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2013 Growing Farms Workshop Series

The OSU Extension Service Small Farms team is excited to offer the Growing Farms Workshops in four different locations in 2013. This six-week course targets farmers in their first 5 years of farming and is designed to provide beginning farmers with the tools and knowledge to manage both the biological and financial risks of farming. Participants will assess their farm enterprise and gain the ability to develop a whole farm plan. The Growing Farms workshop is for both crop and livestock farmers, however for the Northern Willamette Valley series the focus for 2013 will be specialty crops. These workshops tend to fill up, so early registration is recommended!

Northern Willamette Valley
Dates: March 12 – April 23rd
Times: Tuesdays 5 to 9 pm
Location: 15210 NE Miley Road, Aurora, OR 97002
Field Trips: Tentatively scheduled for Saturday April 20th

Southern Willamette Valley
Dates: March 13 – April 17th
Times: Wednesdays 4:30 to 9 pm
Location: 555 S Main Street Independence, OR 97351
Field Trips: TBD

Southern Oregon
Dates: January 28 – February 25th
Times: Mondays 4 to 8:30 pm
Location: 569 Hanley Road, Central Point, OR 97502
Field Trips: Saturdays, February 2nd & 16th

Central Oregon
Dates: TBD
Times: TBD
Location: Prineville, OR
Field Trips: TBD

For more information and registration visit:
http://smallfarms.oregonstate.edu/growing-farms-workshop-series
The recently published book, Greenhorns: 50 Dispatches from the New Farmer Movement, includes nine “dispatches” from Oregon farmers and ranchers. These authors represent the growing youth movement in Oregon agriculture. The keynote session for the conference features four of the Oregon authors and greenhorn farmers representing different regions of the state:

- Sarahlee Lawrence, Rainshadow Organics, Terrebonne
- Josh Volk, Slow Hand Farm, Portland
- Cory Carmen, Carman Ranch, Wallowa
- Teresa Retzlaff, 46 North Farm, Olney

However, greenhorns would not be anywhere without “grayhorns.” Moderating the panel is well-known organic seed grower and inveterate grayhorn, Frank Morton of Wild Garden Seed, Philomath. The session will include readings, lessons learned, wisdom and more than a few laughs.

The 2013 Oregon State University Small Farms Conference will take place on Saturday, March 2nd at LaSells Stewart Center on the OSU campus.

For more information and how to register go to: http://smallfarms.oregonstate.edu/SFC

CONFERENCE SCHEDULE

8:00 am  Registration and Refreshments
9:30 am  Morning Session

Plenary Session: Greenhorns & Grayhorns
The recently published book, Greenhorns: 50 Dispatches from the New Farmer Movement, includes nine “dispatches” from Oregon farmers and ranchers. These authors represent the growing youth movement in Oregon agriculture. Includes four of the Oregon authors and greenhorn farmers representing different regions of the state. Moderating the panel is well-known organic seed grower and inveterate grayhorn, Frank Morton of Wild Garden Seed, Philomath. Session will include readings, lessons learned, wisdom and more than a few laughs.

Concurrent Sessions

11:00 am to 12:20 am

Greenhorns & Grayhorns: Continuing the Conversation
Continuing the keynote session, the panel will be reshuffled to include additional grayhorns. This informal session will be driven by questions from the audience. The goal is to share the wisdom of new and experienced farmers and enjoy the community of small farms.

Pasture Management 101: Maximize Production for Profit
The keys to profitable grazing lie in understanding the pasture system, from the way grass grows to the grazing behavior of animals. Extension Animal Scientist Gene Pirelli will teach the principles of successful grass-based management and ways to maximize in-season and long-term forage production through sustainable management. This session is the first of two pasture management sessions and provides the foundation for beginning ranchers wanting to participate in the discussion of advanced topics in the 201 session. Gene Pirelli, OSU Extension Animal Scientist.

Starting a Farmer Network
Farmer Networks provide great opportunities for producers to develop partnerships, educate themselves and organize. During this session, learn about some successful models of Farmer Networks in Oregon and ideas for how to start
your own. The presenters will highlight portions of their newly published manual on farmer networks, including how to communicate with network participants, run efficient meetings, survey participants and develop relevant programming. Maud Powell & Melissa Fery, OSU Extension Service Small Farms Program; Melissa Matthewson, Barking Moon Farm.

**Selling Farm Products via the Internet**

Internet-based methods for advertising and selling farm products provide opportunities to access new and different customers but also new challenges. Two veterans, one from the Northwest and one from the Midwest, will discuss their best practices as well as great ideas that didn’t work out so well.

**More than an Apple a Day: Farmers’ Market Partnerships with Health Providers**

Collaborations between farmers markets and health service organizations cultivate healthier food systems and healthier people. Learn about the innovative “Fruit and Veggie Rx” model in which healthcare providers give patients “prescriptions” they can redeem at a farmers’ market to buy fruits and veggies. Participants will leave with an understanding of the impacts of “Fruit and Veggie Rx” programs and how to create such programs. Oregon Farmers’ Market Association.

