OEFFA has bestowed its highest award on two of Ohio’s organic farmers. The announcement was made on March 3 as part of OEFFA’s 28th Annual Conference. Molly Bartlett, of Hiram and Mick Luber, of Cadiz each received the award, which recognizes “outstanding contributions to the sustainable agriculture community.”

Molly has served on a number of local, state, and national committees and boards to promote organic and sustainable agriculture, including the OEFFA board, OSU Sustainable Agriculture Team, and the Advisory Committee of USDA-SARE's Sustainable Agriculture Network. Her farm, Silver Creek Farm, which she operates with her husband, Ted, has hosted countless groups of schoolchildren, foreign visitors, other farmers, and consumers. USDA-SARE (Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education) Director Jill Auburn called Molly “an inspiration to us all.”

At Bluebird Farm in Harrison County, Mick raises a diverse crop of vegetables and flowers, but specializes in lettuces and garlic. He has served in nearly every position on the OEFFA Board of Trustees, as well as on a variety of its committees. He also works as an organic inspector and has been active in helping to train new inspectors. In recognizing Mick, OEFFA Board President Mike Laughlin cited his record of service and lauded Luber for “constantly experimenting with new ideas for farming and marketing.”

“Both recipients of the Stewardship Award can claim credit for leading efforts in Ohio to encourage producers, educators, legislators, and consumers to take a look at the viability of organic agriculture at a time when it wasn’t a popular opinion to hold,” stated Mike.

Molly and Mick have been part of OEFFA since its inception nearly thirty years ago. Back then, organic farming was viewed as an anachronism by many in the agriculture community. Today, the explosive growth of organic agriculture, fueled by dedicated land grant research programs and rising demand for organic products, indicates that the times have changed. OEFFA’s Certification Program has seen a 50% increase in applications for organic certification in the last two years.

Congratulations, Mick and Molly, and thank you for your leadership and contributions to OEFFA and to the organic and sustainable agriculture community!

The Ohio Good Earth Guide
Local farms and gardens selling to local people
Spring is here so people are beginning to think about buying locally grown food and turning to OEFFA’s Good Earth Guide. If you are not currently listed in the Guide and wish to be, please sign up (www.oeffa.org/registerpreview.php). If you are already in the guide but need to update your listing, you can do so at www.oeffa.org/update.php.
From the President

Spring is here and I am excited! We are starting to hear the spring peepers and the birds are singing louder, which can only mean that planting season will soon be here. After a mild start to the winter it finally got cold—and boy did it get cold—with temperatures below zero for almost two weeks (right during lambing season). At least that should help with some of the pest and disease problems we had last year. The conference was outstanding with great workshops, great food, and record attendance. A big thanks to Laura Wies who did a lion’s share in organizing the conference this year!

We had some special visitors at the conference: Mike Calevski, who serves as Field Representative to Congressman Zack Space (who is on the House Agriculture Committee), and also Greg Hargett, one of the new Deputy Directors of the Ohio Department of Agriculture. Members had a chance to share with them their views on the future of farming in Ohio.

The following week, Carol and I attended the winter SAC (Sustainable Agriculture Coalition) meeting in Washington D.C., where we spent two days learning about the 2007 Farm Bill and then one day on Capital Hill lobbying our House and Senate members about sustainable agriculture issues (see “OEFFA Goes to DC” on page 14 for more about our trip). One night we went to dinner at the Agraria restaurant in Georgetown, which is owned by a group of farmers who also supply it. It’s a fantastic concept, surpassed only by the fabulous food. By the time I got home I was physically exhausted but mentally full of optimism and excitement for our farm and for OEFFA. There is much work to be done but as a group there will be no stopping us.

See you at the farm tours.

Mike Laughlin, OEFFA Board President

Welcome New (and not-so-new) Board Officers!

The big news from the business meeting held Sunday morning at the conference is the election of officers who will serve on the OEFFA Board from now until next year’s conference. Those elected are a mix of new, old, and older faces (we’ll let you figure out which is which!): Mike Laughlin was re-elected as President, and John Sowder was returned to his seat at the Treasurer of OEFFA. Renee Hunt, who has served as Board representative for the Capital Chapter, was elected as Secretary. At-large representatives are John Easterly (returning for a second term), Judy Chester (Garden Spirit Farm, Mt. Blanchard), and Charlie Frye (Ashland County, returning to the Board after many years of well-earned respite!).

OEFFA News ISSN 1087-6626 Vol. 27, No. 2

Published by the Ohio Ecological food & Farm Association, PO Box 82234, Columbus OH 43202. Ph. 614/421-2022 www.oeffa.org

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR: Carol Goland
Phone: 740/398-9099; Email: cgoland@oeffa.org

MEMBERSHIP COORDINATOR: Laura Wies
Phone: 614/421-2022; Fax: 614/421-2011; Email: oeffa@oeffa.org

PROGRAM DIRECTOR/NEWSLETTER EDITOR: Anne Bulford
Phone: 740/787-2871; Email: newsletter@oeffa.org

CERTIFICATION: Steve Sears, Sylvia Upp, Jannie MarrWerum
Phone: 419/853-4060; Fax: 419/853-3022, Email organic@oeffa.org

• The Ohio Ecological Food and Farm Association news is published bimonthly as part of the educational mission of OEFFA, a nonprofit organization for farmers gardeners and citizens interested in ecological agriculture and creating a sustainable alternative food system.

• Members receive the newsletter as part of annual dues of $10 (student), $35 (individual), $50 (family), $50 (family farm), $50 (nonprofit), $100 (business), $1000 (individual lifetime). Subscription only is $20/yr.

• Editorial and advertising correspondence may be sent directly to Anne Bulford at 10600 Mt. Olive Rd., Hopewell, Ohio 43746 or newsletter@oeffa.org. Unsolicited manuscripts welcome. Membership information is available on the OEFFA website at www.oeffa.org or from the Columbus OEFFA office (see address above.)

