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Danbury, NC 27016

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Stokes County Center

# Cooperative Extension

Stokes County Center

Winter 2013

### Inside This Issue:

What A Difference A Year Can Make

Winterizing Houseplants

4-H Club Corner

Stokes County Welcomes New 4-H Horse Club

Piedmont Farm School

Upcoming Producer Meetings & Certifications

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## What A Difference A Year Can Make

by Deborah Cox, County Extension Director and Family & Consumer Sciences Agent

One year ago our new 4-H agent, Matt Barber, joined the Stokes Extension Staff. As he reminded us of this milestone, I started thinking about how far our office has come in just one year's time.

We recently provided a Report to the People of our Advisory Leadership Council that reflects the growth we have made in the last year. We want to review some figures with you as we also look forward to 2014 and changes that continually improve our offerings to Stokes County Citizens.

Since Matt joined us in November 2012, we also added Chris Jeffcoat as our Livestock Agent in May 2013. Chris has three years of previous Extension work in Pennsylvania (home state) and Kentucky (equine state) so there was no hesitation to his quick offerings of pasture weed management and economic strategy sessions with cattle producers in Stokes County and Forsyth County. Check out his article about Piedmont Farm School and his class offerings.

Our tobacco farmers continued to learn new strategies for crop production, amidst our early rainy season, with Field Crops Agent, Tim Hambrick. Four research plots in Stokes County developed data for tobacco, corn, and pigweed strategies that improve crops and their viability. Tim serves many crop farmers in the area and also assisted a new wheat adventure in the eastern part of the county where the Saura Indians once cultivated crops. Agriculture is a 66 million dollar industry in this community.

Matt has doubled the number of 4-H clubs we have for youth to learn and grow new life-skills. There will be a new horse club that will be led by new community members with a wealth of experience, assisting young people to explore new skills in riding and horsemanship. Working collaboratively with North Stokes and South Stokes agriculture teachers, Matt has also secured funding to build up a shooting sports program to actively engage teenagers who enjoy the great outdoors. Summer enrichment programs reached 305 youth, and we sent a few youngsters to summer camp. To get more youth involved in the horse club, see Matt's article in this newsletter.

Randy Fulk, Horticulture Agent, has double responsibilities with consumer horticulture and being our Local Foods Coordinator. This year Randy successfully conducted our first Master Gardener<sup>SM</sup> Certification Program. We now have six active volunteers who answer lawn and garden questions on a hotline Thursday mornings from April to November. The next class will start in March! Check back on our website because Randy is also offering classes on gardening topics of interest at the King Library in the early part of 2014. His "Winterizing Houseplants" article in this newsletter will also give you great suggestions on keeping plants healthy once the heating system is turned on in the home.

In fact, all of us will be holding regular classes at the King Public Library in 2014 as a way to reach our King Citizens on a regular basis. Starting in the early new year, I will be offering "Eat Smart, Move More, Weigh Less" to capture the annual ritual of making good on New Year health resolutions. There will also be "Living Healthy With Diabetes" classes and "Cook Smart" classes at other venues in the county. This year we reached 33 people and 16 establishments with our food safety management program known as ServSafe<sup>®</sup> via the National Restaurant Association.

We also celebrated the wonderful work of the Extension Community Association (formerly known as Home Demonstration) members in Stokes County who continue to raise money to award college scholarship money for our youth in the area. About 900 people celebrated at NC State University to honor those who helped North Carolina develop the first child nutrition programs, get roads in their rural counties paved, help establish reading programs, and help build new libraries.

All together we reached 8,993 people via face-to-face class time or office consult time, providing solutions to help their agri-businesses, families, youth, and leadership opportunities. We are proud of our growth. What a difference a year can make!



Empowering People - Providing Solutions

## Winterizing Houseplants

by Randy Fulk, Horticulture Agent

As fall begins to cool down and we anticipate the first frost, it is time to make plans for bringing our houseplants indoors. The most important (and sometimes the trickiest) question to answer is WHEN?

Most houseplants are of tropical origin and, as such, can suffer damage at temperatures well above freezing. Most can sustain damage at temperatures below 45°F and some at temperatures below 50°F. A good rule to follow is whenever nighttime temps start reaching 50°F, it is time to bring your houseplants indoors.

