

Pennsylvania Women's Agricultural Network NEWSLETTER

SUMMER 2006

FIELD DAYS

APIARY WORKSHOP



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On April 10, PA-WAgN members met at Singing Creek Farm in Mt. Union for a workshop on establishing an apiary. Twenty-six men and women attended the event, nearly all of whom were new to beekeeping. PA-WAgN regional representative Maryann Frazier, who is also a Penn State Extension honeybee specialist, guided participants in choosing a location for an apiary, identifying appropriate beekeeping equipment, installing bees into the hive, and inspecting a new or established colony.

Beekeeping on the farm is vital to Pennsylvania agriculture. "With the introduction of parasitic mites, we've seen a tremendous decline in both the domestic and wild honey bee populations," Maryann said. "The training of new beekeepers is important to ensure adequate pollination of fruit and vegetable crops."

The workshop took a hands-on approach. After learning how to build the hives, participants donned bee veils to install the bee packages and nucleus colonies. Maryann reminded participants that being stung at some point is inevitable. "To minimize being stung, never go in a hive without a smoker to mask the bees' alarm pheromones. And wear a veil so that

you're not startled by a sting to your face. Remember that the bee that stings you is rarely the bee that you see. Bees are focused on dark colors and movement."

Participants learned that disease prevention is key to protecting hives. "American foulbrood can live in used equipment for decades. And there is always the potential for disease in nucleus and established colonies because they

include comb," Maryann said. "If you buy nucleus or established colonies from another beekeeper, make sure that they have not been fed drugs for foulbrood, which would cover up the symptoms, but not cure the condition. Also, queen breeders are selecting bees for resistance for mites and foulbrood, and new beekeepers will benefit from using resistant stock."



Apiary workshop participants appropriately attired to examine and install a package of honey bees.

include comb," Maryann said. "If you buy nucleus or established colonies from another beekeeper, make sure that they have not been fed drugs for foulbrood, which would cover up the symptoms, but not cure the condition. Also, queen breeders are selecting bees for resistance for mites and foulbrood, and new beekeepers will benefit from using resistant stock."

As a result of the workshop, many farmers plan to add honeybees to their operations. "I've always wanted to keep bees on my farm, but didn't know how to get started," one participant said. "This workshop gave me confidence that I can handle bees on my own and take care of the hives. So I'll be ordering bees and equipment this fall."

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FIELD DAYS

APIARY WORKSHOP

(Continued from page 1)

Beekeepers should keep the following management practices in mind:

- Know honey bee biology.
- Maintain only strong, healthy, and productive hives--Choose apiary sites carefully, requeen annually (every other year) with stock selected for characteristics you desire, equalize colonies in the spring, develop and implement a swarm prevention program, and combine weak colonies in fall.
- "Bee" hygienic—Cull old combs and equipment regularly. Remove dead colonies immediately. Discard combs, pesticide packaging and strips appropriately, and keep the honey house clean. Extract honey as soon as possible.
- Keep good colony and market records—Develop and use a record keeping system that works for you.
- Proactively manage mites and diseases—Be able to identify mites, diseases & other maladies, routinely monitor for maladies, develop a foulbrood action plan, implement integrated pest management practices for control of maladies, and monitor mite levels (treat only when levels exceed thresholds).
- Produce a quality product—Maintain honey moisture below 17%, process honey promptly after removing from colonies, use only clean equipment & containers, and sell nucleus colonies, packages, and/or queens that you would be willing to buy yourself.
- Market actively—Know your product and your customers, sell at a price fair to you and your customers, ensure adequate year-round market supply, seek ways to add value to your product or your operation.
- Stay informed—Commit yourself to life-long learning (subscribe to one or more beekeeping journals, visit and bookmark your favorite web sites, participate in local, state, regional and national beekeeping organizations).