• Opinions expressed in OEFFA news are those of the authors and do not reflect the opinions of the membership, officers, or directors.

• OEFFA does not endorse the products or services of any advertiser, and reserves the right to refuse placement of inappropriate advertising.

• OEFFA is recognized as a nonprofit organization by the Internal Revenue Service, and donations to OEFFA are deductible as a charitable contribution to the fullest extent of the law.

OEFFA shall be a democratic association of chartered grassroots chapters, existing within state bylaws, working together to create a promote a healthy, ecological, accountable and sustainable system of agriculture in Ohio and elsewhere.

Contents copyright © 2007 by the Ohio Ecological Food and Farm Association. Reprinted material. Reproduction permitted provided credit is given, with the exception of reprinted material.

Next deadline May 15, 2006

Member of COSMO (Community Shares of Mid-Ohio)
Guest Editorial

Organic Optimism

Sean McGovern, OEFFA Member

I don’t mean to understate the issues that have arisen as a result of the national USDA Organic Standards, or those associated with the program itself – those problems are significant, and of great concern, but in my opinion, the mainstreaming of organic agriculture has gotten a bad rap.

It’s easy to beat up on “organic” now – and quite in vogue to tie organic production to the whipping post. Watching the organic community critique organic agriculture is sometimes like reading the National Enquirer – we love to build up our celebrities, and then bring them tumbling down in disgrace. Very few people remember that the organic community asked for the national organic program because it couldn’t collectively agree on a standard.

It’s also easy to forget that in the early 90s, Ohio was getting flooded with low cost “organic” livestock products from across the Ohio border. At the time, because there was no national rule and organic was only regulated at the state level, there was absolutely nothing the state could do to prevent some out of state certifiers with lower standards from certifying organic eggs that sold for $1.19 a dozen. At the time, if you called those certifiers and asked them for a copy of their standards, they’d tell you that they weren’t public documents. And we could do nothing but shrug our shoulders! As organic agriculture grew, these types of shenanigans would only have increased without a national organic program. So yes, there are issues with certification now, e.g. access to pasture, but at least there’s SOME legal mechanism for dealing with it.

Despite these literal bad eggs, the growth of organic agriculture has given thousands of heads of livestock living better living conditions, protected thousands of miles of streams and waterways, provided a more income for countless farmers, resulted in hundreds of thousands of people eating healthier food, protected thousands of farm workers from exposure to harmful chemicals, and pulled thousands of acres out of soil depleting monocrops. This is one heck of an achievement – something that would never have been imaginable just 20 years ago! Too often, we fixate on the negative, and forget what a tremendous amount of positive change organic agriculture has had.

It’s easy to point out what’s WRONG with institutional organic agriculture. But did we really expect to convert the wider public to organic agriculture and still retain control of it? That’s an unreasonable expectation – we have to expect that as the pool of producers and consumers that embrace organic production expands, there will be some pressure to modify the standards. Certainly, we should advocate for the strongest standards we can – but despite the loss of local control of the standards and their enforcement the national standards still support an agriculture which is monumentally different in its capacity to protect the environment and provide producers with increased income.

Yes, market share for smaller farmers is an issue – a big one, as is energy use, and local production. But I maintain that the institutionalization and wider adoption of organic agriculture is something to celebrate, not curse. Instead of wringing our hands about the shortcomings of modern day organic, I would hope that we would use those shortcomings as a benchmark for setting a new agenda for improving the sustainability of agriculture as a whole.

If we can make as much progress in the next 20 years with local food systems as we did with organic agriculture, we’ll certainly have something to crow about!

In March, Phil Howard gave a lecture at OSU titled “Be Careful What You Wish For: The Mainstreaming of Organic Food.” In the days preceding the talk, Sean shared these thoughts with OEFFA’s Capital Chapter, and kindly allowed them to be reprinted here. – Editor
"Yes, You Can Raise Chickens"

I talked to several people at the OEFFA conference in mid-March who seemed torn about the decision to raise chickens. They wondered, “Do I have time?” “Is it expensive?” “I don’t know if I’m ready for something as complicated as livestock.” (Those of you who raise real livestock, know that we vegetable people are petrified of the possibility of killing something through our own ignorance or neglect. Carrots die and you replant. Chickens die and you grieve.)

The answer is Yes, No, and Yes, you are. Raising chickens is ridiculously easy. I had the same doubts two years ago and found that the hardest part about having chickens is getting READY to have chickens – getting shelter built and/or prepared, buying equipment such as feeders, waters, and fencing (unless you want them shredding your hostas and scratching up your radish seedlings).

In this column I’ll cover a few basics, but check your bookstore and web search engines for more detailed information.

First of all, get it out of your head that this is some kind of complicated science. For the most part, if watered, fed, and offered shelter, chickens take care of themselves. I spend about five minutes in the morning and five minutes in the evening on our 30 birds. In the morning I open the coop, feed and water them, gather eggs. In the evening, I toss them some kitchen scraps or scratch feed (whole grains—they don’t really need it but I spoil them), and gather any new eggs. They go in on their own at dusk, and you just close the door behind them.

Every so often we clean out the coop. I keep organic straw on the floor, and when it begins to get a little ammoniacal, I toss down more. At some point, we fork it all out, put it in the compost pile, and spread new. In the winter, I don’t clean it out at all. It gets up to a foot deep, but it composts down and we keep adding more. I throw their scratch feed down and they work it around and pretty much stir the straw into compost for me.

The reason I do this is that composting straw and manure is warm. One day the bottom came off one of their hanging feeders and they had buried it. I had to dig down a bit into the straw bedding to get it out, and the plastic was warm! It was about 18 degrees outside, but that unheated coop was close to 30, because the waterer only had a thin sheet of ice on the top of it. In the next few weeks when we do our spring coop cleaning, I will have a nice batch of compost for the gardens.