**Useful Record Keeping for Vegetable Growers**

Successfully operating a diverse farm is much easier with good planning and record keeping and it is essential for maintaining certifications. Josh Volk from Slow Hand Farm will share the basics of the systems he has developed over the last 15 years for keeping clear and concise records that feed into his planning system every year. His systems also help communicate clearly what needs to be done during the season. AgSquared is an online software tool developed to help small farmers plan, manage, and keep farm records so that they can better understand the ins and outs of their own production system and make better decisions in subsequent years. Drew Katz, AgSquared; Josh Volk, Slow Hand Farm.

**Managing Insect Pests on Small Vegetable Farms**

This session will discuss the use of and science informing insect pest methods. Included are trap crops, row covers, and biological controls for managing carrot rust fly, cabbage maggot, cucumber beetle and aphids. Eleanor O'Brien, Persephone Farm; Laura Masterson, 47th Ave. Farm; Paul Jepson, OSU Integrated Plant Protection Center; Nick Andrews, OSU Small Farms Program

**12:20 pm to 1:30 pm - Lunch**

**1:30 pm to 2:50 pm**

**Systems Weed Management on Vegetable Farms: Learning from Case Studies**

Can rotation, cover cropping, and mulching reduce the need for hand weeding? And what does this have to do with insect pests? Alex Stone and Helen Atthowe (formerly of BioDesign Farm, Montana) will share stories about systems weed management from case studies of diverse vegetable farms. Alex Stone & Helen Atthowe, Oregon State University Extension Horticulture.

**Small Farms at the Legislature**

In its 2013 session, the Oregon Legislature will consider policies that will affect the state’s small farms. In this conference session, representatives of Oregon Grows, a statewide coalition of sustainable agriculture groups advocating for supportive public policy, will update us on legislative priorities and potential opportunities.

**Connecting to Land: Finding, Leasing and Purchasing Agricultural Land**

Finding the right land is the most fundamental, and sometimes the most difficult, part of starting or expanding an agricultural enterprise. Those interested in leasing or purchasing agricultural land will learn what to look for in selecting agricultural property to lease. Prospective landlords and tenants will learn the basics of crafting a lease agreement, and how to maintain a long-term, working relationship. Get practical advice from a farmer, a legal perspective on land contracts, and a real estate agent’s perspective on researching a property. Nellie McAdams, Friends of Family Farmers; Conner Voss, Agricultural Real Estate Consultant.

**Oh, SNAP! How to Navigate SNAP Payments for CSA Shares and Increase Your Membership**

In 2011, Zenger Farm received a grant to develop a toolkit to will help Oregon CSA farmers begin accepting SNAP dollars. In this session, you will learn what the current rules are for accepting SNAP for CSAs, the different ways farmers in Oregon are processing SNAP payments, and what recommendations are being made to USDA FNS to make this process easier. SNAP brings more than 1 billion in federal food dollars to Oregon each year. Find out how you and other Oregon farmers can capture a piece of the pie and help make good food accessible to Oregonians of all incomes. Sarah Broderick, Zenger Farm
**Growing the Willamette Valley Bean & Grain Economy**
Staple crops, and the infrastructure needed to clean, store and process them, are making resurgence in the Willamette Valley. Hear the story from farmers, millers, distributors, bakers, and food banks.

**Pasture Management 201: Strategies for Experienced Graziers**
Responsive management is the grazier’s most important tool for extending the grazing season and increasing forage quality. This panel discussion with experienced dryland and irrigated livestock producers will delve into their goals, obstacles, successes, and innovations in fine-tuning forage production and integrated grazing strategies.

**On-farm Composting & Clean Water**
This session introduces methods for creating high quality compost while protecting the environment. Topics include: how to design and locate a compost operation, insights from an on-farm composter, and an introduction to the new OSU Extension Composting Manual and website. Dan Sullivan, Gathering Together Farm; Nick Andrews, OSU Small Farms Program; Will Gehr, Organic Recycling Systems

2:50 pm to 3:10 pm - Break

3:10 pm to 4:30 pm

**Seed Saving on the Farm**
Session provides an overview on how to collect seed from your own farm. Many farmers save their own seed in order to reduce input costs in the spring and to increase productivity with regionally adapted varieties. Experienced farmers will discuss their methods of seed-saving and the impacts of the practice on their farm.

**Basics of Artisan Cheese Making**
Oregon is nationally known for its artisan cheeses and cheesemakers. Come learn about the artisan cheese sector in Oregon, regulatory and food safety aspects of small-batch cheesemaking, and the basics of starting a cheesemaking business. Lisbeth Goddik, OSU Dairy Extension Specialist; Oregon cheesemaker.

**Managing Breeding for Pasture-based Production**
A successful on-farm breeding program matches animal genetics to specific farm conditions and market demand. This session, focused on pasture-based production, will address tips and tools for reproduction management, developing breeding goals, purchasing breeding stock, and implementing a long-term selection program. Speakers will discuss implementing a breeding program in the context of whole farm planning.

