



Carolina Farm Stewardship Association STEWARDSHIP NEWS

WINTER 2011

VOLUME 31, ISSUE 1

Farm Profile: Plum Granny Farm

by Sarah Sinning, Intern

Cheryl Ferguson and Ray Tuegel's Plum Granny Farm is a 54-acre oasis amid the dwindling tobacco lands of old Stokes County. It is located about a half hour north of Winston-Salem and just south of the spectacular Hanging Rock State Park. Named for the unique and intricately beautiful passion flowers that grow wild all over the property, Plum Granny is certainly not your average Piedmont NC farm. So, of course, they can't be expected to grow your everyday, run-of-the-mill produce.

Cheryl and Ray grow an amazing variety of raspberries, blackberries, garlic, artichokes and other specialty vegetables, herbs, and cut flowers, most of which were certified organic in 2010. They currently market their produce directly to consumers through area farmers' markets and on-farm sales. In the next few years, they are hoping to boost the latter by transitioning an old tobacco barn into an on-farm market site. Here folks can purchase Plum Granny bounties throughout the year. "Our plans are to use our terrific location and move into agritourism more," noted Cheryl. "We'll offer pick-your-own raspberries this summer and hope to do at least one on-farm event in 2011."



Ray plants his garlic using his own invention. Photo by Cheryl Ferguson

But Cheryl and Ray's vision for the future doesn't stop here. They will soon be offering eggs from pastured chickens, honey from their very own hives, and some exceptional value-added products, such as jam and garlic power, to boot.

This vibrant farm with a bright future was nothing more than a dream only two short years ago. Although the land has been in Cheryl's family for more than 140 years and experienced several successful decades as a conventional tobacco farm, those days came at a high cost to the soil - leav-

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The Tool Shed: Winter Season Extension

by Pat Battle, Sparkling Earth Farm

This year's exceptionally cold weather conditions have been a challenge for many Carolina farmers and gardeners. Winter growing is clearly no walk in the park. However, at time when many of us are experiencing a sense of market saturation, especially with regards to farmers' markets, I believe it is worth learning how to extend our growing season and eventually our farmers' market season.

At this point, however, the produce available in winter is not as diverse as it could be. I have grown a variety of produce for harvest in mid-November through early spring, including rutabagas, celery, leeks, baby white turnips, salad greens, kale, collard, pac choi, parsnips, carrots, spinach, broccoli raab, Swiss chard, cabbage and Chinese cabbage, various radicchios, broccoli, radishes and escarole.

For those considering winter gardening for the first time, salad and cooking greens are a great place to start. If you combine the protection of row cover and plastic as described in the 2006 article I wrote for *Mother Earth News*, you will be sure to avoid the heartbreaking losses described in the "Ask the Experts" section of this newsletter.

Aside from greens, other rewarding winter crops include:

- **Celery:** When transplanted between late August and October with the size of the transplant increasing the later

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CAROLINA FARM STEWARDSHIP ASSOCIATION (CFSA)

CFSA is a membership-based organization of more than 1,500 farmers, processors, gardeners, businesses and individuals in North and South Carolina who are committed to helping people in the Carolinas grow and eat local, organic food. CFSA's Mission is to promote local and organic agriculture in the Carolinas by inspiring, educating and organizing farmers and consumers.

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From the Director

Safety is Just One Part of Healthy

This year began with a remarkable policy win for local organic food and farming. With President Obama's signature on the Food Safety Modernization Act (FSMA), lawmakers have explicitly acknowledged for the first time that size matters in regulating agriculture. Although far from perfect, the FSMA provides the sustainable ag sector an opportunity to compete on even footing with the dominant industrial food paradigm.

The FSMA requires FDA to ensure that its food safety rules don't conflict with organic practices or soil and wildlife conservation programs, as industrial 'safety' systems have done in California and Florida. It requires FDA to support research and outreach on safety practices appropriate for small producers. And, thanks to the Tester-Hagan amendment, there are key regulatory protections for farms and food businesses with less than \$500,000 in annual sales and that sell the majority of their products locally. In effect, if not intent, it recognizes that local, organic food is a solution to food safety problems. It also puts a target on our backs.

Originally, the giant handlers and distributors in the fresh produce industry supported the FSMA. The same goes for the large-scale food manufacturers that helped the FDA and USDA to develop the Hazard Analysis and Critical Control Points (HACCP) rubric for safety in food manufacturing. Over the last two decades, this system has driven out of business thousands of local food processors, such as small scale abattoirs and cideries. When the Tester-Hagan amendment was inserted into the bill, industry groups like the United Fresh Produce Association, Western Growers, and the Produce Marketing Association, turned against it. Even big ag sectors that are not governed by the act, like the National



Roland McReynolds, Executive Director

Cattlemen's Beef Association, opposed the amended legislation, arguing that "food safety knows no size."

This argument is a red herring. The question is not whether small producers should care about safety of their products. A small producer should be *more* concerned. If they do have an incident of pathogen contamination, due to their small customer base and the ease of tracing of their products, they are finished. No corporate reorganization will save a local sustainable farm.

The real issue is tailoring safety practices to the scale and risk of the operation. Ninety-nine percent of foodborne illness outbreaks from leafy greens between 1990 and 2008 involved bagged "ready-to-eat" salad mixes. Factories that process leafy greens from hundreds of farms and commingle them for packaging and distribution are more at risk to spread pathogens. Tracking down the source of the contamination when it does occur is a much more complex job. So, food safety programs for those factories and the farms they buy from need to address those risks. Moreover, because they are operating at that scale, they have access to capital



Local produce and processed foods at the Carrboro Market. Photo by Amy Eller

and resources to support extensive protective protocols that are irrelevant in a small business where the owner, operator and farmhand are all the same person.

To support those small businesses' efforts to protect their customers, we must foster the development of multiple climate-, scale- and market-appropriate models for promoting safe food. A positive aspect of the FSMA is that it requires funding for research and training on pathogen control practices suited to the unique conditions of small and diversified farming operations, so that those growers can have access to the best, most up-to-date, most relevant information. CFSA is already building a foundation for this research in the Carolinas through our Local Produce Safety Initiative, which will document the effectiveness of organic practices to limit pathogen growth in the first place.

But, it is even more important that we measure agriculture by a more demanding yardstick than the number of people who get sick or die from consuming pathogens. Humans eat to sustain good health, not to merely avoid becoming ill. And the US food supply is failing to promote good health, as our rates of diet-related disease and death testify.

