WNC AG Options
Grant Opportunities for Agricultural Projects

The N.C. Tobacco Trust Fund Commission has recently funded WNC AG Options to award area farmers a new round of $3,000 and $6,000 grants, for a total of $153,000.

Applications are now available at www.wncagoptions.org or at county Cooperative Extension Centers. The postmark deadline for applications is December 13th. Interested applicants should contact their local Cooperative Extension Agents by November 1st to express their intent to apply. If you desire to apply or would like more information about this process, consider attending one of the following question and answer sessions:

- Tuesday October 15th from 10:00 – 11:30 a.m. at the Swain Extension Center on 60 Almond School Rd Bryson City in room 114.
- Tuesday October 15th from 2:00-4:00 p.m. at the Jackson Extension Center on 538 Scotts Creek Rd. Sylva in room 234.

For more information, contact Christy Bredenkamp at 586-4009 or 488-3848, or visit www.wncagoptions.org to download an application.

Composting – Vermicomposting (Worms) Basics

The N.C. Extension Service will hold free Composting – Vermicomposting workshops on Tuesday October 29th from 6:00 – 7:30 p.m. at the Jackson Extension Center on 538 Scotts Creek Rd. Sylva in room 234 and repeated on Wednesday October 30th from 2:00-3:30 p.m. at the Swain Extension Center on 60 Almond School Rd just 7 miles west of Bryson City. If interested in attending either of these workshops, please register by calling your local Extension office at 828 586 4009, 828 488-3848 or by e-mailing christine_bredenkamp@ncsu.edu

Workshop attendees will learn more about acceptable materials for composting, types of structures, preparing and maintaining your compost pile, temperatures, carbon to nitrogen ratios, water requirements, types of worms, bedding, proper food scraps, worm bins, harvesting and troubleshooting tips.
As we near the end of leaf season, now is the perfect time to replenish the amazing array of fall colors by decorating with winter squash, pumpkins and gourds. As members of the Cucurbitaceae or Cucumber Family, these vegetables offer varying hues of blue, green, orange, crème, pink, and variegated types to adorn around our front porches, business’ and churches this Thanksgiving Holiday. Not only do pumpkins, winter squash and gourds come in a wide assortment of colors but also one can select from a vast medley of sizes, shapes and textures for multiple uses. While surfing the Internet, it’s easy to find recipes for cooking many scrumptious soups, stews and of course the traditional pumpkin pie. Others have found creative ways to make high-end gourds for decorations that can be viewed in many of our Appalachian craft shows. Many gardeners and crafters have learned how to fashion gourds into birdhouses, dippers, Luffa sponges and water bottles as part of our mountain heritage. It is well know that gourds have been cultivated for thousands of years by many cultures worldwide, including Native Americans, for their usefulness as utensils, storage containers, and as ornaments.

Winter squash is a warm-season vegetable that is grown throughout Western North Carolina and is currently available in food stores throughout the area. Winter squash has tough outer shells that can be smooth or bumpy, thin or thick and rock hard with a wide array of colors. Winter squash differs from summer squash in that it is harvested and eaten in the mature fruit stage, when the seeds are fully mature and the skin has hardened into a tough rind. When ripened to this stage, most varieties can be stored throughout the winter season.

Edible winter squash belong to three different species: *Cucurbita pepo* (acorn, delicata, and spaghetti types), *C. moschata* (butternut types), and *C. maxima* (Hubbard, kabocha, and buttercup types). Some varieties are small producing enough for single servings, while others produce massive vegetables of 20 pounds or more, suitable for mashing, freezing, soups and pies. While most winter squash varieties can be stored throughout winter; others should be used within a few weeks after harvest. Select varieties that cater to your taste as well as your ability to handle and store the squash. Candyroasters grown traditionally by the Cherokee is a winter squash that has a deep orange color and can range in weight between 10-250 pounds. For a single household this might be a bit too much, but bear in mind it is an excellent choice for canning and freezing.

