**SPROUTS**

Tennessee Vegetable News

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**What’s new?**

**ATTRA Back in Full Force**

Bouncing back after a year of budget cuts, Appropriate Technology Transfer for Rural Areas (ATTRA), a project of the National Center for Appropriate Technology, has a bounty of new resources available on-line.

One of those is ‘The Organic Chronicles’. This illustrated story briefly explains the ecological ideas behind this way of farming. It includes many sources of information about switching to organic methods. There are also new publications on organic garlic production and templates for organic systems plans for certification.

ATTRA has also recently created a series on energy conservation and renewable energy, with publications on food miles, conserving fuel on the farm, biodiesel and clean energy.

For more information on any of these topics, visit: [http://attra.ncat.org/](http://attra.ncat.org/).

**On the Lookout for Disease**

While we are grateful for the rain, the cool, moist conditions we’ve had this spring and the warm, moist conditions we’ll have this weekend have made conditions favorable for the development of several plant diseases.

One of the diseases to be on the lookout for is Sclerotinia stem rot, also known as white mold or timber rot. This disease was first reported on tomatoes in Wilson Co. last week (mentioned in this week’s Fruit Pest News ‘First Reports for the Year in TN’).

When fungicides and bactericides are available, preventative sprays when weather conditions are right, can prevent disease from taking hold. For Sclerotinia on tomato, fungicide options are limited. Regular scouting, timely removal of diseased material and crop rotation (to prevent inoculum build-up) can minimize losses from this disease.

**Wild Herb Weekend 2008**

The North Carolina Herb Association invites you to their Wild Herb Weekend at the Valle Crucis Conference Center in the Blue Ridge Mountains of western North Carolina, July 25-27, 2008 (Friday-Sunday).

This annual event brings together herb hobbyists, gardeners, and professional herb growers and practitioners from across NC and neighboring states. This year’s Keynote Speaker is Dr. James Duke, world renowned ethnobotanist and author of The Green Pharmacy. In addition to giving presentations on Biblical Herbs and Herbs of the Amazon, he will lead a plant walk. This year’s program is filled with educational presentations, workshops, and walks.

For more about the conference, registration information, and to learn how to join the NC Herb Association, visit: [http://ncherbassociation.com](http://ncherbassociation.com).
Five Reasons to Read Your Pesticide Labels

Already this spring, I have received many calls about the wrong pesticide being used on the wrong crop. This can have disastrous effects— for both the grower and the environment. A good rule of thumb is to:

**Read the label before you buy the pesticide, before you use the pesticide for the first time & every time you use it!**

There are many reasons to carefully read the label before you apply a pesticide, here are 5 good ones:

1. **Maximize the benefit you get from the application.** More is not always better. The rates listed on the pesticide label have been carefully calculated and tested to help you get the most out of the product, when it is used correctly.

2. **Save money!** If you are applying more than the label rate, in many cases you are wasting money. In other cases, you could cause crop injury that will cost you money in the long run.

3. **Prevent crop injury!** If you use a pesticide on a crop that is not listed on the label, you are doing so at your own risk. Also, as mentioned above, if you use a higher than recommended rate, you could cause unwanted and unintended effects on your crop. You might kill the weeds with that higher herbicide rate, but you might also kill the crop in the process. If certain pesticides are applied at the wrong time of day (daylight hours), you could unintentionally kill the bees that you rely on to pollinate your crops. Spraying pesticides in the evening hours, when bees are not in the field, can greatly reduce bee mortality.

4. **Prevent human injury.** On every pesticide label, there are signal words to let the applicator know how hazardous the pesticide is: DANGER (most hazardous), WARNING or CAUTION. Products labeled “DANGER,” with a skull and crossbones, are generally only bought and used by state-certified, professional pesticide applicators. Moreover, the label tells you what sort of precautions you need to take when spraying a particular pesticide. Do you need to wear goggles? Gloves? A respirator? It’s all on the label! Lastly, each label will tell you the Preharvest Interval (PHI). Before a pesticide is registered for a food crop, the EPA requires studies to determine how much pesticide residue may legally remain in or on each labeled crop when it is harvested. This is called the tolerance level. If residue levels exceed this tolerance, the crop can be seized and the grower penalized. The PHI is to allow enough time for the pesticide residues to break down, below the tolerance level, before a crop is harvested.

5. **It’s the law!** If you use a pesticide in a manner that is not mentioned on the label, it’s not only unwise— it’s illegal.

Pesticides can be a valuable component of a pest management system, but can do more harm than good, if used improperly, so

**BE SURE TO ALWAYS READ THE LABEL!**

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Weather Report

Last week brought plenty of good weather for planting and catching up on field work. Monday and Tuesday nights brought a good dose of rain to much of the state. It looks like things have cleared up and dried out for the end of the week, and then it’s back to a thunderstorm or two for the weekend. Next week promises to make up for the cool spring we’ve had, as temperatures will be close to or above 90 degrees for most of the week. Plants will make up for lost time with nighttime temperatures staying between 60-70 degrees.
**Question of the Week**

**Q:** This is the first year that I have grown garlic. How do I know when it is ready for harvest?

**A:** Garlic is a crop that is gaining in popularity, for its health benefits, as well as its relative ease to grow. For a first time grower, garlic can be an unusual crop. Unlike many crops that are planted in the spring and harvested that same summer, garlic is generally planted in the fall and harvested the following summer.