Our goal in the sustainable agriculture movement is to provide healthy food for today, and preserve the ability of future generations to do the same. "Safety" as the Food and Drug Administration defines it is one element of health, and we ignore it at our peril. The challenge for us over the next decade is to raise the bar in the public discussion of our food supply, simultaneously improving pathogen control and demonstrating how local, organic farming and food systems improve the overall health of people and our environment. With your help, CFSA is well positioned to take the lead in this discussion.

Sincerely,



P.S. Thank you to all who gave to help us meet our \$50,000 Challenge. We did it with your support!

Nurturing Beginning Farmers

The South Carolina New & Beginning Farmer Apprenticeship Program, as administered by the Carolina Farm Stewardship Association, kicks off in February with three dedicated interns paired with three of the most successful and acclaimed farms in the state. The apprenticeship program is part of a USDA Beginning Farmer and Rancher Development Program grant, led by the Clemson Institute for Community and Economic Development.

Congratulations are extended to Gail Cooley of Patient Wait Farm in Piedmont, Bub Dillon of Long Branch Farm in Fair Play, and Sylglenda Saziru of John Smith's Hill in Spartanburg, who were chosen for apprenticeships in the first year of this three-year program. (CFSA will have four internships to be awarded in 2012, and five in 2013. Lowcountry Local First is administering internships in the lower part of the state.)

Ms. Cooley will be interning with Chris Sermons of Bio-Way Farm in Ware Shoals, where she will learn how to build a small, sustainable farm from the ground up, with a focus on permaculture design, greenhouse management, and biodiversity. Gail Cooley is especially eager to study Bio-Way's innovative methods of edible-forest gardening, which will be well suited for her own farm in Piedmont where



New farmer mentor, Daniel Parson, learns about Milk and Honey Farm from owner Eric Brown (in front) at the 2010 SAC.

Photo by Amy Armbruster

she is currently raising heritage turkeys.

Bub Dillon understands the challenges of diversity. So does Chad Bishop of Greenbrier Farms in Easley, who will be mentoring Mr. Dillon for

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Save the Dates!

2011 Piedmont Farm Tour

April 16-17, 2011

in Alamance, Chatham, Durham, Orange, & Person Counties of NC

5th Annual Upstate Farm Tour

June 4-5, 2011

in Anderson, Oconee, Pickens, Greenville, Laurens, & Spartanburg Counties of SC



More Association News ... (continued from page 3)

the eight-month program. Mr. Bishop will share his expertise and ideas on how a highly diverse, sustainable/organic farm works on a daily basis. Areas of work and study will include plant propagation, insect and disease control, cover cropping, pasture management, livestock management and processing, value-added food production, and marketing and agri-tourism.

Daniel Parson of Parson Produce will lend his store of knowledge and experience to Sylglenda Saziru, who is looking to ensure the sustainability of the farm that has been in her family for 100 years by diversifying production and expanding markets. At Parson Produce, Ms. Saziru will learn intensive but highly diverse vegetable production, including Parson's methods of fertility and pest management through cover crops and rotations. Parson Produce will also expose her to the process of becoming certified organic, as well successful marketing strategies.

Interns and mentors were chosen with compatibility foremost in mind and CFSA is pleased that all three mentor farms are in a position to offer their interns a learning experience that can be directly implemented on their own farms. All interns and mentors this first year are CFSA members who have demonstrated a passion for and commitment to sustainability in their current operations and their goals for the future.

Carolina Grown and Ground: Organic Bread Flour Project Update *by Jennifer Lapidus*

For those who attended CFSA's 25th Annual Sustainable Agriculture Conference, you likely tasted at least one of the various baked goods made with NC grown wheat. The cookies provided for the mid-day break were from West End Bakery, made with Arapaho wheat grown by Fred Miller on Hilltop Farm in Wake County, smack dab in the middle of the state. The bread presented at Saturday evening's reception was from Farm and Sparrow Breads, made with Turkey wheat grown by John McEntire on Peaceful Valley Farm in Old Fort, at the foothills of our mountainous western region.



And the rolls served with Saturday evening's dinner were from Annie's Naturally Bakery, made with Lindley Mills flour, from TAM303 hard red wheat, grown by Ben and Kenny Haines of Looking Back Farms located in Tyner, on the far northeastern end of the state. For each, there was a story illustrating a different route to the same end: the revival of regional grain production and commerce. Three different varieties of wheat, each from a different time in agriculture's history: a heritage wheat, Turkey; a modern wheat, Arapaho; and a regionally adapted wheat, TAM303.

Turkey wheat is a landrace grain, meaning that it predates modern breeding. Turkey arrived in this country in the early 1870s, brought to Kansas by Mennonite immigrants from the Ukraine, fleeing Tsarist persecution. Turkey wheat is, ironically, partly to blame for the death of the community stone mill. It thrived in Kansas, swiftly becoming the primary wheat variety planted throughout the Central Plains. It did so well, that it pushed forward the advancement of milling technology. But that's a whole other story. What's important for this telling is that Turkey was replaced in the mid-1940s, by modern higher-yielding cultivars. Though a small group of farmers in Kansas have started a wheat revival project to

*Hearty, delicious bread baked with
Turkey wheat grown in NC.*

Photo by Jennifer Lapidus

bring back this wheat and Slow Food has inducted Turkey into its U.S. Ark of Taste, they remain in production and on our plates.

But how did bread made with Turkey wheat grown in NC make it onto our plates? Enter Farm and Sparrow Breads. Farm and Sparrow is a small operation, a craft bakery run by owner and operator, Dave Bauer. Dave is deeply committed to his craft. He employs Old World methods—cultures to leaven his doughs and wood to fire his massive masonry oven. Finding a farmer to grow his wheat was the natural next step. Dave befriended farmer John McEntire. John grows heirloom corn that he mills into grits that Dave uses in his Heirloom Grits Bread. Dave acquired enough seed for four acres of Turkey wheat and John, whose father and uncle used to grow wheat, happily planted it.

Dave was able to acquire the seed because of that small group of farmers back in Kansas committed to reviving this wheat. The seed that grew the wheat that went into the rolls baked by Annie's Naturally Bakery was thanks to a friendship between

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Protect Your Property Rights

Mineral Rights Leases May Have Unexpected Consequences

by Jordan Treakle, RAFI

Natural gas deposits have been found in 14 counties (Lee, Chatham, Moore, Durham, Stokes, Rockingham, Granville, Orange, Wake, Richmond, Montgomery, Anson, Yadkin, and Davie) in North Carolina. Extraction of natural gas through a process called hydraulic fracturing or "fracking" could affect more than one million acres of farmland in North Carolina. Farmers are now being approached by gas companies interested in leasing their mineral rights, and farmer advocates at the Rural Advancement Foundation International (RAFI-USA) have serious concerns about liabilities for rural landowners in these contracts.