You have various options when it’s cold. Some people let a bulb hang down. Red is best, I’ve heard, because it doesn’t bother them much at night. On the other hand, some people keep a bright bulb on 14 hours per day to keep egg production up. Hens lay off in the winter when the days are shorter, and the bulb seems to help production, and it provides a little heat. Turn it on about 7 or 8 a.m. and turn in off about 9 or 10 at night. One more note – if it’s below 20˚, I keep the girls inside. If it’s warmer, especially if it’s sunny, they like to go out. I have new appreciation for the term “cooped up.” (Also “hen-pecked,” “flew the coop,” “cock of the walk,” and “getting your hackles up.” I also know why the chicken crossed the road. She was following the rooster.)

For coops, look in all the books, but our best ideas came from web searching. You’ll find all sizes, from little backyard A-frames to full-size chicken tractors. We built ours with new materials from a Huge Box Home Improvement Store and it ran us about $1000. I suppose it would have been smarter to find some used materials, and if you have a shed on your property, that will work great. (As far as the materials, I don’t question He Who Builds – I’ve learned you can either ask for something to be done or tell somebody how to do it, but you can’t do both).

Our coop is about 10 by 12 feet, and houses 40 birds (we’re adding a few) comfortably without much squabbling. Husband-builder Reed made a roost out of some old broom handles and 2x2s. Some people use cut saplings. He fashioned nest boxes out of plastic cat litter buckets, nailed on their side to a board and then mounted on the side of the coop. They worked well in the summer, but in the winter they’re cold and the birds won’t use them, so we’re planning to make new wooden ones. Check your websites or books for all the details on how much space you need per bird, roosting space, nest box needs, windows, etc. People have spirited discussions on the merits of every system. Check it all out and adapt to your farm and budget.

Get your feeders and waterers at the cheapest place you can find them, either by mail or a local farm supply store.
They only last so long, so I can’t see the sense in spending a lot of money on fancy stuff. I use the red plastic things (you’ll know them when you see them). The metal one I bought first broke. Even after some welding it still didn’t hold water, so there you go. Buy cheap.

And as far as cost, overall, you can go as expensive or low-cost as you want. I had no shelter and we thought we’d save money building it ourselves, but of course didn’t. But if cost is a factor, then just get half a dozen hens and put them in a big dog house or a ramshackle lean to against the garage. Honestly, you don’t have to spend a fortune if you’re just wanting to experiment.

For feed, I buy Ed Snively’s layer feed (find Curly Tail Farm in OEFFA’s online Good Earth Guide, and you can also search for other feed growers around Ohio). Look for something that has more than just crushed corn. You can get that stuff at the feed store for about $6/50 lbs., but there’s nothing in it, and it’s likely GMO corn. Good feed will have cracked grain you can see – soy (is fish meal healthier? another current debate), corn, oats, barley, plus oyster shell, kelp, and other micronutrients. Your chickens will be healthier and their eggs, especially if you also let them on pasture/grass, will be higher in vitamins A & E and omega 3s.

If you want to sell your eggs, check with your county health department for inspections. You can sell from your farm without ODA approval, but not if you want to go to market. Usually some guy comes out with a notepad and a thermometer to look at your grounds, but he’s mostly interested in your storage refrigeration—the fridge and market cooler. Prices for inspection vary by county, ranging from a modest $20 to more than $100.

Egg prices also vary. If your birds are USDA organic, you can get upwards of $4 a dozen. I get $2.50 in our little market, and I sell out every week. I have to decide whether or not I’m going to go to $3.00. If I can’t keep eggs (meaning I sell about 15-20 dozen per week), then I’ll probably raise the price. Supply and demand and all. Get what your market will bear, but make sure it’s enough to at least cover your feed costs. As always, don’t undercut your neighbor’s prices.

There are a number of places to get chickens. You may ask at farmers’ markets. Call a 4-H leader for ideas. Veterinarians usually know the local farmers, who might part with a few for $2-12. You’re looking for pullets, 15-20 weeks old.

For the most fun, go online and look up “chicken hatcheries” to see what’s in your area. Or, you can just order from anywhere and get chicks in the mail. Newborn chicks don’t have to eat or drink for up to 72 hours, due to leftover eggsac nutrients. They take special feeders and waterers, but they are great fun to watch grow. Again, get a good resource for all the basics. They will lay at around 20 weeks. The first will be very small (so cute but the tiniest will have no yolk, so I call them “practice eggs”). For awhile you’ll also have double-yolkers, as the pullets work their systems through early fits and starts.

People have allegiances to varying types of chickens. Most go with either good layers or dual purpose breeds (meat and eggs). I have Golden Comet layers, which are very gentle. I also like Buckeye, because they were bred to handle cold weather well. Plymouth Rocks are also gentle dual-purpose and make good layers, as do Wyandottes and Australorps. Auracanas are the ones that lay blue and green eggs. I avoid Rhode Island Reds because they tend to be more contrary, especially when you’re gathering eggs, but they are good layers.

Raccoons, possums, mink, dogs, coyotes, hawks, owls, and everything else, it seems, love chicken dinners. Even if you live in town, you’ll have some of these, so it’s a good idea to close up your birds at night. We also use a poultry electric netting fence we got from Kencove around the coop. (Google them and get a catalogue.) That keeps the girls in and the critters out. We’ve only lost a few birds to predation, mostly to possum when we forgot to close the door and plug in the fence on early winter evenings. We lost a few more when Buck, the rooster, started leading them across the road. He never gets hit, but some girls did. We also put chicken wire around the growing beds, for obvious reasons.

