



Local News

A North Dakota Department of Agriculture Initiative - Agriculture Commissioner Doug Goehring

July 10, 2009

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Great Plains Food Bank begins mobile food pantry project



(l-r) Great Plains Food Bank employees Kelly Ask and Missy Sobolik showing Ag Department employee Stephanie Sinner around the warehouse in Fargo. Great Plains Program Director Steve Sellent has his back to the camera.

Great Plains Food Bank in Fargo, the only food bank in the state, services 232 charitable feeding programs in 80 North Dakota communities annually. It distributed five million pounds of food through deliveries last year in an effort to feed the state's hungry.

A recent study showed that for one in 12 residents, this network made the difference between food on the table or going hungry.

In addition to purchasing large quantities of food through a regional cooperative program, Great Plains also has a recovery program in Fargo. A driver with a truck picks up food from restaurants, grocery stores, schools and colleges every day to redistribute to shelters and soup kitchens. But there's always the need for more – food, services and volunteers.

The Going Local initiative chose five partners to

(Continued on page 5)

Localmotion

From seed to soil

Students from Wahpeton Indian School, in Wahpeton, transplanted the vegetables they grew from seed before going home for the summer.

The group installed four raised bed gardens. It was questionable if the corn that was sowed indoors would survive being transplanted outdoors, but it appears to be doing great.

The garden has a sandbox for root vegetables and potatoes. The potatoes (Red River reds, of course) look good and the beets, carrots, radishes and turnips are coming up.

The remaining boxes have corn, green beans, peas, squash, cucumbers, tomatoes, sunflowers, morning glories, peppers and marigolds all started from seed in the classroom.

The Richland County Vo-tech donated some marigolds and petunias to beautify the garden spot.

First Lutheran seeking boards for gardening boxes

Members of First Lutheran Church in Fargo have plans to build square-foot garden kits over the winter to give to people who may otherwise have limited access to fresh produce so they can grow their own next spring.

These small boxes can accommodate several plants or row crops in small spaces and are perfect for gardeners in apartments or condos.

The model frame is 4-feet x 4-feet, but other similar-sized frames would work too. The beds are built using boards ranging from 2-inch by 6-inch to 2-inch by 10-inch. The 2-inch by 10-inch boards are preferable as the deeper bed is better for root crops.

To build these boxes economically, the church group is gathering scrap wood or donations. If you have any wood, weed block material or seeds lying around and would like to contribute them, or if you know of someone who might be able to help, please email Mary Jean Dean at mjdehne@flcfargo.org.

Minot local foods group plans harvest classes

The Minot area local foods group hosted informational booths at the Verendrye Electric and Souris River Telephone annual meetings.

Group members have planned two classes in August at the North Central Research Extension Center. Both classes begin at 7 p.m.

- Thursday, Aug. 20 - Instruction for gardeners on how to blanch and freeze fresh vegetables.
- Thursday, Aug. 27 - A demonstration on how to make spaghetti sauce from fresh ingredients.

Gail Slinde from NDSU Extension Services will be teaching both classes. There will be a \$10 materials fee for each class and students will take home what they make. Call the extension office at 701-857-6450 to register.

Valley City Farmers Market celebrates 30 years

A cold wet spring may mean the vegetables are not quite ready to be picked, but residents in Valley City are ready to go to market.

The Valley City Farmers Market opens a bit late this season, but it will be held from 4 to 6 p.m. Mondays and Thursdays. The new location will be 727 15th Ave. S.W., the north end of the Pamida parking lot, because of flooding issues at the Rosebud Visitor Center.

There's also a weekly drawing for the customers. Valley City Farmers Market began in 1979 with charter members Norma Voldal, Sharon Clancy and Becky Huber who are still active in the market today. In its 30th year, the market will be celebrating its success later in the season.

A second market held at Hirschberger Park opened in June from 10 a.m. to noon on Saturdays.

