

Newsblast

August 7, 2023

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A Message from VBFRC

Hello everyone! We hope you are doing well this summer. We are excited to share this month's newblast with upcoming trainings, events, and announcements from across the state. Enjoy!

The Virginia Beginning Farmer & Rancher Coalition is a state-wide and coalition-based Extension program, housed in Virginia Tech's Department of Agricultural, Leadership, and Community Education. Funding is sponsored by the Beginning Farmer and Rancher Development Program (BFRDP) of the USDA National Institute of Food and Agriculture (NIFA) Award #2020-49400-32326. This funding is led by VSU's Small Farm Outreach Program.

Partner Highlight

**Farm Dinner Theater at the Catawba Sustainability Center
Monday, August 28 from 6-8:30 pm**

It's the heat of the season, and you're at your wits end! The sun is a-blazin', the sweat is a-drippin', the zucchini is a-poppin'! It's time to take a rest (even just for one night). We invite you to join for a free locally catered farm-to-table meal in solidarity with fellow farmers where we will explore ways of taking care of ourselves even in the busiest of seasons. Facilitators will guide participants through easy and approachable theatre activities that invite dialogue around farmer health, wellness, and safety. AgrAbility Virginia will also be joining us to share resources available to farmers in the state.

Please register to secure your spot! <https://tinyurl.com/farmdinnertheater>

For more information, please contact Mo McGonagle at Mo@leapforlocalfood.org.

If you are an individual with a disability and desire an accommodation, please contact Katie Trozzo at ketrozzo@vt.edu 540-231-4582 during regular business hours at least 10 days prior to the event.

Note: Green underlined text is a link

Announcements

Join the Soil for Water Network

The Soil for Water network is a growing community of commercial farmers, ranchers and land managers across the United States who are interested in regenerative practices and learning together how to improve soil so it will catch and hold more water. Join the network and participate in their forum, events, and receive technical assistance.

Market Garden Apprenticeship at Hidden Creek Farm

We are seeking a qualified individual who wishes to transition into a long-term career in organic, regenerative farming and/or Value-Add production. Desirable experience for a candidate would include at least basic educational or hands-on training in vegetable production or horticulture, and budget management. It might also include team oversight, marketing, entrepreneurship, and a vision for growing a market garden value-add business. Attendance at, and graduation from, a recent onsite training or institutional agricultural or culinary program is preferred, but not mandatory.

Online Agroforestry Trainings for Natural Resource Providers

This educational series of online courses and in-person workshops is designed to help you provide technical assistance to land managers regarding agroforestry, or the use of trees for agricultural purposes. It focuses on three agroforestry practices – alley cropping, silvopasture, and forest farming.

Pesticide Collection Opportunities

Pesticide collection will be available at locations across the state. See [the full list](#).

Veteran Cotton Farmer Grant, Applications Now Open

U.S. cotton growers can apply now through September 1, 2023 for the Climate Smart Cotton Program, a five-year initiative led by the U.S. Cotton Trust Protocol. The program aims to measure and improve the carbon footprint of the U.S. cotton industry while building on the four pillars of Climate Smart Agriculture (CSA) practices. Participating growers will receive technical and financial support as well as other benefits that can enhance their operations, profitability and environmental stewardship.

The grant purpose is to enroll Veterans in agriculture and provide financial and technical assistance to help them grow cotton. Find out more information on how to apply on [their youtube video](#).

The Virginia Association for Biological Farmers is Now Accepting Speaker Proposals

Speaker Proposals are being accepted for the Virginia Association for Biological Farming and VSU Small Farm Outreach Program Summit taking place January 19-21, 2024 at The Hotel Roanoke and Conference Center. Proposals are being accepted below for both: Pre-Conference Workshops Half & Full Day Sessions on Friday, 1/19 AND Conference Sessions 90 Minute Sessions on Saturday-Sunday, 1/20-1/21. Speaker RFP's are due by 9/1/23.

Climate-Smart Vegetable Production in the Southern Piedmont

Rodale Institute, in partnership with a team of twelve universities, farming NGOs, and consulting firms, is working with vegetable farmers and farmers markets in the Southern Piedmont to promote the adoption of climate-smart farming practices and expand markets for the sale of climate-smart commodities.

