

Appalachian Sustainable Agriculture Project
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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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29 Working WNC Farms Open to the Public for 2008 Mountain Farm and Garden Tour

Want to See—and Experience—Where Your Food Comes From?

ASHEVILLE, NC (June 6, 2008)—More and more people want to eat local, but how much do you really know about agriculture in your own community? Find out, first-hand, during the 2008 Mountain Farm and Garden Tour. Western North Carolina is home to an impressive number of family farms—over 12,000 of them—and the tour, on Saturday, June 28 and Sunday, June 29 from 1:00 to 6:00p.m., is an invitation to visit and connect with some of the most outstanding.

Tour participants are welcome at locations across the region—from farms worked by the same family for four generations to biodynamic gardens, from community supported agriculture (CSA) farms to pick-your-own berry fields, and from draft horse powered farms to gardens tended by school children—to enjoy the scenery, learn how animals and plants are raised, and taste local foods.

Get a farm tour map and button. Gather your friends, fill a car, choose the farms you want to visit, and plan a route.

Bring your curiosity—and your cooler and your appetite. A variety of vegetables and fruits, beef, pork, lamb, eggs, artisan cheeses, herbs, mushrooms, honey, garlic, and much more will be available to sample or for sale. Products including yarn, soap, and crafts will be offered as well.

Watch animals such as chicks, baby lambs, bunnies, and llamas. See traditional skills in practice—and even try them out yourself—during demonstrations of border collie shepherding, outdoor apple butter making, hand milking, the maple syrup tapping process, and wool spinning. Or, learn about new ideas during a tour of renewable energy systems, take a sustainable forest walk and identify plants, visit an edible landscape, or explore a garden labyrinth. And stop for a picnic at one of the many beautiful farms along the way.

Included in the tour are Long Branch Center, Lunazeno, Pisgah View Community Peace Garden, Healing Savvy Farm, Bountiful Cities Project, Good Fiberations, Highlander Farm, Flying Cloud Farm, Hickory Nut Gap, Black Mountain Community Garden, Full Circle Family Farm, and Earthhaven Ecovillage in Buncombe County; Hawk and Ivy, Zimmerman Berry Farm, Doubletree Farm, East Fork Farm, Spinning Spider Creamery, and Sunset Valley Farm in Madison County; Maple Creek Farm, Wellspring Farm, Firefly Farm, Green Toe Ground, Mountain Farm, Common Ground Farm, Arthur Morgan School, and Mountain Gardens in Yancey County; Peaceful Valley Farm in McDowell County; and Queens Produce and Berry Farm and Holly Hill Farm in Transylvania County. With 29 farms in five counties—and seven new to the tour this year—there are more than enough choices to fill a schedule for both Saturday and Sunday.

One button gives everyone in a car access to every event all weekend. Buttons are \$25 on the day of the tour, or \$20 in advance. Visit <http://www.mountainfarmtour.org> for information on where to buy and more details.

“[The Farm and Garden Tour] gets people to the farm to see where and how food is grown in the region, helps them appreciate the beauty and work of farming, and lets them connect personally with farmers,” says Elizabeth Gibbs of Firefly Farm in Burnsville, who helps organize the event. “Folks come on the tour years in a row.” This is because new farms are added to the tour every year or they want to stock up on local products, but also because, “It’s so much fun.”

And the tour is more than fun. Farmers who attend see techniques in practice that they may want to try themselves, while farmers who host can educate consumers. Jamie Ager of Hickory Nut Gap Meats says that tour participants often make comments such as, “Wow, this is amazing --truly a paradigm shift in agricultural production,” when they see how different Hickory Nut Gap’s grassfed production is from larger-scale farming.

Consumers also learn that there are ways in which they can be self sufficient. Eve Davis, whose holistic bed and breakfast Hawk and Ivy is on the tour, has observed that, due to the current political and economic climate, more and more people are feeling the need to for a local food system. “I want to show our gardens, not only because they’re beautiful, but because they’re on an urban scale. They let people see that they don’t have to have a huge farm to grow their own food.”

The tour is a joint effort of the Appalachian Sustainable Agriculture Project, Carolina Farm Stewardship Association, Mountain Tailgate Market Association, Organic Growers School, and Slow Food Asheville. Greenlife Grocery is the major sponsor.

ABOUT THE APPALACHIAN SUSTAINABLE AGRICULTURE PROJECT

The Appalachian Sustainable Agriculture Project is a nonprofit organization that supports farmers and rural communities in the mountains of Western North Carolina and the Southern Appalachians by providing education, mentoring, promotion, web resources, and community and policy development. ASAP's mission is to create and expand regional community-based and integrated food systems that are locally owned and controlled, environmentally sound, economically viable and health-promoting.

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