CMC community garden has been planted

*Photos and update
by Amanda McKinnon*

The Catalyst Community Garden began planting its seeds on Saturday, June 6.

From church groups sponsoring new Americans; to a grandfather teaching his grandchildren about century-old gardening tools; to employees gathering together, this journey has been one of appreciating nature, connecting with our neighbors and of course, growth.

A variety of food to enrich the soul and body has been planted including spinach, watermelon, spices, peppers, tomatoes, pumpkins and more. We have established Wednesday nights as our time to unite to water, weed and care for the half-acre plot we share.

Cheers to gardening in a group!



*Deciding where to
put the bedding
plants... and then
the work begins.*



*There can be no other occupation
like gardening in which, if you were to
creep up behind someone at their work,
you would find them smiling.*

~Mirabel Osler



Probstfield Organic Community Garden commits produce

By Abby Gold

Probstfield Organic Community Garden in North Moorhead has more than 80 plots rented this year! Funding from the Otto Bremer Foundation will be used to initiate a Gleaning and Education program in the garden.

An anticipated 6,000 pounds of produce will be delivered to local shelters and the food bank in the Fargo-Moorhead area.

Two great organizations Minnesota CEP, and its green team of youth have committed to working in

the garden once a week and the Social Connexion, an organization offering social activities for people with chronic and persistent mental illness will also be helping out.

If anyone knows of other groups with transportation available who would want to help Owen Sivertson in the garden, please contact Abby Gold by email at abby.gold@ndsu.edu.

Additionally, Clay County Extension will be offering nutrition education and horticultural education through an organic gardening demonstration plot at Probstfield throughout the summer.

Are you on the map?

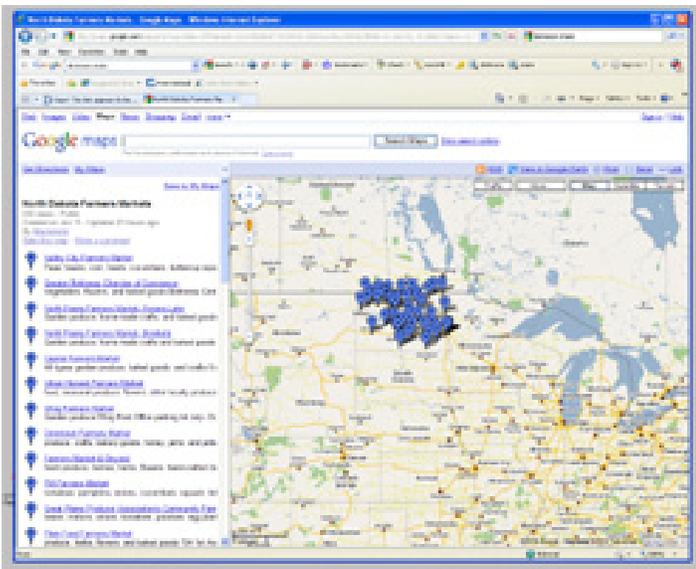
It's time for farmers markets to begin in North Dakota. To make it easier to find them, here is a link to the new Google map of farmers markets in the state: <http://maps.google.com/maps/ms?msa=0&ie=UTF8&msid=112423008665741334354.00046c64fe124cf3033fb&ll=45.336702,-95.888672&spn=13.743222,28.125&z=5>

If your market is not listed on this site, please let us know. We would like to add it.

When people visit our state they will be looking for markets and this will be a useful tool, as well as the new *Farmers Market Directory* available free from the North Dakota Department of Agriculture. Call 800-242-7534 or email info@agdepartment.com.



The gardens are growing, and so are the wild flowers like North Dakota's state flower, the Prairie Rose. It can be found growing along the side of many roads and in the Teddy Roosevelt National Park.



Want to learn more about marketing your farm products online?