RAFI has been working with NC State Cooperative Extension and other legal experts to analyze the mineral rights contracts being offered in our state, and have found that significant financial and environmental liabilities in these contracts could put farmers and landowners at risk.

Always seek legal advice before signing these contracts. Mineral rights leases are binding legal contracts that may have unexpected impacts such as allowing companies to:

- Build roads, buildings, gates, drilling stations and pipelines on your land
- Bill you for all of their expenses if at any time they find a problem with your title
- Leave you liable for any damages caused to neighboring landowners by their drilling practices
- Interfere with farming, hunting, timber rights, conservation programs, and other uses of your land
- Use millions of gallons of your water
- Store waste water and chemicals on your land

If you have been approached by a gas company or are interested in signing a mineral rights lease, always talk to a lawyer before you sign a contract. RAFI can help you find affordable legal representation. Please contact Jordan Treakle at jordan@rafiusa.org or (919) 444-1321.

> **More information at: rafiusa.org/gaslease**

Rememberances

CFSFA Honors Two Much Loved Members Who Passed Away in 2010

Rob Hogan

by Karen J. McAdams, Retired Agricultural Extension Agent

Agriculture was an integral part of Rob Hogan's life. I got to know Rob in my role as an Agricultural Extension Agent helping him with his beef cattle farm and with questions about sheep and Rameses in particular.

Rob Hogan knew from the time that he was 4 years old that he wanted to be a farmer. Russell Hall, a fellow dairyman who bred dairy cows artificially for the Hogans, related that when Rob was 8 or 10 years old, he would come running excitedly to the barn when Russell drove up to learn more about what was going on to improve their dairy herd.

According to Ann, Rob's wife, when Rob was growing up as a teenager at Chapel Hill High in the 1970's, it wasn't cool to want to be a farmer, but Rob knew who he was, what he wanted and was comfortable with his choice. He had a passion for farming. Rob chose to attend NC State to study livestock and dairy production even though he was a dyed in the wool Carolina fan.

Rob came back home to Lake Hogan Farm and was a dairy farmer for 20 years. Rob loved the land, his animals and his farm. When the dairy became unprofitable, Rob decided to keep farming. Rob and Ann were the first farmers in Orange County to begin marketing grass-fed beef locally. Rob was a good, hard working farmer.

> **To leave your condolences for Rob's family, visit: www.caringbridge.org/visit/robandannhogan**

Ken Fager

by Nancy Creamer, CEFS

Ken Fager passed away on December 31, 2010 in his home. Ken touched the lives of so many across the state in so many ways. He was working with CEFS for close to 13 years and brought a knowledge and dedication to sustainable agriculture, his work, and the farmers across North Carolina like no one else. And always with a helpful and willing attitude and a smile on his face. He had so much to give. He was a wonderful mentor to students, interns, beginning farmers, and anyone interested in cover crops, learning how to home can, operate equipment, garden, just about anything. He was always eager to teach, and very good at teaching. He will be so sorely missed by so many. Sustainable agriculture in North Carolina has lost one of its true and long-time heroes.

> **Debbie Roos, NC Cooperative Extension Agent from Chatham County, put together a lovely photo memorial for Ken at: <http://bit.ly/gIFbmF>**

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Tamara McNaughton - 423-727-2791
 - * **Augusta, GA Garden City Organics**
Kate Lee & Brian Gandy - 706-364-0169
- * **Asheville NC and surrounding areas. Loads are being organized to that area 3 times a year. Call Seven Springs Farm for details.**

Farmers' Market Fresh All Year Round

Winter markets support farmers and build customer loyalty

by Erin Kauffman, Durham Farmers' Market Manager



Winter produce from Perrywinkle Farms.
Photo by Debbie Roos

For a long time here in the Carolinas, farmers' markets have tended to be open during the months of April through November - the traditional growing season. This practice is beginning to change. In the last few years, an increasing number of markets in North and South Carolina have started offering winter markets.

This trend is not unique to the Carolinas. Winter markets are popping up all around the country. A recent USDA press release reported that there are 898 winter markets operating in the U.S. A winter market is defined as any market that is open during the months of November through March. From 2009 to 2010, there was a 16% increase in the number of winter markets. North Carolina ranks third in its number of winter markets, behind New York and California.

This year, the Western Wake Farmers' Market in Morrisville, NC made the change to a year-round market. "We wanted to provide access to local food year-round" says Market Manager, Kim Hunter. "Though the selection is more limited in the winter, there's still a great amount of local food available," says Hunter. "We think it is important to continue to provide access and information to connect local farmers with customers even during the winter."

For farmers' market customers, winter markets make it possible to eat

fresh, locally grown food all year. Avid farmers' market customer, Mary Turner, says she is always pleasantly surprised with the variety of produce available in the winter time. "It is amazing what these farmers can do," says Turner. "It is important to support local farmers and food producers as much as possible."

"This is a fantastic trend" says Stacy Miller. Miller is the Executive Director

of the Farmers' Market Coalition, a non-profit that promotes farmers' markets throughout the country. She has noticed that a growing number of markets are extending their season. "It means more income opportunities for farmers as they meet the rising demands of their customer base. It also keeps markets in public consciousness throughout the year making the job of promoting the markets much easier for market operators."

When markets are open in the winter, farmers, food producers and crafters have an opportunity to make some income during the months that can be their leanest and most economically challenging. Stuart and Alice White, owners of Bluebird Meadows Farm in Hurdle Mills, NC, sell produce and flowers at the Durham Farmers' Market. In the winter, they grow their crops in 2 hoop-houses and a greenhouse. "We knew when we got into farming that we wanted to be a part of a winter market because it seemed like such a great opportunity" says Alice. "Any produce we bring to the winter market is going to sell because, at this point, demand exceeds production."

Selling at winter markets is a good way to create customer loyalty. Alice says, "We noticed increased sales during the main season market that followed our

first winter market season."

As more markets offer winter hours, the Whites and other farmers have altered their production methods in order to offer produce outside of the traditional growing season. Other farmers' and market vendors, however, have products that they can sell all winter long, because their season doesn't end when the traditional growing season is over. Meat, egg and cheese producers are able to provide fresh products to customers all year. Vendors who offer baked goods, value-added products, or crafts can sell their products no matter the weather.

