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Gardeners Corner

**Ask Ruth: Solarizing Soil**

Dear Ruth,

Greetings from SW North Dakota. I had some problem with blight the
Ask Tom: Metals in Granulated Poultry Litter

Dear Tom –

We use a granulated poultry litter product that is OMRI (Organic Materials Review Institute) listed for organic production. I read that those products may have high levels of metals that can accumulate over time and damage our soil. Should we be concerned? Thanks.  
-- Karla in Metaphor, NC

Dear Carla –

A specific answer to your question depends on your soil type, pH, cropping system, soil supplements, and pest management strategies. To provide a general answer I will use some information on copper in tomato production. Copper is used in poultry feed so it ends up in poultry litter-based soil supplements. It is also present in several materials such as copper sulfate used to manage late blight and other tomato diseases.

Copper is an important micronutrient that tomatoes need to thrive, but high levels can damage plants. High copper levels can also raise the crop copper content to a point where it is toxic to humans and livestock that eat the crop. Copper is more stable in the soil that some nutrients but copper levels vary as it is applied in the form of soil supplements and sprays and as it leaves when rainfall and irrigation leach it from the soil. Copper is also carried off in crops and perhaps plant debris. Soil type and pH influence this dynamic system. Acid conditions help metals dissolve and move through the soil and groundwater. Organic soils tend to hold metals more effectively than sandy soils.

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New Year Means Big Changes for OGS!

**OGS Welcomes New Executive Director**

The Organic Growers School announces the appointment of Lee Warren as its new Executive Director as of the start of 2014. Organic Growers School works to advance organic agriculture and sustainable living in the Southern Appalachian region by gathering people to teach, learn, and celebrate together.

"I am delighted to be joining Organic Growers School as the next Executive Director," Warren said. "The organization’s vision of a mutually supportive network of thriving communities and prosperous farmers throughout our region is a vision close to my heart. The dedication and passion on the part of the board, staff, and participants is an inspiring climate to step into. While there are certainly challenges for non-profits in today’s economic climate, I believe we will be able to reach our goals of expanding programming to more organic growers, from container gardeners to farmers, because Organic Growers School fills a much-needed educational niche and enjoys tremendous support in the local community. I feel privileged to have the chance to work on such an timely and important endeavor."
For our October and last CRAFT tour of the 2013 season we visited Goldfinch Gardens, where Ben McCann and Cedar Johnson shared their efforts at season extension and greenhouse management. The cooler weather set the stage for lots of discussion about the pros, cons and how-tos for extending your season and markets into less favorable growing conditions. Thanks again to Cedar and Ben for their time and willingness to share all the ins and outs of their farm business.

Ben and Cedar grow the range of A-Z vegetables on about 1.5 acres of land in Celo, NC. Their main markets are an online farmers market and local restaurants, and having quality products as long as possible is important to meet their demand. They've invested, brainstormed, tried a few things and brainstormed some more to devise the best methods for extending their season in the Celo valley. The major challenge they face with season extension is wind. Countless times they've come out to find row cover billowing in the trees, or pipe caterpillars up turned and broken.

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

See You in March!
Early Bird Registration is Open!

Register online here
Register by mail by calling 828.668.2127 to request a paper registration mailer

Register by phone by calling 828.342.1849 during regular business hours

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