What’s new?
Register Now for the Tennessee Horticultural Expo

The first annual TN Horticultural Expo will be held January 29-31, 2009 at the Nashville Airport Marriott.

This is the first joint meeting of the TN Fruit and Vegetable Assn. (TFVA), TN Farm Growers Assn. (TFGA), TN Viticultural and Oenological Society (TVOS), American Wine Society (AWS), TN Flower Growers Assn. (TFGA) and TN Farmers Market Assn. (TFMA). Speakers include Steve Groff, a Pennsylvania farmer and expert on no-till farming and high tunnel production, and Jeremy Gillam, an Arkansas grower, who will participate in the panel discussion on farm labor. Many other speakers are on the TFVA program, making this a meeting not to be missed.

Special events at the Expo will include a bigger and better tradeshow, a winemakers’ dinner, a silent auction, a TFGA meet the experts breakfast, wine tastings and the TVOS President’s reception.

Pre-registration is $35 per person, allowing entry into the educational sessions of any of the six groups. Special events may require a separate fee.

For more information or to download a registration form, visit http://www.tfva.org. The Expo is sponsored by the Tennessee Department of Agriculture (TDA).

UT Organic Crop Production Workshop Series for Growers and Agriculture Professionals

The University of Tennessee Organic and Sustainable Crop Production program will offer a 10-part monthly workshop series in 2009 starting in February and running through November. The workshop series targets commercial producers and agriculture professionals interested in learning about organic crop production practices. Workshops are scheduled for one Monday afternoon a month and the 3-hour session will consist of presentations by extension specialists accompanied by discussions and hands-on activities.

To serve growers and agriculture professionals throughout TN, the workshop series will be broadcast using ITV technology to three locations across the state including Knoxville, Nashville and Jackson. Workshop locations and times include:

- Knoxville
  UT Agriculture Campus
  156/157 Plant Biotech Bldg.
  2:00-5:00pm EST

- Nashville
  Ellington Agriculture Center
  Central Region Extension Bldg.
  1:00-4:00pm CST

- Jackson
  West Tennessee Research and Education Center
  Ag Extension Meeting Room B
  1:00-4:00pm CST

Dates and topics include:

- February 9 - Introduction to Organics
- March 9 - Building Soils & Managing Soil Fertility
- April 13 - Crop Rotations & Cover Crops
- May 11 - Seed Sources & Transplants
- June 8 - Identifying & Managing Weeds
- July 13 - Identifying & Managing Pests
- August 10 - High Tunnel Production
- September 14 - Identifying & Managing Diseases
- October 12 - Putting It All Together: Developing an Organic Plan
- November 9 - Marketing Organic

There is no fee for participating in the workshops, but registration is required. Please contact Dana Saywell at 865.974.7379 or dsaywell@utk.edu for more information or to register for a workshop. Also, contact Dana if you would like to receive email reminders about the workshop series each month.

This series is made possible through support from the TDA.

(Continued on page 3)
High Tunnels for Season Extension in Tennessee

By Mary Rogers, Extension Assistant, and Annette Wszelaki, Vegetable Extension Specialist

High tunnels are a relatively inexpensive way for growers to extend the growing season by protecting high value crops from cold temperatures, as well as provide a more controlled environment to manage insects, weeds and diseases, which in turn helps to produce a higher quality crop.

High tunnels or hoop houses are 3 or 4 season structures that can extend the growing season by weeks or months on either end of the growing season. They are loosely defined as unheated greenhouses or simply an arched frame with plastic covering.

High tunnels offer more protection and control than other season extension techniques, such as floating row covers, although high tunnels also require a larger initial investment. Still, high tunnels are much less expensive to construct than a greenhouse, and have minimal operating costs and the opportunity for maximum returns.

In October, we completed the assembly of three high tunnels at the UT Organic Research Unit in Knoxville. Our new high tunnels are constructed of lightweight aluminum framing, two layers of 6 mil greenhouse grade UV treated polyethylene covering, and polycarbonate sliding doors at the ends. The sides roll up for ventilation during periods of warmer weather.

The new high tunnels will allow us to investigate the potential of this system for year-round production in our region. This autumn is our first season in the high tunnels, and we are planting specialty varieties of popular cool season crops including carrots, peas, radishes, beets, leeks, cauliflower, kohlrabi, broccoli, kale, Swiss chard, lettuces and greens. The same vegetable crops will be grown outside winter row covers (1 oz Reemay fabric). These outdoor crops will be compared to those grown inside the high tunnels with respect to yield, color, texture and taste.

Additionally, we will compare four successional plantings of the direct seeded vegetables (early-November, mid-November, early-mid December and early January) and two plantings of transplanted vegetables (early-November and early-mid December) in order to assess how late in the winter we can plant and still reap a harvest. We expect to begin harvest of these vegetables in late November and continue into early-March of next year.

