2009 WNC AgOptions Awardees Announced
Farmers diversify farms, try local markets to remain viable

Nearly 50 farmers in the mountain region recently received funding totaling $225,000 from Western North Carolina Agricultural Options to demonstrate ways to enhance farm businesses. The $3,000, $6,000 and $9,000 awards will help farm operations stay viable in the rapidly changing economy.

Janet Shisler Peterson, who operates a diversified berry, cattle and bee farm in Buncombe County, aims to create a model for other farms with wood lots to saw their own barn lumber, fence posts, cattle stall frames and other wood products. With her WNC AgOptions award, she purchased the equipment necessary for a small sawmill business, which will add another income stream to her farm.

“Living on a farm with lots of trees that need savaging and thinning, but having no way to make lumber, is like being on a boat in the ocean with no water to drink,” Peterson said. “Now I can make the lumber I need for out-buildings as I enter the agri-tourism market, as well as custom saw for people in the community, making use of this renewable resource.

“This WNC AgOptions project gives me the support for making a business plan with follow through,” Peterson said. “The grant will enable me to maintain a healthy forest, focus on the sustainability issue of the farm and benefit financially at the same time.”

In addition to Peterson, six Buncombe County recipients received 2009 WNC AgOptions awards:

• Van Burnette will transition one portion of his farm into “U-Pick” blueberries and another portion to hops for use at local microbreweries.

• Walter and Wendy Harrill of Imladris Farm will construct a rabbit barn and sanitary processing building and will sell meat to consumers and chefs.

• Susan Mallard, owner of Blue Heron Farm, and her farm manager, Viki Nofke, will extend their growing season of culinary herbs to year-round production by converting a hoop house to a heated house and installing drip irrigation.

• Neal Morgan will produce a non-corn-based type of feed, grinding high quality alfalfa hay and mineral supplements. Feeding this to his cattle will yield hormone-free beef, high in omega 3, for individuals and retailers.

• Rayenelle Ritchie of Wilson Farms will expand her on-farm store and install a greenhouse to expand sales of bedding plants, poinsettias and vegetable transplants.

• Debra Roberts will double the size of her bee yard to 10 hives, using a non-chemical beekeeping approach.

Most of the WNC AgOptions recipients market their products at local farmers’ markets, restaurants, grocers or on-farm directly to the consumer. AgOptions grants will be available to Western NC farmers in 2010 and 2011. Stay tuned for more information on grant applications.
CALENDAR OF EVENTS

Spring 2009

North Carolina Arboretum - Visit their website at http://www.ncarboretum.org
Asheville Botanical Gardens - Visit their website at http://www.ashevillebotanicalgardens.org
The Bullington Center - Visit their website at http://www.bullingtoncenter.org

April 14
Support Landscape Tree Health: Understanding and Managing for Environmental Stress and Pests. NC Arboretum, 9am-1pm. Tree care professionals are encouraged to attend. ISA and NC Pesticide credits will be available. Speakers include Barbara Fair (NCSU) “Understanding impact of environmental stresses on existing trees in the landscape and practical approaches to supporting tree health”, Paul Merten (US Forest Service) “Identifying and monitoring for new and emerging exotic tree pests”. Anthony LeBude (NCSU) “Trees for the landscape-notes on selection, evaluation and research”. Early registration by April 7: $20 for NCUFC members, $40 for non-NCUFC members. Register online at www.ncufc.org or call (336) 774-0215.

May 5-6

June 23-July 23
Certified Plant Professional Short Course. NC Arboretum, 100 Fredrick Law Olmsted Way, Asheville, NC. This class is designed to assist participants in developing their level of knowledge and professionalism in the area of landscape plants and use. For more information contact Cliff Ruth, (828) 697-4891 or Amanda Stone, (828) 255-5522 or visit the website: http://henderson.ces.ncsu.edu/content/CertifiedPlantProfessionalShortCourse2009

June 18-20
Southeast Greenhouse Growers Conference & Trade Show, Greenville, SC. This is the largest educational conference and trade show in the South focused on the greenhouse grower and ‘color’ industry. Tours, workshops, educational sessions, new varieties, trade show networking, are all available during the three day event. For more information call the Extension Office at 255-5522 or visit www.sgcts.org.

June 18-19
Certified Landscape Technician Exam, Blue Ridge Community College, Flat Rock, NC. NCNLA is starting to take applications for the exam. www.ncan.com or (919) 816-9119. For more information contact Cliff Ruth (828) 697-4891.

