

# Newsblast

August 4, 2022

Photo by Marcus Spiske on Unsplash

## A Message from VBFRC

Hello everyone,  
We hope early August finds you well as growing season is in full force. We are excited to send along our monthly newsblast with a number of events coming up in the next few months along with a few announcements. We hope you 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

### September 1: VSU College of Agriculture Field Day

Mark your calendar for September 1! VSU's College of Agriculture is having their field day at the Randolph Farm in Petersburg, VA. This free event will showcase the many ways VSU's agricultural researchers, Extension specialists and professors support Virginia's agriculture and forestry industries, the commonwealth's number one private economic driver, with an annual economic impact of more than \$91 billion. Hop on and off trollies as they circle throughout Randolph Farm's 416 acres and learn from the commonwealth's leading experts about the latest techniques, trends, research and success stories impacting small-scale, limited-resource farmers and ranchers. See first-hand how VSU's research, teaching and public programming is enhancing the resiliency of Virginia's food systems and addressing food safety and insecurity, especially among those who have limited social and economic resources.

[Find more information on their webpage.](#)

Note: Green underlined text is a link

## Announcements

### **Virginia Farm Bureau Young Farmer Expo**

The 17<sup>th</sup> Annual Virginia Farm Bureau Young Farmer Expo was held last weekend in Wytheville, VA with over 220 attendees. It is the largest networking event for young people in agriculture and featured farm tours, workshops, and contests. Our advisory group member, Jacob Gilley of the American Farmland Trust, set up our Virginia Beginning Farmer and Rancher Coalition materials to share coalition resources with young farmers. Thanks so much, Jacob!

### **“Against the Grain, Beyond the Grind” Video**

As you know, Virginia farmers face many challenges and opportunities. Sometimes you have to go against the grain and beyond the grind to overcome challenges and realize new opportunities. Against the Grain, Beyond the Grind is a story about one of Virginia's grain to flour food value chains. The story outlines farm-to-table connections from local soils and farms to a local stone-ground mill and local bakery and how food eventually makes its way to local tables.

### **Catalyzing Agroforestry Grant Program (Application Open)**

A new grant opportunity is available to farmers wanting to establish silvopasture or forest farming agroforestry practices. Farmers can receive \$1,500/acre for silvopasture and \$1,000/quarter acre for forest farming establishment.

### **Appalachian Sustainable Development is Hiring a Part-time Regionally Remote Agroforester**

This new position will be responsible for providing technical and financial assistance to producers for alley cropping and silvopasture establishment in the Central Appalachian region.

## 4 the Soil Highlights



### **Thursday, August 18th, Richmond, VA: RVA Green Drinks with the Virginia Soil Health Coalition**

Join the Virginia Soil Health Coalition from 5:30-7 PM at Sine Irish Pub for a laid back evening of networking and learning about soil health. The event is part of the monthly [RVA Green Drinks](#) series. Everyone is welcome but please register/RSVP at the link above.

### **Episode 22 - 15: Keeping Water Clean: Farm by Farm, Lawn by Lawn with Matt Kowalski of the Chesapeake Bay Foundation**

Keeping local waterways and the Chesapeake Bay clean requires everyone to be actively involved in protecting water quality, managing nutrients like nitrogen and phosphorus, and building soil health. Jeff Ishee and Eric Bendfeldt caught up with Matt Kowalski of the Chesapeake Bay Foundation (CBF) at a recent field day to talk about soil health and water quality. Matt serves as a watershed restoration

scientist in Virginia for CBF and specifically focuses on agricultural best management practices and projects to restore wetland and riverside areas. Matt emphasizes that keeping water clean needs to happen farm by farm and lawn by lawn, and that we all can do our part to improve water quality and save the Chesapeake Bay.

To learn more about the Chesapeake Bay Foundation and the Mountains-to-Bay Grazing Alliance, please visit <https://www.cbf.org/how-we-save-the-bay/programs-initiatives/multi-state-grazers-alliance.html> and <https://www.m2balliance.org/>.

For information about year-round lawn care and ways to possibly incorporate a legume like Dutch white clover into your lawn for water quality and pollinators, please visit <https://www.dcr.virginia.gov/soil-and-water/document/yardcare.pdf> and <https://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/soil-water-conservation/your-land-landscape>

### **National Dairy Month: Celebrating dairy farming and ways farmers contribute to our health and resilience (June 28, 2022)**

As National Dairy Month comes to a close, we want to take a moment to celebrate the many soil health champions who are Virginia farmers and the many ways farmers contribute to our health and resilience. With his family, Phil Witmer owns and operates Grazeland Dairy, a certified organic dairy farm in the central Shenandoah Valley of Virginia. As a grass-based dairy farm, Grazeland Dairy is committed to taking care of the resources on their land and building a stronger food system. Read the blog post to learn more.

