



Carolina Farm Stewardship Association STEWARDSHIP NEWS

SUMMER 2012

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Farm Profile: Crosscreek Farm

by Amy Johnson

Spring at Crosscreek Farm brings new life. When the final litter of piglets has been born and the dust has settled, Colette Nester can look around and take stock of what the year has brought. Baby chicks and ducks roam the pastures, learning from their parents how to live on the 50 acres of free-range farmland. When Colette inherited her share of the 250 acre family farmstead from her uncle, Alex Woodruff, she decided she wanted to teach her two sons, Taylor and Matthew, that same lesson. Now, along with her husband, Jonathon Scot, Colette teaches her boys how to work and live sustainably on their farm.

Just as important as the new life brought by spring is the history behind this farmland. Included in the 250 acres is a quarry with rock that was used to build the Blue Ridge Parkway bridges. There are also numerous barns and outbuildings, a homestead that dates back to the late 1800's, and the original farmhouse from 1907. The farm straddles the North Carolina and Virginia lines, with most of it in Alleghany County, NC, and about 75 acres in Grayson County, VA. Nearly 25 acres is riverfront and a quick stroll through the pastures will take you down to the New River, where a world of ecosystems are waiting to be explored.

When Colette began Crosscreek Farm



Colette showing beginning farmers-in-training a piglet from her farm.
photo by Amy Johnson

they were given chickens and piglets. Those gifts spurred a passion for raising feeder pigs and providing their own meat for their family. They are now raising about 80-160 heritage breed piglets, Jersey cows, heritage breed chickens, and have Great Pyrenees guard dogs, pygmy goats, and horses this year.

There is a lot more to do on the farm than just watching their ducks and chicks roam the pasture. The heritage hogs are raised on pasture, but also grained twice daily and receive fruit and veggie supplements. The farm also produces grass-fed beef and free range eggs. They are Animal Welfare Approved, a certification meaning

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The Tool Shed: Habitats for Beneficials

by Dr. David Orr and Tony Kleese

Organic farmers have historically been interested in using beneficial insects for pest management. Survey data indicate that the preferred method farmers use to accomplish this is not to purchase beneficial insects but rather to enhance populations that already exist on their farms. While pesticide impacts on beneficials are greatly reduced in organic farming operations, most organic farmers are compelled to provide habitat of some kind to further enhance beneficial populations. With just a few general principles, growers can create habitats for beneficial insects on their farms.

What Plant Species Are Best?

Focusing on specific plants may not be the best approach to establishing habitat. Everyone has their own preferences and goals (e.g. insect predators, pollinators, wildlife) with habitat creation. Instead of being overly concerned about which plant species to include in habitat, a better approach may be to focus on guiding principles.

First, diversity is important—no one plant will satisfy all of your needs. Second, it's valuable to choose diverse plants that bloom at different times so that something is always blooming on the farm. Third, promoting native plants and vegetation ensures that you have well-adapted plants that will provide resources to native beneficials and wildlife. Fourth, try to avoid plants that will feed pests like moths (e.g. Japanese honeysuckle that pref-

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>>> Sustainable Agriculture Conference Registration Form pg. 5 (Register NOW and Save \$45!)

CAROLINA FARM STEWARDSHIP ASSOCIATION (CFSA)

CFSA is a membership-based organization of more than 2,300 farmers, processors, gardeners, businesses and individuals in North and South Carolina. CFSA's mission is to advocate, educate and build connections to create sustainable food systems centered on local and organic agriculture.

CFSA Main Office

Mail: P.O. Box 448, Pittsboro, NC 27312

Physical: 15 Hillsboro Street, Pittsboro, NC 27312

Phone: 919-542-2402, Fax: 919-542-7401

Website: www.carolinafarmstewards.org

Email: info@carolinafarmstewards.org

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Finance & Membership Services: Cheryl Ripperton Rettie

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triangle@lists.carolinafarmstewards.org

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Newsletter Information

Send articles, queries, cartoons, recipes, corrections, etc, to amy@carolinafarmstewards.org. The opinions expressed in this newsletter are not necessarily shared by the editor or the CFSA Board. CFSA does not endorse any product or service advertised.

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From the Director

How Long Does Real Change Take?

Rachel Carson's "Silent Spring" celebrates its fiftieth anniversary this year. By presenting an accessible overview of research findings on the effects of pesticides on humans, non-pest animals, and soils and water, this landmark book put questions of pesticide use and misuse in the public spotlight for the first time. Many credit Carson and her book for launching the 'environmental movement' in the U.S. and around the world.

Over time the savvy people running the agro-chemical complex adapted to the new environmental consciousness. In marketing Roundup, and then genetically engineered Roundup resistant crops, Monsanto touted the fact that the herbicide is less persistent in the environment than baddies like 2,4-D and atrazine. Paired with no-till farming practices, herbicides became a tool for preventing soil erosion, pushed hard by agronomic consultants and conservation agencies.