So, YES! You can raise chickens. Quit procrastinating and go do it. You’ll wonder why you waited so long. The last thing I’ll recommend is just sitting on the ground and watching them. They will repay in eggs and entertainment the money you spend getting set up.
2007 is expected to be a very busy year for certification! We already have received significantly more applications than we did at this time last year. In response to this growth, we were able to add three new inspectors last year. We are very excited that in mid-April, over a year of planning will come to fruition as we host the IOIA (International Organic Inspectors Association) training here in Ohio. Our hope is that by offering this “gold standard” of training close to home, it will make it easier for additional Ohioans to become organic inspectors. Janie Marr Werum, who was profiled in the last newsletter as our new certification staffer, is establishing an office in Columbus and will eventually take over running all certification activities. Certification applications should now be sent to that address (PO Box 1025, Columbus OH 43216-1025) so that Janie Marr can do the pre-inspection review and inspector assignment for those applications. Janie Marr will be adding a Certification Assistant to her office to help handle these tasks.

As noted above, we are hosting an IOIA inspector training course on April 14-22. We are working on a second major activity: our National Organic Program accreditation site visit during the last week of April.

Renewal application forms were sent out at the end of February. This was a little later than normal because we were waiting for the new Columbus address. If you have not received a renewal application, please contact the certification office at 419/853-4060.

Welcome to OEFFA’s Newest Members:

Sarah Alexander
Kathryn Archibald
Kathy & Jeff Bielek
Black Dog Acres/
  Joe Loucek & Kristen Pool
Blue River Hybrids
Liza Flores & Molly Boland
Bramble Creek Farms/
  Jackie Le Berth & Mike Neeley
Kathy Brown
Tara & Raymond Buckland
Cheri Burton
Todd & Melissa Camp
John Carpenter
Circle of Life/
  Valerie & Mark Barker
Betsy Clay
Mark Cohen
Sara Cole
Ellen & Ted Cole
Community Food Initiatives/
  Ronda Clark
Doris Cornell
Thomas Coyne
Heather Dean
Randy & Diane Dell
Darby Dicke
Don & Denise Dufresne
Scott Taylor
Linda & Thomas Eckstein
Steven & Patrice Ellis
Enviva Corporation/
  Scarlett Payne
Debra & Jeff Eschmeyer
Barbara & Mark Evans
Karen A. Feltham
William Ferber
Patricia Franz
Edson & Lori Freeman
Fry Farms/Charles C. Fry
Grace Gordon
Kashmira Asani & Hans Gorsuch
Terri Greenbaum
Chris Greene
Daniel & Michelle Greenfield
Joseph Grigg
Daniel Groh
Sherry Grone
Jeff Hahn
Toni Hartman
Gerry Hendey
Heather Hettick
Christine Hitchens
Horizon Organic/
  Peter Slaunwhite
Monica Hudak
Susan M Humphrey
Benjamin Jackle
Alan Kauffman
Jennifer Kennedy
Beth Kindig
Carolyn & Anna King
Chad King
Jacci Klein
Kurt Knebusch
Yvonne Lemaster
Annette Luethy
Jim & Zella MacKenzie
John McCumber
Jeremy McCaula
Gene & Molly McCurdy
Mitzi McElhaney
Dennis McEndree
Dave McMillan
Donald McPherson
Brian McSpadden Gardener
Mark McVay
Evelyn Meiresonne
Midwest Permaculture/
  Bill Wilson
Debbie & Bob Miller
Ivan W Miller
Leslie Miller
Deborah Morgan
Brian Murphy
Rima Nickell
Oberlin Farms Dairy/Larry Boyd
Sam Dunlap & Debbie Ogle
Kelly Oschman
Roberta Paolo
Sandra Pinkham
Kimberly & John Plaga
Corlena Reynolds
Ridgway Hatcheries/
  Dean Ridgway
Jeannette & Michael Rogovin
James & Darlene Schaeffer
Richard & Selinda Schultz
Cindy Shapero
Andrew Simmons
Sirna’s Farm Market
Smith’s Dairy Products Co./
  Bill McCabe
Andrew Stevens
Mac Stone
Mary Storch
Marilou Suszko
Anya Syrkin
Michael Taylor
Warren Taylor
Vicki Tewes
Erin Kohut Tierney
Mary Ann Timmerman
Sharon & Jerry Tinianow
Tiffany Tomerine
Dennis & Patrick Turner
Lauren Vanagasem
Waiora - NCD Health &
  Research Alliance/Virginia
Perdue Joseph H. Wesel III
Pete Wilms
Brian Wilson
Christ I Yoder
Emanuel Yoder
Kyle Yurkovich

Missed Sunday’s keynote?
Had to choose between two great workshops at the same time?

By Steve Sears, OEFFA Certification

You can still listen in! CDs and tapes of the 2007 OEFFA Conference speakers (both keynotes and workshops) are available from Dove Tapes. Titles are being added daily to the online catalog, or you can download a printable order form and mail it in.

Visit www.doveCDs.com/oeffa for details. There are also great speakers from past conferences like Elliott Coleman, Gene Logsdon, and Gary Zimmer and more!
The National Organic Standards Board (NOSB) and the National Organic Program (NOP) are once again conducting business as usual. The NOSB met in Washington, D.C. on March 27th, 28th and 29th, with plenty of items on its agenda. The NOP also participated in the meeting of the NOSB by making its own presentation on issues it believes are important to the certified organic movement. We are still awaiting a full report of the meeting proceedings, but know that:

At its last meeting in October 2006, the NOSB recommended that three items be removed from the national list of approved substances. Those items included non-organic milk replacers in livestock production; non-synthetic colors used in organic handling; and potassium tartrate made from tartaric acid. NOP has announced its intention to adopt these recommendations of the NOSB and has issued a proposed rule for public comment that was published in the Federal Register on March 6, 2007.

At its March 2007 meeting, the NOSB continued its review of the “sunset” provisions pertaining to adding or removing items from the national list of approved/prohibited substances. At this meeting, the NOSB also was set to consider an additional 13 items for inclusion or removal from the approved list, 8 of which are used in crop production and handling and 5 of which are used in handling only. The specific 13 items have not been identified as of yet.