Fruit and Vegetable Safety Training Video for Field Employees

Safely producing fruits and vegetables requires everyone involved in planting, growing, harvesting, packing, and transporting fresh produce to understand food safety practices, as well as commitment from company owners and managers. This video was developed to support fresh produce growers as they implement employee training to reduce risks during fruit and vegetable production. It is intended for all farm employees, but especially focused on those employees that work in the field harvesting and packing fresh produce. Employee training is not only important for ensuring the microbial safety of fresh produce, but for meeting buyer food safety requirements, third-party audit requirements, and for being compliant with the Food Safety Modernization Act (FSMA) Produce Safety Rule. One of the requirements of the Produce Safety Rule is that those working with fresh produce must receive annual training on food safety practices, so this video was created just for them! [Also available in Spanish.](#)

New SARE Bulletin: What is Sustainable Agriculture?

SARE's newly revised What is Sustainable Agriculture? publication provides a primer to practices that can help farmers and ranchers improve the sustainability of any complex, integrated production and marketing system.

Training Series

Eat More Fish: The Oyster Edition, Free Summer Webinar Series

Are you hungry to learn how to incorporate oysters into your culinary repertoire? Satisfy your appetite and indulge in the oyster edition of Eat More Fish! Gain the know-how to start savoring oysters at home by joining our team of Extension specialists, industry insiders, and skilled cooks in this 3-session webinar series. Register and dive into the science behind incorporating oysters into our diets while celebrating their incredible role in supporting healthy waters. Learn the essential knowledge and techniques to safely and scrumptiously prepare oysters in your own kitchen - from selecting and handling to cooking and even shucking! [Register to attend.](#)

- August 9
- August 16
- August 23

Virginia Tree Farm Foundation Tree Farm Tours

The Virginia Forest Landowner Education Program partners with the Virginia Tree Farm Foundation to offer an annual series of Tree Farm tours. These tours bring woodland owners together to visit an active Tree Farm, learn about the Virginia Tree Farm Foundation, and provide fellowship among those who care about healthy woods and active woodland management. You do not need to be a Tree Farmer to attend.

- August 25 - Middle Mountain Tree Farm, Crozet
- September 15 - Huber Engineered Woods, South Boston
- October 6 – Bland County
- October 11 – Essex County

Generation NEXT Legacy Planning Workshops

Learn how to pass your land and your legacy on to the next generation while keeping it intact, in forest, and in family ownership. [Register by mail.](#) [Register online](#)

- September 16: Charlottesville (All day)
- October 20-21: Chatham (Friday evening and all-day Saturday)
- November 9: Richmond (6:00-9:00 pm)

Fall Forestry & Wildlife Field Tours

Join landowners, natural resource professionals, and other outdoor lovers for day-long tours that explore a variety of sustainable forestry and wildlife management practices. Tours visit private, public, and industry-owned lands. Past tours have visited seedling nurseries, timber harvesting operations, sawmills, elk habitat, Christmas tree farms, and more.

- October 6 - Bland County
- October 11 - Essex County
- October 12 - Mecklenburg County
- October 20 - Warren County

The Woods in Your Backyard online course

September 5 - November 14, 2023. Online. \$95 The course will help landowners convert lawn to natural areas and enhance stewardship of existing natural areas. Based on the guide of the same name, the course provides strategies to landowners of small parcels of land (1-10 acres) that improve the stewardship of their property for personal enjoyment and environmental quality. It uses a hands-on learning approach to help participants develop and implement a plan for their property. Activities include how to map habitat areas, understand basic ecological principles about woodland and wildlife, choose and implement a few habitat management projects, and how to set a timetable and record your progress. Online discussion groups will allow participants to interact with others taking the course. A certificate of completion is awarded when all assignments are completed.

Mapping with Drones (Virtual, 4 dates)

This 2-day virtual workshop will prepare participants with the knowledge necessary to take the FAA Remote Knowledge Aircraft Test (aka Part 107). All workshop materials are provided to participants (via snail-mail) prior to the workshop. The workshop has been well received by educators (high school, 2-year, 4-year), state & federal agency employees, the private sector (ranging from engineers to realtors), Cooperative Extension, and a slew of folks from various NGO's. This workshop is a great place to start for individuals who are considering using drones to support business applications, or managers who want to make solid decisions regarding drone issues moving forward.