Emile DeFelice, founder of the All Local Farmers' Market in Columbia, SC adds, "South Carolina produces food all year round; it is the only sensible thing to do," says DeFelice. The All Local Farmers' Market has been a year-round market since it opened five years ago. They sell produce, meat, fish, floral, coffee, baked goods and crafts during the winter. "We love it!" says DeFelice. "The winter market is cozier and a heck of a lot cooler - as in temperature!"

- > To find a winter market in your area:
- carolinafarmstewards.org/advanced.shtml
 - apps.ams.usda.gov/FarmersMarkets/
 - localharvest.org and localdirt.com



Canned goods are a winter market favorite.
Photo by David Darr

The Gardener's Calendar

Plan Now for a Year-round Harvest

by Charlotte Glen, Horticulture Agent –
Pender County Cooperative Extension

With a little planning, you can harvest fresh vegetables from your own backyard most of the year. Vegetables can be grown outside in most parts of the Carolinas from late winter through late fall. If you are willing to invest in a low-cost cold frame or unheated tunnel house, harvesting through the winter is easily possible. The key to growing a productive vegetable garden in all seasons is in knowing what to plant and when.

Knowing when to plant different crops allows gardeners to develop a planting calendar for year-round harvest. Since planting dates vary across the state, check with your local Cooperative Extension office to find out recommended dates for your location. Use the following guidelines to plan your 2011 vegetable garden.

January – March

January is a great month for ordering seeds and getting organized for the year to come. Believe it or not, February is the month to start planting hardy crops outside in the Piedmont and coast. Potatoes and garden peas, along with their close relatives snow peas and sugar snaps, should be planted in the ground around mid-February (mid-March in the mountains). Carrots, parsnip, lettuce, spinach, mustard, rutabaga, radish, and turnip seed can be sown directly into the garden from mid-February to early April. Transplants of onions, broccoli, cabbage, kale, and collards can be set out during this time as well. If you want to start your own transplants of these crops, sow them in an unheated cold frame in January and February. March is the time to start seeds of eggplants, peppers, and tomatoes indoors to have transplants ready for spring.

April – June

It is safe to plant warm season crops like cucumbers, tomatoes, southern peas, and lima beans outside after the last average frost date, which averages from late March on the coast to the

end of April or later in the mountains. A few warm season crops will tolerate very light frost and can be started a little earlier. These include green beans, sweet corn, squash and zucchini, which can be sown in the garden a few weeks before the last expected frost. Other warm season crops are frost sensitive and should not be planted outside until all threat of frost is past. These include melons and okra, which can be set out as transplants or sown directly, peppers, eggplants, and sweet potatoes, which are set as transplants, and peanuts, which are seeded directly into the garden.

July – September

By late summer, heat, drought and pests have reduced yields on many crops. But take heart, this is the time to start crops for the fall garden. Sow green beans, carrots, beets, Swiss chard, kohlrabi, leeks, rutabaga, parsnip, turnips, squash, zucchini, and cucumbers directly into the garden at least eight weeks before your first expected fall frost, which can be in early October in the mountains and as late as early November at the coast. Tomato transplants for a fall crop can also be planted. Start broccoli, cauliflower, kale, collard, cabbage, lettuce, and spinach seeds in late summer and transplant into the garden in early fall, or purchase transplants from a garden center. Spinach and lettuce can also be sown directly into the garden in early fall.

October – December

October is the time to plant garlic from cloves and onion from seeds directly into the garden (September



A little planning yields delicious rewards throughout the year.

in the mountains and western Piedmont). Both crops will grow through winter and be ready to harvest in late spring. Late summer planted cucumbers, squash, and tomatoes, as well as any peppers and eggplant that are still hanging on will continue to produce until frost. Hardy crops like cabbage, collards, and kale will usually continue to produce through December. The growing season for less hardy crops like broccoli and lettuce can be extended by covering them with cold frames or growing them in an unheated tunnel house. 🌱

Learn More!

- NC Cooperative Extension Urban Horticulture Website: www.ces.ncsu.edu/depts/hort/consumer/
- Clemson Cooperative Extension Home and Garden Info. Center: www.clemson.edu/extension/hgic/

> Post your questions online to be answered by an Extension expert using eXtension's 'Ask an Expert' widget at: extension.org/ask.

ASK THE EXPERTS

This season, CFSA asks about greenhouses, new seed varieties and winter growing tips



Tell us about your greenhouses and/or hoophouses for this winter.

DANIEL: At the Presbyterian College (PC) campus garden, we built a 12' x 98' hoophouse using a lost creek pipe bender, and I'm impressed with the quality even without heat during this cold winter. The two small beds were direct seeded with arugula and mustard, both of which look great.

JUDY: My experience this winter has been frustrating. I am putting up a new high tunnel with money from an EQIP grant that was available for organic farmers and was not able to get started until mid-November. I think this high tunnel is going to be excellent because even with just some flapping tarps over the ends, it warms up fast inside.

DOUG: I've grown winter crops under "low tunnels" for many years, but this is the winter I chose to bump it up, to finally be a completely-year-round farm, with a new double-skin high tunnel and 5 new 14' x 150' "caterpillar" movable tunnels. Materials for the latter were funded mostly by a grant from the Tobacco Communities Reinvestment Fund, but the labor of constructing them from scratch has been huge, and the maintenance is also considerable. I'm still waiting to see some payback. Crops have grown okay on sunny days in the high tunnel, but the caterpillar ones have been almost at a stand-still.

PAT: I'm involved with several Winter growing projects using many systems including doubled up row cover for cabbage and collards, plastic tunnels over row cover for cabbage, winter density lettuce, tatsoi and purple pac choi. Also, row covered (mid-weight polypropylene) broccoli, rutabagas, and cabbage. South of Asheville, we're growing celeriac, lettuce, mus-

tard, tatsoi, rutabagas, kale, and chard in an inflated double wall multi-bayed unheated greenhouse with no row cover. Finally, I put in a mix of salad cooking and braising greens in Celo (my coldest site) in a 1970's style solar greenhouse with row cover over the crops. This year growth in all sites was great until the deep cold hit. Now, only the warmer sites are still growing.



Hoophouses protect young collards from the winter chill at Shore Farms

photo by Grace Kanoy, GeoCore Films

STEFAN: We chose not to do any unheated greenhouse greens. We have had very good success with just floating row covers here in the usually more temperate Coastal Plain. The key to the success of floating row covers is in warming the cover supplies, keeping soil temperatures high enough to keep nutrients flowing, and the ability to keep drying winds off the crop. The drawback has always been that weeds and aphids love these conditions.