In addition to the NOSB making recommendations to the NOP, NOSB committees in turn made recommendations to the NOSB. Two committees, Policy Development and Crops and Livestock, had a joint recommendation to the NOSB on certifying organic research sites. In addition, the Livestock Committee made its recommendation on the use of cloning in agriculture, and the word on the street is that the committee would recommend against cloning. Finally, the Handling Committee presented its recommendations on a list of substances that were petitioned by the general public to be included on the national list. Totaling 53 separate items, these substances range from fish oil, carrot fiber and lemon grass to carbon dioxide, fish gelatin and fructooligosaccharides.

Recommendations taken by the NOSB and its subordinate committees can be viewed on the NOSB website, http://www.ams.usda.gov/nosb/index.htm. Actions taken by the NOP can be viewed at its website, http://www.ams.usda.gov/nop/indexIE.htm. As a member of the public, it is important to monitor the actions taken by this arm of USDA to ensure that it maintains the integrity of the organic label and that its actions do not undermine consumer confidence in the label or consumer expectations in how the program should be enforced and implemented.

Although the maxim “the government that governs least governs best” is true, it is also true that transparency in government renders it accountable. By monitoring what is going on in Washington and with the NOSB and NOP, you can ensure that government will be working for you, the consumers and citizenry.

David G. Cox is an associate with the Columbus, Ohio law firm of Lane, Alton and Horst LLC and serves as legal counsel to BECO. This article is not intended to be nor should it be construed as legal advice and constitutes the opinion of only the author and not the firm.
OEFFA’s 28th Annual Conference
March 3 & 4, 2007  •  Landscapes of Well-Being

By the numbers:
2 keynoters
51 workshops
9 tracks
37 exhibitors
54 workshop presenters
14 regional lunchtime tables
18 topic tables
33 volunteers
974 meals

552
conference participants

Sally Fallon’s pre-conference focused on Health and Vitality through Nourishing Traditional Diets.

“ If it had not been for Mick, I and several other growers in the Athens area might not be OEFFA members today.”

Stewardship Award Recipient Molly Bartlett gives her thanks.
“Compliments to the chef and the kitchen volunteers.”

Practicing skills at the Tree Grafting Workshop.

This display added Food for Thought to the exhibit area.

“Mark Shepard inspired me to change my way of thinking.”

The OEFFA book table always draws a crowd.

Congratulations to Nick Leone!
Winner of a complete CD Set from the 2006 Conference.
(Randomly selected from all returned conference evaluations.)

Topic tables at lunch let like-minded folks meet each other.
Keeping in Touch
In Between Newsletters

OEFFA has two listserves, available by subscription, that you can use to keep in touch with OEFFA happenings.

OEFFAdirect is used to discuss ecological production, sourcing, policy updates, current events, and other issues pertaining sustainable agriculture. You can subscribe to this list from OEFFA’s home page (www.oeffa.org).

OEFFAgovernance is used by those who want to be involved in policy matters related to the governance of OEFFA. Here’s the place to discuss bylaw changes, find out about minutes from the Board meeting, and stay current with our organization. You can subscribe by going to http://www.oeffa.org/mailman/listinfo/oeffaco_governance and providing your email address.

NATURAL ORGANIC FERTILIZERS

Insect & Disease Controls
Feed Additives, Soil Testing

SERVING SUSTAINABLE AGRICULTURE
SINCE 1972

- Re-Vita 3-3-3
- Re-Vita 5-4-5
- Re-Vita 2-3-16
- Rock Phosphate
- Soluble Seaweed
- Jump Start
- Humates
- Fish Products
- Sea-Min Kelp Meal

- Diatomaceous Earth
- Greensand
- Potassium Sulfate
- Gypsum
- Sul-Po Mag
- Soil Testing
- And more
- Free Catalog

OHIO EARTH FOOD, INC.
5488 Swamp St., N. E., Hartville, OH 44632
Phone 330-877-9356 Fax 330-877-4237
www.ohioearthfood.com

SOIL AND FEED PROGRAMS FOR THE ORGANIC GROWER

choose Local
the freshest flavors from your community

From farm-fresh fruits and vegetables to handcrafted cheeses, pastries and breads, we seek out regional farmers and food artisans so you can enjoy local flavor while supporting your community. Summer is the peak season for locally grown produce, so stop by and look for all your favorites, including sun-ripened tomatoes, sweet corn, sizzling peppers and more!

WILD OATS
NATURAL MARKETPLACE
Better Food. Pure & Simple.

Visit www.wildoats.com or call 800.494.wild.
Have a spring fling with asparagus!

April’s warmth not only awakens the daffodil and tulip bulbs, but also the sleeping asparagus roots. The succulent spears of this first garden vegetable began to rise from their beds around now, heralding the month-long season of fresh asparagus in Ohio.

This queen of spring vegetables deserves royal treatment. Care must be taken not to overcook the spears. In fact, I usually can’t resist the temptation to eat a few crunchy stalks raw, right in the garden. Delicious simply lightly steamed and salted, asparagus spears pair well with herbs, olive oil, rich cream, and/or succulent shiitake mushrooms.

Two of the following recipes dress the blanched spears with herbs for a side dish to accompany roast meat or broiled fish.

Asparagus au Gratin and Asparagus Mushroom Risotto are rich dishes that can serve as entrées. My CSA customers rave about the risotto recipe. I freeze some asparagus every year just to make sure I can treat myself to this dish sometime in the fall or winter.

Cream of Asparagus Soup makes a great first course for an elegant spring dinner party.

Make the most of the month of Ohio asparagus. It only comes once a year.

Elegant Asparagus

1 bunch of medium sized asparagus, about 1 lb.
2 tab. extra virgin olive oil
2 tab. freshly grated Parmesan cheese
1 tsp. freshly grated lemon rind
Salt and freshly ground black pepper

Rinse asparagus spears, and break off any tough, white bottoms and discard. Cut green parts into 1 to 2 inch sections, slicing the asparagus at a slight diagonal. Bring a medium saucepan half full of water to a boil. Add asparagus and reduce heat slightly to a simmer. Parboil the asparagus exactly 2 minutes. Drain. While asparagus is still hot, toss them in a bowl with the olive oil, Parmesan, and lemon rind. Salt and pepper to taste. Serve warm or room temperature.

