Welcome to Bumper Crop

*Bumper Crop* is the new monthly newsletter that is tailored toward the Vegetable and Small Fruit Growers in Western North Carolina, particularly Henderson, Haywood and Buncombe Counties. The mission of this newsletter is to provide timely, accurate information that will benefit the enhancement and sustainability of agriculture in Western North Carolina.

WNC is a diverse agricultural area with many traditional and non-traditional crops and farmers. *Bumper Crop* is designed for everyone. I hope that the information included has something for all vegetable and small fruit growers.

*Bumper Crop* has been developed as a collaborative project between the editor, other Extension agents and local and governmental agencies that deal with vegetable and small fruit production including the Soil and Water Conservation Districts and the Farm Bureau.

*Bumper Crop* is a newsletter for you, so if you have any issues that you would like addressed or any upcoming events that other vegetable and small fruit growers can benefit from, let me know.

WNC AgOptions 2009

The 2009 Grant Application Cycle for the WNC AgOptions Program has just been announced!

The WNC AgOptions Program was developed with the ultimate goal of enhancing the sustainability of WNC agriculture by assisting farmers in establishing themselves economically, environmentally and socially through the diversification of their farm business. The WNC AgOptions Program provides "mini grants" to growers in WNC counties and the Cherokee Reservation to minimize the inherent financial risk associated with trying new enterprises. Diversification includes growing new crops, season extension and value-added products, agribusiness ventures, etc.

The NC Cooperative Extension Centers in the West District have led WNC AgOptions since 2004. The current WNC AgOptions Program is a partnership among RAIF-USA’s Tobacco Communities Reinvestment Fund, the NC Tobacco Trust Fund Commission, and NC Cooperative Extension. The WNC AgOptions steering committee includes representatives from NC Cooperative Extension, HandMade in America, NC Department of Agriculture & Consumer Services, agribusiness leaders and former AgOptions recipients. Cooperative Extension will continue to partner with RAIF-USA’s Tobacco Communities Reinvestment Fund to provide awards to farmers from 2009-2011.

Since the beginning of the program in 2004, 168 farmers have participated and have been provided with grants ranging from $2,500 to $5,000 totaling $527,500. In 2009 awards will be $3,000, $6,000 or $9,000. These are competitive grants; however, with some research into markets, assistance from your local Extension agent and other cooperators you will be on the right track to obtaining a grant.
Below is a list of FAQs with some brief answers.

**Who should apply?** Farmers who demonstrate economic viability of farms in WNC. Support is provided to farmers diversifying or expanding their operations. Awards go to a variety of operations including, fruits and vegetables, livestock, nurseries, agritourism, beekeeping and value-added processing, etc.

Priority will be given to applicants who currently or previously grew tobacco, are diversifying their operations so they remain sustainable for this and future generations, have sufficiently researched their markets, exhibit a working relationship with their local Cooperative Extension agents, have not received funding from the WNC AgOptions from 2004-2008.

Farmers who do not meet all of these criteria are still encouraged to apply.

**How much is awarded?** Amount of award can be $3,000, $6,000 or $9,000. Project budgets for $9,000 must be at least $45,000, not including farmer labor. Applicants who apply for $9,000 who are not awarded will be eligible for a $6,000 award.

Awards will be granted throughout an 18-county/unit area of WNC. Each county/unit will host at least one recipient in 2009 if one or more quality applications are submitted from each county/unit. Use of funds must be used as stated in the applicant’s proposal.

**When are applications due?** Proposals must be postmarked by January 23, 2009.

Dec. 1, 2008 is the “Intent to Apply Deadline”. This is the date by which all applicants should contact their county Cooperative Extension agents to set up an appointment to discuss their projects. If this deadline is not met, the applicants will miss the opportunity of scoring additional points from the WNC AgOptions Review Board.

**What is the ultimate impact of WNC AgOptions?** The ultimate impact of the program will be the preservation of the small family farm as an economically viable component of the region’s economy as well as the natural resources that these farms presently protect, such as clean water, forestland, riparian zones, wildlife habitat and open space.