We started tomatoes in early December. These will be transplanted in early February into the next green-

houses. Early tomatoes are key to our farmers' market and CSA success.

Any particular seed catalogs or companies that have you excited this year? New varieties?

DANIEL: Last year was the first year I spent more with High Mowing than Johnny's. I'm excited about some of their European varieties, particularly the butter lettuces. Last spring, I grew Roxy and Sylvesta, and I would swear they were the same varieties that I saw in the markets of Paris. Our upstate Slow Food convivium is excited about the Ark of Taste, so I'm thinking about adding a few of those varieties. One I grow from that list every year is Cherokee Purple tomato, and one I'm growing more of this year is Amish Paste tomato. The Amish Paste doesn't seem to grow as well as San Marzano, but I liked the taste better.

JUDY: I have been really pleased with the new High Mowing catalogue. All their seeds are certified organic, and this year they have a number of new varieties. I have ordered a new

OUR EXPERT FARMERS:

Daniel Parson of Parson Produce in Clinton, SC

Judy Lessler of Harland's Creek Farm in Pittsboro, NC

Doug Jones of Piedmont Biofarm in Pittsboro, NC

Pat Battle of Sparkling Earth Farm in Burnsville, NC

Stefan Hartmann of Black River Organic Farm in Ivanhoe, NC

cherry tomato variety (Toronjino) which is advertised as the first organic seed variety that can compete with Sun Gold.

DOUG: I'm most excited about my own farm-bred varieties, and I'm pleased to say that the new Asheville seed company, Sow True Seeds, will be carrying 9 of my varieties, with more in the pipeline. My "Sweet Jemison" and "Abundance" peppers are big, sturdy, and very sweet, and the "Tobago Seasoning Mix" collection is loaded with the background flavor of habanero but with none of the heat.

Good varieties are so important to success in vegetable growing. I could name so many favorites, but tops on my current list are these from Fedco: "Sayamusume" Edamame, "Gold-flower" watermelon, "Jade" green beans, "Caribe" slow-bolting cilantro, and "Evenstar Landrace Tatsoi", a mild mustard developed by Brett Grohsgal, who spoke at this year's SAC. I also love Johnny's "Cherokee" red lettuce for heads, and High Mowing's "Mawlawi" red oakleaf lettuce for salad mix.

PAT: If you have not checked out Baker Creek's selection of Winter squash and you want more vine borer resistant options than just Long Island Cheese and Butternut, Baker's has a wonderful selection of moschata (butternut) & mixta (cushaw). Both of these families are very resistant to vine borers. For the past decade or so I have been quite happy to rely on Fedco for most of my seed with Johnny's for seed needed as fast as possible. But thanks to this year's SAC, I've rediscovered Southern Exposure and was delighted to see that they have Mescher lettuce, which I'd lost years ago and love.

STEFAN: We really like Johnny's Seeds, for their good germination, excellent service and ever expanding organic varieties. We are very excited about Ruby Streaks, a great addition to the salad mix. Most of the time we tend

to pick hybrid seeds for their vigor. In the Coastal Plain quickness is the key! It's all over in August!

Any winter growing tips that you can't resist sharing with fellow farmers?

DANIEL: I try to put my feet up during winter as much as possible. The biggest growing project right now is shiitake mushroom log inoculation, and winter is the best time for that.

JUDY: My winter garden was killed the first week of December when we had a very windy 12 degree night. Some \$4,000 worth of salad mix, kale, arugula, etc. was killed. My tip is: Close down and take your aching body south for the winter. I am considering Panama.

DOUG: Hardiness is a relative quality; any particular variety's "threshold temperature for damage" can be lowered by previous exposure to cold, protection from wind, using hoops to keep covers from touching the plants, and selection for hardiness when saving your own seeds. Farms in rural areas should automatically subtract 5-10 degrees from forecasted lows on clear nights.

PAT: My tip is that although light is certainly a big factor, I have had decent growth until the deep cold. The difference is in the soil. In the sites where the soil isn't constantly in the low forties or colder, growth is still good enough. But, where the soil is getting colder than this and staying there, plants are coming to a screeching halt with a few notable exceptions, such as Mache.

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STEFAN: We are growing micro greens in our well-heated greenhouse. They pay the gas bill and keep the chefs happy and eager for the main crop.



GOT A QUESTION FOR OUR EXPERT FARMERS?

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Local flavors

These delectable dishes wowed the crowd at the Sustainable Ag Conference - you'll love the tender, juicy pork and smooth and savory soup, too!

A Few Very Important Words About Cooking Sustainably

by Kris Reid, SAC Food Coordinator

Learning how to utilize whole animals when cooking, especially for large groups, is paramount. So many chefs want just loins or butt, steaks or ribs, but there is more to an animal than that. This was the reason I did the Whole Harvest Pork Braised in Root Beer at the SAC.

It was challenging for the chefs, as they are not used to getting in whole hogs cut into quarters. Most industry chefs are used to their pre-portioned, deboned, ready to hit the grill or pot animal proteins. When the hogs were delivered to the facility the chef called me. He said, "The pigs are here." And I said, "Great." Then a silence followed. I inquired, "What's the matter?" He proceeded to tell me that they "had skin on them." Here I thought that he would be happy because I asked the processor to remove the head and trotters for him. This is just part of the learning opportunity that goes along with bringing chefs back to 'real food.' They did a beautiful job with the pork in the end.

Putting more emphasis on methods of preparation and less on recipes is also really important in the sustainable cookery movement. The reality is, if the recipe calls for ingredients that are out of season or difficult to come by, chances are people: 1) won't cook it or 2) will run out to a store and buy a whole container when you only need 1 teaspoon of ingredients that will now be inventoried until the end of time in people's pantries.

This leads me to say, "Recipes aren't sustainable." They force people to buy too much, so they are too expensive. Oftentimes recipes pull people away from what is seasonal and locally available. So, the recipes I offer here rely more concepts and methodologies.

Whole Harvest Pork Braised in Root Beer

Use whatever cuts of pork you like.

Let them marinate in Uncle Scott's Root Beer over night. Also include some bay leaves, if available. Make sure the pork is completely covered.

Remove the pork from the marinade (reserve marinade). Pat dry the pork and heat a heavy bottomed pot with a small amount of lard or cooking oil.

Add the pieces of pork and sear (to a dark brown) on all sides. Be sure not to overcrowd the pan. If your pan is too small, work in batches.

Remove the pork along with any oil/drippings. Add any aromatics you would like (onion, garlic, scapes, etc.) and allow to saute until fragrant.

Return the pork back to the pot and using the root beer marinade as a braising liquid, add some back to the pot to cover the meat by half.