**Visual Soil Assessment in Pastures & Cultivated Crops**
Learn how to evaluate soil health in pastures and cultivated crops. Graham Shepherd will describe his Visual Soil Assessment methods. Teresa Matteson will describe soil quality projects in Oregon. Graham Shepherd, Bioagronomics; Teresa Matteson, Benton Soil and Water Conservation District.

**Should I Think About Using a Distributor?**
This session will provide producers with a thorough understanding of the services that distributors provide, the fees charged, and the expectations they have of their suppliers. Two distributors, one from the Northwest and one from the Midwest, will help workshop participants to think through the possibilities and challenges of selling their products in the diverse market channels that often prefer working with distributors rather than individual producers.

**From Field to Jar: Value-added Consideration for Growers & Market Managers**
You’ve dreamed up a great value-added product and flipped through the regulations. But how do you actually go about processing your harvest and selling it from a vendor table at the farmers’ market? This session is for both growers and market managers interested in value-added products. A panel of experts will discuss the ins and outs of processing regulations, production options, and market guidelines. Oregon Farmers’ Market Association.
On November 30, a diverse group of over 150 people joined together at the first ever Oregon Agritourism Summit to learn about regulations, marketing, hospitality, liability, business planning and collaborative models of agritourism. The energy and interest in agritourism as a method to compliment small farming operations and a means for increasing farm viability and rural economic development has been dually noted by OSU Extension Service and partners such as Travel Oregon.

Feedback from farmers and ranchers that was received through written evaluations will be the backbone for Part 2 of this agritourism project to take place in Corvallis on March 1, 2013. Public policy will be the main focus and developing working groups that include policy makers is the primary goal for the March summit.

Save The Date...

and invite your local county commissioners and planners to attend with you!

Oregon Agritourism Summit Part 2
Friday, March 1, 2013
9:30 a.m. to 3:30 p.m.
LaSells Stewart Center - OSU Campus
Corvallis, Oregon
Cost: $25/person
http://smallfarms.oregonstate.edu/oregon-agritourism-summit

For more information about this agritourism project, please contact Melissa Fery with the OSU Extension Small Farms program at (541) 766-3553 or Melissa.Fery@oregonstate.edu.
Western Sustainable Agriculture Research & Education (WSARE) sponsored the Strengthening Agriculture’s Infrastructure conference in Portland from Dec 3-5. Topics focused on post-harvest processing and distribution issues; strategies for optimizing on-farm and local nutrient cycles and sustainable energy use were also discussed. Recordings of presentations from the conference will be posted on the conference website: http://www.westernsare.org/Conferences/Strengthening-Agriculture-s-Infrastructure-Conference.

In the morning sessions, speakers addressed all participants. Break-out sessions in the afternoon looked more closely at opportunities and challenges in specific segments of the food system, featuring examples of infrastructure-related projects from the WSARE region. This article is based on notes from the morning sessions.

Fred Kirschenmann, a long-time leader in sustainable agriculture, inspired and challenged participants to think outside the box and develop solutions to some of the broader challenges faced in our farm and food system. He cited Richard Heinberg’s book Peak Everything (2010), which addresses the challenge of feeding an increasing global population in an era of dwindling resources, especially fossil fuel energy. He also described the “neo-caloric” analysis of Ernest Schusky (End of the Neo-Caloric Era), an anthropologist who views modern agriculture in the context of our long history of providing food, from hunter gatherers to today. Schusky claims that our diet became less nutritious with the introduction of agriculture and that our current energy-intensive and often nutrient poor food system will by necessity be short-lived.

Fred gave credit to the Permaculture movement for pointing out the value of closing nutrient cycles on farms and in food systems. He also praised Food Sovereignty activists who are interested in the rights of peoples to define their own food system. (The term “Food Sovereignty” was coined by members of Via Campesina movement in 1996 and has gained traction at the United Nations.)

One of the ideas that resonated strongly with participants was the difference between cooperative and dominance-based business relationships in the food system, both past and present. Many speakers at the conference emphasized the importance of mutually beneficial, transparent partnerships throughout the food system and provided examples of cooperative versus dominance-based partnerships, favoring the former.

Kirschenmann pointed out the importance of mid-sized farms (grossing $50,000 - $500,000/year) that are large enough to produce significant volumes of food and landscape-level ecosystem services but small enough to be flexible in production and marketing practices. Yet these farms, the “agriculture of the middle,” are struggling to stay in business. Rising input costs make it more difficult for many farmers to stay profitable, though studies in Iowa suggest that the economies of scale are optimized at 600-900 acres for corn, soybean rotations, meaning that mid-sized farms are economically efficient.

However, Fred explained, consolidation at the retail level is forcing mid-sized farmers out of business. Large retailers strive to minimize transaction costs: it is cheaper for them to buy 10,000 hogs from one farmer...
than 1,000 hogs from 10 farmers. If mid-sized farms can’t supply the largest buyers, they get cut out of the system.

