

NC MEDICINAL HERB NEWS

A Newsletter of the North Carolina Medicinal Herbs for Commerce Project—Dr. Jeanine Davis, Project Leader

Volume 1, Issue 3

Winter 2005

JANUARY 12TH MEETING WILL STEER FUTURE OF PROJECT

The Medicinal Herbs for Commerce Project will host an important meeting for all cooperating growers on Thursday, January 12 in Greensboro. The details of this meeting will be forthcoming to all growers. In the meantime, mark this date on your calendars because this is a meeting you won't want to miss!

At this meeting, you'll be invited to hear from buyers in the industry about their future needs and receive useful insight from them about making your operation more marketable and profitable. This is a rare chance to network with several buyers in one place.

This will also be a rare opportunity for the entire group of growers to spend time together. This will allow growers to share experiences and questions with each other, as well as share visions and ideas about how North Carolina growers can work together to support medicinal herb production and marketing in the state.

The Medicinal Herbs for Commerce Project is seeking additional funding so that we can continue operating in support of medicinal herb production and marketing in North Carolina. It is clear, how-

ever, that the future success of this industry in North Carolina will depend on growers and buyers coming together to work collaboratively for common goals. We hope this meeting will kick off a collaborative relationship between cooperating growers and buyers that will continue to strengthen into the future.

We will offer dinner on Thursday, January 12 and we will cover the cost for growers to stay overnight at the hotel. The Medicinal Herbs for Commerce Project is trying to make this event as accommodating as possible, given its importance to the future of this project. Please stay tuned for details!

FIELD JOURNAL REMINDER FOR GROWERS!

If you haven't already, please send a copy (or the original so we can make a copy) of your 2005 field journal to Libby Hinsley: 455 Research Dr.; Fletcher, NC 28732.



NEW! The Medicinal Herbs for Commerce Project has a brand new logo:



FOR YOUR CALENDAR

December 7: Extension Agent Training in Medicinal Herbs. Fletcher, NC. 828-684-3562, x157

December 12-14: Southeast Vegetable and Fruit Expo. Myrtle Beach, SC. 919-334-0099. NC Vegetable Growers Association www.ncvga.org

January 11: Extension Agent Training in Medicinal Herbs. Raleigh, NC. 828-684-3562, x157

January 19-22: Southern Sustainable Agriculture Working Group Annual Conference. Louisville, KY. www.ssaawg.org

February 15-16: Western NC Winter Vegetable Conference. Asheville, NC. www.ncagr.com/markets/commodit/horticult/tomatoes/

ASAP Marketing Conference

March 3: Northern Piedmont Specialty Crops School. Roxboro, NC. 919-603-1350

March 11: Organic Growers School. Flat Rock, NC. www.organicgrowersschool.org

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NEW WEBSITE OFFERS USER-FRIENDLY RESOURCES



The Medicinal Herbs for Commerce Project is soon to unveil a brand new website full of information for growers and others interested in medicinal herb production in North Carolina. The site is designed by Kari Brayman, Media Specialist for the NC Specialty Crops Program. It takes visitors through steps in medicinal herb production, from Brainstorming and Planning to the How-to's. Visit the new site at:

www.ncspecialtycrops.org/medherbs/

EXTENSION AGENT TRAININGS IN MEDICINAL HERBS

The Medicinal Herbs for Commerce Project will host two trainings for extension agents this winter. The first training session will be held on December 7 at the Mountain Horticultural Crops Research and Extension Center in Fletcher, and the second will be held on January 11, 2006, at the Wake County Commons Building in Raleigh. Both trainings are free and open to any extension agent who is interested.

These trainings will draw heavily on our recent experiences working with growers across the state to grow and sell medicinal herbs. Major buyers and experienced growers will give their perspectives on the industry. After attending the training, agents will be better prepared to assist the increasing numbers of North Carolina growers interested in producing medicinal herbs. Extensive reference materials will be provided and lunch will be served.

The training will cover crop selection, production, pest control, harvest, cleaning, drying, packaging, storage, quality control, marketing, and more. If you are a medicinal herb grower, encourage your extension agent to attend!



California poppy in the field and being processed fresh on the farm in 2004. Photos by Jackie Greenfield.

Interested agents may register on the intranet at www.ces.ncsu.edu/xlms/ or by contacting Libby Hinsley at 828-684-3562, x157 or libby_hinsley@ncsu.edu.

HERBA-LORE

*“Trefoil, vervain, John's wort, dill
Hinder witches of their will”*

Herbs have been primary medicines for humans and animals for thousands of years, so it isn't surprising that many interesting stories are associated with them.

Clary sage, or Wild Clary, was called *Christ's eye* due to its effect in healing conditions of the eyes. It was thought if you placed a seed of the Wild Clary in your eye and let it stay until it fell out on its own, pain, inflammation, and even cataracts would be remedied. Clary sage is still used to treat eye conditions.

Roses were believed to have sprung from Aphrodite's beloved Adonis' blood. Could this be where the tradition of giving roses to the one you love came?