- December 14 – 15, 2023
- January 4-5, 2024

4 the Soil Highlights



Soil Health Training Summer Webinars

The Virginia Soil Health Coalition is hosting a series of webinars with soil health specialist Mark Schonbeck. The webinars are part of a professional development program grant with Southern Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education (SARE). Mark has worked for 31 years as a researcher, consultant, and educator in sustainable and organic agriculture. He has participated in on-farm research into mulching, cover crops, minimum tillage, and nutrient management for organic vegetables. For many years, he has written for the Virginia Association for Biological Farming newsletter and served as their policy liaison to the National Sustainable Agriculture Coalition. He has also participated in different research projects to analyze, evaluate and improve federally funded organic and sustainable agriculture programs. In addition, Mark offers individual consulting in soil test interpretation, soil quality and nutrient management, crop rotation, cover cropping, and weed management.

August 8, 2:00-3:00 pm: Why “Organic” Matters for Soil Health in Virginia

Throughout the history of the organic agriculture movement, soil organic matter (SOM) has played a central role in the goals and practices of the organic method. The NOP Standards codify this priority, requiring certified producers to implement systems and practices that build SOM and soil health. This webinar will explore the nature of soil organic matter and how it relates to soil health, review recent research that documents the efficacy of organic systems in building and maintaining SOM, and provide guidelines for organic farmers and conservationists on how to fully realize the potential of the organic method to optimize SOM and soil health.

August 17, 2:00-3:00 pm: Biological Nutrient Management for Virginia

Organic and natural mineral nutrient sources allowed by the USDA NOP Standards offer both advantages and challenges in meeting crop needs while enhancing soil health and protecting ground and surface water from excess nutrients. Unlike conventional soluble fertilizers that can be metered precisely, organic nutrient sources must undergo biological processing to release nutrients, especially nitrogen (N) and phosphorus (P) to crops. As best organic practices enhance soil health, the soil's biological capacity to meet crop nutrient without concentrated fertilizers increases. This webinar will explore biologically based nutrient dynamics and provide guidance on how organic producers and conservationists can realize the soil's potential to sustain production with minimal use of concentrated and potentially polluting nutrient sources.

Podcast Episode 23-16: Seeds of Change: Enhancing Food Access, Local Food Systems, and Childhood Education

Healthy soil means healthy plants which means healthy people and a healthy planet. In this episode, Jeff Ishee, Eric Bendfeldt, and Sarah Koth speak with Kathy Yoder, the Education Outreach Program Director

at Vine and Fig in Harrisonburg, Virginia, about the nonprofit's local programs to strengthen local food systems, ensure access to wholesome nutrition for underserved communities, and educate youth on food production and sustainability. Kathy digs into the importance of empowering young minds to understand the connection between the life in the soil and a sustainable environment, specifically as relates to compost production and use. Listen to learn how Vine & Fig and the New Community Project are sowing the seeds of positive change to cultivate a healthier, more sustainable future for all from the soil up.

4 The Soil Blog: New posts every week!

Have you visited the [4 The Soil Blog](#) yet? There are new posts every week on the four core principles, soil health champions across the state, and more. Check it out and share with your family, friends, and colleagues!

T-shirt Sale

A tee-shirt sale is being hosted by the Virginia Association of Soil and Water Conservation Districts that is directly in line with the work of 4 The Soil and the VA Soil Health Coalition. Consider buying a t-shirt!



August Events

August 8, 5:30 – 7:00 pm: Tree Fruit Basics: Apples (Roseland, VA)

This tree fruit basics class will cover everything you need to know about growing your own apples. Topics include site selection, cultivar selection, pruning, pest and disease management, and harvest. Whether you already have a tree or you're thinking about planting apples, this is the class for you! Taught by Dickie Brothers Orchard's very own John Bruguiera and your local tree fruit Extension Agent, Grace Monger. This educational workshop-style series is organized by Nelson County VCE and hosted by local tree fruit producers. Dress appropriately for the weather as we will be outdoors and an educational walking tour is part of our program.

