warm weather is that if you're a risk taker, you can try planting your garden earlier than usual with the hope of enjoying an earlier harvest. Hedge your bets by planting half your plants early, and the rest at the normal time – in case the mild weather gets fierce and kills all your baby plants. Plan to protect plants with floating row cover, boxes, walls-o-water, etc.

[The Twelve Month Gardener: Simple Strategies for Extending Your Growing Season](#) by Jeff Ashton is a great resource for season extension tactics - by a local author who knows our climate.

Good luck!

~Ruth

Question #2

Dear Ruth,

How do I build my soil quickly? We've got very depleted soil in our garden, but I don't want to use the chemicals, and compost shrinks SO MUCH! Is my only choice to buy soil and compost?

~Trina in Seneca, SC



Harvesting worm compost

Dear Trina,

The very foundation of organic gardening is great soil, and truthfully creating good soil is something that takes time unless you are lucky enough to live somewhere with incredible topsoil already. It takes nature about 500 years to build up one inch of topsoil, and across the globe we lose about sixty million TONS of this precious resource every single day. However, in your own garden you could choose to really speed things up by using every trick in the book!

Try some of these tricks on your garden, or a portion of your garden this season.

Here are a few tricks: [READ MORE: READ THE FULL](#)

["Ask Ruth" ARTICLE HERE.](#)

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!](#)

SUPER SOIL!



Consider attending one *or all* of the excellent classes in the SOILS TRACK at the [Organic Growers School 19th Annual Spring Conference on March 3 & 4.](#)

A SAMPLING OF SPRING CONFERENCE SOILS TRACK CLASSES:

Animal Waste: Matching Sources to Nutrient Needs with Dr. Deanna Osmond
Nutrient content of animal manure varies by species, age and storage of the manure. This session addresses the nutrient content of various

and how to successfully use this important resource to grow crops.

Soil Enhancement Using Compost, Vermi-Compost and Compost Tea with Brian Rosa

The basics of how to create compost, vermi-compost (that's worm compost AKA black gold), and compost tea, and how to best utilize and apply compost and compost tea to enhance your soils. Vermi-compost is a great small-space urban alternative!

Healthy Soils Save Money with Ray Archuleta

Elizabeth Ayers, an Extension Agent in Madison County Extension, has already heard Ray Archuleta's presentation. She was super-impressed by his talk, and said this class is a "must" to attend. The class discusses growing without fertilizer and reducing your fuel bill by 70%!

Soils 101 with Laura Legnick

As a sustainable agriculture teacher at Warren Wilson College, Laura is experienced at explaining soil-building basics. This great class will explain the physical, chemical, and biological properties of soil and how to create and maintain healthy soil.

Other SOIL Classes at the OGS Spring Conference:

Secrets of the Soil: Boosting Fertility with Andrew Goodheart Brown, Sunday only

Permaculture feeds soil by gently orchestrating the web of plants, animals, fungi, and minerals in a managed ecosystem. Come learn practical wisdom for improving your soil fertility in the short and long term.

Farmstead BioChar with Walter Harrill, Half-Day Workshop on Saturday & Sunday

Biochar, or Terra Preta, is a recently rediscovered ancient technique that uses crop residues to improve the soil -

while sequestering carbon in a stable effective way. Explore small scale BioChar production and use, DIY kilns, and actually make a batch of BioChar on-site.



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

Or go straight to registration: <http://www.organicgrowersschool-farmers.org/conf2012/>

Farmer's Corner

Ask Tom: Soil Tests & Organic Soil Amendments



Dear Tom –

I have two questions related to my soil sample test results.

One is on phosphorus and potassium index results. I have read and heard differing answers.

My soil sample index results range from 29 to 85. Some sources suggest that around 100 is ideal for P and K. Others say that less is OK.

What are your thoughts? If you think I should add, do you know where I can find out the application rates? Maybe it's on the bag of supplement? Should I do this now or wait until the field is plowed?

The other question is on when to add lime. I use pelletized lime and I understand that it takes longer to break down. My intuition says to put it out now (prior to plowing) but the agent told me to just put it out when I plow up the field which won't be until

mid- to late March. What do you think?