Asparagus Mushroom Risotto

3 tab. olive oil
2 garlic cloves, minced
2 small or one large leek, sliced
1 med. onion (or, omit leek and just use 1 large or 2 med onions)
2 oz. ham, diced or slivered, opt.
4 oz. shiitake mushrooms, caps only, sliced in slivers
1 1/2 cups rice
1/2 cup white wine or sherry
2 1/4 cups chicken broth or bouillon
1/2 tsp. thyme
1/2 tsp. black pepper
1 lb. asparagus trimmed and cut in 2 inch sticks
1 cup slivered Swiss or Italian Blend cheese
1/2 cup grated Parmesan cheese

Saute garlic, onions, and ham in olive oil in a skillet with a tight-fitting lid. Add rice, then cook and stir 2 minutes. Add wine, broth, and seasonings. Cover and cook slowly 15 minutes. Add asparagus and a few tablespoons water if needed and recover. When asparagus and rice are tender (about 5 more minutes), top with cheese, turn off heat and cover for a few minutes. Stir well just before serving.

Asian Asparagus

1 lb. fresh asparagus spears
2 tab. olive oil
1 large garlic clove, finely chopped
2 tab. grated fresh ginger
2 tab. soy sauce
toasted almonds (opt.)

Wash and prepare asparagus by snapping off the tough, white ends. Heat olive oil in skillet over medium high heat and saute garlic for 1 to 2 minutes. Add asparagus and cook, stirring often, until asparagus is crisp-tender. Remove asparagus to serving plate. Add grated ginger and tamari to pan, stirring well, until heated through. Pour this sauce over asparagus, sprinkle with toasted almonds if you like, and serve.
Farm to Table: Savoring the Season

Asparagus au Gratin

2 tab. butter  
1 tsp. salt  
2 tab. flour  
2 cups milk (can use part cream)  
1 cup shredded cheese  
1 1/2 cups saltine cracker crumbs  
3/4 chopped walnuts  
1 to 1 1/2 pounds fresh trimmed asparagus

Plunge asparagus in boiling water and simmer two minutes. Drain. In a saucepan, melt butter; stir in flour and salt until smooth. Add milk gradually and continue cooking, stirring constantly, until sauce is slightly thickened. Add shredded cheese to the sauce. Combine cracker crumbs and chopped walnuts. Into a buttered casserole, place a layer of asparagus, a layer of cracker mixture and a layer of the sauce. Repeat layers, using remaining ingredients. Bake at 375° oven until top is nicely browned, about 15 to 20 minutes. Serves 4 to 6.

Cream of Asparagus Soup

2 tab. butter  
1 cup chopped yellow onion  
2 tab. flour  
1 quart chicken broth  
1 lb. asparagus spears  
1/4 cup light cream  
Salt, pepper and nutmeg to taste

Melt butter in a large pot and simmer the onion until very soft, stirring often, adding a little water to avoid browning. Stir in flour to blend. Add chicken broth, whisk and bring to a boil. Simmer soup for 10 minutes. Add cream, salt, pepper and nutmeg to taste. Meanwhile, trim the asparagus spears, discarding the tough woody ends. Wash and chop spears into 1/2-inch pieces and cook in salted boiling water about 3 minutes until tender. Drain and cool under cold water. Add asparagus to soup and puree with a hand-held blender. Or, puree in batches in a regular blender. Strain soup and either chill or return to pot and heat slowly. Equally good hot or cold.

Crop Pollinating Native Bees: Insects Working on the Farm

By Mace Vaughan, Xerces Society for Invertebrate Conservation

Farmers need insect pollinators to produce many different types of marketable fruits and vegetables. These include apples, almonds, berries, cherries, cucumber, melons, squash, sunflower and watermelon, to name just a few. In fact, worldwide, animal pollinators are required for over 70 percent of crop species. In the United States, this produce represents 15 to 30 percent of the foods and beverages we consume. Even self-pollinating crops such as tomatoes, peppers and eggplants, often produce more, larger, or higher-quality fruit when cross-pollinated by insects.

Today, the European honey bee usually gets credit for providing this service; however, recent research is demonstrating that our native bees also are important pollinators, responsible for an estimated $3 billion in produce each year in the U.S.

Honey bees form the cornerstone of agricultural pollination in the U.S. and will continue to do so for many years to come. Due to declines in the beekeeping industry however, honey bee colonies can be in short supply or expensive when most needed. For example, during California’s almond bloom this year, growers rented honey bee hives for up to $150 a piece, almost three times the average price of just two years ago. Various problems (for example diseases, parasites, and even Africanized bees) are likely to further discourage bee keeping and this rising trend in price is likely to continue.

Native bees may be able to take some of the burden off honey bees, if not replace honey bees altogether. Wild-living native bees already occur on most farms, contribute to current crop yields, and can provide an insurance policy for farmers’ pollination needs. Their value is clearly illustrated by Prof. Claire Kremen (UC Berkeley) and her research team in California’s Central Valley, who have found over 50 species of native, unmanaged bees providing pollination services to 14 different crops. In fact, when there is enough habitat on or near a farm, native bees provided all of the pollination needed by certain crops, even those with heavy pollination demands such as watermelon. On the east coast, 45 different species of native bee have been documented to pollinate berry crops.
Crop Pollinating Native Bees

In addition, native bees have recently been demonstrated to do some things that honey bees cannot accomplish. For example, native bees can significantly increase tomato production. It is well known that tomatoes receive enough self-pollination just by wind to produce satisfactory yields. It is also known that tomato flowers do not attract honey bees because no nectar is produced and the pollen is hidden deep inside pores in the anthers. Many native bees, however, are able to vibrate the tomato anthers in just the right way to dislodge this pollen. In so doing, they significantly increase cross pollination between plants. The result is that fruit set can go up by almost 50 percent and fruit weight is nearly doubled when these flowers are visited by native bees compared to wind alone.