Maryann Frazier displays a frame from an established honey bee colony



Singing Creek Farm

—Suggestions courtesy of Maryann Frazier
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FIELD DAYS

FIBER WORKSHOP

On May 19, PA-WAgN members met for a fiber field day in western Pennsylvania. We visited two different sheep farms to see how the farmers were adding value to their fiber products and marketing the farm experience.



All in a row at Wild Rose Farm in Beaver County
—photograph courtesy Rose Marie Kendall

Our first stop was Wild Rose Farm in Beaver County, where Rose Marie Kendall raises Rambouillet and Dorset sheep. Rose Marie, an Extension Educator in Indiana County, sells only value-added fiber products. But rather than shear and sell her wool through the wool pool, she takes the fleeces to Green Mountain Spinnery in Vermont to be spun. She brings the skeins back to her farm where she dyes them with natural dyes. Rose Marie also sells spinning fleeces, washable sheepskins, washed wool locks for Santa beards & crafting, and soft Rambouillet combed top.

Rose Marie took the group on a pasture walk, and described her nutrition program and breeding schedule. The key to raising sheep successfully is to practice good grazing techniques, she said. "We practice rotational grazing and lambing in the pasture. We use electric net fencing that we move every afternoon, timing it to the rise in the sugar content of the grass. We plant clover, trefoil, and grasses, and run soil tests, adding lime if needed."

After the pasture walk, Rose Marie demonstrated her techniques for dyeing the wool with marigold, indigo, rhubarb, black walnut, and cochineal dyes. PA-WAgN members watched as she dropped the skeins into the vats of dye and mordant. The beautiful shades of gold, blue, green, rose, and tan were popular with hand knitters in the group.

The group then traveled to Dundee Farm, a 27-acre property in Sewickley where farmer Terri Fetterolf raises

a fiber flock of Corriedale, Jacob, and Merino/Bond Sheep. Terri adds value to her wool by having the fiber spun and woven into soft wool blankets, sofa pillows, fleece, yarn, and roving. These products are sold in her shop located in the farm's historic barn. "We sort, clean, and skirt the wool and send it out to a woolen mill. We actually have a waiting list for the woolen blankets we sell."

However, Dundee Farm has another important farm product: on-farm educational programs targeting the urban community where the farm is located. "We hold programs for kids and adults on the farm. We have offered 6-week craft classes for children and adults that allow participants to create wool-crafted Christmas gifts. We've also held knitting parties, craft classes for homeschoolers, and day camps. We have allowed high school senior



Terri Fetterolf describes marketing strategies during a beautifully presented and delicious boxed lunch at Dundee Farm.

to complete their senior projects on the farm, which can be a great way to get some help with large farm projects. We also hold an annual harvest festival on our farm that attracts hundreds of people. One of our favorite programs is a day camp for special needs children. These kids get so much from being on a farm and interacting with the animals. If you can establish a similar program, you will be especially blessed." Terri said.

"If you are considering on-farm education," Terri said, "be sure to tally up the associated costs of porta-johns if necessary, as well as extra insurance, advertisements, and postage. Always check the licensing requirements as well, particularly for serving food products. And remember to market your source. For example, take advantage of the terms family farm and sustainable agriculture to draw customers."

NATIONAL EXTENSION WOMEN IN AGRICULTURE EDUCATION CONFERENCE

If we didn't know it already, it became clear to us at the National Extension Women in Agriculture Conference that



Kathy Brasier (center) with other conference attendees

women are truly a growing force in agriculture—and that state extension systems are beginning to recognize this as well.

We traveled to St. Louis in April to attend the conference and give a presentation about PA-WAgN and its accomplishments. Our session, attended by nearly 50 people, also included presentations by women in agriculture groups from Kentucky and Massachusetts.