### **Building Soil Health with a Growth Mindset Blog (June 21, 2022)**

Building and managing soil health can teach us how to develop a growth mindset. Carol Dweck, the Lewis and Virginia Eaton Professor of Psychology at Stanford University, studies the benefits of this approach. She describes a “growth mindset” as an understanding that one’s abilities can grow through hard work. A growth mindset welcomes a challenge, builds resilience, and sustains a desire to learn. Read the blog post to learn more.

## August Events

### **Thursday, August 4th, Port Royal, VA: Ag Expo**

The Virginia Soil Health Coalition is excited to be part of the soil health/conservation agronomy exhibit at the Virginia Ag Expo this summer. The location of the expo offers a unique opportunity to see firsthand how soil types can dramatically impact both yield potential and environmental risk.

### **August 10: Recordkeeping on your Computer or Smart Phone (Rapidan, VA)**

Farming is a business, and good recordkeeping is essential for a successful farming operation. Using the tools you have, you can keep thorough records. These records will provide valuable information on which methods work best on your farm. They can help plan a realistic forecast for the coming year and may also be a requirement for lending institutions. Greg Carter will lead this workshop. He grew up on a small farm but worked in the corporate world. After retirement, Greg returned to his roots and started a small diversified farming operation, using the lessons he learned in business. Now he shares this knowledge with other farmers.

### **August 12: Spray Drone Demonstration (Halifax, VA)**

Drones designed for agricultural applications for small-scale farmers can help you improve yields and lower operational costs. To ensure you understand the benefits and usage of drones for precision agriculture, VSU SFOP is offering a basic introduction. Leonel Castillo, UAS-FAA Pilot, will discuss this approach, and explain how drone applications such as map interpretation and utilization can detect soil conditions and plant health. SFOP purchased a spray drone to show how it can enable participants make

timely spot applications to efficiently and effectively rid crops of pests and diseases, or remedy nutrient deficiencies. These precision spray applications can cover areas that are difficult to access by hand or boom sprayers and can serve as lower-cost substitutes for conventional aircraft applications. As interest in and use of agricultural drones continues to increase, SFOP wants to ensure you have the technical assistance you need.

#### **August 12: Small Ruminant Guardian Animals: Choosing a Good Protector (Virtual)**

The American Sheep Industry Association notes that predation is the leading cause of death in American sheep flocks. By using livestock guardian animals, you can give your flock or herd 24-hour, around-the-clock bodyguards, and allow the animals to stay out grazing on the farm. Effective guardians prevent injuries and deaths of your sheep and goats and give you—the farmer—peace of mind. They are well worth the cost!

#### **August 17: Sample and Control of Varroa Mite and Hive Beetle (Petersburg, VA)**

Keith Tignor, VDACS State Apiarist, will provide a lecture on the life cycle of the Varroa mite and the small hive beetle. He will cover how to inspect for these and other pests and discuss various integrated pest management strategies to control them. Following the lecture, we will move out to the bee yard on Randolph Farm where Keith will demonstrate how to inspect a hive to identify, sample and control these pests. All participants going to the bee yard must bring their own bee suit and wear light-colored clothes, gloves and closed-toe shoes. Please do not wear fragrances or perfumes. If you are allergic to bee venom, you must bring your own EpiPen.

#### **August 23: Weed Control Using Goats (Surry, VA)**

Join us on Slade Family Farm in Surry, Virginia, to learn how to use goats to control weeds on your farm. Clif Slade will start us off with a demonstration of how he uses goats in his high tunnel to clean up his sweet potato slip production. He will also share his experience using goats to clean his fields during the off-season. Tracy Porter, VSU SFOP Program Assistant, will explain how to build your own robust and dependable solar-powered fence charger to keep your goats in and predators out. And Dennis Williams of Bees Knees Farm in King William, Virginia, will demonstrate two mobile fence systems that he uses for rotational and mob grazing.

#### **August 24: Irrigating Fall Crops in a High Tunnel (Waverly, VA)**

Some benefits of installing and using drip irrigation systems in fields and high tunnels are improved crop development and yield, cost reduction from low- pressure or gravity-fed systems, decreased fertilizer run-off and weed control. Grace Summers, VSU Small Farm Outreach Program Agent, and Tammy Holler, Nutrient Management Specialist, will discuss different designs for drip irrigation systems in fields and high tunnels. Participants will learn about factors to consider when planning to install one. The workshop will cover system operations, maintenance and water management practices for vegetable production. There will be a demonstration of how to install a simple drip irrigation system during the workshop.