More detailed responses to these questions can be found on-line at wncagoptions.org or by calling Megan Riley, WNC AgOptions Project Manager, at 828.649.2411 ext.305.

Applications can be downloaded at wncagoptions.org or visit your local County Extension Center for assistance.

---

**Hit the ground runnin’!**

That is how I tend to do things. Having started my career in Extension mid–July, I sure received the short and intensive course on vegetable and small fruit production in WNC.

From stringing tomatoes, peppers and beans to learning about the best blackberry varieties, to spidermites and drought conditions, to strawberry and wine grape production, I am faced with new and exciting challenges every day.

This is reminiscent of how I started my graduate work at NC State. I started in the Plant Pathology program on July 11 2005. Before I set foot in my new office, I was off on a downy mildew distress call—the first report of the disease on cucumber in the state for 2005. Wow! Who would have thought agriculture and plant pathology could be so exciting? I sure got lucky to work on such an important and new problem for the vegetable growers in NC. While working with my advisor, Dr. Gerald Holmes (Extension Specialist and Vegetable Pathologist), we were able to solve some practical issues involving downy mildew on cucurbits, including the best fungicides for control and forecasting the movement of spores to track and predict outbreaks.

Now that I am here in WNC, I hope to continue to solve important problems on all types of vegetable and small fruit problems. I really love solving real problems for real people, and that is the best thing about Cooperative Extension!

Thanks for making me welcome, and I hope that whatever problems we are faced with we can work together to solve them.

My email: sue_colucci@ncsu.edu

My phone number: 828.697.4891
Upcoming Events/Deadlines

Oct. 6, 2008 — Fresh Produce Safety Training. For more information see previous page or visit: http://ww.asapconnections.org/Safety-Training.html

Oct. 8, 2008 — Sweetpotato Field Day. Horticultural Crops Research Station, Clinton, NC. 2:30-dinner. For more information contact Dr. Jonathon Schultheis at: jonathon_schultheis@ncsu.edu.

Oct. 16, 2008 — Pumpkin/Gourd Field Day. Mountain Research Station, Waynesville, NC. 2 pm-until. Sponsored by the NC Specialty Crops Program at NC State University. For more information contact Dr. Jonathon Schultheis at jonathon_schultheis@ncsu.edu.

Oct. 27, 2008 — Tomato Grafting Workshop. Reems Creek Valley Nursery. 3-5 pm. $20/person. To register, contact Meredith McKissick at: meredith@organicgrowersschool.org or 828.450.2026. See page 4.


Nov. 6-8, 2008 — Southeast Strawberry Expo. Hilton Charlotte University Place. For more information visit: www.ncstrawberry.com. If you are not on the NC Strawberry Association's mailing list and would like to be, email info@ncstrawberry.com.

Nov. 12, 2008 — NC Tree Farmer Workshop. 9:00 am-4:00 pm in Canton, NC. For more info visit: www.ntreefarm.org/. To register call the Haywood Co. Extension Center at 828.456.3575.

Nov. 17, 2008 — Southern SARE Producer and On-Farm Trial Grant proposals due. See below.

Dec. 1, 2008 — Deadline to file for NAP for certain fruit crops and mushroom crops. See page 5.

Dec. 1, 2008 — Intent to apply for WNC AgOptions Program deadline. See page 1-2 for details of WNC AgOptions Program.

Dec. 2-3, 2008 — 23rd Annual Southeast Vegetable and Fruit Expo. Myrtle Beach Conference Center, Myrtle Beach, SC.


Jan. 23, 2009 — Proposals for WNC AgOptions must be postmarked by this date. See pages 1-2 for details of WNC AgOptions Program.

Feb. 2, 2009 — Deadline to file for NAP from most vegetable crops. See page 2.


March 21 and 22, 2009 — Organic Growers School Spring Conference. More information please contact event coordinator Meredith McKissick at meredith@organicgrowersschool.org or 828.450.7996.