Today, pesticide usage is higher than ever. Misuse of Roundup resistant cotton, soy, corn and canola seed has unleashed a plague of Roundup resistant weeds across the U.S. So much so that 2,4-D and atrazine are making a comeback: Corn and soybeans have been engineered with resistance to them, so we can overuse them, too, and create some real superweeds. This is probably not what Carson had in mind. More consumers are aware of the hazards of chemicals in our food and water than fifty years ago, so how is it that that awareness hasn't had more of an impact?

I'll submit that one key part of the problem is that over the last fifty years, our movement has done a poor job of connecting with traditional farm communities. Today as in 1962, these communities are responsible for most of our agricultural production. The legislators who write the rules of farming come from ag-heavy states, so the voices of these traditional communities matter. And we as organic food and farming advocates



Roland McReynolds, Executive Director

too often have alienated those communities with rhetoric to the effect that conventional farmers are John Deere-driving welfare queens, bent on destroying our health and the environment for the sake of short-term profits.

Certainly there are mega-farms taking advantage of government programs and loopholes to cement their market position, but the vast majority of monocrop commodity farms are family farms stuck on a treadmill. Universities, the USDA, and the multinational corporations that control the food system have been telling them to 'get big or get out' for forty years. Big Agribusiness has made itself the traditional farmer's ally, even as it exploits him, by being present in rural communities and offering (deceptive) solutions to the day-to-day struggles that face his family in the agribusiness-created global marketplace. And those corporations have effectively portrayed "Silent Spring"-spawned environmentalists as a threat to farming. So we should not be surprised that when our movement demands an end to the federal programs that give those families a lifeline, they reject us as out of touch with 'real' agriculture.

If our society experiences catastrophic disruptions, those lifelines will disappear. But short of catastrophe, we need to change government policy to achieve a truly sustainable agriculture. And we will not achieve that change until we bring traditional farming communities into the fold as partners, instead of enemies.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Roland".

Thousands Visit Area Farms During Spring Farm Tours

With great weather for both farm tours—unlike last year with either dangerous tornadoes or triple digit heat—the tour-goers really came out in droves! Over 2,500 people made nearly 11,500 farm visits during the Piedmont Farm Tour in late April. And about 1,600 attendees came out for a total of over 6,600 farm visits, with several farms counting over 400 guests each, during the Upstate Tour.

CFSA extends its gratitude to our co-sponsors, Weaver Street Market, who has continued to support the Piedmont Farm Tour, and Whole Foods Market, whose valued partnership makes the Upstate Farm Tour possible. We also thank all of the farmers, chefs, non-profits, volunteers and tour-goers who participated. We truly couldn't do this without you!

> Check out great farm photos from both tours on our facebook page at facebook.com/carolinafarmstewards.

Get Excited About CFSA's Eastern Triangle Farm Tour!

Mark your calendar for the 7th Annual Eastern Triangle Farm Tour on September 15-16. We are pleased to be once again featuring two dozen beautiful farms in the areas north, east and south of Durham and Raleigh, as well as urban farms and gardens. The tour focuses on teaching where our food comes from and how to grow in harmony with nature.

This year we are pleased to be offering three special and free classes as a part of the tour. Frank Hyman will be teaching about fall vegetable gardens, Bountiful Backyards will do a talk on fruit trees, and Bob Davis will be reprising his popular urban chicken class from last year. We want to thank Whole Foods Market for their very generous financial support—they are co-sponsors of the tour. Tickets and full info will be available starting in early August. Check our website, area Whole Foods Market stores and select farmers markets.

> Interested in volunteering? Email Fred at fred@carolinafarmstewards.org!

Make Plans for the 27th Sustainable Ag. Conference in Greenville, SC

We are busy putting the finishing touches on another conference featuring block-buster workshops and tours, the nation's top sustainable ag. experts, and lots of opportunities for networking and, of course, enjoying fabulous local, organic meals!

This year's conference is happening October 26-28 in beautiful, bustling Greenville, SC. Greenville has one of the nicest downtowns in the Southeast and conference-goers are in for a treat. Believe it or not, there are over fifty restaurants and night spots, as well as Greenville's jaw-dropping riverfront park, all within walking distance of our hotel.

The food at the conference is always something special and this year will be no different. We are pleased that Kris Reid is again our food coordinator—she is busy reaching out to farmers and suppliers for this year's tasty meals.

Besides the setting and the food, how about a wonderful array of workshops and tours to entice you to join us? This year we are honored to be bringing in top farming trainers like Michael Phillips, Ellen Polishuk, Paw Dawling and Ron Morse. In addition, we are scheduling sessions on all the topics you want: small-scale livestock, permaculture, pollinators, food justice, cooking,

gardening and soils. We've also added some new areas this year: aquaculture, international exchanges, agritourism, climate-proofing farms and raw milk! We have three hands-on classes this year—chicken tractors, mushrooms and worms. On the policy front, we've lined up representatives from the National Sustainable Ag Coalition, the Organic Seed Alliance and FoodCorps. How to choose?!

On Friday, look for six mobile tours this year, including a Community Garden Tour. Plus, we've got no less than nine pre-conference classes, including an all day, off-site class at Parson Produce and a half day class at Mushroom Mountain. These classes will likely sell-out.

