



Newsletter provided by the
SC Department of Agriculture

South Carolina Department of Agriculture



Eat Smart...It's in the Garden

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SC Farm to School creating more produce profits

Al Williams, a small vegetable farmer in Latta, SC is finding out first-hand that selling produce to his local schools can be a boom to his business. In just two years, he has sold over 7,000 lbs of collards to surrounding school districts for use in school lunches. He is planning to sell even more next year.

The SC Farm to School Program is a new initiative through the SC Dept. of Agriculture, SC Dept. of Education, Clemson University and DHEC that works to increase the number of farmers certified to provide locally grown products to schools, provide assistance to food service staff and teachers in schools, and develop hands-on learning activities to promote healthy eating among children. The program currently supports partnerships with 52 schools and several farms across the state.

Part of Williams' success is due to being GAP (Good Agricultural Practices) Certified. GAP certification is a USDA-administered audit program that focuses strictly on food safety. Being GAP certified is required of all farmers who

want to sell directly to schools in South Carolina. Having the certification helps protect both the consumer and the farmer.

By being GAP certified for collards, Williams is showing that he has administered a food safety program on his farm. Even though his food safety program requires some additional paperwork at times, Williams Finds GAP certification well worth the effort. "I enjoy the challenge of keeping up the standard. Once you do it and get into the feel of it, it's a part of everyday life," he said.



Beth Crocker, attorney and director of legal affairs for the SC Dept. of Agriculture, recommends all small growers in South Carolina follow Williams' example and pursue GAP certification. "Even if you are unsure about whether you want to



supply schools, get GAP certified so you can explore the opportunity," she said. "It is the way of the future, as I predict that more buyers, not just schools, will be requiring GAP certification from farmers. Being GAP certified will."

Currently, the SC Farm to School program has regional coordinators who are trained to assist farmers in the GAP certification process. In addition, the program will pay for the cost of the audit until September 30, 2012.

Williams is conscious of helping his community with his fresh collards. "I want to help the neighborhood and make a dent in obesity," he said. "We need to try to get kids to eat vegetables instead of burgers—even if I just help one kid, I have done my job."

For more information about the South Carolina Farm to School program, please visit www.scfarmtoschool.com.

Upcoming Events

School Gardens Workshop

June 20, 2012

9:00am-4:00pm

Phillips Market
Center at the
State Farmers
Market

3501 Charleston
Hwy, West Colum-
bia, SC 29172

Registration due
on June 15

School Gardens Workshop

Are you interested in starting or improving a vegetable garden at your school? Come join us for a day long workshop of hands-on gardening training, designed for all skill levels and based on successful Farm to School gardens in South Carolina. This workshop will allow you to hear presentations from the Farm to School regional coordinators and other educators, as well as the opportunity to meet and network with other teachers and school volunteers.

The registration form is available at www.scfarmtoschool.com. Send the completed form by June 15. See website for more details!

SC School Garden Workshop June 20, 2012

"Eat smart...it's in the Garden"



Forest Heights Elementary School

By: Barbara Dire



Forest Heights Elementary School had two adjoining gardens, one a vegetable garden and one a habitat garden.

In the vegetable garden the students plant seasonal crops (i.e. collards, cabbage, toma-



atoes, peppers). They eat a portion of the harvest and donate a portion to local shelters and retirement homes as part of their service learning initiative.



Both gardens allow the children to experience hands-on care throughout the entire life cycle of the plants. A variety of plants support the wildlife in the garden such as lantana, joe-pye weed, and buddleia for butterflies along with a mulberry bush for birds. This process supports the appropriate grade-level science

standards and language arts standards through journaling.

The children have been able to observe a wide-range of wildlife in the garden which includes bees, wasps, butterflies, birds, and lizards.

The garden also provides a quiet place for the students and teachers to enjoy the outdoors!



Farming Update from Legare Farms *by Helen Legare-Floyd*

Every month, Helen writes a monthly update talking about all of the going-ons at her family farm, Legare Farms in Johns Island, SC. Check out these excerpts from her monthly newsletter.