If you have any events to add, please contact me so that I can add them next month.

Southern Region SARE Grants

Calls for the 2009 Southern Region SARE Producer Grants and 2009 Southern Region SARE On-Farm Trial Grants have been released.

The deadline for proposals for both types of grants are due on November 17, 2008.

Obtain the calls at:
http://www.southernsare.uga.edu/callpage.htm

Or by sending an email request to:
info@southernsare.org

Or by calling: 770.412.4787
**NC Division of Soil & Water Conservation: Cost Share Program**

The Buncombe County Soil and Water Conservation District would like to make local farmers aware of some of the Cost Share Program.

The NCACSP is a voluntary program administered through the Buncombe County Soil and Water Conservation District to fund the installation of various Best Management Practices (BMPs) to improve water quality. The NCACSP pays up to 75% of the costs for installation of the BMP.

Some of the BMPs include:

- AgriChemical Handling Facility for Mixing Agro-chemicals
- Chemigation/Fertigation Backflow Prevention Systems for Irrigation Systems
- Grassed Waterways
- Filter Strips
- Watering Tanks
- Field Boarders
- Cropland Conversion
- Streambank Stabilization
- No-Till Vegetables
- Clean Water Diversions

The Buncombe County Soil and Water folks are ready to work with you to sign you up for the program and to begin the planning process. Please contact them at:

155 Hilliard Ave., Suite 204
Asheville, NC 28801
(828) 250-4785

Hours: M-F, 8:00 am-5:00 pm

---

**Organic Growers School Farmer Education Series**

The Organic Growers School is partnering with local farmers to offer an on-farm series of workshops and demonstrations. The series began in August and is a ten-course series that will continue on through May 2009.

Workshops will focus on a variety of subjects, from the green landscaping industry to vegetable grafting for professional growers. Past workshops included: *The Up and Coming Organic Landscape & Lawncare Industry* (presented by Extension Area Specialist, Cliff Ruth, at the NC Arboretum on August 26) and *Chemical-Free Weed Control Methods, an ON-FARM Demonstration* (presented by Rocco and Mike of Jafasa Farm in Mills River, NC on Sept. 27).

The next workshop will be on **Tomato Grafting** and will be held on Monday, October 27, from 3:00-5:00 pm. This workshop will take place at Reems Creek Valley Nursery located at 70 Monticello Road in Weaverville in Buncombe County.

Here is some information on the workshop:

Grafting tomatoes and other vegetables with resistant rootstock provides disease management and may increase yields. Learn from a local farmer and regional Extension specialists the techniques that they use, get some hands-on practice, and discuss production strategies. Growers currently using grafting in the production of vegetables have reported more vigorous plants, larger fruits, and higher yields. Benefits appear to be greatest for growers with soil systems, organic practices, and soils repeatedly used for growing one crop in greenhouses and high tunnels.

The cost for the workshop is **$20 per person**, and educational materials will be provided.

To register, contact Meredith McKissick at meredith@organicgrowersschool.org or 828.450.2026.

To learn more about the Farmer Education Series and to learn about the workshops as they come up, you can subscribe to the Organic Growers School monthly on-line newsletter available on the website: www.organicgrowersschool.org or call Meredith McKissick at the number above to receive a hard copy of the newsletter.

Also, watch out for more information to come about the **Organic Growers School Spring Conference** coming up on Saturday March 8, 2008 at Blue Ridge Community College in Flat Rock, NC.
NAP: Crop Loss Coverage for Uninsurable Crops

USDA's Farm Service Agency's (FSA) Noninsured Crop Disaster Assistance Program (NAP) provides financial assistance to producers of uninsurable crops when low yields, or loss of inventory or prevented planting occurs due to natural disasters.

Producers must apply for coverage of uninsurable crops and pay the applicable service fees at their local FSA office. The service fee is the lesser of $250 per crop or $750 per producer per administrative county, not to exceed a total of $1,875 per producer with farming interests in multiple counties.

