February - March 2010

Horticulture Events

Getting Back To Basics

When you hear the phrase “let’s get back to basics,” what do you think this means? Depending on who you ask, this expression may stir-up thoughts of living a simpler lifestyle in old-timey ways, utilizing old-fashioned craftsmanship, cooking traditional foods and having good old-fashioned fun. Others may contemplate getting off the grid, becoming more frugal or re-establishing fundamental lifestyles or life skills such as eating around the dinner table, canning tomatoes, raising chickens, saving money or making soap.

As we move into February 2010, Swain and Jackson County residents recognize that we are living in sobering times affecting the financial security of most businesses and families. As a result, more individuals desire to become more sustainable and self-reliant. Many homeowners have taken action to find ways to pay off debts, making the most of your land, adding to your income or learning new skills via the library or by attending workshops and classes at your local NCSU Cooperative Extension Center and Community College. In addition, moms, dads and those of all ages continue to spread the message of buying local by supporting our local businesses and farmers. All of these proactive measures are beneficial and will help support you, your family and our community. I want to encourage all of you to keep pressing on!

Although many of you are surviving and thriving, there are just as many good men and women who have lost their jobs, are struggling financially and facing difficult health and relationship issues. During this season of unrest, we know that when finances become restricted, often times health, nutrition, and relationships can become strained. To help you deal with these financial and emotional pressures, the Swain and Jackson County Cooperative Extension Centers have teamed together to launch a new program that features a series of multi-faceted educational seminars geared for youth and adults. This series deals with building a sustainable, self-reliant thriving home as well as specific ways to extend financial resources, such as home gardening and food preservation. Below is a list of programs that are coming your way:

Food & Nutrition
- Cook Smart Eat Smart
- Bread Making
- Food Preservation

Horticulture/Agriculture
- Managing Household Pests
- Managing Garden Pests
- Season Extenders
- Saving Seeds
- Raising Backyard Chickens
- Starting Your Orchard
- Pruning Your Fruit Trees
- Bee School
- Gardening 101

Horticulture/Agriculture Continued
- Gardening 101

Youth & Family
- Sewing Skills
- Vermicomposting
- Composting
- Money Management 101
- Farm to Fork
- Family Game Night
- Green Cleaning

For more information about Extension programs contact your local Cooperative Extension Center at 828 586 4009 or 828 488 3848 or go to website: http://swain.ces.ncsu.edu/ or http://jackson.ces.ncsu.edu/

Let’s put your knowledge to work!

North Carolina State University and North Carolina A&T State University commit themselves to positive action to secure equal opportunity regardless of race, color, creed, national origin, religion, sex, age, or disability. In addition, the two Universities welcome all persons without regard to sexual orientation. North Carolina State University, North Carolina A&T State University, U.S. Department of Agriculture, and local governments cooperating.
**Upcoming Events**

**Shiitake Mushroom Seminar** - The N.C. Cooperative Extension Service will be holding an area Shiitake mushroom workshop for landowners who would like to grow Shiitake for additional income as an alternative agricultural crop or simply for personal consumption. This area workshop will be held on February 18th at the Brasstown Community Center in Clay County from 9:00 a.m. - 12:00 p.m. For more information or to register contact Silas Brown Extension Agriculture Agent at phone # 828 389-6305 or e-mail Silas_Brown@ncsu.edu.

This class will cover all aspects of Shiitake mushroom production and will include a "hands on" experience where individuals will inoculate and bring home their own logs. For demonstration purposes, we ask that you bring 2 logs preferably red, white or scarlet oak that are 3”-6” in diameter, 4 ft. long and with bark intact. Cost for this workshop is TBA.

**Gardening Basics 101** - The N.C. Cooperative Extension Service will be holding a Gardening Basics 101 Seminar for individuals who are new to gardening or new to the area and would like to learn more on how to establish and maintain your vegetable garden. Seminars will be held on Thursday March 4th from 6:00-7:30 p.m. at the Swain Extension Center (Almond) and repeated on Thursday March 18th from 6:00-7:30 p.m. at the Jackson Extension Center in Sylva.

Do you have trouble keeping your vegetables free from disease and insects? Are your weeds getting out of control? Would you like to learn more about where you should put your garden or if you are getting enough sun? Are you comfortable with understanding the proper spacing between plants and rows, when to sow and transplant, the most viable varieties and when to harvest? If you answered yes to any of these questions then this class is for you. To register for this seminar or for more information or directions contact Christy Bredenkamp at your local N.C. Cooperative Extension Center at phone # 586-4009 or 488-3848.