> Early bird registration deals end Aug. 15th, so register today! For all the details and to register, visit carolinafarmstewards.org or turn to page 5.

Don't Miss the Local Foods Feast

This magical, mouthwatering meal is one of the highlights of our annual conference. The evening features keynote speaker Debra Eschmeyer—FoodCorps founder and recipient of the James Beard Foundation Leadership Award in recognition of her school food reform efforts. A go-to expert on food systems and policy, Debra is also an organic farmer and a phenomenal speaker!

-Continued on next page -

Save the Dates!

BRWIA High Country Farm Tour

Aug. 4-5, 2012

Social Media for Farmers Workshops

Aug. 14 – Winston-Salem, NC
Aug. 16 – Pittsboro, NC

Eastern Triangle Farm Tour

Sept. 15-16, 2012

Know Your Farms Charlotte Area Farm Tour

Sept. 15-16, 2012

27th Annual Sustainable Agriculture Conference

Oct. 26-28, 2012
in Greenville, SC

Tickets can be purchased without registering for the full conference. Proceeds from the event support the CFSA's work to help sustainable family farms thrive in the Carolinas. Get your tickets sooner rather than later!

> Contact Alice at alice@carolinafarmstewards.org for sponsorship opportunities or buy your tickets online at carolinafarmstewards.org.

Conference Scholarship Opportunities

Provide young farmers an invaluable educational and networking opportunity. With the increasing average age of farmers, every effort must be made to encourage and educate new generations of farmers. A charitable gift of \$250 provides conference registration and meal events for one young farmer.

Or, if you are a beginning farmer or rancher and could benefit from financial assistance, CFSA may help solicit county farm bureaus on your behalf for scholarship funds.

> For details or to donate, contact Alice at alice@carolinafarmstewards.org.

Barn Storm Tour for Local Food

Watch all this summer long for the Barn Storm Tour-goers, Jared and

Victoria, who'll be visiting farmers' markets, farm-to-fork eateries, and other local food institutions near you!

They'll be sweeping through to let farmers and consumers know about the soon-to-be-launched and improved Local Food Finder, an online resource connecting consumers to local food purveyors, growers and more. They'll also be raising awareness about the 2012 Farm Bill and engage your support for comprehensive reforms.

They intend to create a huge buzz around sustainable food and farms—and we invite you to participate!

> Farmers, market managers, and local food enthusiasts, visit carolinafarmstewards.org/bst/ for more information.

CFSA's Website Gets an Upgrade

CFSA unveiled its new website in June. Now, we serve our members and web visitors better with a cleaner, easier-to-navigate design, enhanced resources in our new web toolbox, upgraded Internship Referral Service listings, advanced event calendars and an archive for our eNews and newsletters.

> Let us know what you think! Email Amy at amy@carolinafarmstewards.org.



On the Barn Storm Tour, Jared and Victoria chomp down on bacon, a sampling at the Western Wake Farmers' Market's Meat Day.

Photo by Sandy Straw

CFSA Launches New Local Food Finder

Check out the new features on our popular online Local Food Finder, which makes it easy for customers to find our members' sustainably grown food. Listings will now feature more than just contact information and product descriptions. Enhanced options include:

- photos and videos
- links to social media, such as Facebook pages, Twitter feeds, or Flickr albums
- show just how local you are on our interactive Google Map
- login anytime to update your listing
- and best of all, you can link your listing with other listings on the Food Finder. So, even if you do not sell your products directly to consumers, you can let people know which restaurants, co-ops, or stores carry them!

> Add or upgrade your existing listing! Go to <http://localfood.carolinafarmstewards.org/profile.php>.

The Local Food Finder upgrade was funded by a grant from the Golden LEAF Foundation.

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- * Hurdle Mills, NC - Hurdle Mills Feed & Seed
Michael Dixon 800-752-5017
- * Asheville NC and surrounding areas. Loads are being organized to that area 3 times a year. Call Seven Springs Farm for details.

Early Bird Conference Registration Form

REGISTER BY AUG 15 FOR THE EARLY BIRD RATE

3 Ways to Register

1. carolinafarmstewards.org
→ Members, to receive your member rate discount, you must log in to the Members-Only Page and register online!
2. Call the CFSA office at (919) 542 – 2402
3. Return your registration form and payment to CFSA, PO Box 448 Pittsboro, NC 27312

If more than one person is attending, you may use initials to indicate your individual choices throughout the registration form. Please feel free to make copies or attach another sheet to register multiple people.

Extension Agent, NRDC, CEFS?

To receive a scholarship to attend the conference and pre-conference activities designed especially for you, please register with the appropriate person:
NC – Carol Moore at carolmoore27@gmail.com
SC – Geoff Zehnder at zehnder@clmson.edu

Early Bird Special!

Discount rate available to CFSA members until 8/15/12.

Not yet a CFSA member and want to take advantage of these great savings? Add a membership to your registration form or become a member online and then register for the conference! You'll save money on the conference and get all the great benefits of a CFSA membership to boot!

