



# SPRING CONFERENCE

PRESS RELEASE

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For Immediate Release:

## **New Location for the Organic Growers School 26th Annual Spring Conference, March 8-10, 2019**

The 26th Annual Spring Conference—for farmers, gardeners, homesteaders, and sustainability seekers—is hosted by Organic Growers School (OGS), a local non-profit organization and will take place this year at Mars Hill University in Mars Hill, NC. The conference is scheduled for Friday–Sunday, March 8-10, 2019. The Friday Pre-Conference Workshops take place at various locations around Western NC.

“We’re thrilled to be moving to Mars Hill University for our 26th Annual weekend event,” says Conference Coordinator Kiera Bulan. The new location is just 20 minutes north of downtown Asheville and the campus offers free parking, larger classroom sizes, more centralized indoor locations for exhibitors and registration, and more food vendor options than previous locations. “In addition,” says Bulan, “the venue is more affordable, which allows us to keep our expenses down and continue to offer extremely low registration fees to participants. It’s a big win for everyone.”

The Spring Conference offers practical, region-specific workshops on farming, gardening, permaculture, urban growing, and rural living and includes a trade show, a seed exchange, kids program, special guest speakers, and a Saturday evening social.

More than 150 classes—both 90-minute sessions and half-day workshops—are offered on Saturday and Sunday are organized 17 learning tracks which are populated with 4 workshops throughout each day. The tracks are organized by local community leaders who are experts in their fields and volunteer their time to create highly diverse schedule.

The themed tracks include:

1. Community Food
2. Cooking
3. Earth Skills
4. Farmers: Beginning
5. Farmers: Experienced
6. Gardening
7. Herbs
8. Homesteading
9. Livestock
10. Mushrooms
11. Permaculture
12. Pollinators
13. Poultry
14. Soils
15. Sustainable Forestry
16. Sustainable Living
17. Thinking Big

This one-of-a-kind event brings people of all walks of life together for a weekend of learning, inspiration, and networking and features a host of local and regional experts. The goal of the Spring Conference is to provide down-to-earth advice on growing and sustainable living while remaining affordable and accessible. The Spring Conference is the largest locally run sustainability conference in the Southeast and is proudly focused on regionally relevant growing methods.

The 2019 Kids Program is available to our youngest growers in partnership with Asheville Farmstead School. The program will offer crafts, science experiments, outdoor activities, and indoor and outdoor play opportunities on the Mars Hill University campus during conference hours. The cost per child is \$35 per day or \$50 for both days of the weekend.

Four full-day, on-farm, pre-conference workshops are available on Friday, March 8, 2019 from 9:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. They offer an deeper dive into specific topics with regional and national special guest experts. The cost for each workshop is \$55 when purchased with a weekend conference registration and \$70 without. Offered this year are:

- Finding, Buying, & Loving the Land— Site Assessment & Land Design for Farmers, Homesteaders, and Land Seekers with Peter Bane at Mountain Horticultural Crops Research and Extension Center, 455 Research Drive, Mills River, NC 28759.
- Year-Round Growing on the Farm & Garden with Pam Dawling & Ira Wallace at Creekside Farms Education Center, 339 Avery Creek Road, Arden, NC 28704
- Integrated Animal Agriculture—Incorporating livestock into Your Farm & Homestead with Meredith Leigh at Southern Appalachian Highlands Conservancy Incubator Farm Education Center, 180 Mag Sluder Road, Alexander NC 28701
- Water and Agriculture—Critical Consciousness for Healing the Planet with John & Jonathan Todd at Living Web Farms, 176 Kimzey Rd, Mills River, NC 28759

Prices for the Saturday & Sunday Conference registration are as follows:

- Saturday Only
  - \$59 on or before January 31
  - \$74 on or after February 1
- Sunday Only
  - \$49 on or before January 31
  - \$64 on or after February 1
- Saturday and Sunday
  - \$99 on or before January 31
  - \$129 on or after February 1

The Spring Conference features an exhibit hall on Saturday and Sunday that showcases a wide array of vendors and products from local farms, gardening suppliers, and cottage industries that specialize in organic products and resources. Also featured on Saturday and Sunday is the annual Seed and Plant Exchange booth which offers the opportunity to preserve genetic diversity and protect regionally adapted varieties. Attendees may bring excess seeds and small plants to share, barter, or trade.

For 26 years, the Spring Conference has allowed Organic Growers School to reinforce Western NC's role as a regional leader in sustainable food and farming. Attendees come from 18 states and Canada and have described the event as the best way to kick-start to the growing season. The event has grown exponentially—from a small gathering of 100 growing enthusiasts in 1993 to a regionally recognized conference drawing over 2,000 attendees, exhibitors and speakers.

“This conference is an annual celebration of the amazing regional wisdom we are fortunate to have access to,” says Lee Warren, OGS Executive Director. “The commitment to land stewardship, sustainable food systems, and local farming not only on the part of our instructors but in our participants makes this event a place to network, a source of inspiration, and a celebration of the richness of our community.”

Sponsors and supporters of the 26th Annual OGS Spring Conference at the highest level are Explore Asheville, Carolina Farm Credit, and Gaia Herbs. Others include Mountain Rose Herbs, Living Web Farms, Earth Tools, Chelsea Green Publishing, Biltmore, Southern SARE, Reems Creek Nursery, Southern Exposure Seed Exchange, Southeastern Seed & Plant Exchange, Thyme in the Garden, Lenoir Rhyne, Riddle & Brantley, Buchi Kombucha, White Insurance, French Broad Food Coop, Zink Outdoor Power Equipment- local BCS dealer, WNC Woman, Laurel of Asheville, Sow True Seeds, Mountain Xpress, Upstate Natural Awakenings, Hendersonville Community Co-op, Sheville, WNCW, Dig Local, and Morning Ag Clips.

The Spring Conference is organized annually by the Organic Growers School (OGS), a 501(c)3 non-profit organization based in Asheville, NC. OGS is the premier provider of practical organic education in the Southern Appalachians, building a vibrant food and farming community by boosting the success of organic home growers and farmers in the region. OGS offers hands-on training, workshops, conferences and partnerships that inspire, educate, and support people to farm, garden, and live organically.

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