

Newsletter provided by the
SC Department of Agriculture



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Adaptive Gardens of the Lowcountry

Strawberries in the fall? That's what numerous people ask when they discover the participants of Adaptive Gardens of the Lowcountry, a non-profit organization located on Thornhill Farm in McClellanville, are planting strawberries this fall. But if the literal fruits of labor are to be seen in the Spring, planting must begin now. Individuals with special needs learn about social bonding, vocational and recreational pursuits through horticultural therapy. The activity of strawberry planting in the fall teaches delayed gratification, teamwork, and works on gross and fine motor skills.



In addition to strawberry planting, this fall and winter high school and middle school students will focus on mixing soil, making lemongrass and Luffa soap, starting vegetables and flowers from seed, harvesting produce, tending the greenhouse and a myriad of other activities to strengthen different skill sets. Organic techniques used by Adaptive Gardens, also, helps the participants of the program learn more about the full cycle of life and the human impact on the land and animal species surrounding us.

The vegetable and flower rows, raised beds and greenhouse tables are all built with special abilities in mind. The raised beds and greenhouse tables are built especially for individuals using wheelchairs. The field rows are built wider in order to focus on balance control and accommodate hand-over-hand interaction with students. Participants have been learning farming and gardening skills since 2008 and have been able to extend their knowledge to a local business. They have been helping tend the garden at 17 North Restaurant and learning a little about the use of the vegetables they grow in the kitchen.

The plethora of activities that students have at their fingertips through the programs offered by Adaptive Gardens of the Lowcountry transfer into skill sets they can carry with them for their lifetime. A goal of Adaptive Gardens is that the participants of the program will take the knowledge they learn and share it with their family, friends, teachers and caregivers to continue spreading the word about farming and gardening as well as educating our communities on adaptable gardening.

Upcoming Events

- Applications to apply for the Farm to School Pilot Program. For more information contact Todd Bedenbaugh with the SC Dept. of Education at tbedenb@ed.sc.gov
- A variety of workshops to be hosted at the Carolina Children's Garden this spring!! Check out their website at: www.carolinachildrengarden.org

Andrews Elementary Outdoor Classroom *by Heather Turner*

“I like learning outside because you have your own spot, ya know, it’s just fun!” stated a four-year old after coming back into the classroom from the outdoor garden. Outdoor classrooms started gaining popularity in Georgetown County within the past three years after a grant from the University of South Carolina-Columbia sent teachers through a summer field experience, Nature Based Inquiry, to learn the importance of and to develop an on-site outdoor classroom. Each year a new group of teachers from surrounding schools have been im-

mersed with information about the importance of outdoor learning. Afterwards, each school has created its own outdoor learning area and developed lesson plans, techniques, and strategies for teachers to use outdoors to benefit all learners.

Here at Andrews Elementary School we chose to do both a Discovery Nature Trail and a Palmetto Inquiry Garden where our students are exposed to an outdoor environment that promotes learning experiences and facilitates inquiry, exploration, discovery, and language development, as well as encourages

movement and healthy eating habits. Our school garden is a place where all students can personally witness the concepts of life cycles, be exposed to and encouraged to explore different foods, and most importantly have fun learning. They take ownership of the garden they’ve planted, have intrinsic motivation to care for it, and enjoy reaping its benefits.

Outdoor education is important for several reasons. Today, the generations of children we teach are unaware of their surroundings. Even though we live in a rural area our

students simply lack exposure to the outdoors. They spend less time outside riding bikes, making mud pies, and catching lizards, and more time seeing who can bet the high score on the latest video game, playing computerized games, or watching hours upon hours of television. This is why for us as teachers it has become so vitally important to instill in children a love for nature, including outdoor activity and exercise. Here at Andrews Elementary that is a goal we take seriously and strive daily to make it a reality.



Students at the Andrews Elementary Outdoor Classroom

SC Farm to School Pilot Program in 2011!!

South Carolina has received a 2 year grant to introduce 85 pilot farm to school programs across the state. The grant was received through a partnership application submitted by SC Dept. of Health and Environmental Control, SC Dept. of Agriculture, SC Dept. of Education and Clemson University.

To participate as a pilot, schools will need to submit applications through the SC

Dept. of Education School Food Service Division.

The farm to school program will be offering schools the opportunity to purchase and serve local, minimally processed produce grown by SC Farmers. There will be educational materials and messages available for teachers in the classroom as well. This grant will also provide funding to ensure that farmers are meeting the required food safety

standards for supplying local schools with fresh produce.

In order to participate in the pilot programs, school will need to apply for consideration. Implementing and/or improving a school vegetable garden will be one of the requirements for viable applicants. If you would like to receive more information about this pilot program, please contact Beth Crocker at the SC Department of

Agriculture at bcrocker@scda.sc.gov or Todd Bedenbaugh at the SC Department of Education at tabedenb@ed.sc.gov.

SC Farm to School Pilot Program applications will be available in early 2011.

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



Every month, Helen writes an 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.