PLEASE NOTE *The Friday Local Foods Feast and Keynote and Saturday Luncheon and Awards are sold separately from the Conference Weekend Pass. If you are interested in attending all of these events please select The Everything Conference Package.*

Don't miss out on the Everything Conference Package, which includes: Conference Weekend Pass, the Friday Local Foods Feast and Keynote, and the Saturday Luncheon and Awards. If you registered for this package, there is no need to sign up for a workshop pass or meals — they are all included in the low "I want to do it all!" price.



Attendee Information

Names _____

Farm/Business Name _____

Address _____

City/State/Zip _____

Day Phone _____ Evening Phone _____

Email _____ Fax/Cell Phone _____

We will email your receipt.

Early Bird Special

Don't miss the farm and food event of the year! Register now for the best conference rates! The Early Bird rate flies away Aug. 15, 2012. Check out the Early Bird Rates:

I WANT TO DO IT ALL! Sign up for the Everything Conference Package and get all of the following included:

- Conference Weekend Pass + \$165 included
- Friday Local Foods Feast and Keynote w/ Debra Eschmeyer + \$35 included
- Saturday Luncheon and Awards + \$17 included

The Everything Conference Package*

If you registering for this package, there is no need to sign up for anything else on this page — it is all included in the low "I want to do it all!" price. Please continue to the next page.

	Early Bird Rate	# of People	Total Cost
The Everything Conference Package*	\$217		\$
Conference Weekend Pass from Friday 4PM to Sunday 12PM Includes Saturday Meet and Eat Reception and Breakfast on Saturday & Sunday All other meals sold separately!	\$165		\$
Student and Apprentice Weekend Pass Includes Saturday Meet and Eat Reception and Breakfast on Saturday & Sunday All other meals sold separately!	\$115		\$

WANT MORE? ADD ONS: Add a Friday Pre-Conference Workshop, Tour or Lunch on the next page!

Conference Workshop Passes	Registrar by Oct. 4		Register Late, by Oct 17		# of People	Total Cost
	Member	Non-Member	Member	Non-Member		
Saturday Workshops Pass w/ Breakfast & Saturday Meet and Eat Reception	\$150	\$200	\$200	\$250		\$
Sunday Workshops Pass w/ Breakfast	\$60	\$85	\$85	\$110		\$
Conference Meals						
Friday Local Foods Feast and Keynote w/ Debra Eschmeyer	\$35	\$40	\$45	\$50		\$
Saturday Luncheon and Awards	\$17	\$17	\$22	\$22		\$

Subtotal for Page 1 \$

*The Everything Conference Package does not include Friday Pre-Conference activities. **CONTINUE ON NEXT PAGE**

Early Bird Conference Registration Form

REGISTER BY AUG 15 FOR THE EARLY BIRD RATE

Work Exchange?

Contact us at info@carolinafarmstewards.org for more details and scheduling. You must register with a CFSA staff member in order to get the work exchange discount!

PLEASE NOTE *You may either take the Early Bird Rate or perform Work Exchange, but not both.*

Scholarships

A limited number of scholarships are available. For more details, please email info@carolinafarmstewards.org or visit carolinafarmstewards.org.



Meeting Space and Accommodation Information

This year's Sustainable Agriculture Conference is in fabulous Greenville, SC at the Hyatt Regency Greenville. Register by October 12 for the \$95/night CFSA group rate or until the block runs out. Reservation line (864) 235-1234

	Regular Registration		Late Registration		# of People	Total Cost
	Member	Non-member	Member	Non-member		
Friday Pre-conference Activities <i>Sold separately from all passes and packages on the previous page.</i>						
	Friday Lunch	\$15	\$15	\$20	\$20	\$
ALL DAY WORKSHOPS	Starting a Small Market Produce Farm <small>OFFSITE (BRING A BAG LUNCH)</small>	\$60	\$65	\$65	\$70	\$
	Resource Rodeo for Farmers w/ LUNCH	\$15	\$15	\$20	\$20	\$
	Organic Certification w/ LUNCH	\$40	\$45	\$45	\$50	\$
	Orchard Health Applications w/ LUNCH	\$75	\$80	\$80	\$85	\$
MORNING WORKSHOPS	GAP Certification for the Small Farm	\$25	\$30	\$30	\$35	\$
	Intro to Organic Beekeeping	\$35	\$40	\$40	\$45	\$
AFTERNOON WORKSHOPS	Mushroom Cultivation <small>OFFSITE</small>	\$50	\$55	\$55	\$60	\$
	Advanced Organic Produce Growing	\$40	\$45	\$45	\$50	\$
	Permaculture Intensive	\$35	\$40	\$40	\$45	\$
ALL DAY TOURS	Horticulture Tour w/ LUNCH	\$40	\$45	\$45	\$50	\$
	Livestock Tour w/ LUNCH	\$40	\$45	\$45	\$50	\$
	Extension Tour w/ LUNCH	\$40	\$45	\$45	\$50	\$
HALF DAY TOURS	Diverse Farms Tour	\$30	\$35	\$35	\$40	\$
	Beginning Farmer VIP Tour	\$10	\$10	\$20	\$20	\$
	Community Gardens Tour	\$25	\$30	\$30	\$35	\$

Join CFSA Today! You'll receive the Early Bird rate NOW so the membership pays for itself!!