Turn the heat to medium low and cover with a lid. Allow to simmer.

The time the meat needs to cook will depend on the size of the cuts. Braising is a slow cook method (think stewing). It will be ready when the meat is fork tender, falling off the bone.

Serve with some of the braising liquid.

*The mouth watering buffet at the 2010 SAC.
photo by Anna MacDonald Dobbs*

Sweet Potato Bisque

2 sweet potatoes, peeled, roasted
1 yellow onion, diced
2 cloves garlic, minced
2-3 cups chicken stock
1/2 cup apple cider or juice
2 sage leaves
oil, or clarified butter for sauteing
1/2 - 1 cups heavy cream
to taste - salt and pepper and nutmeg

In a heavy bottom stock pot, saute onions until soft, add garlic, deglaze with apple cider or juice, add chicken stock and sweet potatoes. Bring to soft boil.

Add chopped sage leaves and puree.

Over medium heat, slowly add heavy cream, using a whisk to incorporate. Bring up to to your preferred consistency. Add salt and pepper to taste. Finish with a few grates of fresh nutmeg. Serve hot.

Note: Cayenne is also a tasty addition to this dish. Amounts of stock and cream vary based on desired consistency.



Winter Season Extension...(continued from cover)

it gets in the season, celery is tender, sweet, juicy, and almost fiberless. Note that although 72 size cells would be a fine size to plant out in late August, by October you need to put three-inch cells out to ensure a good crop prior to the long warm days of mid-Spring, which will induce bolting. My favorite variety is Ventura.

• **Rutabagas:** When these vegetables are planted between mid-July and early August, they start becoming irresistible as the deeper cold moves in in late November. If you don't think you have a market for rutabagas, try taking them to market with a George Foreman grill and offering samples of grilled rutabagas. You'll have people purchasing several after tasting them!

• **Turnips and Baby White Turnips:** These should be succession sown, from early August through early September for purple top turnips, and from mid-August through early February for baby whites. Baby whites in particular lend themselves to very dense plantings and are especially productive. When winter-grown, there are salad-quality turnips that are particularly delectable at the ping-pong ball to small-peach size. If some of your later sowings bolt, you could harvest the flowering tops and use them or sell them for use as a broccoli raab type green. Of course, if none of your turnips bolt, you could always grow successions of broccoli raab.

• **Chicories:** The chicories are particularly well served by the winter cold. Without the stress of heat, their perfect balance of bitter and sweet provide a depth of flavor that rivals broccoli rabe. And, nothing goes better with special fruit and salad than winter-grown chicories.

• **Oriental Vegetables:** I love all the oriental vegetables grown at this time a year, but I've been delighted by the beauty and quality of Purple Pac Choi.

• **Brussels Sprouts:** No discussion of winter vegetables would be complete without Brussels sprouts. Although they are widely represented as a crop that can be sown in late summer or early fall, the yield is pathetic when treated this way. Yet those who know

the pleasures of well grown Brussels sprouts harvested after plenty of deep cold speak about them with longing. Brussels sprouts are best if grown over a long season from late spring into your area's season of deep cold. If harvested by the stalk and stored this way, they have a very long shelf life with little loss of quality.

Season Extension Systems

I must confess that some of the season extension systems I've used or observed are very labor intensive. Fortunately, a modest investment in season-extension infrastructure would have made many of these systems more cost effective. Ultimately, my ideal winter growing strategy is to create cold frames designed to shed snow load and withstand the rigors of winter windstorms. Intensive production inside such cold frames can be very productive and much less labor-intensive.

Sometimes make-shift can be very efficient. I've used recycled greenhouse plastic combined with row cover to protect parsnips and rutabagas. This "system" uses no hoops, letting both the layers of cover rest directly on the crops. Here in Celso where winter often brings plenty of deep cold and snow, this basic protection allows the plants to survive the winter and produce spectacularly sweet root crops for early-season sales. It's important to note that it was key that I simply left these two layers of protection on all winter, until March. Attempting to access these crops when the covers are heavily anchored, wet, and frozen would be dangerous.

Half-hardy and hardy plants have the ability to move water out of their cells as they sense increasing cold. If given enough time, these plants can move enough water out of their cells to ensure that their cells don't rupture when they

freeze. Once plants have the water out of their cells, when it freezes, the resultant ice functions sort of like an igloo and protects the cell. These tunnels, greenhouses, and all forms of "glazing" go a long way toward providing even half-hardy plants enough time to complete this water relocation process.

On very cold mornings, you will look at the likes of lettuces in your greenhouse and they will all be popsicles, frozen solid! But if they get the chance to reverse this water relocation process as the sun warms your structure, they will thaw out and get right back to growing. It is mostly a question of time! Your other tool/insurance policy is floating row cover. If you pull floating row covers over your plants in the late afternoon, the added insulation serves to sufficiently lengthen the cool down process.

I think we all realize the positive effect our efforts to re-localize our food system has had on our communities, both economically and socially. Expanding our efforts into the winter months will only increase this impact, strengthening our sustainability. 🌱

> Find Pat's article on winter greens from *Mother Earth News* here: <http://bit.ly/gT0x71>



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Plum Granny Farm...(continued from cover)



Cheryl Ferguson and Ray Tuegel at Krankies Market. Photo by Virginia Weiler



Plum Granny Farm grows 15 varieties of garlic! Photo by Virginia Weiler



The eponymous flower of Plum Granny Farm. Photo submitted by Cheryl Ferguson

ing it washed-out and almost hopelessly infertile. That is until Cheryl and Ray decided to take matters into their own hands.

While this green pair has since grown the thumbs to match, all they really had to work with in the beginning were a few years of part-time farming in New Mexico and perhaps more importantly their childhood memories. Cheryl spent her childhood watching her father on this farm, and Ray spent his amid the lush and golden plains of Kansas. So after a year of trial cultivations and a lot of planning and research, these "baby farmers," as Cheryl has so humbly deemed them, finally took the plunge and returned home, determined to do right by the Ferguson family heritage and bring the land back to life.

But, this was certainly no easy task. After taking years of abuse from tobacco crops and cattle alike, the soil, according to Ray, was "abysmally low in organic matter." The property was seriously eroded and dotted with more than 3 tons of old scrap metal, not to mention so many rocks that one friend of the family laughingly remarked that the "farm must be doing really well because that's a lot of Irish potatoes!"