In early spring of 2009, we will begin variety trials for early season tomatoes grown in high tunnels.

Continue to look for updates on our high tunnel research in future editions of SPROUTS.

Grower Resources
- Eliot Coleman’s Four Season Harvest. 234 p. www.fourseasonfarm.com/
- High Tunnel Design and Use Workshop CD and Info Packet. 2006. Ohio State University. The CD ($10) contains 6 hrs of discussion and the educational packet ($20) contains 71 p. of materials. Price for both is $25. To order, contact Matt Kleinhenz, 330.263.3810 or kleinhenz.1@osu.edu
- HighTunnels.org www.hightunnels.org/

Preparing the tunnels before planting

Newly transplanted kohlrabi crop with drip irrigation

High tunnels constructed at the Organic Research Unit of the UT East Tennessee Research and Education Center, Fall 2008
Question of the Week

Q: I have a gardener that is concerned that her broccoli won’t survive the cold nights that we’ve had this week. What’s the minimum temperature broccoli can take?

A: There is no absolute answer to this question, as broccoli’s cold hardiness depends on the conditions it was raised under, or preconditioning. If broccoli is raised under warm conditions and suddenly experiences temperatures in the low 20’s, it is less likely to survive than if it had previously been exposed to cooler temperatures.

However, broccoli is generally a hardy crop and can withstand temperatures as low as 18-22 °F. You might see a bit of foliage burn, but the crop will survive. Other hardy crops include cabbage, rutabaga, Brussels sprouts, kale and mustard.

Peas, carrots, lettuce, cauliflower, beets and chard are considered semi-hardy.

The very hardy crops include leeks, spinach and parsnips, with parsnip roots able to withstand temperatures as low as 0 °F!

Season extension techniques, like those mentioned on page 2, can provide additional protection from the cold for these cool season crops.

If you have a question, send it to: annettew@utk.edu.
Upcoming Events

23rd Annual Southeast Vegetable & Fruit Expo, December 2-3, 2008, Myrtle Beach, SC
This annual event is sponsored by the North Carolina Vegetable Growers Association with the North Carolina Extension Service in partnership with the South Carolina Vegetable Growers Association. More information will be posted on www.ncvga.com/.

Deep South Fruit and Vegetable Conference and Tradeshow, December 3-4, 2008, Mobile, AL
For registration information, visit: www.deepsouthfruitweg.com/.

Successful Small Farm Opportunities Conference, December 6, 2008, Creedmoor, NC
This conference is designed to provide practical, no-nonsense, hands-on advice you’ll need when considering crop production, market development, and other important business options. The program will include one general session and 10 specialty topics taught in 6 breakout sessions, with 5 topics offered during each breakout session. You will receive resource materials in a notebook for all 10 sessions. Registration confirmation will be sent upon receipt of your payment. For more information, visit: www.ces.ncsu.edu/index.php?page=events&event_id=13196.

Kentucky Fruit and Vegetable Conference, January 5-6, 2009, Lexington, KY
For program and registration information, contact John Strang (859.455.5000 or jstrang@uky.edu).

2009 Southeast Regional Fruit and Vegetable Conference, January 8-11, 2009, Savannah, GA
For program and registration information, visit: www.gfvga.org/.

Arkansas and Oklahoma Horticulture Industries Show, January 16-17, 2009, Fort Smith, AR
For more information, contact Donna Dollins (405.744.6460 or donna.dollins@okstate.edu) or visit: www.hortla.okstate.edu/his.htm.

For more information, visit: www.ssawg.org/.

Tennessee Horticultural Expo, January 29-31, 2009, Nashville Airport Marriott, Nashville, TN
Come to the inaugural joint meeting between the Tennessee Fruit & Vegetable Association, the Tennessee Viticultural and Oenological Society, the American Wine Society, the TN Farm Wine Association, the TN Flower Growers Association and the TN Farmers’ Market Association. This horticultural extravaganza will have the largest tradeshow in TFVA history, plus the added comradery of the other associations. Mark your calendar now! For more information or to download a registration form, visit: www.tfva.org.

North American Farmers’ Direct Marketing Convention, February 1-7, 2009, Savannah, GA
For more information, visit: www.nafdma.com.

2009 UT Organic Workshop Series
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Nashville, Ellington Agriculture Center, Central Region Extension Bldg., 1:00-4:00pm CST
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SPROUTS: Supporting Producers through Research and Outreach at UT
Programs in agriculture and natural resources, 4-H youth development, family and consumer sciences and resource development. University of Tennessee Institute of Agriculture, United States Department of Agriculture and county governments cooperating. UT Extension provides equal opportunities in programs and employment.