The presentations covered two main ways that state extension systems work with women in agriculture: supporting the development of networks of women farmers, and developing educational programs that specifically address the needs of women farmers. For example, the Women, Food, and Agriculture Network in Iowa has created a program called "Women, Land and Legacy," that brings to-

gether local groups of women landowners to discuss farm management concerns and to provide social support to each other. Kentucky has an annual conference that brings women farmers together from across the state to learn from each other and network, and a public policy institute for women in agriculture that focuses on ensuring sustainable agriculture through policy, legislation, and leadership development. We saw presentations that described the results of needs assessments (those dreaded surveys!) and the programs developed to fit the identified needs of women farmers in those states.

We counted about 17 states represented in the presentations, mostly from the Northeast and Midwest, and met people attending the conference from all over the country. Nearly every state in the Northeast was represented, and, based on our conversations, we created a network to share ideas, resources, and programs.

The Conference was a great opportunity to see the variety of women's networks around the country, and how those networks work with extension educators to create educational programs that fit their interests and assist them with developing successful, sustainable farm businesses.

The conference website contains all the presentations and materials from the conference. If you'd like more details, visit <http://www.agrisk.umn.edu/wia/>.

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FIBER WORKSHOP

(Continued from page 3)

PA-WAgN members enjoyed Terri and Rose Marie's hospitality and benefited from their years of experience. "It's always great to hear first-hand experiences from other farmers who are doing what I'm still learning. It's so much more useful than reading about it. I hope to take back some of what I've learned here to my own flock," said participant Angela Fishman.

If you are interested in on-farm direct marketing, but missed this field day, be sure to register for the "Direct Marketing Field Day in South Central PA" on August 9. Hope to see you there!

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SURVEY RESULTS ARE IN

CONFERENCE ATTENDEES INSPIRED

PA-WAgN's December 2005 Newsletter described the *Women in Sustainable Agriculture Conference* in Vermont October, 2005 in which 19 PA-WAgN producers and educators participated in workshops, tours, and discussions. This issue reveals what these women thought about the *Conference* and what they took back to their farms and classrooms.

Why did these women go to the Conference? Both groups (producers and educators) put a high priority on learning new ideas about sustainability in agriculture and getting to know other women in PA-WAgN. Additionally, producers wanted to learn about business practices and farming practices and educators wanted to learn new techniques to become better educators of women in agriculture and obtain the latest information and resources about sustainable agriculture in particular.

What results did the Conference achieve? All the producers and most educators reported that they experienced a change in attitude toward three concepts: hope and opportunity in agriculture; taking leadership in the community; and participating and building networks. Most producers reported that they experienced a change in attitude toward two other topics as well: getting involved in policy development and seeking out information resources

about sustainable practices. Educators also indicated that they would seek out information resources about sustainable practices.

Most producers found the educational presentations and the informal networking about business management very effective. Most producers and educators found the

educational presentations and the informal networking about sustainable farming practices either *moderately* or *very* effective.

Almost all the participants said the Conference provided them with new ideas to modify their operations or their educational events. They declared that they would have been unlikely to have made these modifications were it not for their participation in this Conference.

Look forward to attending a similarly productive *Women in Sustainable*

Agriculture Conference here in Pennsylvania in 2008. Grant monies have been requested to begin the planning. Stay tuned.

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A few WISA Conference attendees (left to right): Ann Stone, Maggie & Claire Robertson, Mary Cottone, Maryann Frazier, Amber Lockawich, Susan Alexander, Carolyn Sachs, Sandy Miller, Gabbriel Frigm, Barb Kline, Emily Cooke, Lyn Carling, Linda Moist, Clair Orner

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GET TO KNOW YOUR REGIONAL REPRESENTATIVE

Audrey Gay Rodgers, owner and operator of Hameau Farm in the Big Valley and PA-WAgN South Central Regional Representative, offers a unique twist on the farm experience.

Every summer, Gay opens her doors to girls ages 8-14 for week-long farm camps that guarantee lasting memories and provide farming skills that may guide career choices.