Individual CFSA Membership	\$25		\$
Business CFSA Membership	\$50		\$
Conference Scholarship Donation	\$20 (suggested donation)		\$
Subtotal for Page 2 \$			
+ Subtotal from Page 1 \$			
TOTAL \$			

Payment Options

- Check to CFSA enclosed
- Visa/Master Card/American Express/Discover

Cancellations

There is a \$10 charge to process all registration cancellations, however you may designate an alternate attendee at no charge. Full refunds are given for cancellations received before Sept. 28, 2012. Partial refunds will be given between Sept. 28, 2012 and October 19, 2012. Cancellations received after October 19, 2012 will not be refunded.

Credit Card Information

Account Number _____ Exp Date _____

Signature _____ CVW / Security Code _____

Name on Card _____

Billing Address _____

If different from attendee address on previous page.

ASK THE EXPERTS

This season, CFSA asks about pests, shade for livestock, new crops or products, weed control, and making time for family.

1) What pest has been most damaging on the farm and what are you doing to manage it?

CHRIS S.: We grow a lot of asparagus and consequently have common asparagus beetle damage. They overwinter in plant material which I plan on control burning when it goes dormant this winter. I try to limit fire ant damage, which I anticipate on crops like okra, by boiling grey water and pouring it on mounds throughout the year.

2) What do you do to keep livestock happy during the heat of the summer?

JAMIE: We make sure to provide the cattle with access to plenty of shade. We actually are beginning to experiment with putting together a shade mobile to distribute the manure that occurs when cows congregate underneath a shade tree. We also like cattle with red hides because they seem to handle high temperatures better than ones with black hides.

CHRIS M.: With pastured poultry, fresh clean water during the hot months is essential. Whenever possible, we use hoses and float valves to ensure a constant supply. Fresh water and shade are also essential to pasture-raised pigs and grass-fed beef. When intensive grazing our black-hided beef cattle during the summer months, we make sure the animals are not back-fenced and have access to a shady treeline during the afternoon.

ERIC: In the past, I built chicken tractors about 2 feet tall with sheet metal or tarp for shade. However, when temperatures soar into the 90s, I've seen high mortality rates even with access to fresh water. I think that these structures, despite seeming fairly open-air, trap too much heat during summer warm spells. I have become a fan of livestock panel coops as shade with an additional area to free range outside of the coop enclosed by electric poultry netting. Panel coops are still lightweight but

are much taller and allow for better air circulation.

3) What new products or varieties are you offering to your customers?

DANIEL: We are looking forward to the first harvest of 'Indigo Rose', a deep-purple tomato. The leaves are purple, and the fruit is already very dark, but we are still weeks away from harvest. In addition to the orange and purple, we are growing 'Yellowstone' carrots to make rainbow bundles for our CSA and market.

JAMIE: Some new products we are excited about are salami, soppressetta, and pepperoni that are fully cured and great for the farmers' market. They have been very popular with our customers and we are enjoying them at home as well. We are also selling chicken at our farm store all the time, which is not something we have been able to do in the past.

CHRIS S.: New varieties I'm trying are Olympus and Carmen sweet peppers, German Johnson, Rutgers and Indigo Rose tomatoes, Parade bunching onion, and Red Burgundy okra.

4) What tips do you have for fitting in personal/rest time for you and your family during this busy time of year?

CHRIS M.: For faith and family reasons, we decided early on that we were only going to do the essentials (i.e., irrigating, chores) on Sundays. This Sabbath rest actually makes us more productive, as we have time to collect ourselves and spend time together as a family. Since we have three farmers markets and chores to do every Saturday, we've been taking Mondays off this season as well. This gives us a five day work week like everyone else. While taking an extra day off is a bit of a leap of faith now, I believe it is helping us to avoid the "deep burnout" that can sneak up on us as full time farmers.

JAMIE: Fitting in family time is essential for our family. With three young

children I am not sure I would call it "rest" time, though! My best tip in this department is to hire good people that you can trust to be there when you are gone. At first it is difficult to leave things, but when you do leave, things seem to work out alright. Plus, we have smart phones so we can get in touch very easily.

5) What weed management strategies and equipment do you use?

DANIEL: All of our weeding is done by hand cultivation. Last year I got a bench grinder, which really helps keep those collinear, stirrup, and wheel hoes sharp. We try to weed early and do a good job before the weeds are big enough to compete with the crops.

CHRIS S.: Weed management strategies include using poly. ground cloth, disking, hoeing, and mulching with oat straw we bought for \$1.75/bale on Craigslist. We also use a new Hoss wheel hoe from Earth Tools. It has a steel wheel instead of a pneumatic tire. Not sure how we got by without a wheel hoe until now! 🌱

> Learn more from Daniel Parson at this year's Sustainable Ag. Conference for a pre-conference all-day workshop on beginning a small market farm. Or check out the beginning farmers' VIP tour held at Chris Sermons' Bio-Way Farm!