#### **August 24: VDACS Agriculture and Forestry Development (Virtual)**

Join Stephen Versen, Manager of the Office of Agriculture and Forestry Department at the Virginia Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services (VDACS), as he and his staff share information about the programs and services that VDACS has for Virginia small-scale farmers. They will give timelines for application to the programs and share tips for participation in their many offerings.

#### **August 26: Selling Your Story (Unionville, VA)**

Join Michael Carter of Carter Farms as he expounds on selling your most valuable farm product—your STORY. Stories are like opinions: everyone has one. Let Michael assist you in crafting and narrating your

story, marketing your passion, cultivating your growing practices and harvesting your history to assist you in sharing your most valuable commodity. YOUR STORY.

**August 26-27: 2022 Legacy Planning: Central Virginia (South Boston, VA)**

Join the Generation NEXT Team and experienced conservation, legal, and financial advisors to learn how to pass your land on to the next generation while keeping it intact, in forest, and in family.

## September Events

**September 1: VSU College of Agriculture Field Day (Petersburg, VA)**

This free event will showcase the many ways VSU's agricultural researchers, Extension specialists and professors support Virginia's agriculture and forestry industries, the commonwealth's number one private economic driver, with an annual economic impact of more than \$91 billion. Hop on and off trolleys as they circle throughout Randolph Farm's 416 acres and learn from the commonwealth's leading experts about the latest techniques, trends, research and success stories impacting small-scale, limited-resource farmers and ranchers. See first-hand how VSU's research, teaching and public programming is enhancing the resiliency of Virginia's food systems and addressing food safety and insecurity, especially among those who have limited social and economic resources.

**September 6: Grants to Fund Trees & Orchards (Kinsale, VA)**

Learn how the VSU Small Farm Outreach Program provided grant assistance for Sandra Brackett to realize her lifelong dream of having an English Walnut orchard. Sandra will take us on a tour of the orchard she planted in April with grant funding assistance from SFOP. She will describe all of the steps she took to design, plant and maintain it. Tracy Porter, VSU SFOP Program Assistant for Eastern Virginia, will be on hand to explain the Renewable Resource Extension Act Capacity Grant, and show how he can assist small-scale and beginning farmers with locating tree vendors and designing an orchard, windbreak, pollinator habitat or silvopasture. Grace Summers, VSU SFOP drip irrigation specialist, will explain how to set up a drip irrigation system for trees.

**September 7: Planting Garlic in the Fall (Unionville, VA)**

Garlic can be grown either in the ground or in a raised bed. October is the most popular month to plant garlic, but depending on where you live, you could plant sooner or later. Late September and October are the best times to plant garlic in the northern Piedmont. It should be done at least two weeks before the first frost, and must be done before the ground freezes. This workshop will teach you the proper way to plant garlic, how to prepare the ground, and take proper care during the season.

**September 7: National Conference on Next-Generation Sustainable Technologies for Small-Scale Producers (NC A&T)**

The purpose of this conference is to create a road map for developing and delivering the next generation of soil, air and water technologies in support of sustainable production systems on small and limited resource farms; identify gaps, needs and recommendations for NIFA; and ensure access to technology with consideration for affordability and applicability.

**September 8: Small Ruminants: Using Fecal Egg Counts on Your Small Farm (Clintwood, VA)**

What are Fecal Egg Counts and what do they tell us? You will not want to miss learning the answers to these common questions. Learn how to consider the true needs of your flocks/herds, and stop blindly and routinely treating for parasite infection. Attendees will gain a hands-on opportunity to learn the McMaster Egg Counting procedure. Dr. Chris Fletcher from Washington County Veterinary will provide instruction and Mandy Fletcher from VSU Small Farm Outreach Program will assist small ruminant

farmers with fecal analysis. All necessary workshop supplies will be provided but BYOF (bring your own fecals).

**September 10: New Christmas Tree Growers Meeting (Brightwood, VA)**

Kyle Peer, Superintendent - Reynolds Homestead Forest Resources Research Center, and Tim Williams, owner of Spruce Rock Farm, will discuss getting started with Christmas tree production, including 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 6.

**September 12: Small Farm Orientation (Virtual)**

This two-hour Zoom course is geared to new farmers with zero to five years of experience operating a farm. Vernon Heath, a VSU Small Farm Outreach Program Assistant with over 40 years of experience in the Virginia Agricultural industry, will teach the course. He will walk attendees through the process of how to develop a productive and profitable farm. Participants will receive a Small Farm Orientation manual.