Gay's passion for farming and preserving heritage breeds such as Ayrshires was developed during her childhood on the family dairy farm. Gay still remembers when her father purchased a milking herd of Ayrshires, several from Scotland. At the age of four, Gay assisted with milking and feeding the herd. While Gay's skills continued to grow, her passion for farming waned as she progressed through high school. With the excitement of college and following a year in southern France, Gay decided that her milking days were over. She strived for an urban life but, following a farm vacation, Gay realized that her heart was still on the farm.

After sharing ideas with family and friends, Gay decided to return to farming with a 12-head herd. By the time she was 23, Gay had increased her milking herd to 60. But, unprepared for the isolation so frequently experienced by female farmers and the overwhelming responsibilities, Gay decided to sell the herd and return to college where she sought a degree in Ag Economics. Again, however, she developed feelings of discontent and, through self-evaluation, determined that her real passion was in farming but perhaps in a style different than any example previously offered.

After researching the more natural method of grazing dairy cows, Gay returned to farming but with a new focus—a farm camp for girls—fulfilling her desire to continue farming while providing educational opportunities in an environment that is certainly not isolating.

In 1996, Gay's first farm camp for girls became a reality and the overwhelming positive response had a multitude of rewards including renewed enthusiasm and contentment towards farming for Gay.

Gay's beautiful, serene multi-generational family farm situated in the scenic Big Valley provides an ideal setting for artists seeking a peaceful and creative environment. Art is embedded in Hameau Farm and is honored with an annual Farm Art celebration where artists display their creations, most of which are farm inspired.

Gay Rodgers not only inspires future female farmers through her farm camp but she also mentors farmers interested in preserving heritage breeds or expanding their farming operation to include educational components.

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For information about Hameau Farm visit:
<http://www.hameaufarm.com>



GOING LOCAL

THE CONFESSIONS OF A LOCAL FOODS CITIZEN-EATER

Lately I've been talking with a lot of PA-WAgN farmers about producing food, building community, and what keeps them going when everything seems to be going in the direction of the crazy heifer who just ran through the electric fence with all her buddies. In addition to the daily joys and frustrations of farming, almost everyone talks about giving back to the community in some way, whether through programs for at-risk kids, growing produce for the food bank, mentoring young farmers, or donating farm profits to community organizations. I've been amazed at the generosity of spirit and the desire to **give** more when farmers already give us so much, and when so much of our culture encourages us to continuously **take**. I've been thinking about this and what social justice looks like in the context of agriculture, so in this issue, I'm going to stop raving about local foods for a few minutes, and offer a few reflective thoughts on food and community.

I seem to have lost some (not all!) of my zeal for local foods, now that summer is upon us. It's not that I think eating locally is less important when it's easy; I'm just faced with a different sort of challenge lately---how to get rid of all the surplus! My arugula and spinach are bolting, my salad greens are hardly "baby" anymore, and I shudder at the virtually visible rates of growth in my zucchini. My husband and I cannot possibly eat it all, and while I knew last winter that my garden would be too big, it seemed impossible then to know what kind of volume we'll want or be able to eat, or if I will manage to keep all the little plants alive long enough to enjoy their fruits. (Okay, six zucchini for two people is REALLY over the top. Even with five and half of them dead, we would still have too much!) While this bounty gives me pause because of my inability to keep up with it (and the obvious potential for waste), this is hardly a serious problem. At the very least my compost pile would "eat" what we couldn't. Nevertheless, I am perplexed. Why grow all this food, why take the bounty of the earth and use the fertility of the soil if the food is ultimately thrown away with no one to savor its freshness and to receive its health-giving benefits?



