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PRESS RELEASE

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For Immediate Release:

Organic Growers School Offers Third Year of Farm Beginnings® Farmer Training in Western NC.

Asheville, NC: Organic Growers School's **Farm Beginnings® Farmer Training** is entering its third year, having graduated 45 farmers in the last 2 years. Farm Beginnings® Farmer Training is a 12-month training that uses a mix of farmer-led classroom sessions, on-farm tours, and an extensive farmer network, tapping into the knowledge of the most innovative & skilled farmers in Western NC.

Organic Growers School (OGS) will begin this year's program on October 15, 2017 and is now accepting applications. New in the 2017-18 program is a 15+ hour Mentorship Program offering each student a farmer mentor to guide them in farm development, offer problem solving, provide support and guidance, as well as practical advice.



Lori Burra and Rich Steinhoff graduated from OGS's Farm Beginnings® Farmer Training in 2016. They are the co-owners of Greenheart Gardens, a medicinal herb farm and business in Candler. According to Lorri, "I learned more of the business end and how to plan for profit [with Farm Beginnings]. Organic Growers School and their Farm Beginnings Program has helped me become a profitable, sustainable, organic farmer."

Farm Beginnings® Farmer Training is designed to offer beginning and expanding farmers the practical skills and knowledge needed to start and grow successful long-term farm businesses. With a focus on sustainable agriculture practices, the course is taught by established farmers and agricultural entrepreneurs from across Western NC, such as Flying Cloud Farm, Green Toe Ground, Rayburn Farm, Bluebird Farm and A Way of Life Farm. The course is open to aspiring, beginning and expanding farmers in Western NC and surrounding Southern Appalachian states – Tennessee, Virginia, Georgia, and South Carolina.



According to graduates, Stephen Rosenthal and Krista Fayette, in their first season at New Roots Market Garden, "The connections that we have created through Farm Beginnings is what we cherish the most. Many different farmers took the time to share their stories, mistakes, successes and business models with us. These stories helped us in making many of our own first-time decisions. We now have a network of dear friends whom we can call on if we ever have a problem, need assistance, or just simply to talk, vent, and relate."

Farm Beginnings® Farmer Training was developed to address the needs of the regional farming community and offer a comprehensive farmer-led training course to better prepare the next generation of farming professionals in Western NC. It is a part of the national Farm Beginnings® Collaborative, recognized as "a model that is creating strong new farm businesses across the country" by Kathleen Merrigan, former U.S. Deputy Secretary of Agriculture (in her 2012 remarks to the Beginning Farmer and Rancher Development Program directors).

The one-year farming training program consists of 200+ hours of training time including: 60 hours of whole farm business planning sessions; 45 hours of production training through field days on sustainable farms around WNC and on the Southern Appalachian Highlands Conservancy Incubator Farm; 40+ hours of classes at Organic Growers School's Annual Spring and Harvest Conferences; and 8 hours at ASAP's Business of Farming conference. The newly added mentorship component adds an additional 15+ hours of one-on-one guidance from an experienced farmer mentor.

Nicole DelCogliano, Farm Beginnings® Farmer Training Coordinator, states, "I am really excited as we enter our third year of Farm Beginnings. As participants graduate they are asking deeper questions and have a more fine tuned sense of what to look for, assess and think about as

they plan their farming future. Training beginning farmers not only in production methods, but in systems assessment, business and financial management, is vitally important to the resilience of our farming community”

Applications are being accepted for the program until September 1st, 2017. The program fee for the one-year, 200-hour program is \$3000, similar to other national and regional year long training courses. An early bird discount of \$100 will be given to those who submit applications by August 1st. Scholarships and payment plans are available. For more information and to apply for Farm Beginnings® Farmer Training visit: www.organicgrowersschool.org/farm-beginnings

Organic Growers School (OGS) is the premiere provider of practical and affordable organic education in the Southern Appalachians, building a vibrant food & farming community by boosting the success of organic home growers and farmers in our region. A 501c3 non-profit, OGS is based in Asheville, NC, and has been serving the region since 1993.

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