CRAFT TOUR: Hickory Nut Gap Farm

It may have been a muddy day on the farm, but that didn't stop the CRAFT members from showing up en masse at Hickory Nut Gap Farm to learn about orchard management and small fruits. Come meet the pigs, cows, horses, and berries of Hickory Nut Gap Farm and take a virtual tour on our blog.

Click Here for More!

Farmer's Corner

Ask Tom

Dear Tom:

In the July OGS 'Notebook' you mentioned using clear plastic sheeting to dry firewood. Is there a 'greenhouse grade' clear plastic that is different from conventional clear plastic? I would expect that covering a pile of wood with clear plastic sheeting will cause “sweating” inside the plastic and actually cause the wood to rot. Can you send me a reply with a more detailed description of your wood-drying method?

I appreciate all your helpful info!
We installed a wood furnace last fall to help heat a greenhouse on our farm. We have not been through a full heating season with it yet but on paper we will need seven to ten cords a year. Dry wood is easier to ignite and it burns more efficiently with more heat to the heated space and with less wood smoke to cause health and aesthetic problems. My interest in dry wood led me to explore solar assisted wood drying.

The lumber industry dries wood for a variety of reasons. Appalachian State researchers developed an interesting solar kiln.

Virginia Tech has an interesting design too.

I suspect these devices would be great at drying firewood but they are a little more expensive than needed on our farm. My comment last month suggested using a very basic "solar chimney" concept employed in these designs to dry firewood but with a less elaborate structure.

Read more at Our Blog

Farmers: Got a question for Tom? Email it to us at enews@organicgrowersschool.org

RePost: Just Keep Farming

Around this time last year, Tom wrote an article about staying calm when the farming season is not cooperating. We at OGS know all too well what it's been like this year--many customers are having to cut the farmer's market out of their budget, feed prices are through the roof, and it seems like it never stops raining long enough to do any work these days! So, we thought, in light of all these challenges, we'd repost a link to Tom's article.

Ask Tom: Outwardly Calm

Also, if you've got a particular article from the Grower's Notebook you've been trying to find, check out our blog, where all Tom, Ruth, and Meredith's articles are archived!

Organic Living Corner

Ask Meredith

Dear Meredith,

My youngest daughter just started kindergarten, and my oldest is entering 3rd grade. Getting everyone out of bed, fed, and out the door on time every day is a real challenge, and I find I don’t have much time to think about healthy lunches for the kids. Do you have tips for organic and fun lunches that won’t break the bank or take too much time?

Gardener's Corner

Ask Ruth

Hi Ruth.

I live just on the edge of Pisgah National Forest at about 3000 ft. I have almost no experience gardening. We have tried a garden for the past few summers that has been unsuccessful mostly I think to lack of sunlight as our land is mostly
Thanks!

Dear Amy,

What a fun question! And super appropriate, as I too am dealing with a new kindergartner and a toddler entering daycare this week. The morning rush hit us like a ton of bricks, too, but this past weekend I rolled up my sleeves and did a whole bunch of cooking, baking, and organizing to get myself ready for the week. Below are some ideas for staying organic, healthy, and sane as you send the kids to school every day.

- **Make time the night before to pack lunch.** Boy, did I learn this lesson the hard way. I usually wake up at 5am and get a couple hours of work in at the computer before the kids wake up. Not anymore! Not only do we have to be out the door by 7am nowadays, but also it takes all of an hour for me to get lunches, cups and snacks loaded with healthy fare, labeled, and in the right backpack compartments to meet all the school requirements. Shew! Now I’m assembling food, labeling, and packing the night before and keeping everyone’s little pile in the fridge so I can grab and go in the morning.

Read more at Our Blog

**Organic Thinkers: Got a question for Meredith? Email it to us at**

enews@organicgrowersschool.org

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forested and shaded. I have a new, more sun exposed location in mind and I am looking for advice on how to prepare the soil for next year. The spot I have in mind is currently a pretty impacted field of clay quality soil. What should I do now to set myself up for success in April/May 2014?

-Melanie "Lark" Gardner

Dear Melanie,

I agree that shade could have been your problem. Full sun is optimal to a successful vegetable garden. Certain edibles will grow in partly shaded locations, but usually you will have a better harvest with good sun exposure. Additionally, sunshine and good air circulation help prevent many diseases. I often plant lettuces in my front garden, and the plants diminish in size and vigor as the shade increases across my yard. That said, if shade is most prevalent in your yard, I would find the very sunniest spots in your yard and plant in those spots, even if your garden is dotted around your yard. Some shade tolerant edibles include lettuce, greens, spinach, arugula, Asian greens, parsley, mint, and blueberries (more productive in full sun). And remember... mushrooms LOVE shade!

Moving your garden to a sunnier space is an excellent idea and highly recommended. Look for areas with at least 6-8 hours of full sun. Locate your garden in close proximity to your home and a water source, and start small.

Read more at Our Blog

**Gardeners: Got a question for Ruth? Email it to us at**

enews@organicgrowersschool.org

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Follow Us!
Changes to Soil Testing Protocol

**NEW! NC STATE SOIL TEST FEE CHANGES:**

NC State has just started charging for soil testing during the busiest times of year. For a free soil test you must submit your sample from April through November (NC State must receive your sample by Nov. 27 in 2013). During the peak season, estimated fees for an 8 acre field would run approximately $4 to $16. Fees will not be charged during the off season. NC State encourages farmers and gardeners to submit their soil samples during the off-season.

[Click Here to Learn More](#)

Tell Asheville to Quit Spraying!

Sign a local petition demanding that the city of Asheville stop spraying RoundUp on our city's playgrounds!

The active ingredient of Roundup is the isopropylamine salt of glyphosate, a known endocrine disruptor that can also cause genetic and oxidative damage. Another important ingredient in Roundup is the surfactant POEA (polyethoxylated tallow amine), which has been found to be highly toxic to animals and humans. As with other herbicides, the EPA requires that products containing glyphosate carry a label that warns against oral intake, mandates the use of protective clothing, and instructs users not to re-enter treated areas for at least 4 hours.

This stuff is being sprayed near and on our playgrounds with no warning, signs, or mandated limitations around application. This must stop. There are better ways to keep up our parks and playgrounds without spraying toxins that harm our children!

[Click here to add your name to this very important petition.](#)

Thanks!

Questions? Thoughts? Comments?

**We want to hear from you!**