This has been a really busy spring! We have done a lot of off farm events on the weekends which makes it seem like we are busier than normal. I have done 2 events at The Wine and Food Festival, MUSC Earth Day, Charleston County Earth Day, Mt. Pleasant Academy Green Day, and The Dirt Fair. We hosted the Growers Group from Low-country Local First and the Dirt Road Trip at the farm and hosted the Battle of Charleston, a 3 day event at the farm. I've gotten really good at packing a lot of stuff in my truck. We've been selling our canned products (jams, pickles, salsas, etc.), vegetable plants, meat, eggs, and displaying baby chicks and rabbits and giving away brochures and price lists.

We started our CSA vegetable deliveries on May 1. They started out with more cool season vegetables like collards, kale, turnips, beets, carrots, spinach, lettuce, mustard, cabbage, and broccoli. Early spring vegetables started shortly after, providing our customers with potatoes, onions, squash, zucchini, swish chard, arugula, and radishes. Summer vegetables are just starting and we are including tomatoes, watermelon, cantaloupe, cucumbers, peppers, eggplant, and okra. I'm sure I have left out a lot of them but these are the basic ones. As much as I dread starting de-

liveries and being out late 3 nights a week, I am looking forward to seeing my old friends and meeting the new CSA members and getting to now new ones!

You do not have to be a member of the CSA to stop by

and purchase meat, eggs, or canned products at a CSA drop site. If you want something specific, just let me know in advance and I will bring it for you. Our drop locations are: Tuesdays at Trident Tech Campus at Building 620 from 3:30-4:15, Tuesdays at West Island Center West Ashley from 4:45-6:00; Wednesday at the Pour House on Maybank Hwy James Island from 4:30-6:00; Thursday at 411 Hibben St. at Earthly Artifacts from 4:30-6:00.

We've had critter problems here on the farm lately. Raccoons have been terrorizing our chickens at night and the hawks have been terrorizing them in the daytime. Between losing chickens and the rest being scared, our egg production is way down. We still have eggs, just not as many as

before. We're also fighting the wild hogs and the deer in the vegetable patch. I'm sure as soon as the corn and watermelons get old enough, we're going to have to fight the raccoons for those, too. We always plant extras but not enough to feed all of the creatures.



I don't think I could write a newsletter without talking about the weather and what wild weather we have had this year. We really haven't had a winter which means the insects will be a problem this summer. It's already in the 90's and we have been suffering from a lack of rain. I can't wait to see what the rest of this year will bring. If we can just get some decent rain then we can deal with the rest.

Seems like everywhere I go someone asks about the lawsuit that we have been dealing with. I've tried not to mention it as much in the last few months since I know some of you are sick of hearing about the lawsuit and quite frankly I am sick of it. However, to answer the questions of where this stand on the lawsuit, it was settled in our fa-

vor. Although the neighbors filed the lawsuit, they have yet to do anything they agreed to do. Maybe the gate and dirt road weren't as important as they claimed. From our point of view, we still owe the attorney several thousand dollars and are searching for a way to raise that money. We are hoping to do another fund raiser this summer. We don't want to over burden friends and family by asking for too much and we are so very grateful for the support we have received thus far. I'll keep everyone abreast of where we stand on some type of fundraiser.

We do have some new things to tell you about on the farm. First, we will have our store open on Wednesday and Friday afternoons from 3:00-6:00 and Saturday mornings from 9:00-12:00. You can still call us and make an appointment to come out anytime. We will have our canned products such as jams, salsas, pickles, and honey for sale. Eggs will be available and we will be adding other items as we get more space.

Legare Farms Meat Club: Join the meat club and prepay by quarterly (\$250) or yearly (\$1,000) and receive your meat at wholesale prices. This will save you about 30% on the meat. You get to pick the type of meat—beef, chicken, or pork. You can pick it up from the farm or preorder to pick it up at a CSA location. This allows you to order the amount your freezer will hold and reorder when you start to run low!

Summer Programs at the SC Children's Garden

This summer the South Carolina Children's Garden will be offering programs at the Garden and Conservation Station.

Cost: \$2 per participating child for most programs. Parents and chaperones free. Non-participating siblings may explore the Children's Garden (with an adult's supervision) during the program.