**Harvesting**

Harvest winter squash and pumpkins before a hard freeze. A light frost that kills the vine will usually not harm the fruit. Cut the fruit from the vine, leaving a few inches of stem attached. Be careful not to cut or bruise the fruit. Ideally, the pumpkins and squash should be field-cured in place for a week or two in dry, sunny weather. This dries and toughens the skin for longer storage. If the weather has turned cold or rainy, squash can be cured indoors, in a well-ventilated, warm (80°F) space.

**Storage**

Winter squash should be stored in a cool place around 55°F, with good air movement. Ideal humidity should range between 50% and 75%. Check squash in storage frequently and remove the ones that seem soft or show signs of spoilage.
October-November Horticulture Tips

Lawns
● Depending on the weather, you may still need to mow a time or two before putting the mower away for winter.
● A mulching mower can do a good job of chopping those fallen leaves if there are not too many. Another option is to put on the bagging attachment to chop and collect the leaves. They make a good addition to the compost pile.
● Do not allow a heavy layer of leaves to smother ground covers, evergreen perennials or pansies.

Vegetables
● Dig Sweet Potatoes before first frost.
● Plant lettuce, green onions, carrots, radishes and most leafy greens inside your cold frame.
● Remember to take advantage of the herb garden when preparing those holiday meals. In addition to flavoring, herbs can make lovely garnish or table decorations.
● Leafy greens can be harvested by pulling the whole plant, or by removing lower leaves and allowing the plant to continue to grow.
● Most winter vegetables, such as cabbage, broccoli and greens, do not need protection from cold temperatures until nights fall in the low 20s.
● Monitor greenhouses, cloches and cold frames daily. Temperatures heat up quickly on a sunny day
● Sow cover crops such as clover, annual rye, barley and buckwheat in fallow winter beds to improve soil structure and suppress weed.

Fruits
● Finish fall cleanup – rake leaves and remove any fruit left in trees or on the ground.
● Do not prune fruit trees until March.
● Pull weeds in the strawberry bed and cover the plants with straw.

Ornamentals
● When planting trees and shrubs, pay attention to correct planting depth. Water well and apply a 3 inch layer of mulch, being careful to pull the mulch a few inches away from the stem.
● Check landscape beds for winter annual weeds. Remove them now as they will only be larger in the spring.
● If you love to have daffodils, crocus, iris and grape hyacinth blooming next spring, then plant now! Bulbs need to be exposed to cool temperatures to bloom. Its best to get them planted before Thanksgiving.
● Inspect house plants, especially any that spent the summer outdoors. They often carry in small insects such as scale, mealybugs, whiteflies and spider mites.
● Prune maple, birch, elm, and willow trees now through January if needed.
● Pull bagworms off shrubs to prevent re-infestation next year.

Other
● This is an excellent time to soil sample while the test is free from April-November. A $4.00 charge will begin during peak times from Dec-March. Results come back quickly this time of year, allowing plenty of time to start making adjustments for next season’s garden.
● Turn the compost pile incorporating layers of chopped Autumn leaves.

Look for Christine Bredenkamp for more on Horticulture Tips and upcoming programs.
Think Bulbs

If you love to have daffodils, crocus, iris and grape hyacinth blooming next spring, then plant bulbs now! Bulbs need to be exposed to cool temperatures to bloom. Its best to get them planted before Thanksgiving.

Daffodils, crocus, squill, snowdrops and fritilaria will perennialize so you can enjoy more blooms in the coming years. However most tulips and hyacinth do not bloom more than a couple of years. Bulbs often do poorly in clay soils so work in plenty of organic soil amendments to improve drainage and try to plant at the appropriate depth. The larger the bulb the deeper it should be planted. 2-4 inches for crocus and 6-8 inches for large daffodils.

Buy Local! Support Our Farmers & Gardeners!
Check Out Our Local CSA’s, Produce Stands & Farmer Markets

Sincerely,
Christy Bredenkamp, Extension Agent
Agriculture-Horticulture

Look for Christine Bredenkamp for more on Horticulture Tips and upcoming programs.

NC STATE UNIVERSITY

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