August 11, 8:30-1:30 pm: Central Virginia Crops Expo (Brookneal, VA)

Virginia Cooperative Extension is hosting the Central Virginia Crops Expo for a second year on Friday, August 11th. The event will be held on-farm at 1838 Hat Creek Road; Brookneal, VA in Campbell County. The program will begin at 8:30 AM, include a lunch sponsored by Virginia Farm Bureau and conclude early afternoon. A trade show will run concurrently with the program. Producers are asked to RSVP to the Charlotte County Extension Office by August 4th at (434) 542-5884.

August 11, 1:00 pm: Virginia Pork Council Annual Meeting (Richmond, VA)

The annual meeting of the Virginia Pork Council, Inc. will take place at 1 p.m. on Friday, Aug. 11, 2023 at Virginia Farm Bureau Federation in the Auditorium, 12580 W. Creek Parkway, Richmond, VA 23238. All members are encouraged to attend. A free lunch will be available to all registered attendees between noon and the start of the program at 1 p.m. [Please register to attend.](#)

August 15, 10:00-12:00 pm: Invasive Species Affecting Virginia: Spotted Lanternfly and Asian Longhorn Tick (Virtual)

The Spotted Lanternfly is an invasive species native to Asia. In 2014 it was found in Pennsylvania, and has since spread to multiple counties in Pennsylvania, Maryland, and Virginia. This insect is a threat to many fruit crops and trees. The Asian Longhorn Tick is native to eastern Asia. It is a serious pest of livestock as well as pets. Cattle producers and homeowners should be aware of it. This important information will be presented by Scott Baker, ANR Agent in Bedford County.

August 15, 3:00-5:00 pm: 2023 Twilight Grower Meetings Loudoun Flower Growers Meeting (Waterford, VA)

[Please register to attend.](#)

August 16, 9:00-12:00 pm: Plastic-Laying Demonstration (Virginia Beach, VA)

For over a half century farmers have used plasticulture for increased crop yields, soil moisture retention, improved weed control, and to lengthen the growing season without using a greenhouse. A short farm tour for Q&A will be followed by a plastic laying demonstration. This workshop will teach you the basics of plastic laying equipment, various irrigation and plastic products available to the industry, and the unique method of planting developed by Creekmore's Place called "2-10-T." Afterwards there will be a short beekeeping talk, as well as a honey, jelly and jam tasting.

August 17, 9:00-3:00 pm: SNAP Program for Small Farmers (Petersburg, VA)

Learn how SNAP EBT and Virginia Fresh Match empower families with tight food budgets to bring home more fresh fruits and vegetables by increasing their purchasing power. Learn how it can help expand local farmers' customer base. Discover how nutrition incentives work in your community, and how participating in the Virginia Fresh Match network can benefit your farming operation and help you reach new customers.

August 17, 1:00-3:00 pm: RVA Urban Ag Kickoff! (Richmond, VA)

You won't want to miss the inaugural RVA Urban Ag Kickoff! presented by the United States Department of Agriculture and the VSU Small Farm Outreach Program, a unit of Virginia Cooperative Extension. You'll enjoy this fun and informative community event.

August 18, 9:00-3:00 pm: UMES Annual Ag Showcase Event (Princess Anne, MD)

In partnership with Atlantic Tractor, UMES Extension will present the 2023 Ag Showcase. This event will showcase modern technologies in farm equipment and operation, agronomy, research and crop production as well as to introduce agriculture diversification opportunities for farms both small or large. Attendees will learn about the ongoing research being conducted on more than 35 specialty crops (herbs, small fruits, ethnic vegetables, etc.) and more. The event will also feature the USDA-funded UMES Research, Extension and Teaching Farm building's transformation and include lunch, sponsored by Mountaire Agri-Business.

August 18, 6:00-8:00 pm: Garden Gallery Night (Roanoke, VA)

LEAP in Roanoke will be hosting a Garden Gallery Night fundraiser with live music by Grandin Village Strings on Friday, August 18 from 6-8 pm at the Mountain View Community Garden. Please register online to attend.