September: Summer is supposed to be over but it's hard to believe with temperatures still in the 90's. The only thing that is still enjoying this hot weather is the okra. We're racing around trying to get everything ready to open the maze and pumpkin patch on the 1st of October but it's hard to get in the "Fall frame of mind" in the heat. I would never want to live anywhere else except Johns Island but if I was rich I think I'd have a mountain house where the seasons actually change. The pumpkins are looking good but could use more rain. Some fall vegetables are getting close to being ready. We're still planting fall vegetables so we will have enough to last the entire 6 weeks of the CSA delivery. We also have to have enough vegetables for our Fall Harvest Dinner. We're repairing

fences and mowing grass and painting signs and so many other things to get spruced up for all of our visitors in October. We're still taking reservations from teachers for the Pumpkin Patch field trip and are already booking Thanksgiving on the Farm field trips for November. Fall is just a busy time for us and the farm. I know not to make any plans for the entire month of October or most of November.

We don't have a corn maze anymore which happened by accident last year when the worms ate the corn and we had to come up with a new plan quick. We have a maze cut into a 12 acre field of our native wax myrtles. We have created a game to play in the maze and hopefully teach you about the wax myrtle while playing. The wax myrtle has been an important plant in our history. Everyone completing the game will win a small prize and be eligible to win a \$100 prize at the end of the month.

November: We've been really busy on the farm for the last few months. We had more visitors to the Pumpkin Patch and Maze this past October than ever before, and that's not counting the children that visited during field trips.

We have completed our third Fall Harvest Dinner and sold out all the tickets a week in advance. We finished up our Fall CSA last week and I'll really miss our members every week, but I'm glad for a break from the routine. We finish this week with our Thanksgiving on the Farm field trips. I'm afraid it's going to be a big let down as we finish all of the activities. Of course we are starting to take orders for our jams, pickles, and salsas gift boxes for Christmas, so it's not like we won't have anything to do. Cold weather also means more work with the animals. We have to make sure everybody has plenty of food and dry bedding. If it's really cold we have to break ice in water troughs. The winter months may not have as many activities, but the work is maybe the most important of the year.

This time of year is a time of cleaning up on the farm. We have to get everything put away from the Fall activities. We have to remove the plastic mulch from the vegetable fields and plow everything up. We'll leave the fields fallow for now. We have to get all the good pumpkins picked and out of the field if there are any left. Then we have to get those fields plowed under also. It won't be long be-

fore we are planting spring/summer crops. In fact we will start planting potatoes and onions by the end of January. I'm already starting to look through seed catalogs to pick out vegetables for spring.

We've had a raccoon problem this year in the pumpkin field. I always knew raccoons would eat watermelons and especially sweet corn, but I never knew they would eat pumpkins. They were very brave and would come right into the tent where the extra large pumpkins were. No small or medium pumpkins for them. They would sit right in front of us and eat away. We learn something new about our animals both the farm animals and the wild ones all the time.

We are starting to plan activities at the farm for next year. If you have a suggestion for something new we can try, pass it on to us. Also if you have any ideas on how to improve things we're already doing, please feel free to let us know



South Carolina Department of Agriculture



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We're on the Web!

www.agriculture.sc.gov
www.scschoolgardens.blogspot.com

School Gardens Program

The South Carolina Department of Agriculture started the School Gardens 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



Upcoming Carolina Children's Garden Events

Monday, January 17, 10 a.m.-Noon
A Winter Walk

Take a guided walk through the woods and around the ponds at the Clemson Sandhill REC to discover what nature is up to at midwinter. \$2 per child; no strollers. Space is limited; register in advance. Children must be accompanied by an adult.

Saturday, February 19, 8-10 a.m.
Great Backyard Bird Count

Join us for a morning of birding as we participate in the North American Great Backyard Bird Count. Experienced birders will team up with novices to collect data that will aid in research and conservation efforts. Refreshments, crafts, and an education table will be available. FREE; families welcome. Register in advance. Children must be accompanied by an adult.

Monday, February 21, 3-4 p.m.
February Forestry

How does a tree grow? Investigate the life cycles of trees, learn to interpret growth rings, and practice identifying local trees. \$2 per child; recommended for children ages 6-12. Space is limited; register in advance. Children must be accompanied by an adult.

Sunday, March 20, 2-4 p.m.
Spring Fling

Join us as we welcome spring! Enjoy crafts, games, and fun spring gardening projects. FREE. Families welcome. Register in advance. Children must be accompanied by an adult.

Saturday, March 26, 10-12 a.m.
Butterfly Gardening

Study the life cycle of the butterfly, learn about the differences between butterflies and moths, and discover how you can attract butterflies to your own home through strategic planting. Make-and-take craft included. \$2 per child; recommended for children ages 6-12. Space is limited; register in advance. Children must be accompanied by an adult. for ages 6-12. Children must be accompanied by an adult.

All events are hosted at the Carolina Children's Garden, 900 Clemson Rd. Call 803-459-3212, e-mail carolinachildrengarden@gmail.com or visit our website at www.carolinachildrengarden.org for more information.