Kirschenmann, who is involved with a national research effort on Agriculture of the Middle and “values-based value chains” (which includes OSU researchers Larry Lev, Lauren Gwin, and Christy Brekken Smith), outlined marketing approaches for farmers based on scale and ability to differentiate the product (Figure 2). Some commodity farmers are entering “specialty” and “opportunity” markets to survive. They are investing in relationships with their supply chain partners, creating “values-based value chains” based on trust, transparency, and equitable sharing of risks and benefits. Fred spoke of redesigning farms for resilience. The 20th Century strategy was to maximize efficient production for short term economic return, assuming external factors will be stable. The new resilient strategy is to maximize the adaptability of farm and food businesses and assumes complex system behavior in a world of constant change.

Dr. Ann Bartuska (Deputy Under-Secretary for Research, Education and Economics, USDA) addressed the conference over lunch. She described some new priorities at the USDA:

- Improve the connection between rural and urban communities;
- Improve local and global access to food and support the unprecedented growth in farmers’ markets and other outlets for local food;
- Reduce food loss and food waste, estimated at 40% of current production;
- Investigate the intersection between food, energy and water;
- Utilize agricultural Extension as a method of peace building in poor and unstable countries.

The second morning featured a series of panelists including Steve Balling from Del Monte Foods and Stacy Davies from Country Natural Beef.

Steve provides technical services to Del Monte growers and spends most of his time working on integrated pest management strategies and their vegetable breeding program. Del Monte is a $3.8 billion/year company, but Steve pointed out that Walmart is about an $800 billion company: “When Walmart says ‘jump,’ we say ‘how high?’” He discussed some of the challenges faced by larger corporations that are genuinely interested in sustainability and quoted pollster Larry Kagan: “if you put a gun to my head and told me to give you a one sentence definition of agricultural sustainability, I’d say pull the trigger.” For some food corporations, he said, sustainability is a marketing strategy and more about green-washing than protecting natural or social resources.

Steve didn’t give much credence to random acts of sustainability, claiming that a holistic approach is needed to get anywhere. He explained that 70% of the footprint of Del Monte’s final product comes from the water and energy used in agriculture, so in their view, sustainability goes back to the farm. At Del Monte they wonder whether their customers care about sustainability. The commitment of corporate executives and investors to sustainability is critical; Steve believes there is a strong commitment to sustainability at Del Monte. He asked whether we can break the stranglehold of a cheap food supply which continually externalizes the costs outside the farm and food business. He also
wondered whether it is possible to create a conventional values-based supply chain.

Stacy Davies from Country Natural Beef described how CNB grew from a very small group of ranchers selling a few head of beef each week to their current size of 50,000 head per year. At the beginning they realized that if your farm is production-driven, you are a price taker, but if you can switch to a consumer-driven model, you can become a price setter, at least to some degree. At Country Natural Beef they’ve taken their product out of the commodity market to produce a product their consumers want. They’ve learned to recognize what healthy grazing land looks like and how to monitor and audit grazing practices to ensure they are meeting consumer demands to protect the environment. All CNB ranches and the whole supply chain are certified by Food Alliance. Their business has helped make ranching more socially acceptable as a lifestyle – public opinion was very hard on ranching in the 1980s – which in turn helps make ranching families happier.

Stacy noted that it costs CNB $400 more per head to process beef at a small plant than at a larger plant. That translates to about $2/lb. Smaller plants can’t capture the value of offal that doesn’t become beef in the box. He thinks there may be enough packing plants in Oregon to process the beef CNB produces but is concerned about realizing the value of the offal at smaller plants. Early on, Stacy said, Country Natural Beef realized that they had great ranchers but they weren’t good feeders and were even worse packers: they rely on partnerships with others in the food chain that specialize in these services.

The conference was thought provoking and provided an excellent opportunity for farmers, buyers and other agricultural professionals from around the West to network and share their experiences.

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**CASCADIA GRAINS CONFERENCE**

On January 12, Washington State University Extension will host a conference aimed at rebuilding a regional grain economy west of the Cascade Mountains in Washington, Oregon, and British Columbia.

The Cascadia Grains Conference is for farmers, bakers, millers, brewers, distillers, brokers, investors, and policy-makers. The conference will be held at the STAR Center, 3873 S. 66th St. in Tacoma, Washington.

**Conference workshops include:**
- Expanding Grain Networks and Infrastructure
- How to Grow Grains West of the Cascades
- The Science and Art of Malting and Brewing
- Milling and Bread Baking Quality: Creating a Common Language
- Grains as Poultry and Livestock Feed
- Roles for Co-ops in the Small Grains Economy
- Financing Grain Farming and Processing Businesses
- Gluten Free Baking
- Growing and Marketing Organic
- Craft Distilling

Registration, the program, and more information about the conference are available at: [www.cascadiagrains.com](http://www.cascadiagrains.com).

The cost is $120 for those registering before Jan. 12.
Pregnant animals have a few very important needs that are different from those of other classes of livestock. Without a good record keeping system or management calendar, livestock producers can easily overlook crucial management tasks and disaster can ensue.