Most plants will perform best if they are allowed to gradually acclimate to their new indoor environment. Otherwise they are likely to lose lots of leaves quickly. While this is usually not life threatening. As new leaves will regrow, it will set the plants back by a few weeks. Avoid this by making the change less traumatic. If outdoor plants have been in a high-light environment, place them in a similar environment indoors, near south-facing windows or under plant lights on a timer. Currently, daytime high temperatures are similar to conditions many people maintain in their homes, which helps lessen the shock of suddenly being brought indoors. Be sure to clean windows to allow maximum light penetration.

Prior to bringing plants indoors, inspect them for insects and diseases and treat as appropriate. Soaking the pots in lukewarm water for about 15 minutes can force some insects out of the soil. This is also a good time to re-pot if necessary. Measure the height of the plant and divide by two. This should be the diameter of the pot used for the plant.

Do not overwater. Let the surface soil dry to the touch before watering again. A SMALL boost of fertilizer can also help plants make the transition. Do not apply excessive fertilizer. Plants need to undergo a period of reduced growth. Giving them just the bare essentials over winter is the best approach.

### 4-H Club Corner

**4-H Ology Club:** A club for science lovers. Meets once a month to conduct experiments! Call the office for club contact info.

**4-Service Club:** Community service-oriented club. Call the office for club contact info.

**Club S.H.I.E.L.D.:** School for homeschooled youth. Call the office for club contact info.

**North Stokes Shooting Sports Club:** A club for North Stokes High School students who are interested in shooting sports.

**Quaker Gap Clovers 4-H Club:** Club focused on service projects and member interests. Call the office for club contact info.

**Southeastern Middle School Robotics Club:** Info coming soon!

**School Skippers 4-H Club:** Community club that does service projects and studies. Call the office for club contact info.

**Stallion Ridge Stables 4-H Club:** A club for horse lovers. Call the office for club contact info.



## Stokes County 4-H Welcomes New Horse Club

by Matt Barber, 4-H & Youth Development Agent

Stokes County has been lucky enough to have a brand new volunteer step up and start a new 4-H youth club. Terri Young of Westfield, N.C. has plans to make her new property (Stallion Ridge Stables) the location of an exciting new horse club. She and her husband have built beautiful new stables, riding rings, and an education building to accommodate all the youth who have an interest in horses. Terri tells a little more about her program in the following write-up...

Stallion Ridge 4-H offers a high-quality horse program that facilitates "Learn by Doing." Stallion Ridge 4-H promotes horsemanship skill and safety. The program uniquely wraps itself around small equine and large equine interactive activities. One main focus is attaining knowledge of the horse and human connection. The program is diverse and meets youth needs that further enhances and/or develops essential life skills, which include: responsibility, teamwork, community involvement, positive thinking, self-sufficiency, and self-worth. Participants do not need to own a horse to be a part of the club! Some highlights that the program will offer are:

- Horsemanship & handling clinics
- Recreational/therapeutic activities
- Horse judging, horse bowl, and hippology
- Real horsemanship skills applied to future employment
- Camp



Photo courtesy of  
Terri Young

Do not miss out on the opportunity to join this club in its beginning stages. I see many wonderful things to come from Stallion Ridge Stables. Terri's passion and knowledge are endless. If you have any interest or would like to know more, please contact Matt Barber at matthew\_barber@ncsu.edu or 336-593-8179.

## Piedmont Farm School

by Chris Jeffcoat, Livestock Agent

I would encourage young, beginning, and transitioning farmers who are considering having a farm and/or looking for ways to make their farm more profitable and sustainable for the future to participate in the 2014 Piedmont Farm School. Demand for locally-grown food continues to grow despite a lagging economy, with direct marketing to consumers growing 215% from 1992-2007. There are certainly various opportunities in agriculture today! Serving you as Livestock Agent since May of this year, I have quite often had people call me to say, "I have some land that I want to do something with... can you tell me what I need to do to raise livestock or what I can grow to make some money?" This is really an open-ended question because it depends on both the operator and market as to whether the agricultural venture will be successful.