Andrew Angus has produced and offered a free downloadable booklet called “Farm Marketing Made Easy.” His web site <http://farms.switchmarketing.com/> has a multitude of informational tips and tidbits about online marketing. If you desire more assistance, his Web page services are outlined in an easy to understand chart. Prices are clearly marked.

In this age of social networking, an online presence can be fundamental to a great marketing program. Angus outlines steps to creating a marketing plan and then offers tips on creating a good logo, marketing materials, and building a website.

The download is also available by e-mailing suebalcom@nd.gov.

Donations of fresh produce can be accepted at food pantries

(Continued from page 1)

kick off local foods in October of last year. Included in that list was Great Plains Food Bank. Setting a goal to fight hunger by promoting more community and school garden “plant a row for the hungry” programs was a high priority. The initiative also encourages home gardeners and farmers market vendors to remember that excess produce would be appreciated by their local food pantry.

There are still several hurdles to accepting and distributing fresh produce on a large scale for distribution.

1. The distance between communities seems to grow every year as small towns are getting smaller at the same time the population grows older. This means the need for healthy food increases while it becomes more difficult to service these areas.
2. Many food pantries in smaller towns have limited hours and volunteers. That means perishable foods like milk; meats and fresh vegetables and fruits cannot be delivered or picked up in a timely manner.
3. Smaller food banks may not have freezers or refrigerators to keep perishable items until they can be distributed.

Great Plains has addressed these issues by approaching the Legislature this past session and receiving money to begin a mobile distribution system. This “Mobile Food Pantry” operates much like a bookmobile. Pre-packed boxes weighing 40 pounds are currently delivered to three sites every other month.

There’s also a new program to assist food pantries in acquiring much needed freezers and refrigerators and to create a uniform application process for statewide use.



The packing room at Great Plains Food Bank in Fargo.

On a lighter note, preparation education has become a key to food distribution. Combining the necessary ingredients for a dish such as chili, including a recipe, in a simple-to-use kit can make the difference between food being eaten or returned to the pantry.

Great Plains relies on 2,400 volunteers every year to assist with packing and distributing food to those in need. There are only 14 full-time employees. That means only very large quantities of produce can be picked up. For the rest, the food bank and its pantries must rely on local gardeners to deliver excess produce.

Another goal of the Going Local initiative would be providing EBT (electronic benefit transfer) services at farmers markets allowing SNAP (supplemental nutrition assistance program) participants to purchase fresh vegetables.

In addition to the social aspect of farmers markets, access to fresh vegetables is important to the health of our state’s population. For more information about volunteering in your community, contact Great Plains Food Bank at 701-232-6219.

Deadlines for National Gardening Association grants approaching

Grants encourage the Family Farming System

Deadline: August 1, 2009

The mission of Farm Aid is to keep family farmers throughout the United States on their land. Farm Aid supports organizations that work to maintain a family farm system of agriculture and that promote solutions to the challenges facing rural communities. Grants are provided in the following categories: *Growing the Good Food Movement* supports projects that increase the interest in family farm-identified, organic, or humanely-raised food; *Helping Farmers Thrive* supports projects that assist farmers transitioning to more sustainable farming practices, as well as support services for farm families in crisis; and *Taking Action to Change the System* grants enable advocates to strengthen the voices of family farmers and promote their interests on a local, regional, and national level.

2009 Hooked on Hydroponics

Education Grants

Deadline: September 18, 2009

The Grow Store and ProgressiveGardening.org have joined with the National Gardening Association to offer hydroponic equipment to expand indoor gardening opportunities for elementary, middle, and high school students. The program will provide 36 schools with equipment and learning materials for hydroponics projects that involve at least fifteen children between the ages of 6 and 18 during the 2010 school year. Applicants must verify that their facility can accommodate the equipment in the award packages available for their age group.