The start of care for a pregnant animal should begin well before gestation even starts. Animals need to have an acceptable body condition score (neither too fat nor too thin) to be able to cycle, conceive and support a fetus. This means that producers must have an appropriate nutritional program in place for their breeding herd.

Small ruminant producers typically “flush” their animals by increasing the plane of nutrition for two to four weeks before and after breeding to encourage the production and release of multiple eggs, which produces more twins and triplets. Providing grain, feeding higher quality hay or turning animals into a reserved lush pasture are all effective approaches to flushing.

After animals are bred and confirmed pregnant, few management changes are needed until the last third of pregnancy. In the first two-thirds of pregnancy, animals should be encouraged to exercise and graze to help them stay healthy, wear down their hooves and prevent obesity. Animals can be sorted into groups and fed accordingly if changes in body condition scores are needed during this time.

During the last third of pregnancy, the fetus(es) finally make(s) an impact on the mother’s nutritional requirements. Pregnant animals need more protein and energy to support the growth of a normal, healthy fetus. In some cases, a pregnant animal’s additional nutritional requirements can be met by simply feeding more of the current ration.

If animals are already consuming their maximum amount of dry matter possible each day, however, a more nutritionally-dense feedstuff will have to be added to or substituted for the current ration. Examples of more nutritionally-dense feedstuffs include high-quality hay, protein concentrates or energy concentrates. Remember to make all ration changes gradually.

Dr. Rodney Kott, Montana State University Extension Sheep Specialist, reports that ewes carrying singles in late gestation need 50% more nutrition than in early pregnancy and 75% more if they are carrying twins. The National Research Council’s current recommendations for a 1,172-pound beef cow in late pregnancy include 13.9 megacalories of net energy per day and 672 grams of metabolizable protein per day. Compare these figures to daily recommendations for non-lactating, first trimester pregnant cows of 8.9 megacalories of net energy and 436 grams of metabolizable protein and you will note a 55% increase in requirements in late gestation for beef cattle.

Energy requirements also go up as the thermometer goes down. For every one degree drop in temperature below a critical temperature (20°F is often used), an animal’s energy demands increase by 1%. This is because additional energy is required to maintain normal body temperature. If this energy isn’t provided through feed, animals will need to call on their body fat reserves.

If pregnant animals are underfed, they will be in poor body condition when they give birth and begin...
lactating; milk production will be significantly reduced. They will also be slow to start cycling again. Underfed animals may also give birth to lightweight and/or weak offspring. In small ruminants, the dam may be unable to support twins or triplets and one or more may die in utero.

Special attention should be paid to pregnant immature animals. Pregnant doelings, ewe lambs, heifers, etc. must be fed for maintenance, growth and pregnancy. For example, Table 1 depicts the minimum nutrient requirements during winter for spring-calving pregnant beef cows vs. heifers. Grouping and feeding pregnant youngstock separately will help managers remember to pay special attention to these animals.

Overfeeding pregnant animals can also cause undesirable outcomes: fetuses may grow too large and dams may have fat deposits and poor muscle condition that interfere with giving birth. Overconditioning also puts animals at risk of pregnancy ketosis and/or fatty liver syndrome. Fat youngstock may have reduced milk production due to the deposition of fat in the udder.

Milk fever primarily affects dairy cattle, but it can be seen in any lactating animal. This condition strikes because of the sudden demand for calcium after an animal gives birth and begins to lactate. If a pregnant animal has been on a high-calcium diet during pregnancy, her body is not ready to mobilize calcium from her bones—a process that is necessary during lactation. The sudden drain of calcium through milk makes blood calcium levels fall, which causes weakness, trembling, collapse and even death. To prevent milk fever, avoid feeding high calcium sources (e.g. alfalfa, dairy grain, dairy minerals) in the last month or so of pregnancy.

A few important tasks need to be done in the last month or so before birthing. Your veterinarian may recommend you give vitamin E/Selenium and/or other vitamin injections to pregnant animals in the last two to four weeks of pregnancy. This action helps prevent White Muscle Disease in the developing fetus and Selenium deficiency in the dam. Your veterinarian may also recommend deworming pregnant animals. Follow your veterinarian’s recommendations about which products to use because some are not recommended for use in pregnant animals. Use low-stress handling techniques as well.

Booster vaccinations are often given about two weeks before birthing to protect pregnant animals from disease and encourage the production of high-quality colostrum. Ask your veterinarian about what vaccinations to give your pregnant animals in late gestation—some vaccines are specifically developed for use in pregnant animals and others should be avoided.

Other requirements of pregnant animals include providing shelter from wind and precipitation, space and time to exercise and good ventilation. Transportation, handling and any other sources of stress should be minimized. Care should be taken when routine procedures such as hoof trimming, shearing, crutching, etc. are performed on pregnant animals; alternative handling techniques may be needed.

Prepare a clean and dry area in which animals will give birth. Remove dirty bedding and, if possible, disinfect the premises between births. Make sure the birthing area is free from drafts and doesn’t contain anything that could hurt the mother or her offspring.