Amy Trauger with an offering of freshly harvested garlic

—Photograph courtesy Ryan Peterson

My perplexity was resolved one night with a gift of fresh strawberries on my porch. My new home in Sugar Valley is in a very small community composed of our household, two maverick architects, two Amish families and Gram. Gram is in her late eighties and putters around her farm and her gorgeous gardens day in and day out. I often walk by her on the road, and she is so absorbed in her little wedge of a garden, carved out of an Amish hay field, that she barely notices me. She

waves sometimes, but rarely raises herself out of her stoop to chat. She says her name is Edith but everyone calls her Gram, apparently because she is a grand-mother many times over. She is white haired, wiry and permanently bent at the waist, as if some force pulls her, against her will, towards the earth. One night last week, I stepped out to call in the puppy and there in the light spilling out from the living room window, sat a box of glistening strawberries. We wondered who in our little community could have possibly gifted us with such a treat, and it

wasn't until we checked our phone messages that we found out it was Gram. She had walked over to our house on her old, bowed and wise legs to share the bounty of her little garden with everyone in our little neighborhood. Apparently she does this every year, with produce throughout the season, and we hear she is not alone. And so, now I know what to do with my wildly growing lettuce.

When I ask farmers why they give back to their communities in the way that Gram gives to her community, they say it's the right thing to do with their success. Surprisingly, they also say that it's good for business. Generosity and altruism are not often prominent features of economic theory or business practices as they are discussed or applied in capitalist economies, so the idea that generosity is good for business intrigues me. That farmers who pay retail, sell wholesale, and pay the shipping both ways, find it in their budgets and their hearts to provide for those around them is a truly remarkable example of compassion. But contrary to what most people would think, there is no

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FINANCING A NEW FARM VENTURE

There are a number of State and Federal programs that can help both new and existing farmers. This article explores the opportunities for financing new ventures. This category could cover those new to farming or those experienced in farming, but who have never managed their own farm operation, or those who are adding to or changing their operation in a significant way.

Getting financing is a real hurdle for any start-up small business. One thing that makes it easier for any lender, whether private or public sector, to consider the venture seriously is a well-prepared business plan. Rather than look at this as a chore, this can be time wisely spent in developing your dream, showing your experience and talents, setting priorities and evaluating and managing risks. Within your community, Cooperative Extension and Small Business Development Centers can assist you in preparing the plan.

Once a flexible, but detailed, plan is in place, you can explore financing options with private investors (including family and friends), commercial lenders, and public lenders. There are a number of programs available from federal and state government sources that could be useful to explore.

The Farm Service Agency, part of the U.S. Department of Agriculture, has a few programs that are specially geared toward farmers who find it difficult to obtain credit commercially. Their programs include farm ownership and direct operating loans which can be used to purchase land, livestock, equipment, feed, seed, and supplies, as

well as to make farm improvements or construct buildings. They also have a special loan program that can aid with down payments for beginning farmers. Their interest rates vary by program, but are generally lower than commercial bank rates.

The Commonwealth of Pennsylvania also offers loan programs that can help new farmers' cash flow through lower-than-market interest rates. The Next Generation Farmer Loan Program, specifically for farmers who have not owned a significant amount of farmland of their own previously, can offer interest rates at 70-80% of market rates for purchasing a farm or making improvements. The Small Business First Fund and Machinery and Equipment Loan Fund offer partial financing of the total project costs at below-market fixed interest rates.

One final suggestion is to give yourself ample time to explore any and all financing opportunities. Not every path will be fruitful, but you will gain information that might be helpful in later stages of your business and develop your network of allies.

Above is a very brief summary of some resources available. For more detailed information, please call Suzanne at (610) 458-5700, ext. 239 or smilshaw@cceconomicdevelopment.com.

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THE CONFESSIONS OF A LOCAL FOODS CITIZEN-EATER

(Continued from page 7)

apparent contradiction between generosity and sustainable business practices for a number of reasons. Donations and sponsorship of community organizations and events outside the sustainable agriculture community provide "free" advertising to customers who might not be actively seeking local farm products. Farm tours and programs that bring kids, families, and other community groups to the farm raise awareness of farming, local farm products, and the role of farmers in healthy rural communities. Providing fresh, healthy food for the less fortunate is a kind and generous way to widen the circle of nutrition, consumption and awareness. All of these things ultimately make agriculture, food production and consumption, and our communities more sustainable in the long term.

