We are always trying to expand and improve the services we offer to all you growers out there. With that in mind, the Organic Growers School presents the following classes for all manner of homesteaders--if you have ten acres in the country or a quarter acre in the suburbs!
Organic Growers School presents

PERMACULTURE-BASED SITE DESIGN for the HOMESTEAD

with Chuck Marsh, Living Systems Design

Saturday October 19, 2013
9:30am - 3:30pm
an on-farm workshop at
11 Fuller Lane
Asheville NC 28805

You’ve purchased your land, but now what? What you create will support your life for years to come, or be a series of ongoing problems. Avoid costly mistakes and learn how to assess your land for roads and access, outbuildings, water sources, waste treatment, gardens, orchards, and of course, your home site. You’ll understand how to create a site and needs assessment, conduct research and gather geographical and geological information, track climate, solar, water, and air variables, and study existing vegetation for keys to health. This workshop will take place at a homestead using these principles to guide its growth, so you can see how to apply what you’ve learned.

Registration is $75. Email meredith@organicgrowersschool.org or call 828.668.2127 to register.

www.organicgrowersschool.org
Ready to get started with your flock of chickens? Learn about breed selection and sourcing, and proper identification of heritage poultry breeds for eggs and meat, so you can pick the perfect birds for your family. You'll also learn about housing for your flock, feed considerations, and best management practices for keeping your birds healthy and productive. This workshop will take place on a farm where poultry production is getting established, so you'll have hands-on access to the birds and equipment.

Registration is $40.
Email meredith@organicgrowersschool.org or call 828.668.2127 to register.

www.organicgrowersschool.org

Presenting Organic Growers School Spring Conference Encores!

Revisit some of your favorite classes from this year's spring conference. You can sign up for one or take the entire series!

Click here to read full class descriptions
Farmer's Corner

Ask Tom

Dear Tom -

With the late spring and

Gardener's Corner

Ask Ruth

Hi Ruth,

After this wet summer,
incessant rain in June, this season was very stressful but making things worse was back pain on and off all season. Any suggestions?

Aching Andy in Tuxedo

Dear Andy –

You are not alone. Farming is the occupation most associated with disability in females and second most in males. The severity of the disability was second highest for women and fifth highest for men. (Leigh and Fries, 1992)

Solving back pain or any other work-related pain may involve a three part strategy:

- short term cures,
- injury prevention by personal preparation, and
- injury prevention by improving your workplace.

**SHORT TERM CURES** The first step may be body awareness. Even in the rush of harvest, I try to be aware of twinges caused by overworked muscles. Pushing through the pain rarely works out for me. Consider changing postures or positions at the first sign of problems. We hand transplant most of our crops so I have six or eight different postures for transplanting – bending, kneeling, straddling the bed, to the left, to the right, etc. Heading off the problem usually works for me.

The next step for me is to remember at the end of the day when my muscles have been stressed. Farming is often an athletic activity and yet few of us warm up before or stretch afterwards. Stretching by Bob Anderson is a great resource. Remembering to stretch before work may be unlikely but I try to always do it at the end of the day. While not very “natural,” Advil often works for me when stretching is not enough.

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I'm wondering if any varieties of tomatoes showed any resistance to the blight (early or late). I grew Opalkas, Amish paste, and Jullets for canning; Cherokee pink, Brandywine Black, Eva Purple Ball, and Early Girl for eating; and Sungolds and Black Cherokees for cherry tomatoes. Here at the end of August I picked a few cherry tomatoes, but all others are gone. Jullets lasted the longest. So what to do next year???

I never grow tomatoes in the same place or where potatoes were. I've even tried growing tomatoes outside of the garden in new ground. I use fresh compost every year and I don't till. I put landscape cloth beside my plants to reduce weeding and prevent soil splash. I've tried Serenade alternating with copper to help prevent blight. What else can I do?

Thanks!
Pat
Madison County

Hello Pat,

You are an excellent and very experienced gardener, and it sounds like you are already extremely pro-active regarding tomato blight prevention. Like most Western North Carolina gardeners, you have been facing the devastation of tomato blight for years on end, and it is a super-frustrating disease. I had never experienced tomato bight when I moved here 22 years ago. During my first gardening year in the mountains, my tomatoes were almost six feet tall and beautiful at the beginning of August. When I returned from a vacation two weeks later, my tomatoes looked like they had been sprayed with an herbicide (they were mostly a dead brown color). It was my first shocking encounter with tomato blight. Ouch!

Tomato blight is merciless. Don't take it personally. I talked to a few organic farmers at the Montford Farmers Market and their conclusions match my own conclusions. With tomato blight in WNC, it is not a question of if you will get blight, but more a question of when you will get it. We talked various strategies for staving it off (some below). Not very encouraging is it?

**OK. SO WHAT IS TOMATO BLIGHT?**

Early blight of tomato, *Alternaria solani*, is a fungal pathogen that appears as concentric spots on the foliage and can eventually rot out the stem. Prevention is the key.
Dear Meredith,

Here I sit browsing the June/July issue of The Appalachian Voice and came across an interview with two folks from the OGS. In it there is a recipe for garlic soap spray, supposedly the executive director’s favorite. One of the ingredients is mineral oil. The Internet defines mineral oil as “a liquid by-product of the distillation of petroleum to produce gasoline and other petroleum-based products from crude oil.” How is that organic? I know that some folks think this stuff is the best thing to use on their wood and metal kitchenware. I think the idea of eating petroleum sounds disgusting and potentially hazardous. What do you think?

Matthew Hester

Dear Matthew,

This is an excellent question, and not one with an easy answer. You are correct that mineral oils, which are components of horticultural oils, are byproducts of petroleum processing. As coffee-stirrers are to the lumber industry, so are mineral oils to the petroleum industry. They are colorless, odorless oils that remain after refinement of crude oil, so are produced in huge quantities, and carry a relatively low value. As a result, the market for mineral oil has been obviously bolstered by an industry interested in maximizing a waste stream to the fullest extent. Aha! This kind of thing is a kingdom for my enthusiastic skepticism. Let’s dig a little bit deeper, shall we?

Petroleum-based oils have been used in agriculture since the beginning of the industrial era, mostly in the form of “dormant oils” then, which are extremely viscous, relatively un-refined mineral oils used on woody plants. “Horticultural oil” or “Hort Oil” is an umbrella term used to describe mixtures of a mineral oil and a detergent, for use on plants to deter pest insects, molds, and mildews. What differentiates the various horticultural oils has to do with the amount of detergent used in combination with the oil, any additional ingredients (such as those in my DIY garlic soap recipe), and also the degree to which the mineral oil component has undergone refinement. In general, the more refined the oil, the safer it is for use.
Organic Events Around Town

Learn to Process Turkeys and Chickens! Just in Time for the Holidays!

Western Piedmont Community College’s Sustainable Agriculture Program is offering an On-Farm Poultry Processing workshop on Saturday October 5 from 9:00-4:00 pm. Students will learn the skill of humanely processing backyard poultry, including Standard Bronze Turkeys and Partridge Chantecler Chickens.

Date: Saturday October 5
Location: WPCC in Morganton, NC
Time: 9:00 - 4:00 pm
Cost: $50

Register online or in person until 10/4 (There will be no registration day of):
http://www.wpcc.edu/continuing_ed.php?cat=382

If you have any questions, contact Meagan Roberts at 828-448-3562

Got Organic News to Share?
Email a brief description to jenn@organicgrowersschool.org

Questions? Thoughts? Comments?

We want to hear from you!
Email them to us at
jenn@organicgrowersschool.org