OUR EXPERT FARMERS:

Chris Sermons—Bio-Way Farm in Ware Shoals, SC

Jamie Ager—Hickory Nut Gap Farm in Fairview, NC

Chris Murray—Sunset Farms in Snow Camp, NC

Daniel Parson—Parson Produce in Clinton, SC

Eric Soderholm—Somerset Farm in Edenton, NC (and CFSA's Organic Transition Coordinator)

Cat's Cradle for Tomatoes

A garden guru offers advice for trellising up those sprawling tomatoes

by Frank Hyman



The Florida Weave technique holding up several rows of five-foot tall tomatoes.

photo by Matt Ballard

I have a thirty-year-old memory of the first time I saw a farm worker trellising tomatoes. He quickly walked down one row and up the other side with his hand bobbing up and down like a needle on a sewing machine. In minutes, hundreds of tomatoes were secure in their trellis. This speedy technique, called the Florida Weave, holds tomato plants in a slot created by twine and stakes. Without a trellis, tomato plants would sprawl on the ground, vulnerable to fungi and insects.

Home gardeners can benefit from the Florida Weave too. Probably the most common way in the home garden to trellis tomatoes is also the most time consuming: tie a tomato plant to its stake with one or more knots every week as if you were taking a prisoner. With one or two plants, that's no big deal. But if, like us, you have a dozen or more San Marzano paste tomatoes needing weekly attention, the Florida Weave saves time that can be put to use in other valuable activities, like relaxing in the garden.

Anyone that's played Cat's Cradle with a simple loop of string will quickly catch on to the Florida Weave. If your tomato transplants are arranged in a row with a stake equidistant between each plant (and a stake at the beginning and end of the row), a quick loop

of twine every week or so will keep them from slumping to the ground.

Florida Weave Materials

Here's how. Tie the twine to the first stake about 6" above ground. Loop the twine around the second stake, keeping the line taut. With tension on the twine, loop it around each subsequent stake. Adjust the twine's height as needed since some plants may be taller or shorter than others. When you reach the last stake, make a double loop for strength and continue looping and snugging your way up the other side to make a cradle for the plants. When you get back to the first stake, tie off the twine with a strong knot and cut off the end. Depending on how fast your vines are growing, you'll want to run another line of twine about 4"-8" higher every five to seven days.

Plants

The Florida Weave works best with determinate tomatoes, which are those that only get about 4' high, such as Roma and San Marzano paste tomatoes or determinate slicing tomatoes like Mountain Pride and Celebrity. Most hybrid and heirloom tomatoes, like Better Boy and German Johnson, are indeterminate, meaning they keep getting taller until frost kills them; so you may be tying tomatoes up over your head.

Twine

We use jute twine. It's strong and organic, so it lasts a full season and then at the end of the season we can just cut it and let it fall to the ground where it can decompose.

Stakes

Tomato stakes are commonly made of wood, but we've switched to 3/8" thick metal rods used in the construction business called rebar. They last longer than wooden stakes, can be stored outside, their tops don't splinter and their small diameter makes them easier to drive into the ground with a hammer. You'll need to drive them twelve to eighteen inches into the ground to support the weight of the tomatoes. For determinates you'll need about four to five feet above ground, so a length of 6' or so should work. Rebar is available at stores that sell construction materials and most of them will cut the rebar to length for you for a small charge. For instance a 20' length could be cut into 3 stakes of 80" each. 🍅

This article originally published in the May-June issue of "Organic Gardening" magazine.

Frank Hyman is a Durham-based garden consultant and frequent writer about organic gardening.

> Learn more from experienced gardener Frank Hyman about everything tomatoes during his workshop at this year's Sustainable Ag. Conference.

RAFI-USA Crop Insurance Survey

The Rural Advancement Foundation International-USA is requesting for specialty crop growers to participate in a survey about crop insurance use and availability. The information collected in this survey will be released in a 2013 report outlining ways to improve crop insurance and enhance the potential of specialty crops in North Carolina. Please contact James Robinson at 919-542-1396 ext. 201 or email him at james@rafiusa.org for further information.

This project is supported in part by the North Carolina Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services Specialty Crop Block Grant Program.



Local Flavors

Feast your eyes on a sunny morning with this savory treat highlighting summer's tomatoes, from the folks at the Green Sage Cafe in Asheville, NC

by Randy Talley and Staff

At the Green Sage restaurants in Asheville, the all-time customer favorite is the Breakfast Burrito. This "meal in a wrap" is filled with highly seasoned vegetarian black beans, fresh tomatoes, cheddar cheese, sweet potato homefries, scrambled cage free eggs and a homemade Enchilada Sauce. Plus it's served with a yummy, homemade, charred tomatillo Salsa Verde on the side.