September 15-17
Building Your Urban Forest Infrastructure: developing working partnerships and technologies for your community. Winston-Salem, NC

Local Plant Sales

April 24-25 - Blue Ridge Horticulture Association’s “Growing in the Mountains,” Plant Sale, WNC Farmers’ Market, Asheville

May 1–2- Days in the Garden, Botanical Gardens in Asheville, Fri. 1-6pm, plant sale; Sat. 8am-3pm, plants, food, entertainment, crafts, guided tours.

May 1,2,3 - Spring Herb Festival, WNC Farmers’ Market., Fri. and Sat., 9am-5pm & Sun.,10am-3pm, plant sales, herbal products, crafts, educational programs.
Properly Dispose of Pesticides

Buncombe County is a member of the Hazardous Household Waste Program (HHW). HHW are accepted each Friday, except holidays, between 9:00 am and 3:00 pm at a special drop off area at the landfill. HHW is accepted for $2 per gallon for paint-related material, such as paint thinner, kerosene, gasoline and paint. Other materials, such as lawn, garden and agricultural chemicals are accepted from Buncombe County residents, at no charge. Periodically, the North Carolina Department of Agricultural will pick-up these chemicals and their containers and have them incinerated. It is important to be a responsible pesticide applicator and dispose of left over chemicals and containers properly to ensure environmental safety.

Directions to the Landfill: From I-240, take 19/23 north and then take the UNC-A exit. Turn left at the stop sign and go through the red light onto Riverside Drive. Go 10 miles north then turn right on Panther Branch Road. The landfill will be on the right. The new landfill (Panther Branch Rd.) is six miles north of the old landfill.

Phone # of Landfill: (828) 645-5311

Green Industry Integrated Pest Management Workshop Series, register NOW!

North Carolina Cooperative Extension will be holding 5 classes this season on Green Industry disease, insect & weed identification and controls. Each class will teach skills needed to identify diseases, insects and weed in the landscape. Actual live (or dead) samples of insects, disease and weeds will be brought to each class for hands-on teaching. Please feel free to bring in your own samples! We will then discuss Integrated Pest Management approaches to controlling these pests. No class will be the same, so come to one or come to all! The classes will be held at the Mountain Horticulture Crops Research & Extension Center, Mills River, NC. Class size will be limited to 35 students. Pesticide credits have been approved for all classes – 2 credit hours (each class) for categories GLNDOX. The class dates are as follows:

- April 23, 3:00 - 5:00pm
- May 21, 3:00 - 5:00pm
- June 11, 3:00 - 5:00pm
- July 28, 3:00 - 5:00pm
- August 18, 3:00 - 5:00pm

To register, please call Amanda Stone (828) 255-5522. There is a $5 registration fee for each class OR $20 for all 5 classes. Please indicate which classes you would like to attend and make checks payable to Buncombe County and mail to Amanda Stone, Cooperative Extension, 94 Coxe Ave. Asheville, NC 28801.
Pesticide Recertification Classes

***** Please visit North Carolina Department of Agriculture, Pesticide Section for a list of recertification opportunities throughout N.C.
http://www.ncagr.gov/SPCAP/pesticides/index.htm

Pesticide Safety Training Session (Category V)

5/7/2009- Pesticide Safety Training for Private Applicators, category V (2 credits). Class will be held from at the Haywood County Extension Office, Waynesville, NC. Please call (828) 456-3575 to pre-register

9/1/2009 - Pesticide Safety Training for Private Applicators, category V (2 credits). Class will be held from 3:00 - 5:00pm at the Buncombe County Extension Office, 94 Coxe Ave. Please call (828) 255-5522 to pre-register.

Pesticide Specialty Training Sessions

6/2/2009 - Pesticide Specialty Training, categories LNODX (2 credits), Madison County Extension, Marshall, NC. Please call (828) 649-2411 to pre-register

6/9/2009 - Pesticide Specialty Training, categories ABGHJKLMNOTDX (2 credits). Class will be held from 3:00-5:00pm at the Buncombe County Extension Office, 94 Coxe Ave. Asheville. Please call (828) 255-5522 to pre-register.

9/1/2009– Pesticide Specialty Training, categories ABGHJKLMNOTDX (2 credits). Class will be held from 6:00-8:00pm at the Buncombe County Extension Office, 94 Coxe Ave. Please call (828) 255-5522 to pre-register.

NC Irrigation Contractor License (Law comes into full effect June 30!)

The North Carolina Board of Irrigation Contractors’ was established by legislation which became effective January 1, 2009. The board oversees the licensing of Irrigation Contractors in North Carolina. The purpose of licensure is to protect the public health, safety and welfare and to promote the efficient use of water. The new licensure law comes into full effect on June 30, 2009.