-Andy in Reems Creek

Dear Andy,

On the soil indexes I usually try to stay above 50. Since many organic supplements release their full fertilizer value slowly, it is not a problem to aim for an index value higher than 50 if you will be farming this same land for several years.



[Table one on page two at the NCDA Soil Lab site](#) says that there is generally no response for fertilizer additions above an index of 50. For indices between 25 and 50 crops will have a declining response as you move closer to 50.

Since P and K do not move much in the soil once they are applied, the only problem with going over 50 is the expense this year compared to later. Organic growers starting to build up a field need to meet the plant needs for this season but they are also building reserves for future years.

An organic supplement like clay phosphate releases a percentage of P immediately (that's the number on the bag- the "available" P) but it releases more over several years. Also, with supplements like Harmony you will add more P and K as you meet the N requirements

around planting time. . . [READ MORE: READ THE FULL "Ask Tom" ARTICLE HERE.](#)

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

Consider Joining CRAFT for the 2012 Season!

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.



Training is done mainly through a series of on-farm tours held by experienced growers in the region. These tours are held once a month from April through November and are focused on a specific aspect of sustainable farming. In addition to the tours, members receive a comprehensive CRAFT handbook. This handbook is rich with regional information on all aspects of farming and much of the information is farmer generated, containing invaluable knowledge gained from many years of farming in the southeast Appalachians. CRAFT also 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.

CRAFT 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.

News Bits: Reader Submitted News, Events, and Opinion

Opinion:

Exposing the "Big Lie" of GMOs
by Samm Simpson



The companies who stand to profit from GMOs keep repeating this worn-out mantra: "[GMOs will feed the world](#), [increase yield](#) and [use less pesticides](#)."

The myth of GMO and organic coexistence is a falsehood. But there is an even bigger lie that has been repeated and repeated for nearly thirty years by proponents of GMOs. It is embedded in policy statements of food manufacturers, in the halls of government, in the faculties of universities who procure big dollars from Biotech agricultural giants, and in the mind of unknowing Americans. It goes like this: "The Food and Drug Administration, the U.S. Department of Agriculture and the Environmental Protection Agency have all concluded that food using ingredients from biotechnologically-improved crops is completely safe and no different in any meaningful way from other food."

Where is the peer-reviewed research that says it's safe for humans to eat food containing DNA injected with cross species bacteria, such as those resistant to Bt or Roundup or 2,4-D then combined with E-coli, and topped off with an antibiotic resistance gene? *There isn't any.*

Some scientists doing independent GMO research have been silenced, but we do have reports of the effects of GMO food on hamsters and rats. The findings indicate reproductive disorders, increased liver toxicity and death. [Dr. Don M. Huber](#), professor emeritus of plant pathology, has warned of devastating results of glyphosate (Roundup), and the emergence of a new, unclassified organism found in the soil, the roots of Roundup-Ready GMO crops, and in the guts and manure of animals that eat feed made from ingredients containing GMOs.

Dr. Huber explains: "What we do know is that it [this new, unclassified organism] causes reproductive failure,

infertility, as well as miscarriage for cattle, horses, pigs, sheep, and poultry. We can anticipate with that broad spectrum of animal species, which is extremely unusual, that it will also be with humans."

Readers of the Organic Growers School newsletter are most likely aware of the toxic effects of GMOs. But do you still feed them to your animals? Do you still eat them? Have you made a purposeful choice to stop buying any GMO products, including animal feed?

Will you commit to tell one friend, one family member, one stranger, one doctor, one farmer, one teacher, one car mechanic, one hair dresser, one veterinarian, one chef, one religious leader, one television or radio program host how GMOs can not only destroy our organic food supply, but put the control of food into the hands of corporations?

Will you speak out? Join the [Institute for Responsible Technology's Tipping Point Network](#). It's past time to expose the "Big Lie" of GMOs. It's time we dismantled it.

Ms. Samm Simpson is a GMO Educator and Activist in Florida and North Carolina. She can be reached at sammscript@yahoo.com.

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

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 foodies, farmers, and conscious consumers in the southeast? Advertise in the Organic Growers School E-newsletter! [Email us for more information](#).
- 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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