In the end, I've learned that generosity ultimately brings reciprocity. Generosity and reciprocity make community. Generosity, reciprocity, and community make safe, secure places to live. Safety and security weave a peace that is lasting and resilient. In a world where these things seem

valuable and rare, I feel very blessed. I was made very aware of my good fortune a few weeks ago, when a friend was visiting from Lisbon, Portugal. She witnessed the giving of strawberries, observed the honor system of buying bread, yogurt, and eggs on Amish farms and had a picnic with me on my CSA farm. She was continuously amazed at the generosity and trust in this local food system, and we concluded that the reason it works has everything to do with the food itself. Food holds symbolic value in almost every culture, and the sharing of food unites people on scales as small as a family and as large as a nation. Food—so simple, so basic, so abundant—has the power to transform. So, share some strawberries or some salad greens today, and reap the benefits of peace, community, and security tomorrow.

Eat, live and give well.

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PA-WAGN PROGRAMMING

ANNOUNCING TWO-DAY INTENSIVE WORKSHOPS

The Pennsylvania Women's Agricultural Network (PA-WAGN) is committed to serving female farmers throughout Pennsylvania. We develop programming based upon the educational needs of farmers as evidenced through agriculture statistics, evaluations, member and educator correspondence, and specific requests.

Our research indicates that women prefer intensive, hands-on learning environments, and so PA-WAGN has developed a series of eight two-day intensive workshops funded by a grant from the Northeast Center for Risk Management Education.

The educational needs articulated by women farmers mesh well with the program areas of Risk Management Education, and our workshops will include programming on Business Planning, Balancing Farm and Family, Equipment Maintenance and Repair, and Value-Added Agriculture.

These hands-on workshops will help you develop or improve the skills needed to successfully run your farm business. Class sizes will be small (15-20) to facilitate one-on-one interaction between participants and instructors. Register early! Space is limited.

Visit PA-WAGN's website frequently at <http://wagn.cas.psu.edu/Calendar.html> for updated information and on-line registrations.

Ann Stone
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PA-WAGN TWO-DAY INTENSIVE WORKSHOP SCHEDULE

BUSINESS PLANNING

With pre-workshop preparation focused on your specific farm business, you will complete a business plan and develop marketing strategies specific to your farm operation.

November 9-10, 2006

Northwest PA

Location to be announced

March 21-22, 2007

Victoria Inns

Pittston, PA

BALANCING FARM & FAMILY

You will learn how to better balance farm work, family, and off-farm jobs to improve your health and well-being.

October 20-21

Northwest PA

Location to be announced

May 4-5

One World Environmental Camp

Spring Mills, PA

EQUIPMENT MAINTENANCE & REPAIR

You will learn the economic risks and benefits of purchasing farm equipment and learn how to maintain, repair, and operate that equipment safely.

***September 8-9**

Accokeek Foundation

Accokeek, MD

January 31-February 1, 2007

Penn State's Ag Arena

University Park, PA

*This two-day event will include a Women-Based Crop Insurance Presentation.

VALUE-ADDED AGRICULTURE

You will learn how to diversify your operation and develop strategies for adding value to your farm products.

***August 21-22, 2006**

Quiet Creek Herb Farm

& School of Country Living

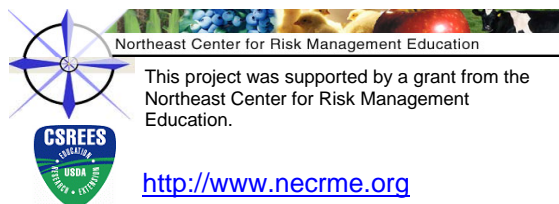
Brookville, PA

January 17-18, 2007

Keswick Creamery

Newburg, PA

*This two-day event will include a Women-Based Crop Insurance Presentation.