August 19, 1:00-4:00 pm: Virginia Tech’s Alston H. Smith Jr. Agricultural Research Public Open House

The Center’s scientists will provide an overview of their research projects focused on sustainable agriculture, invasive insect monitoring, plant pathology, and horticultural through research demonstrations, posters, and wagon-ride tours (1:20 and 3:00 pm) of the Center’s vineyards and orchards. This is an open event - all are welcome! Cold drinks and locally made desserts will be provided.

August 22, 9:00-11:00 am: Small Farm Orientation (Virtual)

This two-hour Zoom course is for new farmers with zero to five years of experience operating a farm. Marilyn Estes, regional program assistant for the VSU Small Farm Outreach Program, will walk attendees through the process of how to develop a productive and profitable farm. Participants will receive a Small Farm Orientation manual.

August 22, 4:00-6:30 pm: USDA Information Session (Petersburg, VA)

Learn about eligibility requirements and how to apply for USDA Farm Service Agency (FSA) direct or guaranteed loans as well as programs, service and cost share opportunities from other USDA agencies. Beginning, socially disadvantaged, and veteran farmers can get help to prepare applications for farm ownership and operating loans and learn about the requirements for borrowing. Find out about the resources and current grants that are available from USDA, including the Rural Development Renewable Energy for America (REAP) grant and loan guarantee program, Value-Added Producer Grant (VAPG) program, and Rural Business Enterprise Grant (RBEG) program. USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) programs are also available. These programs can help you implement conservation practices to reduce soil erosion, enhance water supplies, improve water quality, increase wildlife habitat and reduce damages caused by floods and other natural disasters.

August 24, 5:30 – 8:30 pm: High Tunnel Vegetable Production (Wytheville, VA)

High tunnel vegetable production is a game changer in the commercial vegetable world, allowing for year-round growing conditions. Grace Summers, SFOP State Program Assistant, will share her many years of experience and extension expertise in high tunnel commercial vegetable production. She will cover the topics of management, irrigation, crop selection, planting dates, and production practices.

August 26, 10:00-4:00 pm: Carter Farms Taste of Africa (Unionville, VA)

Join Carter Farms and Africulture for a family friendly field day bringing together plants, flavors, stories, and cultural traditions for new, beginning and experienced farmers. We'll plant grape vines at the first Black woman owned winery in Virginia while learning about conservation opportunities in agriculture for heir property. We will also discuss generational wealth and asset management while enjoying African cuisine.

August 29, 10:00 – 12:00 pm: Dexter 101 (Rapidan, VA)

This workshop will introduce participants to Dexter cattle and provide guidance and decision-making tools for small beef producers who are considering herds that include Dexter genetics. The information presented is based on current research being conducted at Virginia State University to access the appropriateness of Dexter and Dexter x Mashona crosses for small beef producers in Virginia. Dexter cattle are a small frame dual-purpose breed with the potential for meat to be more marbled than that of commercial breeds. Mashona cattle are hardy and known for their resistance to high temperatures, ticks and flies; and their ability to maintain reproductive efficiency in semi-arid regions.

August 31, 7:00-8:00 pm: Extending the Sheep & Goat Grazing Season Virtual Pasture Walk (Virtual)

An important goal for most livestock producers is to extend the grazing season, filling gaps in the availability of pasture forage. During this virtual pasture walk, we will look at ways to improve your pastures, increase carrying capacity and lengthen your grazing season. Learn how to improve pasture quality, increase production, and lower grazing expenses for sheep and goats.

September Events

September 7, 9 am – 12:00 pm: Sustainable Forestry & Small Wood Lot Management (Halifax, VA)

Sustainable forestry management is complex, with the need to manage trees, wildlife and the environment. We will discuss topics such as determining your management goals; working with forest professionals; timber sales and harvest; water quality; forest health; wildlife and other unexpected factors. We will also provide information on USDA programs and services relating to forestry management, tree planting and financial assistance. At the end of the workshop we will visit two forestry sites.

September 8-9: Advanced Woodland Owner Retreat (Providence Forge, VA)

Developed for those new to actively managing their woods, the Retreats combine classroom, field trip, and hands-on activities to teach concepts of sustainable woodland management. Past participation in landowner education programs is required.

