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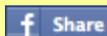
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Organic Growers School

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



...e-news

Summer CRAFT Tours Begin!

CRAFT: Farmer Training ~ Peer Support ~ Resources ~ Roundtables ~ Workshops



The 2012 CRAFT season has begun! We had our first tour at [Goldfinch Gardens](#) in Celo, NC with a great turnout and a beautiful day.

The topic for this first tour was "Production Planning and Greenhouse Management" and our host farmers Ben and Cedar shared so much wisdom about these topics. Our thanks again to them for their time and willingness to share all the ins and outs of their farm business!

We started the tour in the main greenhouse that was filled with lettuce mix, pea shoots, and winter greens. Ben and Cedar sell through mid-December and start selling again in mid-March so they are dependent on their greenhouses for this production.



Ben explained their process of making and maintaining beds in the greenhouse. First they build the beds up by shoveling out the walkways. To prep beds for planting they use a broadfork to loosen, add compost and Harmony fertilizer and then go back over the bed with a [tillther](#).

They direct-sow lettuce using a 6-tine precision seeder which Cedar explained needs a very smooth seed bed (and a lot of patience!) to operate correctly.

They use overhead irrigation in the greenhouse, a system that uses mini-wobblers by Senninger. In the field, Ben likes the [MegaNet sprinklers made by Netafim](#) because of their even coverage and ability to water only 180 degrees.

Ben and Cedar then walked us through their system of crop planning and marketing. Their main markets are an online farmers market and area restaurants. Cedar explained that they plan for the net income to be half of their gross income and they do this by managing a mix of more gourmet/high dollar produce with the regular A-Z vegetables typically grown for market.

Since they are on a small piece of land (~1.5 acres) they need to figure out crop balance, intensive planting and well-timed rotations in order to meet their income goals. They recommended "[Crop Planning for Organic Vegetable Growers](#)" (published by Canadian Organic Growers) as a great resource for helping farmers figure out the puzzle of crop mapping, planning and rotations. They use this resource extensively, retrofitting the examples and models to their own particular farm needs.

The tour then moved to the [rolling greenhouses](#) – a

highlight of this tour!

Ben and Cedar have two 26 x 48 moveable greenhouses and Ben explained that these have helped maximize production on their small area.

The greenhouses are set to be moved twice a year – so they have a 150' run, allowing the houses to be on new ground each time. This cuts down on soil borne disease, allows for easy rotations, helps them to always have a crop that is ready and one that is coming in.

Ben quoted these houses at 1.5x the cost of a fixed house but said the benefits do outweigh the cost. Our task was to help move on the greenhouses to its next location. With over 40 folks at the tour, this was easy work! Once we rolled it forward, the sides were re-anchored and the plastic ends were covered with dirt to hold them down...it was all ready for the new crop of tomatoes that will be planted to soon.



There is so much more to say but the end of the page is near! Ben and Cedar are full of great ideas, farming practices and farming innovations and it was so valuable to spend the afternoon learning from them. We finished up with our usual potluck - another great culinary experience of local food and brews!

[MORE PHOTOS of Goldfinch Gardens and permalink to this article here.](#)

Our next CRAFT tour is May 19th at Full Sun Farm. Alex and Vanessa will be leading the tour and their topic is "Equipment for 5-10 Acres of Vegetables." Join us!

CRAFT is a year-round farmer training collaborative that offers farmers and their interns networking and learning opportunities. Membership is rolling, so join anytime! [For more information or to join, click here.](#)

Join 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](#) or contact Cameron Farlow, OGS Farmer Programs Assistant at 828.338.9508 or cameron@organicgrowersschool.org.

Gardener's Corner

Ask Ruth: Blueberries!

Dear Ruth,

I am thinking about planting some blueberries. Are they

Farmer's Corner

Ask Tom: New Organic Sprays

Dear Tom,

I have heard talk about new organic sprays for flea



hard to grow?

- Michelle, Burnsville NC

Dear Michelle,

I love this question, because blueberries are one of my favorite plants. We sell lots of blueberries at the garden center where I work, and we

like to remind people that blueberries – in addition to the berry production – are a beautiful ornamental plant that will enhance the landscape in your yard.

They are covered with pretty pinky-white bell shaped flowers in spring. In summer they produce yummy berries that are power packed with anti-oxidants. As cooler weather approaches, their leaves turn yellow, orange and red...with truly spectacular fall color. Blueberries are deciduous (they loose their leaves in winter), but even in winter they are an interesting plant – with reddish stems and somewhat exfoliating bark.