Pay upon arrival by cash (preferably) or check made payable to Richland Master Gardeners (for Carolina Children's Garden programs) or Richland Conservation District (for Conservation Station programs).

Supervision: Children must be accompanied by an adult (parent, teacher, or group leader) at all times and may NOT be "dropped off" at programs.

Freaky Frogs and Sneaky Snakes

Date: June 12
 Time: 4:00 PM
 Length: 45 Minutes
 Ages: 4 years old-2nd grade
 Cost: \$2 per child

Are snakes slimy? When do frogs look more like fish? Using our gentle live animals, learn about the life cycles, habitats, and importance of our reptiles and amphibians.

Animal Habitats

Date: June 19
 Time: 4:00 PM
 Length: 60 Minutes
 Ages: 3rd-6th Grade
 Cost: \$2 per child

See what things animals and plants need to have a good home. Explore the places around Clemson Sandhill REC that provides everything needed for animals and plants to survive.

Evening Bird Walk

Date: June 28
 Time: 6:30 PM
 Length: 90 Minutes
 All Ages
 Cost: \$2 per person

Come and discover the birds that are in our area in the summer. One this guided walk we will travel through several different habitats as we look for birds. Come prepared to walk 1-2 miles. Bring water and binoculars if you have them!



To schedule or sign up for a program or need more information contact Tim Nafziper at 803.459.3212.

Richland County Conservation Education Awards Presented at Earth Day



Columbia, SC— The Richland Soil and Water Conservation District (RSWCD) recognized several individuals who have made a significant impact on conservation education in Richland County during its annual Earth Day Awards Banquet on May 17. Conder Elementary School student Jayliq Nelson opened the banquet with a reading of Earth Day poetry. District Manager Buddy Atkins described current projects of the District, including Organic Richland—an initiative to promote local, sustain-

able, and organic agriculture—and conservation planning at the USC Equestrian Center. District Education Coordinator Chanda Cooper provided an overview of the RSWCD's education outreach programs and recognized students, teachers, administrators, and community members for their contributions to conservation.

Among those recognized were Richland County's Conservation Principal of the Year, Michael Guliano of Bookman Road Elementary, and Conservation Teachers of the Year, Katherine Littlejohn of Brennen Elementary and Victoria Pasco of Catawba Trail Elementary. Forest Heights Elementary fifth grader Najah Marshall was congratulat-

ed for her award-winning Arbor Day essay, and Keenan High School and Dreher High School were applauded for their participation in the SC Envirothon. Awards were presented by District Commissioners Mark Huguley and Hemphill Pride, III and by Associate Commissioner Mary Burts.

The RSWCD is a subdivision of state government under the local direction of a five-member Board of Commissioners. Its mission is to promote the wise use and care of natural resources for the benefit of the citizens of Richland County. For more information about the RSWCD, visit www.rcgov.us/rswcd.

Earth Day Mini-Grants

- **Alternative Academy for Success** School Garden
- **Ballentine Elementary School** Save the Sea Turtles; SC Loggerhead Project
- **Bookman Road Elementary School**—Outdoor classroom
- **Catawba Trail Elementary School**— SC Butterfly Garden
- **Columbia Islamic School**— Green Festival
- **Conder Elementary School**— Schoolyard habitat
- **Horrell Hill Elementary School**— School Garden
- **North Springs Elementary School**— School Garden

South Carolina Department of Agriculture



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We're on the Web!

www.scfarmtoschool.com

www.scschoolgardens.blogspot.com

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School Gardens Program

The South Carolina Department of Agriculture started the School Garden initiative to provide schools and communities alike with the opportunity to learn healthy eating habits, as well as providing an effective and fun way to instill the appreciation for local agriculture and food production in our children and everyone else involved in the garden. Incorporating the health benefits of gardening activity with the educational process of development reinforces the Department of Agriculture's goals related to promoting the consumption of locally grown products.



For more information about the S.C. School Gardens program and to share information about your school garden program, contact:

Beth Crocker, (803) 734-2193, bcrocker@scda.sc.gov.

SC Farm to School Pictures