The best way to tell if garlic is ready for harvest is to look at the top of the leaves. When the garlic is ready, the leaf tops should begin to dry and bend down to the ground.

Another way to tell if garlic is ready to harvest is to look for 3-5 wrapper leaves around the bulb.

It’s a good idea to pull up a few random bulbs and make sure that they have reached the proper size for harvest.

If you are growing elephant garlic, the bulbs should be double the size of traditional types.

Garlic is generally harvested by hand. Soil can be loosened with a garden fork, bed lifter, or potato digger.

Once harvested garlic should be cured before storage. To properly cure, first, carefully (no bruising!) brush most of the dirt off of the roots. Then, tie the plants in bunches to a string. You want make sure that there is plenty of air circulating around the bulbs to reach all sides of all bulbs for uniform drying. Hang the strings in a warm area (70 - 75°F), not in direct sunlight, for 2-3 weeks. This will ensure that the bulbs dry evenly and remain disease-free, and that the cloves will retain their moisture and oils.

To learn more about growing garlic, visit the University of Kentucky ‘Garlic and Elephant Garlic’ publication at: [http://www.uky.edu/Ag/NewCrops/introsheets/garlic.pdf](http://www.uky.edu/Ag/NewCrops/introsheets/garlic.pdf).

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

**Crop Report**

With those high temperatures coming, this may be the last week for spinach lettuce, as they certainly do not like the heat. But plenty of other crops are coming on to take their place!

New potatoes, sweet peas and green onions are prevalent at Farmers’ Markets. Baby carrots are coming along and asparagus is still hanging on.

This coming week, we will planting our powdery mildew resistant pumpkin trial at the West Tennessee Research and Education Center in Jackson. We have 19 varieties of PM resistant pumpkins and plan to take yield data, as well as evaluate storability, to make sure we find varieties that will last until Halloween and beyond. We will also be planting a repeat of the pumpkin trial we did last year in Waynesville, NC in the coming weeks.

At the Highland Rim Research and Education Center, we will be planting a minimum till tomato trial, investigating weed control, erosion control, soil properties, moisture retention and fruit quality with two different living mulch treatments, planted between the rows, compared to no mulch and conventional tillage. With rising fertilizer costs, living mulches can help reduce synthetic fertilizer inputs, as well as other potential benefits mentioned above.

Both sweet corn trials in Crossville and Springfield are doing well.

Feel free to drop me a line and let me know how your crops are coming along at: annettew@utk.edu.
Upcoming Events

**United Fresh Produce Associations’ Produce Inspection Training Program**, June 2-6, 2008, Fredericksburg, VA.
*Hands-on instruction from USDA experts to anyone involved in the produce supply chain - grower to retailer. Become more knowledgeable about quality control standards, inspection grading, USDA produce procedures and requirements, and more! For details, contact Beth Berman at 202.303.3405 or visit www.unitedfresh.org.*

**Grainger County Vegetable Field Day**, June 5, 2008, Randy Turley Farm, Lakeshore Drive
*For more information or to reserve a plate, call UT Extension at 865.828.3411 by June 3.*

*This annual event promises a program full of educational presentations, workshops, and walks for herb hobbyists, gardeners, and professional herb growers and practitioners. For more about the conference, registration information, and to learn how to join the NC Herb Association, visit [http://ncherbassociation.com](http://ncherbassociation.com).*

**CFSA High Country Farm Tour**, August 2-3, 2008, Boone, NC area
*Sponsored by Carolina Farm Stewardship Association. For more information, visit [http://carolinafarmstewards.org](http://carolinafarmstewards.org).*

**NCSU Annual Tomato Field Day**, August 7, 2008, Fletcher, NC
*More information will be posted as it becomes available.*

**TSU Small farm Expo/Small Farmer Recognition Program**, August 8, 2008, Ashland City, TN
*More details to follow.*

**Pumpkin/Gourd Field Day**, October 16, 2008, Mountain Research Station, Waynesville, NC
*For more information, contact Department of Horticultural Science Extension Specialist Jonathan Schultheis at Jonathan_Schultheis@ncsu.edu.*

**2008 University of Tennessee Research and Education Center Field Days:**
*(For more information on any of these events, visit [http://taes.tennessee.edu/dynamic/events.asp](http://taes.tennessee.edu/dynamic/events.asp).)*

**Beef and Forage Field Day**, June 12, 2008, East TN Research and Education Center, Knoxville, TN

**Fruits of the Backyard Field Day**, June 17, 2008, Middle TN Research and Education Center, Spring Hill, TN


**Blooms Days**, June 28-29, 2008, University of Tennessee Gardens, Knoxville, TN

**Summer Celebration**, July 10, 2008, West TN Research and Education Center, Jackson, TN

**Tobacco and Forage Production Field Day**, July 17, 2008, Research and Education Center at Greeneville, Greeneville, TN

**25th Milan No-Till Field Day**, July 24, 2008, Research and Education Center at Milan, Milan, TN

**Steak and Potatoes Field Day**, August 5, 2008, Plateau Research and Education Center, Crossville, TN

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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.