September 9, 8:45-12:30 pm: New Christmas Tree Growers Meeting (Winchester, VA)

Kyle Peer, Superintendent - Reynolds Homestead Forest Resources Research Center, and Ryan Clouse, grower of Clouse's Pine Hill Farm, will discuss getting started with Christmas tree production. The topics include seedling selection, planting techniques, farm layout, and shearing. We will also discuss applying pesticides and herbicides safely. This is a hands-on workshop with indoor and outdoor sessions, wear appropriate footwear and bring work gloves. Please pre-register by September 4th.

September 9, 10:00-12:00 pm: Small Engine Maintenance (Ettrick, VA)

Come to this workshop and learn how to save time and money with best practices to maintain small engine farm equipment and keep it running year after year. The workshop will help you understand how a four-cycle small engine works, as well as common problems that occur and how to fix them. There will be some hands-on demonstrations, and we will also share some safety tips.

September 14, 5:30-8:30 pm: High Tunnel Vegetable Production (Blacksburg, VA)

High tunnel vegetable production is a game changer in the commercial vegetable world, allowing for year-round growing conditions. Grace Summers, SFOP State Program Assistant, will share her many years of experience and extension expertise in high tunnel commercial vegetable production. She will cover the topics of management, irrigation, crop selection, planting dates, and production practices.

September 14, 6:00 – 8:00 pm: Preparing the High Tunnel for Fall Tropical Plant Production (Unionville, VA)

As fall and winter approach, it is time to prepare our high tunnels. Season extension starts with preparation and maintenance. Michael Carter Jr., of Africulture and Carter Farms, will share tips and practices on how to grow tropical crops into the colder months. Let's warmly grow into the fall and winter seasons!

September 19, 9:00-11:00 am: Small Farm Orientation (Virtual)

This two-hour Zoom course is for new farmers with zero to five years of experience operating a farm. Leonel Castillo, state program assistant for the VSU Small Farm Outreach Program, will walk attendees through the process of how to develop a productive and profitable farm. Participants will receive a Small Farm Orientation manual.

September 21, 3:00-5:30 pm: Farm Viability Issues (Petersburg, VA)

Farms and homesteads can be dangerous. With a myriad of perils, it is important that landowners understand their responsibility to keep visitors safe and the liability they may incur if an injury occurs. Agents from the Virginia Farm Bureau will discuss why you, as a landowner, need the correct amount of

liability insurance to protect yourself from financial ruin. There will be an opportunity to ask questions at the end.

September 21, 5:30-8:30pm: High Tunnel Vegetable Production (Montvale, VA)

High tunnel vegetable production is a game changer in the commercial vegetable world, allowing for year-round growing conditions. Grace Summers, SFOP State Program Assistant, will share her many years of experience and extension expertise in high tunnel commercial vegetable production. She will cover the topics of management, irrigation, crop selection, planting dates, and production practices.

September 28, 6:30-8:30 pm: Farm Insurance: Do I have the Correct Coverage? (Bristol, VA)

Enjoy the season, network with other Southwest VA farmers and friends of agriculture, and enjoy a free picnic dinner, as you hear from Mike Felty about farm insurance. Many factors are involved in finding the right coverage for your farming operation. It is usually highly customized, and can include insurance for buildings, such as barns; dwellings; livestock; seed; hay; tools and equipment. He will give a short overview and answer your questions about coverage.

October Events

October 3, 10:00-12:00 pm: Introduction to Permaculture (Petersburg, VA)

Permaculture is more than a new system of recordkeeping and urban agriculture. It is an ecological design system based on systems found in nature. Patrick Johnson, of Nanih Farm and Garden, Inc., will lead this workshop. Come learn about the key concepts surrounding the broader aspects of permaculture: care for people, care for the earth, and fair share.

October 4, 1:00-3:30 pm: Farm Pond Management (Burkeville, VA)

Mackenzie Gunn, Virginia Cooperative Extension agent for Amelia County, holds BS degrees in marine studies and agriculture, and a masters degree in wildlife, fisheries and aquaculture. She will discuss pond construction, the factors affecting pond management through nutrients and seasonal changes, common aquatic weeds and how to manage them, stocking your pond, fish management, and how to take water samples to assess the health of your pond water.