CALENDAR OF EVENTS

PA-WAGN/SLOW FOOD CENTRAL PA PRESENT
A PROGRESSIVE DINNER IN PENNS VALLEY
HOSTED BY PENN'S VALLEY FARMERS

JULY 16

ENJOY FARM FRESH PRODUCTS WHILE TOURING
PENNS VALLEY FARMS

DETAILS AVAILABLE AT

<http://wagn.cas.psu.edu/Calendar.html>

PA-WAGN ANNOUNCES

TWO-DAY INTENSIVE

WORKSHOPS

These hands-on workshops will help you develop or improve the skills needed to successfully run your farm business.

Topics include Business Planning, Empowerment: Balancing Farm & Family, Equipment Maintenance & Repair, and Value-Added Agriculture.

Visit PA-WAGN's website for frequent updates at:

<http://wagn.cas.psu.edu>



ORGANIC VALLEY CROPP COOPERATIVE
PRESENTS

ORGANIC DAIRY FIELD DAY

ORE BANK FARM, MIFFLIN COUNTY

JULY 19, 2006 9:00 A.M. – 3:00 P.M.

COSPONSORED BY PENNSYLVANIA CERTIFIED ORGANIC,
PENNSYLVANIA WOMEN'S AGRICULTURAL NETWORK &

PENNSYLVANIA ASSOCIATION FOR SUSTAINABLE AGRICULTURE

Lunch Provided
Cost: Free

photograph courtesy of Ore Bank Farm Collection, Mennonite Church USA Archives

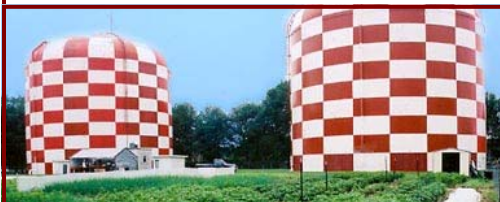
<http://www.mchusa-archives.org/personal/pc/photos/OreBankFarm/index.html>

To register:
Contact PCO at
814-364-1344

PA-WAGN/PASA FIELD DAY
URBAN FARMING
USING THE SPIN METHOD

JULY 24

10:00 A.M. – 2:00 P.M.



SOMERTON TANKS FARM
PHILADELPHIA, PA

REGISTER ONLINE AT

<http://pasafarming.org> or call 814-349-9856

DETAILS AVAILABLE AT:

<http://wagn.cas.psu.edu/Calendar.html>

Cost: \$15 (includes lunch)

DIRECT MARKETING FIELD DAY
SOUTH-CENTRAL PA

AUGUST 9, 2006 10:00 A.M.–2:30 P.M.

COST: \$5 INCLUDES LUNCH

DETAILS, AGENDA, AND ONLINE REGISTRATION AVAILABLE AT:

<http://wagn.cas.psu.edu/Calendar.html>

PAINTED HAND FARM

HOSTS: SANDY MILLER & RALPH JONES

RAISING MEAT GOATS FOR THE ETHNIC MARKET

GRASSROOTS FARM & CSA

HOSTS: JENNIFER HALPIN & MATT STEIMAN

VISIT A THRIVING CSA IN ACTION WITH DEMONSTRATION OF FARMING SYSTEMS
AND BUSINESS STRATEGIES

KESWICK CREAMERY

HOST: MELANIE DIETRICH-COCHRAN

VISIT A VALUE-ADDED DAIRY OPERATION WITH ON-SITE CHEESE MAKING
FACILITY

THE KITCHEN GARDEN

WHAT'S NOT TO LOVE ABOUT TOMATOES?



Every growing season, I am reminded why tomatoes have been named “fruits of love.” They inspire so many heart-warming meals and spark renewed admiration for the garden with their colorful, abundant show. Once thought to be poisonous, tomatoes have, over centuries, become the prize of every home garden and are central to feasts and festivals around the world.