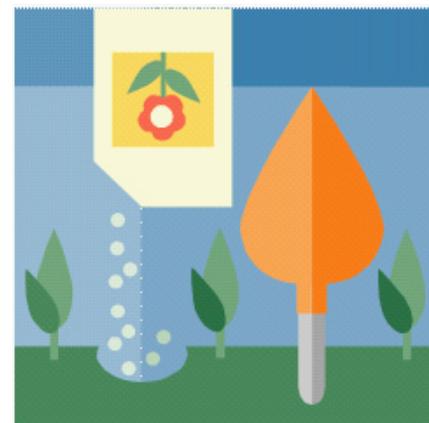
2009 Healthy Sprouts Awards Program

Deadline: October 17, 2009

The National Gardening Association encourages the growth of health-focused youth garden programs through the Healthy Sprouts Awards program sponsored by Gardener's Supply Company. The awards support school and youth garden programs that teach about nutrition and the issue of hunger in the United States. To be eligible for the 2009 Healthy Sprouts Awards, a school or organization must plan to garden in 2010 with at least fifteen children between the ages

of 3 and 18. The selection of winners is based on the demonstrated relationship between the garden program and nutrition and hunger issues in the United States.

In 2009, the program will present awards to twenty schools or organizations. Each recipient program will receive gardening supplies and resources, including gift certificates toward the purchase of gardening materials from Gardener's Supply. The top five programs will each receive a certificate valued at \$500; fifteen more programs will each receive a \$200 gift certificate.



Youth Garden Grants Program

Deadline: November 2, 2009

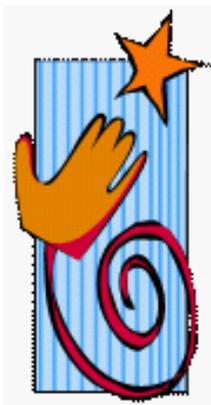
The National Gardening Association (NGA) has announced that the Home Depot is returning as the Youth Garden Grants sponsor for 2010. NGA annually awards Youth Garden Grants to schools and community organizations with child-centered garden programs across the United States. Schools, youth groups, community centers, camps, clubs, treatment facilities, and intergenerational groups throughout the United States are eligible. Applicants must plan to garden with at least 15 children between the ages of 3 and 18 years. Previous Youth Garden Grant winners who wish to reapply may do so, but must wait one year before applying again, and must have significantly expanded their garden programs. For the 2010 grant cycle, 100 grants are available. Five programs will each receive gift cards valued at \$1,000 (a \$500 gift card to the Home Depot and a \$500 gift card to the Gardening with Kids catalog and educational materials from NGA). Ninety-five programs will each receive a \$500 gift card to the Home Depot and educational materials from NGA.

Information on these grants can be found at <http://www.kidsgardening.com/healthysprouts.asp>

Fargo's newest market opens

Fargo has a new open-air market.

The Plain Food Farmer's Market will be open from 4 to 7 p.m. every Thursday from July 9 to Oct. 1. It will be held on the street in front of the Plains Art Museum, 701 First Ave. N, and admission to the museum is free on market nights. The museum is open until 8 p.m.



Flower and vegetable vendors as well as community gardeners are invited to host a booth or table. For more information or a vendor application, contact Colleen Sheehy, director at 701-232-3821 or email museum@plainsart.org

or Stephanie Sinner at 701-239-7211 or email ssinner@nd.gov.

Consumer guide to grass-fed beef available

The University of Wisconsin Extension office has released "A Consumer's Guide to Grass-fed Beef," as a free download. This brochure has information about the health and environmental benefits of grass-fed beef and how to buy and cook grass-fed beef. There are also several beef recipes included.

It can be downloaded free of charge from <http://learningstore.uwex.edu/A-Consumers-Guide-to-Grass-fed-Beef-P1323C0.aspx> or email suebalcom@nd.gov.

Is your community planning a local foods meeting or event?

Send your information to

suebalcom@nd.gov

or visit our networking site at

<http://goinglocalnd.ning.com/>

Add your information by clicking on "add events."