October 4, 5:00-7:00 pm: Twilight Growers Meeting Yankey Farms (Bristow, VA)

[Please register to attend.](#)

October 6-7: Virginia 2023 Cattlemen's Boot Camp (Blacksburg, VA)

Virginia Cattlemen's Boot Camp is open to all producers, with a day and a half of educational materials and speakers. Educational opportunities for producers at all levels to either brush up on their current knowledge or learn the basics. The Boot Camp will include a variety of relevant and essential topics that the cattle industry faces today through hands-on experiences for the full educational experience!

October 11, 2:00-4:00 pm: Bringing Basic Solar Energy to Your Farm (Fredericksburg, VA)

Solar energy can provide farmers with invaluable power options on the farm. It is convenient and inexpensive. Join Farmer Thomas Roberson as he discusses solar energy options in use on his small 10-acre farm. Learn about design basics, solar operations, and how he uses it for electric fencing, powering his well and cooling his high tunnels during the summer.

October 17, 9:00-11:00 am: Small Farm Orientation (Virtual)

This two-hour Zoom course is for new farmers with zero to five years of experience operating a farm. Derrick Cladd, state program assistant for the VSU Small Farm Outreach Program, will walk attendees through the process of how to develop a productive and profitable farm. Participants will receive a Small Farm Orientation manual.

October 18, 4:30-6:00 pm: Small Fruit Production (Mechanicsville, VA)

Mr. Jim Stewart, a producer with years of experience, will lead this workshop on small fruit production and maintenance. Attendees will learn methods of producing small fruit crops such as blackberries, raspberries and strawberries. There will be a discussion of planting methods and cultivation practices. We will also discuss soil fertility requirements and the best soils for different berry types.

October 18, 6:00-8:00 pm: Diversifying Streams of Revenue on Your Farm (Virtual)

As farming expands from cows, plows and sows, listen to Michael Carter Jr. of Carter Farms and Africulture as he talks about how to increase revenue through unconventional farm products and the use of soft skills. Winter months should not mean a decline in revenue. Let's explore ways to put your farm experiences to work for more profitable enterprises.

October 18-20: Lancaster PA Cattleman's Bus Tour (Lancaster, PA)

The CCCA Bus Trip to Lancaster County, PA is now accepting reservations. The trip will depart Rustburg Wednesday, October 18, at 7:30 am and return on the evening of Friday, October 20. Non-members can register after May 1 @ a slightly higher rate. We will be staying at the Comfort Inn in Denver, PA for 2 nights. On our way north on Wednesday, we will stop at a Graze 300 Demonstration Site in the Shenandoah Valley. Upon arrival in Lancaster County, we will make a farm visit prior to supper. Thursday will be devoted to farm visits around Lancaster County. On Friday morning, we will visit the Green Dragon Farmers' Market before departing for home. En route, we will visit Roseda Farm at Monkton, MD where we will be treated to lunch and a farm tour.

October 20, 1:00-3:00 pm: Converting Cropland to Pasture for Sheep (Kilmarnock, VA)

Point Pleasant Farm is a new/old farm located in the Coastal Plain of Virginia. The land has been cleared and farmed for over 100 years. It was mostly crop-farmed until 2020 when Nan Harvey purchased several small adjoining parcels, added fencing and changed the land use to livestock farming. Nan will share the good, bad and ugly she had to face along the way. Raising sheep changed the crop from a bean/wheat/corn rotation cycle to a permanent grassland constrained by proximity to the Chesapeake Bay. With invaluable technical support from the Virginia State University Small Farm Outreach Program, VT Small Farms Nutrient Management Program and extensive research, the livestock operation is working towards sustainability. Elaine Shirley, President of the Leicester Longwool Sheep Breeders Association, will also join us to address the special challenges and rewards of raising heritage breed sheep.

October 21, 11:30-1:30 pm: Lambing and Kidding Skills for Success (Abingdon, VA)

Beginning and experienced sheep and goat producers will visit Beyond Blessed Farm to learn about best management practices before and after lambing or kidding. This workshop includes preventing lamb or kid loss, the importance of colostrum, strategies for troubleshooting when birthing complications occur and diagnosing and treating newborn lamb or kid problems. Dr. Chris Fletcher and Dr. Emily Hoss will provide instruction and demonstration. A lamb dinner will be provided.

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