



## Eyes on Orange County:

### The Roots of Farming in Orange County

#### The Land

Before settlers had even arrived on its soil, Orange County held a promising future right in its landscape. Located in the foothills of the Blue Ridge Mountains—entirely within the Piedmont Plateau—the land has been home to generations of farmers who have recognized and utilized the potential of its rich soils.



Orange County today encompasses an area of 309 square miles, or 197,760 acres. Of that, 54.7% is forest, 42% is crops or pasture, and 3.3% is taken by other uses. The best agricultural soil of the county is the Davidson clay loam, whose depth, drainage, and relief make it favorable for farming. Chemically, the majority of the soils in Orange County are lacking in nitrogen, lime, and phosphoric acid, and so they frequently require additional fertilization. Despite these deficiencies, nearly all of the county's soils are capable of supporting good pasture land and hay, lending to favorable agriculture.

#### The Climate

Other important factors in farming are weather conditions and climate. Orange County has an average temperature of 54.6 degrees Fahrenheit, and receives an average annual rainfall of 43.43 inches. This classifies the county as having a "temperate humid climate." Most agriculture is done in the frost-free season, which lasts an average of 192 days in areas where the land is primarily agricultural. With warm to hot summers—and cold but short winters—hardier crops such as grains and grasses can thrive and continue to grow even into the spring and fall.

JAMES MADISON MUSEUM  
129 CAROLINE ST.  
ORANGE, VA  
22960-1532

540-672-1776

The James Madison Museum is owned and operated by The James Madison Memorial Foundation. Copyright 2003. All rights reserved.

***"Essentially all life depends upon the soil... There can be no life without soil and no soil without life; they have evolved together."***

***- Charles E. Kellogg, USDA Yearbook of Agriculture, 1938.***