

# Newsblast

December 12, 2023

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## *A Message from VBFRC*

Hello everyone! We hope you are doing well as we approach the holiday season. We are sending a special winter greeting this month with a seasonal poem and upcoming trainings and events in the new year.

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*

Join for the Virginia Association for Biological Farming and VSU Small Farm Outreach Program Summit January 19-21 at the Hotel Roanoke. You won't want to miss this inaugural joint summit! This power-packed event offers more than ever before.

The summit brings together farmers, gardeners, eaters, educators, industry professionals, and advocates of sustainable, regenerative, biological, and organic agriculture. The summit includes 60+ concurrent sessions, locally sourced farm meals and book sales with author signings and over 40 trade show exhibitors.

[Register today](#) to join!

Note: Green underlined text is a link

## Seasonal Poem

### **To Know the Dark by Wendell Berry**

To go in the dark with a light is to know the light.

To know the dark, go dark. Go without sight,  
and find that the dark, too, blooms and sings,  
and is traveled by dark feet and dark wings.

## Announcements

### Common Grain Alliance Handbook

The Common Grain Alliance Handbook Sections 1 and 2 are now available! Section 1 focuses on the regional grain economy in the Mid-Atlantic. Section 2 focuses on factors influencing flour quality.

### American Farmland Trust's Regenerate Virginia Farm Vitality Cohort Opportunity

American Farmland Trust (AFT) is able to offer scholarships to up to 10 Virginia farmers to attend [The Farmer's Edge](#), an online farm business course offered in winter 2023-24 by Julia Shanks Food Consulting, along with a series of follow-up farmer-to-farmer sessions hosted by staff from JSFC and AFT. AFT is offering this opportunity to help prepare farmers for our upcoming Farm Vitality Grants funding opportunity, which they are hoping to launch in late 2024.

### Accelerating Appalachia Building Soil, Building /equity (BSFE) Farmer Fund

Accelerating Appalachia has launched an innovative program to support underserved farmers and expand regenerative farming across Central/Southern Appalachia and the rural Southeast. Building Soil, Building Equity (BSBE) provides financial support, technical training in regenerative agriculture, connections to business development support, and resources to increase market growth opportunities.

## 4 the Soil Highlights



### Episode 23-25: A Healthy, Fertile Celebration of World Soil Day 2023

Since October 2021, Jeff Ishee, Mary Sketch Bryant, and Eric Bendfeldt have had sixty conversations

about the health and fertility of soil as part of the podcast. To celebrate World Soils Day 2023, we are sharing three recaps of conversations that were quite memorable with Dr. David R. Montgomery and Anne Bikle authors of *What Your Food Ate* and *Growing a Revolution*; Clare Tallamy of Virginia Tech's 2022 Soil Judging Team; and Lee Rinehart a grazing specialist with the National Center for Appropriate Technology. World Soils Day was organized to bring attention and focus on the importance of healthy soil and the sustainable management of soil resources. David Montgomery and Anne Bikle start the conversation off with a discussion about soil life and how the health of soil can ultimately affect diet and nutrition at a basic level. Clare Tallamy gives a summary of how to assess and judge soil from inside a pit, while Lee Rinehart emphasizes how critical soil health is for grazing management, water quality, and drought resilience.

### **Celebrating World Soil Day 2023 Blog Post**

Soil is living and life-giving in more ways than we might think. By caring for the soil, we can build healthier communities, stronger economies, and a more resilient landscape. Let's celebrate World Soil Day! Do you know the international theme for this year? Or how soils are categorized around the world? Or how you can search topics from the 4 The Soil: A Conversation podcast? Check out the latest blog post.

## **December Events**

### **December 12, 4:00-6:00 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.

### **December 13, 11:00-1:30 pm: Holiday Gifts from the Garden (Chase City, VA)**

Show your gratitude for family, friends and loved ones by creating a collection of delicious and beautiful crafts and foods that are easy to make and easy on your budget. This event will focus on recycling, repurposing and reusing household items and gifts from the garden and nature to create a multitude of gifts and memories.

### **December 15-16: Virginia WISE Cattle & Equipment: Women Increasing Skills & Education**

Join fellow women (including Dr. Temple Grandin for Cattle WISE) in hands-on learning experiences such as: tractor driving, backing trailers, sprayer use, securing a load, fencing, cattle handling, chute side skills, calving trouble shooting, etc. Participants will receive a discounted rate to attend our dinner and program with Dr. Temple Grandin on December 16th!