St. John's wort was called “demon chaser” and was used to protect people from ghosts, evil spirits,



and fairies. Folks believed that if you stepped on the plant on Midsummer's Night you would be carried away by the fairies until the next dawn. Interestingly St. John's wort is still used, in a sense, to drive away the “demons” of depression.

Sometimes stories about one herb get confused with another herb: Devil's bit got its name because it was believed that the devil found this herb growing in Paradise and, recognizing the powerful medicine in the herb, bit off the root so it would die. It still grows but doesn't get very big and the root looks like the end has been bitten off. Now, two herbs are called devil's bit: *Chamaelirium luteum*, also called false unicorn root, and *Scabiosa succisa*. Both roots fit the description! False unicorn root is a wonderful remedy for reproductive conditions, both for women and men. Guess the devil lost again!

A TASTE OF AYURVEDA

Ayurveda (eye-yer-vay-duh) is an ancient Indian system of health and literally means “knowledge of life.” Although an ancient healing art, many people practice Ayurvedic medicine today, and many have found it beneficial. The use of herbs is a central component of Ayurveda. Most Ayurvedic herbs today are grown outside the United States in countries such as India and China. This is one of many markets medicinal herb producers could explore. Common Ayurvedic herbs include ashwagandha (winter cherry, *Withania somnifera*) and tulsi (holy basil, *Opal ocimum sanctum*). Studies indicate that ashwagandha has anti-inflammatory, antitumor, antistress,

and antioxidant properties. It is also said to benefit the endocrine, cardiopulmonary, and central nervous systems. Tulsi is said to have antioxidant properties, support respiratory health, and balance the mind, nerves, emotions, and blood sugar. Just a few other Ayurvedic herbs include: Aiamoda (wild celery, *Apium graveolens*); Aiwain (wild caraway, *Carum copticum*); Jatamamsi (Indian spikenard, *Nardostachvs iatamamsi*); Chandana (sandalwood, *Santalum album*); Vidari (Wild Yam Root, *Pomoea digitata*); Ushira (vetiver, *Vetiveria zizanioides*); Shatavari (asparagus root, *Asparagus racemosus*); Neem (Indian lilac, *Azadiracta indica*); and Nirgundi (*Vitex negundo*).

GROWER PROFILE: JUSTIN DILLINGHAM

By Libby Hinsley

Justin Dillingham isn't typical among Medicinal Herbs for Commerce growers for one primary reason: he's only 18 years old. Nonetheless, he plays a vital role in his family's farming operation, and as a young farmer in western North Carolina, he offers a unique perspective.

The primary obligation of this young farmer is to run the tobacco, cattle, and hay businesses at his family's farm in Barnardsville, where his grandfather has been farming all his life. He also helps with his father's new three acre vineyard in Weaverville, where the family just picked their first wine grapes this year. Next year, Justin will continue learning about new crops by growing an acre of skullcap. He's hopeful about this new venture. "I really think there's a potential for it. Western North Carolina has more biodiversity than most places in the world, and I think growing medicinal herbs will really capitalize on that." He does foresee some challenges, however. He knows that his skullcap will be a more labor intensive crop than he's used to, and not knowing signs of disease in a new crop will mean a steep learning curve. Justin is also aware of general challenges facing him and NC farming in general. "With the

land market as it is in this area, buying more land can be difficult. That's the main challenge for me." Justin cited pressure from non-farming interests as one of the main challenges to agriculture in North Carolina, but he sees



Justin Dillingham in Barnardsville

a unique situation for the western part of the state. "Our main challenge is it's just so much different farming river bottoms and pasturing hillsides than it is farming thousands of acres. Our terrain is somewhat of a hardship to us, but at the same time, it may give us an advantage in niche markets. We can't compete with the Midwest, but we can do a lot of things they can't."

Despite the challenges ahead, Justin's vision is to continue the farming tradition of his family and expand on what he's already got by bringing several crops together in a successful overall operation. His vision and dedication to sustaining viable agriculture in our state is inspiring.

NEW FARMLAND PROSPERITY PROJECT SEEKS COOPERATING GROWERS IN WESTERN NORTH CAROLINA

Dr. Jeanine Davis has recently received a 3 year grant from the new USDA National Research Initiative on small farms and rural communities to study farmland preservation techniques and new crop/new agricultural enterprises as a way to enhance small-farm prosperity.

The project seeks farmers who have recently transitioned (within the past three years or so) into new crops/enterprises, those who have adopted farmland preservation techniques, and traditional farmers who have not made any changes. The new crop/enterprise areas that we are interested include: agritourism, organics/natural/biodynamics, nursery (exotic, niche, aquatic), specialty meats and cheeses, specialty fruits and vegetables (including heirloom, ethnic, grapes), and other value-added agriculture.