In another example, Dr. Sarah Greenleaf (UC Davis) demonstrated that native bees cause honey bees to move more often between male and female rows of sunflowers in hybrid seed operations. The result is an increase in cross-pollination and a doubling of sunflower seed yields.

Establishing a healthy population of native bees on your land

The abundance of native bees depends upon both suitable habitat near a field and careful farm management. Farms close to natural or wild habitat already may be visited by significant populations of native bees. If growers want to increase populations of these wild bees on their land, three resources must be in place: nesting sites, a variety of flowering plants that provide pollen and nectar and a refuge from insecticides. All of these resources can occur in small patches or in marginal areas across a farm, such as around farm ponds, fence-rows, or field margins.

Ensuring adequate nest sites is an easy thing to do. Be on the lookout, and try to protect native bee nests already established on your property. Ground nesting bees (these are different from yellow jacket wasps) often occur in well-drained, bare, sandy loam soils that are not tilled year-after-year. Tunnel-nesting bees use holes in old snags or the center of pithy twigs. You can also make artificial nest sites for native bees by boring holes in lumber or creating patches of soil with sparse or no vegetation.

Providing forage areas may be as simple as leaving weedy borders or allowing cover crops to bloom. Growing a diverse array of crops, rather than a single crop, and planting patches of native flowers also helps to attract valuable pollinators. Ideally, a farm should always have something in bloom, from early in the spring until the fall. These flowers can include the crops themselves or adjacent plants. If nothing else, forage patches should include flowers that bloom before and after the crop for which you most need pollination. Many of our native bees are active as adults for only about five weeks, longer than the typical bloom period for the varieties of crops in the field. Because of this, the bees on a piece of land will only reproduce successfully and be there when your crop requires them, if they can find flowers before and after a crop is in bloom.

Finally, if pesticides – even those approved for organic operations – must be used, growers can still reduce their impacts on pollinators in simple ways. For example, apply pesticides just after dark when bees are no longer visiting the field (pest insects often remain on the crop during the night) and never apply insecticides to plants in bloom, even weeds that grow around field margins. Switch to pesticides that are less toxic to bees and adopt appropriate integrated pest management practices for selected crops.

A more productive and sustainable future

We all desire the most efficient, cost-effective and reliable pollination strategy. Our native bees can be an important part of this strategy and, with a small effort on the part of growers, may improve the reliability and effectiveness of pollination for a variety of crops. Farmers can provide a haven for native bees, that will result in greater crop yields and lower costs for renting pollinators, and will provide an insurance policy when honey bees are scarce. These same habitat enhancements can also support other beneficial insects, shade irrigation ditches and streams, conserve water and reduce erosion, buffer winds and beautify your farm. By “growing” these wild bees in addition to your crops, you will support sustainable agriculture and help native bee populations, as well as the native and crop plants they service!

For more information

The Xerces Society for Invertebrate Conservation publishes Farming for Bees: Guidelines for Providing Native Bee Habitat on Farms. This and other materials are available at our website www.xerces.org (follow the links to “pollinator conservation”). Xerces also produces The Pollinator Conservation Handbook.

We are interested in providing workshops to growers or agricultural professionals and in establishing demonstration sites for growers to learn from each other.

For more information, please contact Mace Vaughan at (503) 232-6639, or mace@xerces.org.

Mace Vaughan is the Conservation Director, Entomologist/Educator at the Xerces Society for Invertebrate Conservation. Since 1971 the Xerces Society has been protecting the diversity of life through invertebrate conservation.
OEFFA Goes to Washington

On March 8th, the Sustainable Agriculture Coalition, of which OEFFA is a member, held its winter meeting, this year aimed at education and advocacy for the 2007 Farm Bill. OEFFA President Mike Laughlin and Executive Director Carol Goland traveled to Washington and met with Ohio’s elected officials and their staff to discuss the national and state benefits of funding sustainable agriculture programs in the 2007 Farm Bill.

“We traveled to D.C. because we strongly believe in the importance of programs that support sustainable farming practices and the next generation of family farmers,” said Carol. “We have a real chance this year to make sustainable agriculture a prominent part of federal farm policy.”

Mike and Carol were in D.C. as part of a delegation of over 150 farmers, ranchers, and farm and rural advocates attending the Sustainable Agriculture Coalition’s Roots to Reform farm policy summit. During the three-day period, members held over 50 meetings with Congressional offices. The Sustainable Agriculture Coalition is a national alliance of family farm, rural, and conservation groups that works to support federal policies encouraging vibrant rural economies, family farmers, and new markets for sustainably-grown food.

The delegation focused on several key sustainable programs, including an expanded Conservation Security Program (CSP), a fully-funded Value-Added Producer Grant Program, and a Beginning Farmer and Rancher Initiative aimed at providing support for the next generation of farmers and ranchers. Other priorities highlighted by Mike and Carol were support for the organic cost-share program, organic research, and the SARE Program.

“We think we were able to get our message of support for sustainable and organic agriculture in the 2007 Farm Bill to a number of decision-makers” said Mike. “They seem to really appreciate hearing from grassroots organizations like ours that represent real farmers out here on Ohio’s lands.”

OEFFA regularly puts out Action Alerts related to upcoming legislative decisions on the OEFFA direct listserve, which you can join from the home page of the oeffa website: www.oeffa.org. We would like to identify 15-30 members who are especially interested and willing to contact legislators when such action is needed. If you would like to be one of OEFFA’s Rapid Responders, please email Carol at cgoland@oeffa.org.