As with all livestock production practices, time spent planning and preparing will reap large dividends through all the problems that will be avoided. Pay particular attention to caring for your pregnant animals—after all, you are caring for two (or more)!

For More information:
http://oregonstate.edu/dept/animal-sciences/bcs.htm (sheep)
www.ext.vt.edu/pubs/beef/400-795/400-795.html (beef)
http://extension.psu.edu/courses/meat-goat/reproduction/body-condition-scoring (goats)
The Southern Willamette Groundwater Management Area Committee (SWVGWMA) is interested in increasing its understanding of attitudes and perceptions related to groundwater. In 2004, a Groundwater Management Area was declared in the Southern Willamette Valley because of the high levels of nitrate in drinking water. The nitrate contamination originates from many everyday sources, such as fertilizer, septic systems and animal waste. High nitrate levels have been associated with short and long term health risks.

The SWVGWMA Committee a broad stakeholder group is assessing current knowledge, attitudes and practices related to nitrate and groundwater. The Committee wants to identify internal and external barriers to change (knowledge, attitudes, or practices) as well as positive motivators for change. This survey is for all residents of the state of Oregon. The feedback from this short survey will provide important insights into general perceptions and attitudes of groundwater. Partners in the region will use this information to develop a Community Based Social Marketing approach that actively engages the community in local efforts to improve groundwater conditions.

Please take 5 minutes to complete the survey http://www.surveymonkey.com/s/groundwaterquality
NRCS Helps Fund Seasonal High Tunnels

By: Maud Powell, Small Farms Program, Oregon State University

With an increasing demand for fall, winter and early spring produce, High Tunnels, defined here as in-field greenhouses or hoophouses, provide the necessary infrastructure for small farmers to take advantage of these markets.

My own farm, Wolf Gulch, is situated in the Applegate Valley on a south-facing slope several hundred feet above the fog zone. Our site is ideal for producing winter crops, as the ground rarely freezes and the slope encourages frost drainage. Five years ago, my husband and I decided to start a winter CSA program to provide some winter cash flow. Marketing for the winter CSA was easy—we filled our initial twenty-five spots within a few days. We were able to grow and store winter squash, potatoes, garlic and onions; and keep root crops and members of the brassica family, including carrots, parsnips, beets, rutabagas, turnips, kale, collards, broccoli, cabbage and cauliflower in the ground. The less hardy greens did need some protection from the elements, so we built boxes in our propagation house for the salad greens. As demand for our winter CSA increased, we realized that salad mix was our limiting factor for growth; we needed more protected space.

Last winter, we applied to take part in Oregon’s Natural Resources Conservation District (NRCS) High Tunnel initiative, which is offered through the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP). According to the NRCS website, “the goal of the initiative is to assist producers in extending the growing season for high value crops in an environmentally safe manner.” The program reimburses producers for purchasing and constructing High Tunnels. In order to be eligible for the Initiative, applicants must be farmers who earn a minimum agricultural income and meet other EQIP requirements. Other important requirements include the following:

- The maximum size of the seasonal high tunnel funded by the Initiative is limited to 2178 sq. ft.
- The practice must be sited on existing cropland that has an active crop production history.
- The crops grown within the seasonal high tunnel must be planted directly into the soil covered by the seasonal high tunnel. The use of pots, growing racks or hydroponics is not eligible.
- The seasonal high tunnel system must be constructed in accordance with manufacturer’s recommendations. The frame for the seasonal high tunnel must be constructed of metal, wood, or durable plastic and be at least 6 feet high at the center, structure cover at a minimum will be made of 6-mil greenhouse-grade, UV resistant polyethylene and will not include electrical, heating or ventilation system. Expected life span of the seasonal high tunnel is a minimum of 4 years.
Over the course of the spring, my husband and I worked with our local NRCS representatives to fill out the necessary paperwork and walk through a site inspection. In early October, we purchased and built our High Tunnel and immediately transplanted thousands of plants into it. As a result of the increased space, we have been able to double our winter CSA membership and will sell surplus salad mix to a local store. Within a month of construction, we had been reimbursed in full for the High Tunnel by NRCS. Other producers in Southern Oregon cite similar positive experiences. Angelika Curtis of Wild Bee Honey found the NRCS staff “super-helpful and easy to work with. We are thrilled with the program.”

During 2012, NRCS contracted 47 High Tunnels in Oregon through both the High Tunnel Initiative and Organic Initiatives. Erin Kurtz, one of Southern Oregon’s NRCS Conservationist explains the many benefits of the initiative: “seasonal high tunnels can help support a local food economy with associated natural resource benefits, including reduced transportation and energy inputs.”

The NRCS is gearing up for another round of EQIP and High Tunnel funding. If you and your farm are eligible, NRCS offers practical support for season extension and niche enterprises.

For more information on NRCS’s EQIP program or the High Tunnel Initiative, contact your local NRCS office or one of the statewide specialists below.