Blueberries are a native plant that grows wild in WNC. You can pick them in the summertime at places like Roan Mountain (near Bakersville), Craggy Gardens (MP 364.4), and Graveyard Fields (MP 418). The wild berries are small and very flavorful. . . .**[READ MORE: READ this month's 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 [Tailgate Market Fan Club](#). 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](#)

Welcome Cameron!



The Organic Growers School welcomes **Cameron Farlow** to our team!

Cameron joins the Organic Growers School as our **Farmer Programs Assistant**, and will be working on the CRAFT program and Apprentice Link throughout the season. Cameron is the main contact for CRAFT members during the tour season and will be handling program logistics for our new CRAFT initiative

in Tennessee.

Cameron grew up in the Piedmont of NC and earned her



beetle and downy mildew. Can you tell me more about those products?

- Anxious in Asheville

Dear Anxious –

Downy mildew is a problem on our farm most years in squash and

cucumbers. It is not bad enough to kill the plant right away but it seems to slow down the production after about a month and eventually the plant loses enough leaves to stop producing.

I heard about a new product called Regalia. Kelly Ivors, a plant pathologist at the NCSU Mountain Horticultural Crops Center in Mills River says that according to her tests Regalia works better on downy mildew than either copper or Serenade. Its active ingredient is an extract from giant knotweed.

According to the label, Regalia works by inducing the plant to increase its own defenses – up to five times the normal amount of internal phenol compounds, for example. It is a protectant and takes two days to reach full effectiveness. . . . **[READ MORE: READ This Month's FULL "Ask Tom" ARTICLE HERE.](#)**

**Commercial Farmers:
Got a Question for Tom?**
[Email it to us.](#)

True Nature Country Fair Ready to Blossom on Its Own!



The Organic Growers School is excited to announce that the True Nature Country Fair, formerly a program of the Organic Growers School, is now an independent project.

The True Nature Country Fair, now in its sixth year, has built a strong foundation of community support and is ready to blossom on its own!

Under the direction of Karen Vizzina, one of the Fair's creators and it's director since 2006, the Fair will continue and expand its mission of celebrating our heritage and cultivating our future with a fun, experiential weekend of activities focused on sustainable living.

The Organic Growers School, which managed the Fair for five years, has officially transferred ownership of the True Nature Country Fair to Karen Vizzina, who intends for the Fair to bring together a wide variety of community collaborators. "The Fair is no longer a program of any one organization, but is a collaborative community event," says Vizzina. "We are looking to partner with individuals, organizations, and businesses

undergraduate degree from UNC-Chapel Hill in Anthropology and Geography in 2006. Brought to the mountains by a stint in the Great Smoky Mountain National Park Cameron quickly decided to make WNC her home.

In 2011, she completed her Master's degree in Appalachian Studies and Sustainable Development from Appalachian State University. While at ASU, Cameron put her studies in localizing food systems into action: she initiated a sustainable and local food system with Appalachian Food Services at ASU; she planned, organized, and facilitated the second High Country Local Food Summit in 2010; and she conducted phase one of a research study on farm profitability with the Western North Carolina Agricultural Options Program.

More recently, Cameron has been working as an AmeriCorps intern with the Lord's Acre conducting a Community Food Assessment in Fairview, NC, and learning the art of cheese-making at Looking Glass Creamery. Cameron also enjoys getting her hands dirty in her garden, cooking and sharing what she grows, indulging her sweet tooth, traveling and practicing photography.

Cameron can be reached at 828.338.9508 or cameron@organicgrowersschool.org.

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that share our vision of life in connection with the Earth."

"I am grateful to the Organic Growers School for helping to launch the True Nature Country Fair," says Vizzina. "And now we are looking forward to continuing the work of True Nature: increasing awareness of the challenges facing our bioregion and teaching the skills that are necessary to meet those challenges."

This year's True Nature Country Fair will be held on Saturday, September 29, 2012 at Highland Lake Cove in Flat Rock, NC. Along with other organizations and businesses, the Organic Growers School will be one of the True Nature Country Fair 2012 sponsors.

Individuals, businesses and organizations interested in becoming a partner, sponsor, exhibitor, teacher or volunteer should contact Karen Vizzina at earthstarnc@earthlink.net or (828)342-1849.

[Click here to visit the Fair's website.](#)

Help OGS by Recycling!

OGS Partners with Planet Green



The Organic Growers School has just signed up to fundraise by recycling inkjet cartridges, cell phones and other small electronic with [Planet Green](#). [Check out this video](#) and help OGS help organic growers by recycling!

Most of us have these recyclable items sitting around our homes collecting dust and now you can recycle them and help us raise money at the same time. [Click here to find out more!](#)

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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True Nature Country Fair



September 29th at Highland Lake Cove
Flat Rock, NC

Be a part of the event! Join us as a
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or silent auction.

www.truenaturecountryfair.org



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