The project area includes Madison, Buncombe, Henderson, Transylvania, and Haywood Counties. Selected growers will be asked to participate in interviews and surveys over the next few years to determine the impact their transition (or lack thereof) has had on their families, their finances and the economic situation in their surrounding communities. Information gained from cooperating farmers will be used to develop a decision-making model that will help

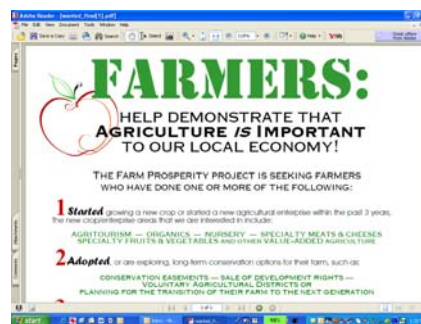
determine the potential economic, social, and ecological outcomes of various new crop-farmland preservation method combinations. Through this project, we hope to demonstrate the economic importance of agriculture in WNC and encourage county leaders to view agriculture as "an industry", thereby providing economic incentives for farms as they currently do for manufacturers.

In Return, participating farmers will get free publicity through NC State University and the Appalachian Sustainable Agriculture Project (ASAP) websites, technical assistance from our staff on new crops and farmland preservation methods, free attendance at our workshops and conferences, assistance with grant and loan identification and submission to further their progress, a "Partner" membership with ASAP, and signs and brochures to help promote their farms.

This is a cooperative project with Land of Sky Regional Council, the Appalachian Sustainable Agriculture Project, Carolina Mountain Land Conservancy, American Farmland Trust, Southern Appalachian Highlands Conservancy, and economists from Warren Wilson College.

If interested, please contact project technician David Grimsley at 828-684-3562, ext 357, or by email:

david_grimsley@ncsu.edu



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Medicinal Herbs for Commerce: A project to encourage the diversification of NC farms
WWW.NCHERB.ORG | WWW.NCMEDICINALHERBS.ORG | WWW.NCSPECIALTYCROPS.ORG

TIDBITS

NC Natural Products Association Memberships

The Medicinal Herbs for Commerce Project will be providing free memberships to the North Carolina Natural Products Association for all cooperating growers in the project. Membership entitles growers and others to receive (and be listed in) a directory of NC Medicinal Herb Growers and Buyers. Members also have access to a regularly updated online pricing matrix—a “first” in the natural products industry.

The matrix shows current market prices for a selection of medicinal herbs by compiling basic pricing statistics in \$/lb from confidentially-supplied industry sources. This is useful for growers to predict the pricing they might expect when selling raw bulk material. It is also useful for buyers to see how supply and demand trends are influencing prices in the industry.

Herb Pricing Matrix

This matrix compiles basic pricing statistics in \$/lb derived from confidentially-supplied industry sources. The data will be updated regularly, approximately monthly. Over time, the matrix will develop trailing low and high pricing indicators, which may also be of interest to NCNPA members.

Plant	Part	Status	Count	Average	Median	Low	High	Trailing Low	Trailing High
American Ginseng	Root	Woods Grown	5	139.80	125.00	24.00	250.00	n/a	n/a
American Ginseng*	Root	Wildcrafted	2	330.00	330.00	280.00	380.00	n/a	n/a
Black Cohosh	Rhizome	Cultivated	5	4.06	4.00	3.30	5.00	n/a	n/a
Black Cohosh**	Rhizome	Wildcrafted	8	3.95	3.68	3.00	5.60	n/a	n/a
Burdock Root	Root	Organic	3	2.66	2.40	1.85	3.72	n/a	n/a
California Poppy	Herb	Organic	5	8.17	8.00	5.95	10.39	n/a	n/a
Dandelion	Root	Organic	5	5.15	5.25	0.75	9.50	n/a	n/a
Echinacea angustifolia	Root	Organic	7	13.24	14.00	7.00	16.00	n/a	n/a
Echinacea purpurea	Root	Organic	7	3.74	3.75	1.85	7.00	n/a	n/a
Goldenseal	Rhizome	Cultivated	6	29.83	29.50	24.00	34.00	n/a	n/a
Goldenseal***	Rhizome	Wildcrafted	7	28.29	28.00	24.00	32.00	n/a	n/a
Hawthorn****	Berry	Wildcrafted	2	2.21	2.21	0.56	3.85	n/a	n/a
Holy Basil (Tulsi)	Leaf	Organic	3	2.90	3.64	0.56	4.50	n/a	n/a
Sweet Annie	Herb	Cultivated	3	3.78	2.10	1.35	7.90	n/a	n/a
Valerian	Root	Organic	8	3.47	2.50	1.75	7.90	n/a	n/a

Organic Certification Training Opportunity

We have the opportunity to arrange in-depth organic certification training by the Carolina Farm Stewardship Association for growers. This is a valuable resource! In order to schedule a training, we need to have a cluster of at least four or five growers in a particular area of the state commit to attend. Cooperating growers who are interested in having this training brought to a farm near you should contact Libby Hinsley at the project office: 828-684-3562, x157.

If we get enough interest, we will schedule it!