When a crop is affected by a natural disaster, you must notify your local FSA office and complete a Notice of Loss within 15 calendar days of either: (1) The natural disaster occurrence; (2) The final planting date if your planting was prevented by a natural disaster; or (3) The date damage to the crop or loss of production becomes apparent to you.

NAP deadline for the following crops has been extended to December 1: blueberries, blackberries, raspberries, strawberries, grapes, grazing, hay, alfalfa, honey, ornamental nursery, aquaculture, Christmas trees, ginseng, sod, mushrooms, floriculture, and strawberry rootstock.

Crops with a February 2nd deadline are: artichoke, asparagus, basil, beans, brussel sprouts, melons, cucumbers, eggplant, kenaf, okra, peas, peppers, popcorn, pumpkins, radishes, squash, sunflowers, sweet corn, sweet potatoes, and tomatoes.

If producers want to be eligible for disaster programs such as SURE for 2009, they need to ensure that they sign up for federal crop insurance or NAP by the applicable deadlines for every crop on every one of their farms.

Please call your local Farm Service Agency office for more information.

*Special thanks to Kelly Springs from the Farm Service Agency in Henderson County for providing this information.

Up to the minute information!
WNC Vegetable and Small Fruit News Blog

Have you ever wondered if there is disease or insect pressure in your area right now? Or what to do if we are expecting a major storm and you are ready to lay your plastic?

If you answered “Yes” to any of these questions, then I have the resource just for you. I have been working on a new news blog to address just these issues. The blog is entitled “WNC Vegetable and Small Fruit News” and can be found at: wncveggies.blogspot.com.

What is a blog? A blog is basically a webpage that is updated on a regular basis with important information. It is easy to use, create and update.

WNC Vegetable and Small Fruit News is where I will post important information FIRST in hopes to getting the information out as widely and timely as possible. This site will feature additional information to supplement this newsletter and to continue to educate all of us on important issues.

Included on the blog is up-to-the-minute information on:
- Extreme weather/ precautions
- Disease outbreaks
- Insect problems
- Production issues
- Grant information
- Upcoming events
- Helpful links, including NC Pest News and Cucurbit Downy Mildew Forecasting, WNC AgOptions and other blogs of interest

Do you want to know what those spots on your cabbage leaves are? This blog will also include COLOR pictures of disease, insect, nutritional problems that I see in the field with the best control measures recommended by experts at NC State.

You can subscribe to the blog so that you receive the new posts to your email inbox as soon as I put them up on the web.

New to blogging or the internet? This is a great time to start using the internet, not only to get information but to market your own business and products.

See final page for information on how to get free computer training and a free computer with the help of NC A&T University!
Free Computers

No kidding. NC A&T has a program called FACT (Farmers Adopting Computer Training) offering free computer training for growers in North Carolina. Growers are encouraged to take part in this program which involves a series of classes starting with the basics of computers then progressing to word processing, spreadsheets (helpful for chemical inventory and spray records) and eventually using the internet to access information, create and use an email account and actually learning how to make your own website to promote and market your farm!

The following objectives assist in accomplishing the FACTS goals:

1. Introduce the computer as a new method of keeping records and managing farms

2. Assist farm families through training to develop computer skills that enable them to send correspondences via e-mail and the Internet.

3. Develop partnerships with local Small Business Centers and Human Resource Departments at Community Colleges to help train limited-resource audiences.

4. Enhance small farm families’ decision-making skills through computerized programs.

5. Increase small farmers’ accessibility and competitiveness in the marketplace through the use of technological innovations.

At the end of the training your reward will be a free computer!

To be qualified for this program you must make more than $1,000/year in farm income and not already own a computer, or the computer you own is obsolete.

The program is currently available through Asheville-Buncombe Technical Community College, and we are hoping to team up with Blue Ridge Community College for the training and need at least 10 participants per session. We can also extend this program to other areas if there is interest.

If you are interested in this program or would like more details please contact me or Marci Joyner at 336-334-7956 OR email: joynerm@ncat.edu