Any good business starts out with a good plan and lots of research. More and more families are looking at ways to supplement their incomes and put their land into productive use. The Piedmont Farm School is an eight-month educational program that trains beginning and transitioning farmers with a strong commitment to operate successful small-scale sustainable farms. The Piedmont Farm School offers seven business planning seminars, which will give farmers the tools to create a viable business plan. Each business session will focus on different areas of writing a business plan including financial management and effective marketing strategies. This also includes a production mini-conference and seven-day-long field trips at different working farms led by innovative experienced farmers and agricultural professionals.

Participants will learn about low-cost sustainable farming methods, from fruits, vegetables, cattle, pigs, poultry, goats, specialty crops, and agritourism. The business classes will meet the second Tuesday of the month, beginning in February 2014 from 6-9 PM at the Forsyth County Extension Center, and the farm field days will typically (but not every month) be the fourth Thursday of the month from 9 AM-3 PM. The farm field days will take place at various farms throughout the Piedmont region. The registration deadline is December 31; one person: \$200 and two people: \$250. The registration fee includes meals for all of the business planning seminars and field days, and a binder full of educational information. For a brochure and registration form, please visit [stokes.ces.ncsu.edu](http://stokes.ces.ncsu.edu) or call 336-593-8179 for more information.

### Piedmont Beef Conference

I would like to encourage every beef producer to mark the calendar for the 2014 Piedmont Beef Conference, which will be held February 27, 2014 at the Guilford County Cooperative Extension Office. We have a dynamic set of speakers you: Duane Lenz, Manager of Operations and Market Analyst for CattleFax located in Colorado; Dr. Miguel Castillo, NCSU Forage Agronomist; Dr. Dee Whittier, Virginia Tech Vet School; and a representative from Novartis Animal Health. The trade show and registration will open at 12:30 PM and the program will be 1:30-6:30 PM. Dinner is included with the registration. A flyer and registration form will be mailed to the beef cattle mailing list in January, but it will also be available at <http://stokes.ces.ncsu.edu> after January 1, or by calling the Stokes County office at 336-593-8179.

## Upcoming Producer Meetings & Certifications

by Tim Hambrick, Field Crops Agent

2013 is about over and it will soon be time to be turning our attention to 2014. I think we can all agree that this year brought its fair share of challenges—wet the first half and dry the last half.

If you are a tobacco or grain producer, I am in the planning stages now of putting together what I think will be an informative and useful set of meetings. We'll talk about weed, insect, and disease management, and look at various efficiencies, as well as spend some time talking about the best varieties and hybrids for our part of the country.

Tobacco producers need to pay special attention to the need for GAP recertification. It is my understanding that everybody who contracts will have to receive recertification credits for GAP, just as you do for your pesticide license. Like last year, there will be limited opportunities to receive these credits, so keep that in mind as you are planning your winter schedules. Below is the tentative GAP training schedule. GAP will be incorporated into traditional tobacco meetings this year, and you will once again receive a certificate of attendance to show your contractor.

### 2014 Tentative GAP Meetings

Jan. 7: Martin County Farmer's Market, Williamston, NC, 10 am  
 Jan. 8: Wayne County Center, Goldsboro, NC, 10 am  
 Jan. 9: Wilson County Center, Wilson, NC, 10 am  
 Jan. 9: Johnston County Center, Smithfield, NC, 6 pm  
 Jan. 10: Nash Farmer's Market, Rocky Mount, NC, 12 noon  
 Jan. 20: Lee County Center, Sanford, NC  
 Jan. 21: Forsyth County Center, Winston Salem, NC  
 Jan. 21: Sampson Ag Expo Center, Clinton, NC  
 Jan. 22: Caswell County Civic Center, Yanceyville, NC  
 Jan. 23: Cunningham Research Station, Kinston, NC, 10 am  
 Jan. 28: Granville County Expo Center, Oxford, NC  
 Jan. 30: Ag Expo Center, Fayetteville, NC  
 Feb. 3: Pitt County Center, Greenville, NC  
 Feb. 7: TGANC Meeting, State Fair Grounds, Raleigh, NC, 1pm  
 Feb. 12: Surry County Center, Dobson, NC

As in years past, check your pesticide license to determine when it might expire. If you need credits, keep your eyes open for correspondence detailing when and where V opportunities will take place. X opportunities generally occur during the course of educational meetings and field days, and I will be letting you know those details as they are finalized.



Enjoy the holidays, and we will be back in the fields soon!