Determined to "treat the land with respect," however, Cheryl and Ray got down to business. They "evicted" the remaining cows (keeping a special one as a pet). Then, they wisely sought the help of experts in their area – namely the kind folks at the

North Carolina Cooperative Extension and the Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS). With the assistance of these experts, the farm had its soil tested for nutrient content (which is, by the way, free in NC) and received recommendations on how to correct some of the erosion problems that plagued the fields.

They are now working to stop erosion with better waterways and plowing techniques, as well as using methods like no-till drillings to plant cover crops and beneficial habitat. "We also got buy-in from one of Cheryl's cousins, who is a neighboring landowner, to work together to remedy a serious erosion problem in his field that was impacting our fields and ponds," said Ray. State engineers, however, weren't the only experts to weigh in. Other local farmers have also been a great source of advice. This is how Ray and Cheryl learned about using discarded leaves from Winston-Salem as a valuable source of organic matter. Because this debris by law cannot go into city landfills, Plum Granny can receive truckloads of 80,000 pounds of unwanted yard waste at a time for a very reasonable fee.

This isn't to say, however, that Cheryl and Ray's progress is entirely indebted to the wisdom of others, for they certainly have a few tricks up their own sleeves. Although Cheryl rather demurely refers to their farming technique as "market gardening," which they simply "fine tune as they go," no one can deny that they've been fine tuning in the right direction! In order

to ensure a longer raspberry season and gain a leg up on the competition, for example, they have begun planting a number of varieties that peak at different parts of the year. With the assistance of NRCS, they are building a hoop house that will shelter the plants and provide further season extension.

When I had the pleasure of paying them a visit in December as part of the CFSA 25th Annual Sustainable Agriculture Conference, I was invited to help myself to some of the juiciest, most delectable raspberries right off the vine!

They've also been experimenting with weed cultivation as pest control, placing the generally unwanted and, to some, rather nasty horse nettle around their tomato and other solanaceous plants. Since the Colorado potato beetle seems to prefer the horse nettle over the tomato, why not take advantage?

But, one of Ray's favorite adaptations would have to be his, well, I'm not quite sure what you call it! Although the photo on the cover page will probably serve as a better description, I'll do my best to at least explain what it does. It's an apparatus that makes planting garlic a heck of a lot easier than doing it completely by hand. Rather than taking the time to measure and dig the individual holes for each and every bulb, Cheryl and Ray have this little marvel to do it for them!

Plum Granny Farm



Photo submitted by Cheryl Ferguson

a healthier farm and healthier crops. Organic is not really about what we can and can't put on our crops; it's about taking a systemic, whole-farm approach versus cookbook farming – that's where all the magic is," noted Ray.

This focus on "care and tending" has surely paid off, so much so that Michael Hylton, Stokes County Extension Director, has described Plum Granny as a "model for the future of farming." But it's also much more than this. Because it's an enterprise built on love – for the land, for the community, for each other – no matter where their hard work and creativity may take them, Cheryl and Ray serve as another admirable link in the Ferguson-Tuegel farming heritage. "We've always said that we want to leave a place better than we found it; that's what we are trying to do here," Cheryl added.

> Learn more about Plum Granny Farm at: plumgrannyfarm.com

Sarah Sinning has a MA in English from the University of Kansas and an Associates in Culinary Arts from New England Culinary Institute in Vermont.

Plum Granny Farm is certainly something to be proud of today, and Cheryl and Ray's passion for the land and for growing organically is clear. "As organic farmers, our practices are based in the soil – not just as an anchor for the plants, but in the belief that building and sustaining the biodiversity in the soil and treating it as something that is alive results in

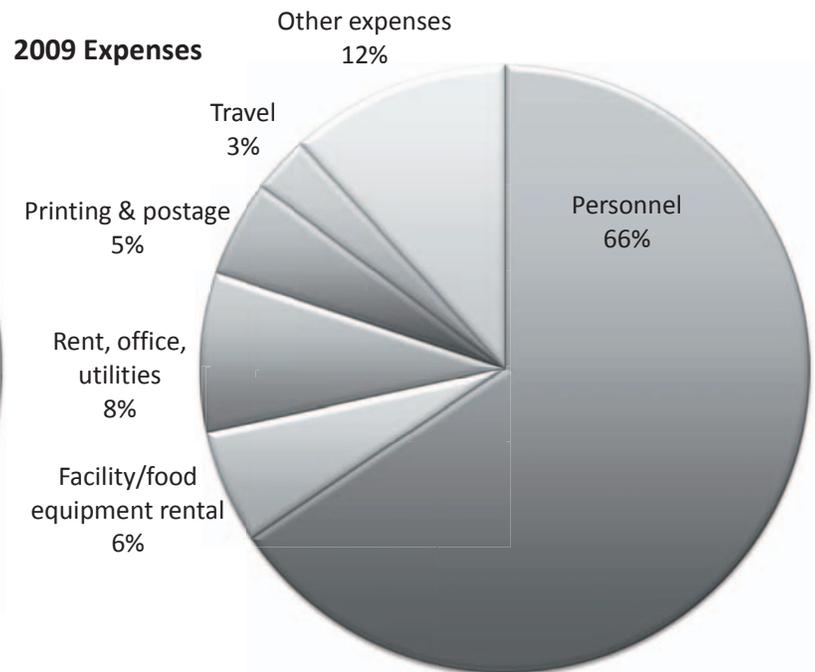
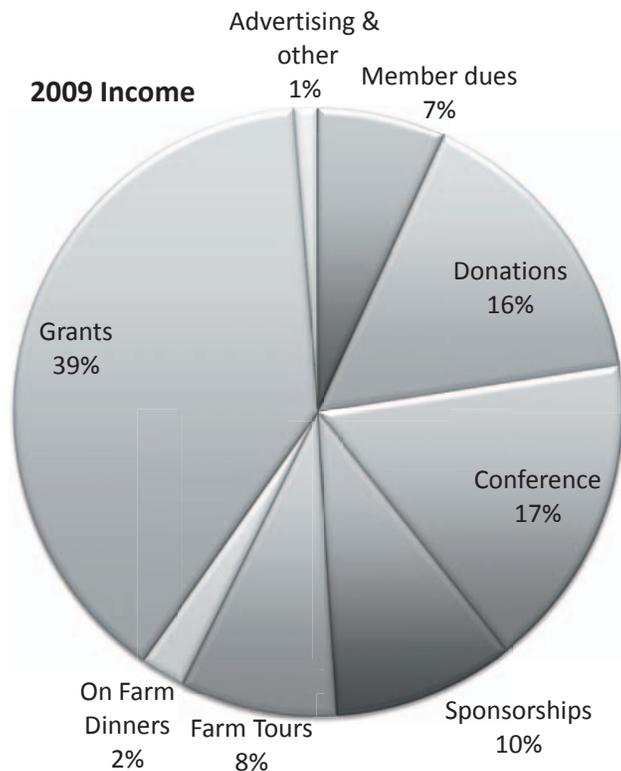
Summary of Income & Expenses (unaudited)