**September 14: Value Added Hemp Production on a Small Farm (West Point, VA)**

Ben Clark is a successful beginning farmer and owner of Glow Holistic, an all-natural online retail store for CBD and value-added hemp products. He will provide a tour of his farm and discuss the regulations, marketing, financial risk management challenges and strategies for the production of hemp and value-added hemp products. He will also discuss how he markets his products online and at various farmer's markets, including the Virginia State Fair.

**September 9-10: Woodland Owner Retreat (Providence Forge, VA)**

Retreats are hosted by the Virginia Department of Forestry and Virginia Cooperative Extension. They are geared towards landowners who are new to forest management, provide information on both hardwood and pine forests, offer chances for interaction with natural resource professionals from various agencies in Virginia, as well as with other landowners, provide information on estate planning, management planning and certification, and provide hands-on experience with tree identification, forestry equipment, and more.

**September 18: Chesapeake Foodshed Feast: Blue Ridge (Jeffersonton, VA)**

Join us for night at Wollam Gardens you'll never forget! A celebration of local farmers, chefs, winemakers, and brewers showcasing our organization's commitment to sourcing ingredients from local farmers, ranchers and fishermen will reconnect diners to the land and the practices that promote healthy soil, bay and communities.

**September 22: GAP for Beginners (Unionville, VA)**

Join Michael Carter Jr of VSU Small Farm Outreach Center and Carter Farms, as we look at the foundation of Good Agricultural Practices (GAP). We will go over pre-harvest and post-harvest protocols, practices to implement, how to document your efforts and how to start the process if you are interested in moving forward with GAP. This hands-on interactive workshop will share what to do, and more importantly, what not to do.

**September 24: Small Engine Maintenance and Repair (Middleburg, VA)**

Save time and money with the best practices to maintain small engine farm equipment and keep it running year after year. This workshop will help you understand how a four-cycle engine works; common problems that occur; and how to fix them. Information on safety and risk management issues related to small engine repair will also be included in this hands-on workshop.

### **September 24-25: 2022 Sassafras Moon Herbal Festival (Erwin, TN)**

Join for a Saturday in beautiful downtown Erwin Tennessee for a day of free herbal classes and herbal product vendors, followed by a day of hands-on intensive learning at the Forest Farming Conference on Sunday!

## **Fall and Winter Events**

### **October 8: Improving Rotational Pastures and Pasture Walk (Abingdon, VA)**

Rotational grazing is a system designed to maximize grazing efficiency, and protect and improve soil and forage health. The factors to consider when developing a rotational grazing program are the intensity and duration of grazing, recovery period, and the size and number of paddocks. VSU Small Farms Outreach Program Nutrient Management Specialist Tammy Holler will discuss the steps to take and ways that you can work to improve soil and crop production.

### **October 27: 2022 Legacy Planning: Southwest Virginia (Galax, VA)**

Join the Generation NEXT Team and experienced conservation, legal, and financial advisors to learn how to pass your land on to the next generation while keeping it intact, in forest, and in family. Registration opens in August.

### **November 2: Starting a Hydroponic Growing System (South Hill, VA)**

Hydroponics is a growing industry in which farmers produce vegetables in a nutrient solution without soil. Chris Mullins, VCE horticulture specialist at VSU, will discuss the proper way to set up a hydroponic system using basic materials from the local hardware store. Chris will present information on which system is most cost-effective, what crops grow best, production issues and ways to resolve them, and most importantly food safety. He will also talk about the differences between hydroponics and aquaponic systems.

### **November 2: 2022 Legacy Planning: Southeast Virginia (Providence Forge, VA)**

Join the Generation NEXT Team and experienced conservation, legal, and financial advisors to learn how to pass your land on to the next generation while keeping it intact, in forest, and in family. Registration opens in August.

### **January 6-8: 23rd Annual Virginia Biological Farming Conference (Roanoke, VA)**

Save the date for the 23rd Virginia Biological Farming Conference will be held January 6-8, 2023 at The Hotel Roanoke & Conference Center in Roanoke, VA. Speaker proposals are being accepted now for half and full-day pre conference workshops and conference sessions. [Find the Speaker Proposal form on their website.](#)

### **January 12-14: 24th Annual Future Harvest Conference (College Park, MD)**

Save the date! Now accepting workshop proposals for our 24th annual winter conference, which will take place in person January 12 - 14, 2023. The deadline to submit a proposal is September 15, 2022 and speakers will be notified by October 14, 2022.

***Virginia Cooperative Extension is a partnership of Virginia Tech, Virginia State University, the U.S. Department of Agriculture, and local governments. Its programs and employment are open to all, regardless of age, color, disability, gender, gender identity, gender expression, national origin, political affiliation, race, religion, sexual orientation, genetic information, military status, or any other basis protected by law.***