Every January, I peruse seed catalogs intending to keep it simple. But, because every heirloom variety is so enticing, I order more than an ample amount of seeds. I select some for their unusual color, some for dependability, and others for storing qualities, but all for their outstanding flavor.

Tomatoes don't develop adequate flavor unless allowed to ripen on the vine. Thus, home gardeners and educated consumers know that beauty is only skin deep, especially with regard to tomatoes. Heirloom varieties may not appear to be as flawless as tomatoes available year-round in grocery stores but their intense tomato flavor is unparalleled.

Again, I have planted beyond my family's expected consumption. But, having an abundant harvest allows me the following privileges: Enough fresh from the garden fruit to satisfy a family of five for several productive months; a multitude of winter storage options such as peeled and frozen whole tomatoes to be enjoyed in hearty winter soups and stews; an

abundance of slow-cooked and canned treasures such as ketchup and sauces; and several varieties suitable for dehydrating to be reconstituted and enjoyed on home-style pizza, in pesto, and as a main ingredient in highly flavored appetizers. Most importantly, an excessive crop allows me the greatest pleasure — sharing with friends and neighbors, bringing greater awareness and appreciation to the benefits of sustainably grown fresh produce.

When preparing fresh tomatoes, keep it simple and allow the tomato's unique flavor to shine (save cooked tomato recipes for those long winter evenings when we can only dream about next season's bounties). A fresh salsa can be prepared in minutes with a few simple ingredients — tomatoes, jalapeños, onion, garlic, cilantro, lime juice, extra-virgin olive oil, and sea salt. Bruschetta is a quick and easy appetizer for those spur of the moment guests (who seem to appear more frequently during the growing season) with a combination of garden treasures and a few Italian contributions — tomatoes, onion, basil, garlic, good-quality extra-virgin olive oil, balsamic vinegar, and sea salt served on toasted Tuscan-style bread and topped with a few shavings of Parmesan cheese. A platter of sliced tomatoes layered with basil leaves, roasted red bell peppers, and sliced fresh mozzarella topped with a drizzle of good-quality extra-virgin olive oil and balsamic vinegar, and a sprinkling of sea salt and freshly cracked pepper is another simple way to highlight beautiful tomatoes. And of course we all know that there is nothing better than a tomato sandwich — thick slices of tomato on whole-grain bread with plenty of mayonnaise and a sprinkling of sea salt. Just a snack of bite-sized tomatoes in a variety of colors and shapes is simplicity at its finest. Showing off in the kitchen is so easy when fresh tomatoes are plentiful!

Celebrate the gifts of the season, share the wealth, and eat well!

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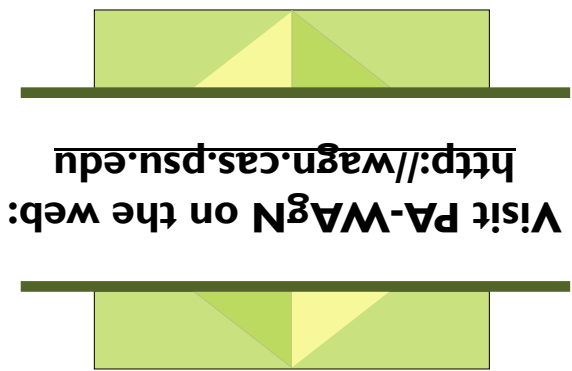


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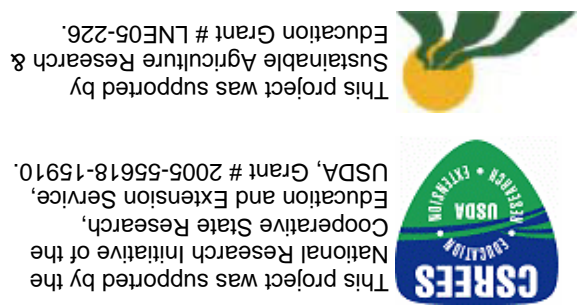
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