Buncombe County Small Farms Initiative Updates

Hello, my name is Melinda Roberts, a native of Iredell County where I grew up on a small farm that participated in, and depended on a buy local program similar to that here in Buncombe County. Seventeen years ago I moved to Asheville to start learning about the flora and culture of Western North Carolina. While in WNC, I have participated in educational opportunities at Haywood Community College, Western Carolina University and Appalachian State as well as an abundance of hands on experiences.

On April 1st, I joined the Buncombe County Cooperative Extension team as the Small Farms Agricultural Agent. Since that time, I have been reestablishing goals and priorities for the Small Farms Initiatives Program so that I can offer the most valuable information and as many educational opportunities as possible. My goals include providing educational programs on farm planning, new crop production, adding value to existing products, new enterprise development, marketing techniques and farmland preservation. I will be working toward linking farmers with local markets, and connecting folks with the North Carolina Farmland Transition Network and other Farmland Preservation organizations.

For the past four months I have been out introducing myself to business owners and folks in other organizations working towards the same goals as myself. I have also started meeting and visiting farms, both urban and rural, trying to get a feel for what you farmers need. So, if you have not spoken with or had a visit from me, please contact me via phone or email so we can talk about your farming operation, your successes, troubleshoot any problems and discuss and develop future goals. I look forward to meeting you and helping you all in the future.

Melinda D. Roberts
Project Skill Up

A program to help you stay in farming, return to farming or get training in an exciting new career.

Opportunities:
- New Certificate Program for Farmers
- Special training or education for farming in the 21st century
- Guidance to individuals interested in a new career

Eligibility: Individuals who have roots in Madison and Buncombe counties and who have been affected by changes in tobacco

Find Out More: Maureen at 254.1921 X 5832

Project Skill-UP is Offered By:
Asheville-Buncombe Technical Community College
1459 Sandhill Road
Candler, NC 28715
E-mail: mmacnamara@abtech.ed
Funded by the NC Tobacco Trust Fund Commission

Strawberry Pre-Plant Meeting

A strawberry pre-plant meeting will be held on Tuesday, August 11 at the Mountain Horticultural Research Station in Mills River from 9:00 – 11:30 am prior to the Fresh Market Tomato and Vegetable Field Day.

Topics Will Include:
- An overview and how to plan a strawberry enterprise month by month in WNC (Dr. Barclay Poling)
- Row covers and their importance in WNC (Dr. Barclay Poling)
- High elevation day-neutral varieties and high tunnels for off season production in WNC (Dr. Barclay Poling)
- Mite management; both conventional and organic/biological (Dr. Hannah Burrack)
- Thresholds in strawberries; what pests are not necessary to treat (Dr. Hannah Burrack)
- Natural Resources Conservation Services EQUIP program (Loring McIntyre)

For more information or to register call Sue Colucci at (828) 697-4891.

Keys to Success in Adding Value to Farm Products

- Start small and grow naturally.
- Make decisions based on good records.
- Create a high-quality product.
- Follow demand-driven production.
- Get the whole family or partners involved.
- Keep informed.
- Plan for the future.
- Evaluate continuously.
- Persevere.
- Capitalize adequately.
- Focus.
- Establish a loyal customer base.
- Choose something you love to do & something that fits your personality and goals.

These points are described in detail in the ATTRA publication Keys to Success in Value Added Agriculture. Call ATTRA at 800-346-9140 to request a copy.
Transitioning to Organic Vegetables

The Transitioning to Commercial Organic Production course will run for 9 consecutive Tuesday evenings, starting on September 22nd through November 17th. The course is designed for growers throughout WNC that are already set-up for commercial production (1+ acres) of organic production. In addition, conventional growers looking to expand their markets and who wish to certify acreage as organic are encouraged to take part in the program.

**When:** Tuesday evenings, September 22nd – November 17th, 2009

**Where:** Buncombe County Cooperative Extension Office, 94 Coxe Ave, Asheville 28801

**Registration Fee:** $25.00 which includes informational booklet. *Limited to first 25 registrants!*

**Topics include:**
- Introduction to Organics and Certification and Transitioning to Organic Production
- Soils and Fertility
- Cover Crops and Rotation Design
- Weed Management
- Insect Management
- Disease Management
- Post-Harvest and Food Safety
- Marketing Options
- Certification Paperwork Questions & Answers

For more information or to register call the Buncombe County Cooperative Extension office at (828)255-5522 or email Sue Colucci at sue_colucci@ncsu.edu.

The Featured Farmer

**Hop’N Blueberry Farm**

**Owner:** Van Burnette

**Focus:** Organic Hops and Blueberries

**Established:** Spring 2009

Van is the seventh generation of Burnettes to live in the North Fork Valley of Black Mountain on his families “Century Farm”. In 2009, Van was awarded a WNC AgOptions grant to assist him in converting his family’s 60-year practice of raising cattle into a hops and U-Pick Blueberry Farm. Van hopes researchers will benefit from the outcome of his hops production, contributing to the growing interest in hops-farming in WNC. WNC Agricultural Options applications will be available online August 4th. Anyone interested should visit www.wncagoptions.org

**Did You Know?**

“Blueberries are the top-ranked fruit crop in N.C. and they are the 16th ranked commodity overall for the state. A state record 28.5 million pounds of production yielded a value of roughly $50 million in 2008. The level of production places N.C. fifth nationwide for blueberries.”