	2008	2009
Member dues	34,082	31,890
Donations	99,894	74,081
Conference	75,536	78,956
Sponsorships	37,515	45,286
Farm Tours	34,262	38,828
On Farm Dinners	20,740	11,425
Grants	29,423	183,130
Advertising and other	29,939	5,927
Total income	361,391	469,524
Personnel	178,295	285,110
Facility/food eq. rental	42,943	26,161
Rent, office, utilities	28,521	36,834
Printing & postage	23,391	22,347
Travel	19,937	13,195
Other	33,591	50,961
Total expenses	326,678	434,608
Net Income	34,713	34,915

Balance Sheet (unaudited)

	2008	2009
Cash	89,850	95,429
Investments		1,714
Accounts Receivable	4,270	10,854
Fixed Assets	357	575
Total Assets	94,477	108,572
Current Liabilities	45,810	24,390
Fund Balance	48,667	84,182
Fund Balance & Liabilities	94,477	108,572

Carolina Farm Stewardship Association's Financial Report - 2009



Based on data submitted to the Board of Directors by Cheryl Ripperton Rettie. Prepared by Barbara Lawrence, CFSA Secretary.

More Association News ...

a farmer and a miller. Kenny Haines has been growing soft (pastry) wheat for Joe Lindley for years. The two met when Kenny, who also has a trucking business, arrived at Lindley Mills for a pick up, and they got to talking. At the time, regionally adapted bread wheat varieties were not even a possibility, but in 2002 the USDA-ARS launched the Uniform Bread Wheat trials to develop bread wheat varieties that can withstand the hot and humid climate of the southeast. The first of the varieties released was TAM303, through Virginia Foundation Seed. No one was growing out the seed stock though, so Joe and Kenny stepped up to the plate, purchasing all the seed that was available. The seed was treated, so it could not be planted on an organic farm, but Kenny had a conventional grower plant it, so there would be untreated seed to plant the following year. Which, the next year, is what Kenny and Ben did. And with the harvest from that planting, and Lindley Mills, and Annie's Bakery, the rolls from Saturday evening's dinner were made. And enough seed was held back so that this past planting (planting just ended), over 600 acres of TAM 303 were planted on four different organic farms in NC and one in VA. Kenny and

his son, Ben, by the way also planted close to 20 acres of Turkey. 🌾

Sustainable Food NC Receives Grant

In November, CFSA was awarded a grant of \$205,000 over two years from the Z. Smith Reynolds Foundation for support of the Sustainable Food NC coalition. The grant agreement was finalized in January, and will allow for a seamless continuation of the work begun in 2009. Coalition members will work with the General Assembly and other policymakers during the 2011-2012 legislative session to raise awareness about the value of local-scale agriculture and food production. SFNC is committed to advocating for policies in North Carolina that foster locally supported sustainable and organic food production, enhance local economic development, support community health and increase access to local food throughout the state. For more information on the coalition's work, contact Shivaugn Rayl at 919.576.9173 or shivaugn@sustainablefoodnc.org. 🌱

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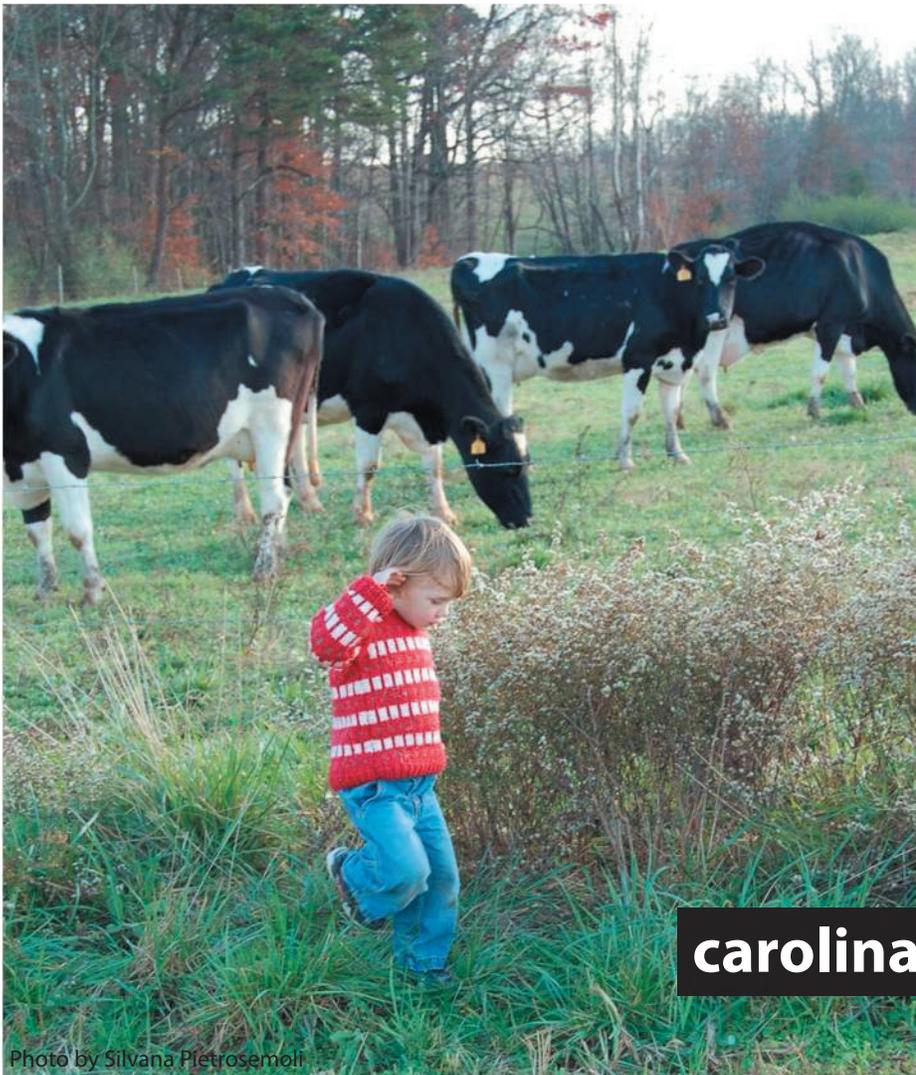


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