Farmers Market and Growers board members meet the commissioner



Members of the North Dakota Farmers Market and Growers Association met with North Dakota's new Agriculture Commissioner Doug Goehring. (back, l-r) Marv Baker, Karen Gehring, Dan Folske, (front, l-r) Sue Balcom, Holly Mawby, Sharon Andrus and Patty Patrie. Each participant was given the opportunity to tell about their experiences with the NDFMGA and a little of what the future holds.

Looking for something to add to your farmers market this summer?

Stephen Duster, an international pianist and composer who lives and works in South Korea, has returned to the North Dakota area during the summer months and is available for performances. He has offered to perform at a variety of places including restaurants, weddings, farmers markets and festivals while he is in the area this summer. He has his own portable piano and sound system. Duster has offered to come by to markets and perform his compositions for your customers in return for power and cover in case of rain. Duster is available to perform at events between June 28 and July 22nd.

You can listen to his music, and watch him perform live at the following web site: <http://www.sanddust.com>.

For more information or to book an event, call 253-292-8268.



North Dakota Farmers Market and Growers Association supports adding music to your market scene – especially if you've never featured music and are looking for a new twist this year!

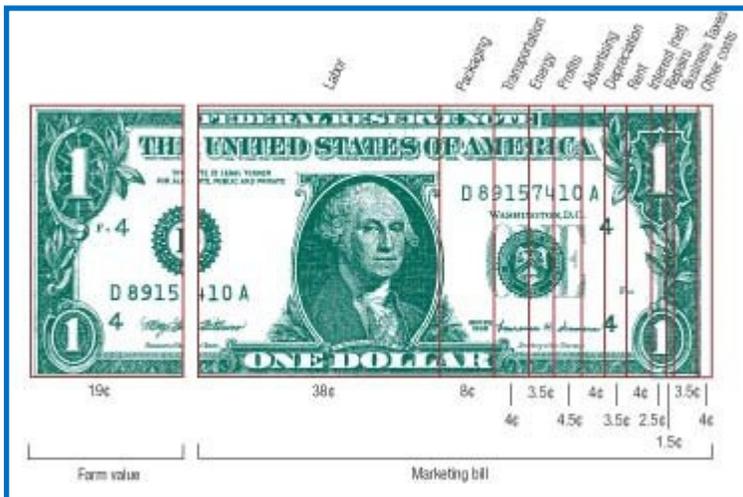
How much of the cost of food services and distribution goes to farmers?

A report released by the USDA breaks down the cost of food to highlight the shrinking farmers share of the food dollar.

The estimated bill for marketing domestic farm foods—which does not include imported foods—was \$498 billion in 1999. This amount covered all charges for transporting, processing, and distributing foods that originated on U.S. farms. It represented 80 percent of the \$618 billion consumers spent for these foods. The remaining 20 percent, or \$121 billion, represents the gross return paid to farmers.

The cost of marketing farm foods has increased considerably over the years, mainly because of rising costs of labor, transportation, food packaging materials, and other inputs used in marketing, and also because of the growing volume of food and the increase in services provided with the food.

In 1990, the cost of marketing farm foods amounted to \$343 billion. In the decade after that, the cost of marketing rose about 57 percent. In 2000, the marketing bill rose 6.9 percent.



The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) annually publishes the *Agriculture Fact Book*, which contains a figure of a dollar bill broken into segments to represent the allocation of each dollar we spend on food. The 2001–2002 *Fact Book* showed that farmers received nineteen cents per food dollar; the remaining eighty-one cents went toward everything else, subsumed under “marketing.”² This shocking statistic reveals the distorted values of our consumerist culture.

These rising costs have been the principal factor affecting the rise in consumer food expenditures. From 1990 to 2000, consumer expenditures for farm foods rose \$211 billion. Roughly 92 percent of this increase resulted from an increase in the marketing bill.

The cost of labor is the biggest part of the total food marketing bill, accounting for nearly half of all marketing costs. Labor used by assemblers, manufacturers, wholesalers, retailers, and eating places cost \$252 billion in 2000.