Todd Peplin  
625 SE Salmon Avenue, Suite 4  
Redmond, Oregon 97756-9580  
Phone: (541) 923-4358 ext 131  
Email: todd.peplin@or.usda.gov

Denise Troxell  
1201 NE Lloyd Blvd, Suite 900  
Portland, Oregon 97232  
Phone: (503) 414-3232  
Email: denise.troxell@or.usda.gov
Farmscaping describes a broad range of activities that improve the diversity of a small farm to enhance the ecosystem services it provides, including enhancing beneficial organisms for pest management. Farmscaping and enhancing farm diversity in general, can also increase carbon sequestration, improve wildlife habitat, and provide erosion control. Riparian buffers are vegetated areas adjacent to waterways that filter and slow runoff, while shading and providing habitat along the stream or pond itself.

Properly managed riparian buffers of native vegetation can enhance habitat for aquatic and riparian species, including fish and amphibians, as well as provide wildlife and bird habitat. Riparian shading around ponds can reduce sedimentation and evaporation, and reduce stream temperatures, which limit water quality for many native fish. Riparian buffers additionally filter nutrients in runoff and reduce or prevent eutrophication in irrigation ponds and natural waterways.

Timing
The advent of rains in Western Oregon marks the planting season for native vegetation. As farm production slows, these winter months are the ideal time to enhance riparian habitat around ponds and along waterways on the farm. By catching the rains early in the winter season, native riparian plantings have the maximum time to become established before entering the dry summer months.

Species and Site Design
Your county extension agent can provide a list of appropriate riparian species for your area. In general, riparian plantings include a mix of trees and shrubs and are divided into three zones: 1. an inner zone, with species such as willows and rushes that require water to survive, 2. an intermediate, bank zone that can tolerate high water and flooding, but can also dry out, and 3. an upland zone that does not tolerate flooding. Ideally riparian plantings will have multiple vertical layers to maximize diversity and shading. Wide riparian buffers, 50 feet and greater, will enhance water infiltration to the soil to filter runoff and reduce erosion.

Special consideration should be taken in designing riparian buffers around irrigation ponds. Irrigation ponds offer a wonderful opportunity to expand wildlife habitat on the farm, while improving water conservation. Care should be taken, however, to avoid negatively impacting irrigation infrastructure. For irrigation ponds, vegetation should not cover more than 50% of the pond and should be kept clear from spillways and irrigation outlets. In areas without vegetation, structures such as basking logs and rock piles can provide additional habitat for reptiles and amphibians. For more information about enhancing pond ecosystems see the NRCS publication “Farm Pond Ecosystems”, [http://directives.nrcs.usda.gov/OpenNonWebContent.aspx?content=18500.wba](http://directives.nrcs.usda.gov/OpenNonWebContent.aspx?content=18500.wba).

Site Prep and Planting
The OSU extension publication, “A Guide to Riparian Shrub and Tree Planting in the Willamette Valley: steps to success” [http://ir.library.oregonstate.edu/xmlui/handle/1957/24003](http://ir.library.oregonstate.edu/xmlui/handle/1957/24003) provides six key elements of successful riparian revegetation. To prepare your
planting site, it is important to remove competing and invasive vegetation and to ensure that you can continue to control invasive weeds, such as Himalayan blackberry, until the plantings become established. Bare root, containerized stock, and cuttings are all planting options that each requires special care. If you have access to species such as willow, cottonwood, or red osier dogwood, these can be taken as cuttings and planted directly into the ground. Cuttings should be planted deeply enough to reach the water table at its lowest summer level. Be sure to plant according to the plan design you developed to ensure that species are planted in the correct environmental conditions. Although, these native plantings will eventually thrive without additional summer water, occasional irrigation in the first three years after planting will greatly enhance planting success.

**Farmscaping Benefits**
The keys to successful farmscaping for pest management lie in monitoring your pests and knowing the relationships between plants and beneficial insects. For pest management, your riparian buffers can be enhanced with plant species known to harbor natural enemies of your farm pests. Riparian refuges on the farm also provide many other services that enhance the overall ecological function of your farm to conserve soil, protect water quality, improve native habitat, store carbon, and enhance your farms aesthetic appeal. Whether you plant a few cuttings along the edge of a pond or restore a large stretch of waterway, winter riparian plantings will diversify and transform the edges of your farm for maximum ecological benefit.

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**Registration Opens - Training Program For New Urban Farmers**

Oregon State University is accepting applications for its eight-month training program in the Portland area for aspiring urban farmers. Now in its third year, the *Beginning Urban Farmer Apprenticeship* (BUFA) program was developed by the OSU Extension Service and Multnomah County for people with little to no farming experience. Applications are being accepted through Jan. 13. Classes start April 3. To apply, go to [http://bit.ly/10YPZ5O](http://bit.ly/10YPZ5O).

Participants can enroll in two tracks: one consisting of about 550 hours of instruction and another that’s about 120 hours but doesn’t have in-field training. Space is limited to 20 students for track 1 and 10 for track 2.

