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News Release

Currant Events: Field Day at Hilltop Community Farm

For Immediate Release – July 5, 2012

Contact: Erin Schneider, 608-257-6729

(La Valle, WI) – Celebrate fruit, and build community while exploring ways to expand the markets, products, and palettes for unique small fruits in Wisconsin. You're invited to a day of learning and celebration at Hilltop Community Farm, a small diversified community supported agriculture farm and orchard near La Valle, WI on Saturday, July 14, from 9:30 am – 4:00 pm. Learn about sustainable fruit production and marketing research being conducted at Hilltop and discover ways to use, prepare, grow, and market small fruits such as currants, saskatoons, honeyberry, and elderberry.

There will be a mix of focused discussions from farmer entrepreneurs, a panel of experts highlighting success stories on the 'current' trends with local food, fruit that help communities and farmers prosper, an orchard tour, a jam making demonstration, and music. Lunch and snacks provided. You will leave the day with resources on growing these fruits, ideas for use/preparation, and ways you can support growing Wisconsin's local food/fruit system. Dress for spending time outdoors.

Three years ago, beginning farm women at Hilltop Community Farm, Elsewhere Farm, and Mary Dirty Face Farm, who manage their small, diversified farms in different locations in Wisconsin, independently set out to grow unique varieties of fruits such as currants, saskatoons, honeyberry and elderberry using agroforestry techniques. Having discovered that they were growing the same fruits, in similar phases of production, and facing the same marketing challenges, they set out to work together. The farms jointly received grant funding to research marketing options for their unusual fruit from the North Central Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education Farmer Rancher grant program (NC SARE, USDA).

The low-impact nature of these fruits, grown at Hilltop when cultivated using agro-forestry techniques, should appeal to environmentally conscious consumers, and has sparked wide interest from other farmers.

“We've led several orchard tours in the three years since we planted it,” says Hilltop Farmer Rob McClure. The up and coming generation of consumers is more concerned with the sustainability of what they eat, at the same time they see family farms disappearing around them. We want to let both farmers and consumers about these novel, well-adapted, potentially high margin fruits, but also open a wider dialogue with the community about the changing nature of agriculture, its difficulties, and how we need to adapt in the next 10 – 20 years.”

For event details and to RSVP for this event, contact Erin Schneider, Hilltop Community Farm, at 608-257-6729 or email e.schneider.hilltopfarm@gmail.com by July 11, 2012.

Support for this event is provided by the Wisconsin Farmers Union, with research support from the North Central Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education Farmer-Rancher Grant Program. Special thanks to the Michael Fields Agricultural Institute, Family Farm Defenders, and all of our friends, CSA & family members for your 'sweat equity' and support.