This was 4.7 percent higher than in 1999 and 64 percent more than in 1990. The total number of food marketing workers in 2000 was about 14.3 million, about 17 percent more than in 1990. About 80 percent of the growth in food industry employment occurred in public eating places. A wide variety of other costs comprise the balance of the marketing bill.

These costs include packaging, transportation, energy, advertising, business taxes, net interest, depreciation, rent, and repairs. Their relative proportions are illustrated in the accompanying dollar chart.

*Despite the gardener's best intentions,
Nature will improvise.*

~Michael P. Garafalo, gardendigest.com

Local light

Let the harvest begin

Summer has officially started now that the Fourth of July has fizzled into memories.

July's warm evenings bring mosquitoes in clouds of noise and annoyance. But also the warmth wakens the tomatoes and peppers. Stunted gardens are now rewarding our efforts with green, blooms and early crops.

Is there a greater joy than shopping in your garden as you plan your dinner? I think not.

We have had an abundance of lettuce and spinach in our raised bed garden near the house. This week, the zucchini are the proper size for salads and the bunnies. Even though I hate to share, the animals have not been too selfish and only nibble little bits here and there. I'm sure my tune will change in the near future as they become bolder and the fruits of my labor become more obvious.

There's basil and dill, as well as some kale. I've been picking green onions sparingly as I hope to have enough large white and red onions to dry for winter.

My two plots in the Mandan Community Garden are also doing well. It survived the Mandan Rodeo Days in fine style. Every time I visit the plants appear to have grown by inches and there are tiny tomatoes forming on the vine. I bedded that garden with straw bales – it looks so wonderful under its yellow blanket. The ground remains moist and I can walk around in there without the danger of muddying up my cros. My spouse so kindly brought me a pair of those goofy-looking shoes with the holes in top because they were on sale... I swore I would never wear a pair and guess what? They are the perfect slip-on, slip-off, rinse-off and the cleanest pair of gardening shoes I have ever owned. Pretty comfortable too, I might add.

Life's little pleasures, a good up of coffee, a sunrise, a garden to weed and a new pair of shoes.

Farmers markets are beginning all over the state so I thought you may enjoy this very simple recipe for fresh greens from the garden. It's easy and can be adapted to whatever vegetables you currently have in season.

Easy, versatile, good for you salad

Step 1 –

Pick your greens early in the morning while still dewy fresh. Place in bag and refrigerate until you

come home from work. Then, wash well, pat dry and put in colander in the fridge to freshen up. Meanwhile chop up a little green onion, radishes, tomatoes... whatever you have in your refrigerator. Chill while you work on the dressing.

Step 2 –

1 or 2 garlic cloves
½ to 1 teaspoon of salt (to taste, and, yes, I love sea salt so use it!)
3 to 5 tablespoons of olive oil
½ teaspoon of black pepper (or more if you love it as much as I do.)
½ teaspoon of ground yellow mustard
Crush the garlic with the back of a spoon, add the salt and grind it into a paste. Put in a bowl add the olive oil and the rest of the spices (you can improvise with more or less or different seasonings.)
Whisk together well.

Step 3 –

When it's time to serve the salad, add the lettuce to the oil and mix until the leaves are coated and shiny. Add the remaining vegetables. Stir to coat them also. I use a large bowl for this step and then transfer to a serving dish.

Step 4 –

Sprinkle with balsamic vinegar (or any of your favorite flavored vinegar) to taste.
Transfer to a clean bowl and serve immediately.

We love this salad and it's adaptable and easy to whip up. It's also good for you and doesn't mask the flavor of the greens. By tossing the greens in the oil they are coated with flavor through and through. Adding the vinegar last keeps everything crisp and delicious.

Experiment, eat healthy and get outside -- summer's are precious in North Dakota and we don't want to waste a minute.



A personal column
By Sue B. Balcom