“Blueberries are a ‘superfruit’ that possess a combination of exceptional antioxidant and nutrient qualities, which have led to an increase in demand recently. The National Blueberry Council can provide additional resources.”

NCSU’s Value-Added & Alternative Agriculture: http://ncvalueadded.org/did-you-know.php
2009 Hops Farm Tour

SATURDAY AUGUST 29, 2009
FEATURING TWO LOCAL GROWERS AND ONE LOCAL BREWER
$10 PER CAR LOAD OF FOLKS

Topics of Discussion:
- Trellis Systems
- Varieties for WNC
- Flower Sets, Burrs, Cones
- When to Harvest
- General Care
- Pest and Disease Management
- Importance of Locally Grown Hops

Schedule:
- Registration: 9:00—10:00 am at Landfair Farms, 71 Allman Hill Road, Weaverville 28787
- Tour Landfair Farms: 10:00—12:00 noon
- Lunch/Travel: 12:00—1:30 pm (Food available for purchase at Landfair Farms)
- Tour Hop N’ Berry Farm in Black Mountain: 1:30—3:30 pm
- Tour/Taste Test at Pisgah Brewery: 4:00—5:00 pm

Primary Contact: Melinda Roberts
(828) 255-5522 melinda_roberts@ncsu.edu

Please call for additional information or directions.

More Upcoming Events

North Carolina Pesticide Rectification Opportunities:
- September 1st, 3:00 – 5:00 pm (V Category) & 6:00 – 8:00 pm (all categories)
- September 22nd – 23rd North Carolina Pesticide License School & Exam
- Contact for registration: Amanda Stone NC Cooperative Extension (828)255-5522 Amanda_Stone@ncsu.edu

Weed Management For Vegetable Production:
- A Course for Farmers and Extension Agents on Ecologically Based Weed Management for Sustainable/Organic Vegetable Production Presented by Dr. Mark Schonbeck
  - September 24, 2009; 8:30 am till 4:30 pm
  - Madren Conference Center Auditorium, Clemson University, Clemson, SC
  - Registration: $25 which includes lunch. Registration deadline is September 14. To register, contact Geoff Zehnder at zehnder@clemson.edu

Introduction to Beekeeping Class:
- November 2009
- Check www.wncbees.org for updates

Keeping Your Farm: Updates on Issues Effecting Farm and Forest Landowners:
- November 2009
- Collaboration between Buncombe County Soil & Water Conservation & Buncombe County Cooperative Extension Service
- Primary Contact: Melinda Roberts (828) 255-5522
Grants and Monies

Links to all of the grants below are available on the Buncombe County Cooperative Extension Website. Go to http://buncombe.ces.ncsu.edu and click on “Agriculture & Food” and then under County Extension Programs, click on “Buncombe County Small Farms Initiative”. If you do not have access to the internet, please call our office at (828) 255-5522 for more information on any of these grants.

- **WNC Agricultural Options Applications - Online August 4th.** [www.wncagoptions.org](http://www.wncagoptions.org)
- Farm Aid Grants – Deadline August 1
- USDA Small Socially-Disadvantaged Producer Grant – Deadline August 10
- North Carolina Value-Added Cost Share Program – Deadline September 1
- CROPP’S Farmers Advocating for Organics Fund – Deadline September 2
- USDA Small Business Innovation Research: Air, Soil and Water Resources – Deadline September 3
- USDA Small Business Innovation Research: Marketing and Trade – Deadline September 3
- USDA Small Business Innovation Research: Small and Mid-Sized Farms – Deadline September 3
- Good Husbandry Grants for Farmers – Deadline October 1
- OFRF Organic Research and Education Project Grant - Deadline November 16
- NCD&A&CS Food Safety Cost Share Grants - Given on a First Come First Serve Basis
- Farm Credit Financial Training Funding Provided by NC Tobacco Trust Fund Commission Grant - Currently Accepting Applications
- Appalachian Grown Matching Funds - Ongoing through June 2010
- USDA Small Farm Funding Resources - Ongoing
- USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service has several programs that offer financial and technical assistance, easements, incentive payments, cost shares and matching funds in the areas of conservation, watershed and wetland rehabilitation and protection, environmental quality, farmland protection, wildlife habitat, and grassland and grazing reserves.

"Much appreciation to Erin Bonito for her assistance in comprising the Small Farms Initiative Newsletter"
Buncombe County Small Farms Initiative

More and more farmers have been sharing with our agents their desire to continue farming, as well as the challenges they are facing in doing so. Farmers are desperately looking for ways to increase their income so they can keep their operation viable and their land preserved. Support given by our Buncombe County Commissioners and County Management has allowed the Cooperative Extension to develop a Small Farms Initiative Program to aggressively work toward helping both seasoned and new farmers.

Melinda Roberts
Extension Agent
Agriculture-Small Farms

http://buncombe.ces.ncsu.edu

You can get this newsletter via email. Contact us either by phone at 828-255-5522 or email: Melinda_Roberts@ncsu.edu