Our burrito and all our food at Green Sage emphasizes organic and local ingredients and we screen every ingredient to make sure there are no artificial colors, preservatives, or flavors. We do this because we are committed to serving natural and organic food and because we believe that natural and organic food helps people, the planet, and our business to thrive. 🌱



Breakfast Burrito

1 spinach-flavored flour tortilla
1 slice or 1/4 cup of shredded cheddar cheese
1/4 fresh avocado slices
1/3 cup of seasoned black beans
1/3 cup diced fresh tomatoes
1/2 cup of cooked, diced sweet potatoes
2 eggs-scrambled
1 oz enchilada sauce (recipe follows)
Side of salsa verde (recipe follows)
Salt and pepper to taste

Heat up seasoned beans and sweet potatoes.

Warm up tortilla in a dry skillet or microwave.

Scramble 2 eggs in a non stick pan.

Place cheddar cheese in center of warm tortilla.

Spoon black beans on top of cheese.

Arrange fresh tomatoes and warmed sweet potatoes on top of beans.

Place scrambled eggs over everything and place fresh avocado on top of eggs.

Drizzle enchilada sauce over the top and sprinkle with salt and pepper.

Fold the left and right sides towards the middle and hold in place while folding the back side towards the front. Pull tightly from front to back and continue to roll forward to form a tight burrito.

Seal the exposed bottom edge of the burrito by placing it into a dry, hot sauté pan for a minute.

Cut in half and serve with your choice of salsa. Enjoy!

Enchilada Sauce

2 tablespoons canola oil
1/2 diced onion
2 cloves minced garlic
12 oz fresh tomatoes
1 cup water
1/4 cup red wine vinegar
1 tablespoon agave or brown sugar
1 tablespoon dark chili powder
2 dry ancho chilies-seeded (can substitute extra chili powder)
2 tablespoons tomato paste
1/2 teaspoon dry chipotle powder (can substitute cayenne)
Salt and pepper to taste

Heat canola oil and sauté onion and garlic for 1-2 minutes on medium heat. Add remaining ingredients and bring to a simmer.

Cook over medium heat for 20 minutes until tomatoes are very soft and liquid has reduced by at least half.

Puree sauce in a blender and strain through a mesh strainer into a bowl.

Season as desired with salt and pepper to taste. Keep warm to make the burrito.

Salsa Verde

1lb fresh tomatillos
1/2 chopped onion
1 serrano pepper-cut in quarters
1 cup water
1/2 bunch cilantro
1 garlic clove
1 lime
Salt to taste
Agave or sugar to taste

Place tomatillos, onion and serrano in a shallow baking dish and pour water over.

Roast at 450 degrees until the tops of the tomatillos turn a charred black color.

Allow to cool and place in blender or food processor with cilantro, garlic and lime juice.

Blend until smooth and transfer to a bowl.

Season to taste with salt and agave or sugar.

(More or less serrano pepper can be used depending on the heat level you are looking for.)

> Visit the Green Sage Cafe locations in downtown Asheville or South Asheville for their ever-expanding array of seasonal, organic, raw, vegan and gluten-free food choices. Or visit them online at thegreensage.net.

Crosscreek Farms...(continued from cover)



Colette nestles one of the many piglets from recent litters in her arms.

photo by Amy Johnson

the animals are raised from birth to slaughter using humane handling practices. These practices include early castration, no tail-docking, no nose ringing, no wolf-teeth removed, and all animals are on pasture. The farm prides itself on not using growth hormones or antibiotics on their livestock and the fact that all of their animals are friendly and free ranging.

The Nester-Scot family also has a small family garden. The garden is completely organic, using only livestock manure, pine needles, and ash from the woodstove. They have planted 1,200 asparagus crowns (that means plenty for this year's farmers' market!), and the rest of the vegetables and fruit are grown for the family or CSA customers.

Crosscreek Farm is overflowing with assets to share with the world. Colette often takes baby piglets, ducklings, or chicks to farmers' markets, the library, and other public places to let children see, touch and hold baby farm animals. "They love it!" It wasn't long before the family decided they wanted to share this delicious meat and eggs with the rest of the world!

So, how are they going to do that? They are currently finishing the renovation of the corn granary. This log-building will be the new home for their farm store. The current farm store is in their cinderblock "milk holding room," and they are excited to show the new granary off! Their farm products can also be found through regional buying clubs or CSAs, as well as at both Cobblestone farmers' mar-

kets in Winston-Salem.

Colette is also busy working with non-profits and economic developers to open a natural foods grocery in the downtown Winston-Salem area. For two years Colette operated an indoor farmers market store in Roaring Gap and wants to move it to a year-round location. "I see the potential downtown Winston Salem has for supporting local foods, healthy pasture-based meats and dairy products, and increasing economic opportunities for farmers in the region... We see it as very important to expose our younger generations to farming, to create a connection of consumers to their food, and assure the next generation finds rewards in feeding people as a way of life."