Students in the longer track take classes on Wednesday evenings, attend field trips on Saturdays and help at a farmers market on Sundays. They also work at the Learning Gardens Laboratory in southeast Portland and Multnomah County’s community farm in Troutdale. The majority of the program focuses on organic farming.

“‐The team farms two days per week at several farms, ensuring good-quality food and community health benefits,” said lead instructor Weston Miller, a horticulturist with OSU Extension. “It’s fun and interactive and students develop strong friendships through the course of the year.” Since its 2011 debut, 43 students have completed the course. Some have gone on to intern or work on farms or start small farms that sell produce to members.

In the upcoming season, 13 graduates will help develop a small-scale farm on a vacant lot in northeast Portland that will grow produce for school meals. It’s a new partnership with Portland Public Schools and the city of Portland. Graduate Karen Flowers will be a part of that effort. New to farming, she completed the program in 2012 and said she came away with experience and confidence.

“My year in BUFA taught me so much about the realities and challenges of farming but also gave me even more passion to be a farmer,” Flowers said. “It solidified for me how rewarding it is to grow healthy food and share it with others. The BUFA program set a great foundation for my future in farming.”

Headwaters Farm Incubator Program: Cultivating the Next Generation of Farm Stewards

By: Rowan Steele, Farm Incubator Manager, East Multnomah Soil and Water Conservation District - rowan@emswcd.org

We’ve all heard the stats: Oregon’s farmers average 57.5 years old; only a quarter of Oregon’s primary farm operators are under the age of 50; up to half the nation’s farmland is expected to change hands over the next ten years. The numbers go on and on, but the bottom line is clear—new farmers are needed to assist the generational transition in agriculture and to ensure responsible farmland management now and into the future.

The East Multnomah Soil and Water Conservation District (EMSWCD) is addressing this problem head-on. In the spring of 2013, they will be launching Headwaters Farm Incubator Program on their 60-acre property in East Gresham. This program is designed to assist the development of new farmers by removing several common barriers—access to land, agricultural equipment, farm and business training, and farmer isolation. More specifically, this program will involve leasing out sections of the property to motivated, experienced individuals who will use it as a launching pad for their own farm endeavors. The cost of land will begin well below market value, but will incrementally increase each year the farmer is on-site. To assist business development, farmers will also be able to rent tools, equipment, and have access to agricultural infrastructure. Farmers will grow at Headwaters Farm for up to four years, after which they will move off-site to make room for others.

In addition to cultivating successful new farm businesses, this program will seek to expose both incubator farmers and the general public to the benefits of Good Agricultural Practices (GAPs) and their connection to watershed health. By empowering the next generation of farmers with this knowledge, the program will result in more robust, resilient agricultural businesses, as well as the protection and improvement of Oregon’s natural resources.

The Headwaters Incubator Program is also intended to have positive effects on the local economy through the creation of jobs, sourcing of agricultural resources locally, and possibly fostering niche agricultural products and services. In addition, Headwaters Farm will serve as a demonstration and research site for streamside restoration, soil and water quality improvement, pollinator habitat, and other conservation practices.

The selection of incubator farmers will be through a competitive process and will require the submission of an application, farm/business plan, and resume. Please contact Rowan Steele, Farm Incubator Manager, for more information (rowan@emswcd.org / 503.935.5355) or stay posted to EMSWCD.org for updates on when the application window will open.
January

15 to 17 - North Willamette Horticulture Society Meeting: Organic Crops, Vegetable, and Berry Field Days
For registration and program information please visit http://nwhortsoc.com. Clackamas County Events Center, 694 NE 4th Ave., Canby, OR. jan.egli@oregonstate.edu
$45 for a single day, $85 for two days and $125 for all three days. Student rate is $25 per day

28 - 2013 Growing Farms Workshop Series - Southern Oregon
This six-week course targets farmers in their first 5 years of farming and is designed to provide beginning farmers with the tools and knowledge to manage both the biological and financial risks of farming. Participants will assess their farm enterprise and gain the ability to develop a whole farm plan. 569 Hanley Road, Central Point, OR 97502. Mondays. 5:00PM to 9:00PM. For more information or cost see page 2.

March

1 - Oregon Agritourism Summit
Getting to YES for Agritourism business development
This is day two summit and public policy will be the main focus and developing working groups that include policy makers is the primary goal. LaSells Stewart Center, Corvallis, OR. 8:00 PM - 4:30 PM. See page 6 for additional details. $25

2 - 2013 Oregon Small Farms Conference
The 2013 Small Farms Conference will be held at the LaSells Stewart Center, Corvallis, OR. 8:00 PM - 5:00 PM. A list if sessions is available on page 3. Online registration is open at http://smallfarms.oregonstate.edu/sfc $50 each or $90 for a couple from the same organization/farm. Registration fee increases after Feb. 15th

February

5 to 6 Integrated Pest Management Focus will be on Integrated Pest Management. Lane Community College - Main Campus, Bldg. 19, Center for Meeting & Learning, 4000 East 30th Ave., Eugene, OR. Call the OSU Extension Service - Lane County with questions or to register at 541-344-5859.