According to the recently enacted licensure law, no person shall engage in the practice of irrigation construction or contracting, use the designation ‘irrigation contractor,’ or advertise using any title or description that implies licensure as an irrigation contractor unless the person is licensed as an irrigation contractor. All irrigation construction or contracting performed by an individual, partnership, association, corporation, firm or other group shall be under the direct supervision of an individual licensed by the Board.

Please forward this to anyone you know that may be affected by the new law requiring those performing irrigation contracting work to be licensed. All Grandfathering applications must be filed on or before June 29, 2009. Read the instructions for the application to see the options for grandfathering. After June 29, 2009 the only way to become licensed is via exam (the board exam only). Two irrigation exams are scheduled, one in Raleigh and one in Greensboro.

More information can be found at the NC Irrigation Contractor’s Licensing Board: www.nciclb.org.
NEW!!!! INVINCIBLE™ Spirit Hydrangea

For years gardeners and landscapers have dreamed of an Annabelle Hydrangea with pink flowers. The dream has come true! INVINCIBLE™ Spirit hydrangea is a new release from researcher Tom Ranney. Tom Ranney is the Ornamental Plant Breeder for NC State University.

INVINCIBLE™ Spirit Hydrangea is the first pink flowered, mop-head form of *Hydrangea arborescens*. Unlike other selections it continues to produce new flowers right up until frost. It is very hardy and easy to grow. Unlike many hydrangeas, the flower buds are produced on new wood, so it will still produce flowers even if the stems die back to the ground by extreme weather. It is useful as a specimen, mass planting or incorporated perennial gardens or into a woodland setting. The blooms are extremely attractive both in the landscape and as a cut flower. It is a durable choice for both fresh and dried arrangements.

It is a remarkable plant considering all of the preceding cultivars of *Hydrangea arborescens* are white flowered.

http://www.springmeadownursery.com/invincibelle.htm

Back to Basics:

Program to Help Buncombe County Residents Deal with Financial Stress

Buncombe County residents, like most Americans, are feeling the stress created by our nation’s economic downturn. To help them deal with the financial and emotional stressors the current economic climate has created, the Buncombe County Cooperative Extension Center has launched a new program: Back to Basics: Surviving (& Thriving!) Through Troubled Times. The program features a web page, factsheets and a series of multi-faceted educational programs that deal with broad personal and family financial issues, stress management, and farm/agri-business financial issues, as well as specific ways to extend financial resources, such as home gardening and food preservation, http://sites.google.com/site/survivingtrouble/Home

Scheduled programs:

- **Backyard Small Fruit**, 6:00pm on April 14 at Lord Auditorium, Pack Library, 67 Haywood Street, Asheville
- **Dollar-wise Landscaping and Gardening**, 6:00pm on April 21 at Lord Auditorium, Pack Library, 67 Haywood Street, Asheville
- **Canning and Preserving Made Easy**, 6-9:30 pm on April 23 at the Buncombe County Extension Center, 94 Coxe Ave. Asheville $10
- **Making Strawberry Jam**, 9am—1pm on June 4, Extension Office, 94 Coxe Ave. Asheville
- **Making Dill Pickles & Relish**, 1 - 4 pm on July 9, Extension Office, 94 Coxe Ave. Asheville
- **Canning Tomatoes**, 1 - 4pm on August 6, Extension Office, 94 Coxe Ave. Asheville
- To pre-register or for cost information (cost varies) call (828) 255-5522. For more educational programs check the website or call (828) 255-5522.
**Grower Spotlight—Past 5 Issues**

**Southeastern Native Plant Nursery**, (828) 670-8330, 36 Kel-Co Road, Candler, NC. Field-grown and containerized native plants. Brokering and reliable delivery. Wholesale.


**Eagle Feather Organic Farm**, (828) 649-3536, 300 Indigo Bunting Lane, Marshall, NC 28753. Native medicinal herbs such as Ginseng, Goldenseal, Echinacea and more are available. See website: [http://www.ncgoldenseal.com](http://www.ncgoldenseal.com).

**Country Fields Greenhouse & Garden, Inc.**, (828) 296-8839, 154 Lower Grassy Branch Road, Asheville, NC 28805. Perennials, annuals, bedding plants, shrubs, blueberries, hydrangeas, crepe myrtles, field grown trees from seeds and plugs plus organic vegetables. Retail and wholesale to the green industry.

**Jack Young Greenhouses**, (828) 667-5555, 91 Holbrook Road, Candler, NC 28715. Perennials and annuals grown from seed, perennials grown from cuttings and division, hanging baskets, potted flowering plants like lilies, flowering shrubs, and more.

Give these nurseries a call and support our local growers!! If you are interested in being featured in the Grower Spotlight give Amanda Stone a call at the Buncombe County Extension Office (828) 255-5522.