If the farm and her two boys didn't keep her busy enough, Colette is also actively involved in a local non-profit, Grayson LandCare, to fulfill an even bigger vision than the year-round market. That is the creation of a local food hub in the region of Southwest Virginia and Northwest North Carolina. She believes that the local food hub will create short and long-term solutions to ensure food security for the area—including increas-

ing access to healthy foods, educating the public of the benefits of pasture-based meats and dairy products, fresh fruits and vegetables, and methods of connecting farmers to buyers. Colette is also currently working with Blue Ridge Women in Agriculture and the Seeds of Change Initiative to improve the regional food system.

As you can see, Crosscreek Farm focuses on growing their farm, their family, and their community. Colette and her family have begun a farmstead that they hope will inspire others, whether it's through tasting their free-range eggs and meats or petting their friendly potbelly pig, Crosscreek offers a world of opportunities. 🌱

Amy Johnson is a Senior Communication Studies major at Appalachian State University. She is currently a communications intern for Blue Ridge Women in Agriculture.

> Learn more about Crosscreek Farm at crosscreekfarmnc.com. See other mountain area farms like it on the High Country Farm Tour, an event held by the Blue Ridge Women in Agriculture and sponsored in part by CFSA. Check it out August 4th-5th, from 2-6pm! Go to brwia.org for more information.



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Beneficial Insect Habitats...

(continued from cover)

erentially feeds hornworm moths).

Habitat Isn't Just For Beneficial Insects

As with plant species, it may not always be best to focus on habitat for just one organism. Farmland wildlife will make use of habitat areas and considering their needs such as cover (e.g. field borders should be at least 30 ft. wide), nesting areas (e.g. shrubs) and food resources (e.g. seeds from flowering plants) will make your habitat more productive.

Ugly is OK

Neatly mowed areas offer few resources to beneficial insects or wildlife, while areas that look unkempt to us may be great habitat for wildlife provided they are not filled with exotic, invasive plants. Wildlife resource managers in North Carolina recommend that you "Farm Ugly" to enhance wildlife populations. For example, fallow field borders are basically weedy strips that are lightly disked roughly every 3 years to keep out woody vegetation. These are excellent and "instant" habitat for farmland gamebirds and songbirds. When you understand that neatness doesn't equate to habitat and appreciate the value of lightly managed vegetation, then areas that are biologically productive will begin to look attractive.



Tony Kleese exhibits a beneficial habitat plot on a field day at Whitted Bowers Farm.

photo by Debbie Roos

What Should The Habitat Provide?

To be most effective, habitats should provide food (e.g. nectar, pollen) and alternative hosts (e.g. plant feeding insects that are not pests) for when there are none in crops. Also, habitats should include nesting sites (e.g. lightly vegetated areas for ground nesting bees and wasps, shrubs for songbirds) and overwintering sites (e.g. standing vegetation, trees, leaf litter on woodland edges). Clearly, all of these values may not come from a single habitat area, and so you should look across your entire farm when you are considering habitat.

How Much Habitat Is Enough?

In general, bigger is better when it comes to individual habitat areas for both beneficials and wildlife. Although narrow or small habitat areas may be fine for beneficial insects, wildlife prefer larger blocks. Narrow strips result in much higher predation of nesting birds for example. Research indicates that providing non-crop natural or semi-natural vegetation on at least 20% of a landscape will enhance populations of a variety of beneficials, including predators, parasites, and pollinators.

Where to Put the Habitat?

It is natural to want to put habitat next to the field you want to manage pests or pollinators in. This should not necessarily be the case, though. Research has shown that the larger landscape may be more important than what's beside a field. In some cases, habitat that is a mile or more away may have an impact on insect populations in crop fields. For wildlife,

as well as ground dwelling beneficials, it can be important to provide travel corridors for them to move across the landscape. Siting habitat areas adjacent to existing non-crop vegetation will help accomplish this.

Conclusion

By following the principles laid out so far, your beneficial insect populations will likely be enhanced. Whether it's because of habitat or not, organic farming itself seems to be a practice that leads to better pest management by promoting something called species evenness. This means that in organic crops, populations of different species of insect predators are more or less equal in size and collectively are more effective in reducing pest numbers and damage than if the population size of one species was large and the others small. 🐞

Dr. David Orr is an associate Professor of Entomology at NCSU with a research and extension focus on applied biological control of insect pests and organic insect management.

Tony Kleese has managed several organic farms, helped develop USDA's National Organic Standards, and co-founded the Earthwise Company to offer consultations on organic farming and certification.

> For more information about beneficial insects, check out the pollinator conservation workshop with Nancy Lee Adamson of the Xerxes Society during the Sustainable Ag. Conference!

Example Seed Mix and Rates

Common Name	Rate (lbs/acre)
Little bluestem	1
Butterflyweed	.25
Common milkweed	.5
Black-eyed Susan	.5
Purple Coneflower	1
Lance leaved coreopsis	1
Swamp sunflower	1
Showy Goldenrod	.25
Heath Aster	.25
Partridge Pea	1

Seed source = Ernst Conservation Seeds

For details on planting and maintaining habitat plots in the southeast, go to Dr. Orr's website at <http://www4.ncsu.edu/~dorr/>

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