---

Midwest Permaculture

Offering Exceptional P1 Design Certification (7 Day) Courses
With 6-Webinar Pre-Classes

Featuring:
Mark Shepard & Wayne Weisman

“The information, design methods, networking, and food were beyond my expectations. Taking this course has re-ignited a fire in me that had been only embers. There is hope for the human species.”
(Ron Nowicki -60- Landscape Designer)

Multiple Locations and Dates
- MidwestPermaculture.com
- 815-256-2214 Bill@Stelle.net
These Events and more local and national sustainable ag events and OEFFA events can be found on the OEFFA website at www.oeffa.org/events.php.

Insect and Disease Control in Organic Vegetables
Thursday, April 19, 2007
Three locations: Ohio, Indiana and Illinois
Ohio Meeting Site: OARDC/Wooster
Contact: Alan Sundermeier
Phone: 419-354-9050, E-mail: sundermeier.5@osu.edu

Moderators and attendees at three conference sites will be linked for direct interaction and information exchange. The programs are sponsored by SARE, University of Illinois Extension and The Ohio State University Extension.

The Role of Raised Beds in the Farm Organization
Saturday, April 21, 2007 from 9 a.m. - 5 p.m.

Pfeiffer Center
260 Hungry Hollow Road, Chestnut Ridge, NY 10977
Phone: 845-352-5020 ext. 20

A comprehensive workshop covering the principles and practical details of biodynamic raised bed, field, and garden vegetable gardening. Presenter Mac Mead has some 30 years experience as a biodynamic practitioner, farmer and gardener.

Granny’s Spring Garden Party
Saturday, May 5, 2007 from 1 -5 p.m.
Granny’s Garden School
550 Loveland-Madeira Road, Loveland, Ohio
Contact: Amy Caspar acasper@green-acres.org

Thistlehair Farm Tour
Sunday, May 20, 2007 at 1 p.m.
Thistlehair Farm
10570 Big Bone Road, Union, Kentucky
Contact: Amy Caspar acasper@green-acres.org

SAN is pleased to announce its newest publication, “Marketing Strategies for Farmers and Ranchers.” Visit www.sare.org/webstore to order a copy for yourself or www.sare.org/press to download cover and feature images for newsletter articles.

Farmers’ Legal Action Group, Inc. (FLAG) has published Understanding Farmers’ Market Rules. The booklet contains important legal information for farmers who sell their vegetables, fruits, flowers, meats, and other foods at farmers’ markets. It can be downloaded free at http://www.flaginc.org/topics/pubs/arts/FarmersMarket.pdf or ordered by calling FLAG’s office at 651-223-5400.

Ohio State University Extension has released two new collections of educational materials on high tunnels – an overview of high tunnel design and construction, integrated crop management, and role in local marketing.

Both collections - one an audio CD, one a printed reference packet - stem from Ohio State’s November 2006 Horticulture High Tunnels workshop. The speakers, all recorded at the workshop, include nine high-tunnel-using farmers, seven scientists and others.

The CD features six hours of discussion on high-tunnel design, construction and management, including in organic systems. The packet compiles 71 pages of color and black-and-white visuals and resource materials used by the speakers and panelists.

For details and to order, call (330) 263-3810; e-mail kleinhenz.1@osu.edu; or write to Kleinhenz in the Department of Horticulture and Crop Science, OSU/OARDC, 1680 Madison Ave., Wooster, OH 44691-4096. The cost is $10 for the CD, $20 for the packet (discount available for orders of five or more), or $25 for both. When ordering, indicate how many CDs, packets or both are wanted; include your name, full mailing address, telephone number and, if available, e-mail address; and make checks payable to The Ohio State University.
Time to Renew Your Membership? Check the date on your Mailing Label.

Student $10 • Single $35 • Family $50 • Farm Family $50 • Nonprofit $50 • Business $100 • Individual Lifetime $1000

Mail payment to OEFFA, PO Box 82234, Columbus, Ohio 43202 or call 614/421-2022 or renew online.

---

Flower CSA - available at Turner Farm, Cincinnati. Come 1x per week and pick up to 25 stems of flowers. $50.00 per 5-week session. Call 513/561-8482 ext. 1.

Turner Farm Day Camp in Cincinnati - Children will experience farm life through hands-on activities involving animals and plants. Interacting with nature will enrich lives and promote learning and well being. Call 513/561-8482 ext. 1.

One Horse Cultivating Workshops at Turner Farm in Cincinnati - Speed up weeding! Great for small fields and can use donkey or draft horse. Saves fuel! Learn harnessing and equipment. Hands-on experiences. Call 513/561-8482 ext. 1.

For Sale - John Deere 1240 planter, 4 row, excellent condition, numerous seed plates, dry fertilizer boxes. $450/offe. Dale Dyko, 937/372-7411 or newhopeorganics@wmconnect.com

For Sale - McGeary Organics dry fertilizer available for farms, vegetables & flower gardens, and lawn care. New Hope Farm (dealer for all of Ohio), Dale Dyko, 937/372-7411 or newhopeorganics@wmconnect.com

Room/Farm to rent wanted - in Northern Cincinnati area, for OEFFA member. Call 330/354-1103.

Seeking summer apprenticeship - Semi-retired professional couple with plans to start own organic market vegetable garden looking for learning experience. Hard workers, prefer to live on-site in the Knox or Licking (possibly Franklin) County area. Email etilton1@yahoo.com or call Elena at 604/628-4913.


For Sale - Rabbit and poultry processing, packaging, distribution plant in North Central Ohio. High profile accounts in major Midwestern cities and Northern Michigan resorts. USDA licensed and inspected, on-site residences included in asking price. Processing and sales staff will remain after sale. Owner willing to work with new owners to assist transition. This is a turnkey opportunity. Asking $595,000. Email theedwards@triton.net for details.

---

Ohio Ecological Food & Farm Association
PO Box 82234
Columbus, Ohio 43202
614/421-2022; fax 614/421-2011