Establishing Learning Farm Demonstration Site
Amy Garrett - Small Farms Extension Agent – Benton, Linn, and Polk Counties

Situation
Successfully Navigating the First Ten Years: Education Targeting Farm Developmental Stages to Achieve Profitability and Environmental Sustainability is a 3-year project funded by the United States Department of Agriculture. One of the four main objectives for this project is to establish learning and demonstration farms in three locations throughout the state, one being in Benton County at the Oak Creek Center for Urban Horticulture (OCCUH). The main purpose for the learning farm is to provide demonstration areas for sustainable farming methods for advanced beginning farmers.

The demonstration areas for OCCUH site in 2015 will involve:
• Dry farming
• Variety trials (culinary interest and disease resistance)
• Small-scale equipment field day

Variety Trials via the Culinary Breeding Network

Dry Farming Demonstration
Three 10’ x 100’ plots are being established this spring at OCUH to demonstrate dry farming management techniques in several crops including dry beans, tomatoes, potatoes, squash and melon. Varieties and management practices were selected based on interviews with several established growers experienced in dry farming techniques. An on-site weather station will monitor soil temperature and moisture in each plot. This will be linked to a Dry Farming Demonstration page on the Oregon Small Farms website and updated with pictures throughout the season. Several educational field days will be held to observe crop response and include side-by-side tastings for quality comparisons of both dry farmed and irrigated crops.

Small-Scale Equipment Field Day
Finding the right tools and equipment can be challenging for small farmers. Having the right or wrong equipment can greatly affect efficiency of operations and make a significant impact on farm profitability. Renting or borrowing equipment before purchasing your own is recommended. Equipment can be expensive! A small-scale equipment field day will be held at OCUH in the fall of 2015. Multiple tool-makers, suppliers and equipment geeks will be invited so that farmers can see equipment in action, try tools out, and ask questions. There will also be classes offered on tool sharpening and equipment maintenance, ergonomics, and a Farm Hack aspect to this event in which farmers can share some of their equipment innovations.

Projected Outcomes
Dry Farming Demonstration
Farmers that attend field day(s) and/or visit the Dry Farm Demo page on the Oregon Small Farms website will gain awareness about dry farming techniques used to grow some crops without any form of irrigation. Field Day participants will also get to try dry-farmed and irrigated tomatoes in side-by-side taste comparisons.

Variety Trials
These trials connect farmers and plant breeders with the culinary world. Farmers will learn more about on-farm plant breeding and seed saving from the workshops organized with these trials.

Small-Scale Equipment Field Day
Participants will leave with a better understanding of small-scale equipment available and how it is used, innovative ideas from farmers and tool-makers, and sharper tools.