**Crabgrass Control** – A thick healthy lawn, mowed at 3 inches will prevent crabgrass seedlings from becoming established. For those who desire a perfect lawn, you may want to use an herbicide for crabgrass control. Keep in mind that pre-emergent herbicides work by keeping the seeds from germinating. So it’s best to use these products before the soil temperature reaches 55° F. For best crabgrass control, NC State University specialists suggest splitting the herbicide application in half. Apply half of the recommended rate when forsythias bloom and the other half in 6 to 8 weeks.

**Note:** *Pre-emergent herbicides should not be used on lawns where you’ve sown grass seeds this past fall. Pre-emergent herbicides will damage tender new grass seedlings!*

**Hemlock Woolly Adelgid Control** – Now is the time to start scouting your Hemlock trees for the Hemlock woolly Adelgid! If you normally treat your shorter trees with a foliar spray, I encourage you to spray now and again in August with products such as insecticidal soaps, horticultural oil, Malathion or liquid Sevin.

Large trees may be treated with systemic insecticides such as imidacloprid (Merit, Bayer Advance Garden Tree and Shrub Insect Control) in April or May. If the tree is not too close to a stream, a soil drench can be applied by digging a shallow trench one foot away from the trunk. Follow label directions carefully. For more information see website publication at www.ces.ncsu.edu/depts/ent/notes/O&T/trees/note119a/note119a.htm

**Note:** *A professional arborist or licensed pesticide applicator should handle trees that are too close to a spring or stream.*
Lawns
- Think Spring! This is the month for the spring application of slow releasing fertilizer to the lawn.
- If you have bare spots that did not recover from drought, late February or early March would be a good time to put down grass seed.
- Check your lawn mower. Sharpen and tune it up if you missed this chore last fall.

Vegetables
- Soil Sample now if you haven't done so already. The test is free you just need to sample and mail off to NCDA's lab in Raleigh. You can pick up soil boxes at your local Extension office.
- Start Planning this years garden. Sketch the garden and fill in rows for rotating crops and planning space.
- Check notes from last year to see which varieties performed well and which are not worth planting again. Start shopping for seeds at garden centers and seed catalogs.
- Go ahead and start planting English and edible-pod peas, spinach, kale, onions and a few other cold hardy crops in late February through March.
- Plant an asparagus bed.
- Mow cover crops and turn under if the soil is not too wet to work.

Fruits
- Prune grape vines. The sap may drip from cuts during warmer temperatures but not too worry.
- Check and repair your trellises for grape vines and blackberries.
- Mature apple and pear trees can be pruned, but do not prune young fruit trees, peaches or plums before March.

Ornamentals
- If overgrown shrubs need renovation, do severe pruning in late February or March.
- When removing wayward branches from shade trees, make correct pruning cuts at the branch collar. DO NOT TOP TREES!
- Try forcing some blooming branches to brighten winter days. Look for swelling flower buds on winter honeysuckle, viburnums, winter daphne, spirea, forsythia or fruit trees.
- Get outdoors. Winter days can bring wonderful surprises—crocus, early daffodils, hellebores or lungworts.

The North Carolina Extension Service in Swain County is now taking orders for fruit trees along with a few selected grapes and blueberries. Prices are generally $8.00 for the grape and blueberries, and $12.00 for the apple, peach and pear trees. All trees are 3-4 feet tall. All plants are bare-rooted. For more information or to receive an order form, contact the Swain County Extension Service at phone # 828 488-3848. The deadline for taking last minute orders will be Friday February 26th 2010.
The NCSU Extension Service & the Smoky Mountain Beekeepers – are holding a Beginning Bee School on Saturday March 6th from 8:30-4:00 p.m. at the Old Almond School in Swain County. School cost is $20.00 which includes lunch and handouts. Come and listen to Robert Brewer Georgia Extension Coordinator on the following topics:

- Basic Beekeeping Equipment
- Getting Started with Your Hive
- Buying & Installing Packaged Bees
- The Beekeeper’s Calendar – A Year in the Hive
- Nectar Plants & Honey Flow
- Honey Harvesting
- Pest Management in the Hive

To pre-register, contact Tom Rodgers at 293-0678 or email at trodgers44@verizon.net

Checks should be made to Smoky Mountain Beekeepers and mailed to Tom Rodgers, 438 Gray Fox Ridge, Cullowhee, NC 28723.

Sincerely,
Christy Bredenkamp, Extension Agent
Agriculture-Horticulture