### **December 20, 8:00-12:00 pm: DFAP Technical Assistance Day (Hampton, VA)**

Section 22007 of the Inflation Reduction Act authorized \$2.2 billion in financial assistance to farmers, ranchers and landowners who experienced discrimination in USDA Farm Loan Programs prior to January 1, 2021. The Windsor Group will be providing onsite technical assistance to help farmers, ranchers and

forest landowners with your Discrimination Financial Assistance Program (DFAP) application, which is available at <https://www.22007apply.gov>.

#### **December 21, 9:00-3:00 pm: Growing High Value Produce (Windsor, NC)**

Are you interested in growing vegetables and fruits in unconventional ways to increase your farm profitability? Come join on Thursday, December 14, 2023 at the Bertie County Extension Center in Windsor, NC. Learn about growing options to produce higher value vegetable and fruit crops in northeast North Carolina. Including: hydroponics/Aquaponics, high tunnel and other season extension techniques, Organic certification for vegetable and fruit production.

## January Events

#### **January 4-5: Mapping with Drones (Virtual)**

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.

#### **January 5, 10:00-2:00 pm: Central Virginia Grower Meeting (Dillwyn, VA)**

Several Amish communities have recently relocated to Central Virginia in the past several years and are in the beginning years of operating a produce auction. This grower meeting will include Christina Banks (VDACS), Darrel Clay (Timac Agro USA), and VCE Specialists, who will discuss the critical issues of marketing, soil fertility, major diseases and insect concerns regarding vegetables produced and sold at the auction. Dress warmly; the meeting will be in the produce auction, and expect an excellent Amish presence. Please register for this meeting, as lunch will be served.

#### **January 8, 12:00-2:00 pm: Hemp Dos and Don'ts (Petersburg, VA)**

This course will review some of hemp's basic dos and don'ts. The workshop is excellent for folks interested in hemp but unfamiliar with what they should and should not do to be successful. The discussion will include the different types of industrial hemp, growing conditions, genetics, and post-harvest processing. A representative from VDACS Industrial Hemp will be on site to cover the dos and don'ts from a legal perspective.

#### **January 9, 10:00-12:00 pm: Drought Designation Opportunities (Lovingston, VA)**

As of November 7, seventeen counties in Virginia have received USDA Drought Disaster Designation. This number will probably grow and does not include contiguous counties. The footprint of this disaster in Virginia is significant, and there are opportunities for agriculture producers that have been impacted. Learn about and take advantage of federal government programs that assist farmers and the implications of this disaster designation.

#### **January 10, 6:00-8:00 pm: Grant Writing for Small-scale Farmers (Virtual)**

Build confidence in applying for grants by joining farmer Anita Roberson of Botanical Bites & Provisional, LLC, as she shares basic grant writing information. Anita will speak about what is needed to assist farmers in receiving multiple grant awards. She will share information on planning, developing budgets and understanding grant scoring criteria. She will also share some unique tips and talk about her experience as a grant reviewer.



**January 16, 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. Ben Dukes, 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.

**January 17, 9:00-12:00 pm: Precision Agriculture in Virginia (Petersburg, VA)**

Farmers and Growers will have the opportunity to learn about the different aspects of managing their farm field by field and intra-field by using multiple inputs that occur during the growing season up through post-harvest, along with the aids to farmers that make the decisions easier to make, such as precise soil testing locations to determine intra-field variables, disease or pest test results, or pre-side-dress nitrate testing, which will reduce variability in yields and increase farm profits.

**January 17, 10:00-12:00 pm: What is Heirs Property (Petersburg, VA)**

What is Heirs Property 101? Estate planning, land transition, land access and land succession. VSU-SFOP is holding this workshop to provide land inheritance education and resources to disadvantaged landowners and their heirs. Special guest presenter Lillian “Ebonie” Alexander, the Executive Director of the Black Family Land Trust, Inc., lives on her family farm in rural Southside Virginia. She will discuss the challenges families face in retaining land and family communication surrounding land inheritance. She will also share resources and steps for successful family land assets building and succession.

**January 17-18: Virtual Shepard’s Symposium (Virtual)**

Details coming soon.

**January 18, 10:30-12:00 pm: Home Cannery Tour (Farmville, VA)**

Prince Edward Cannery has been in operation for home canning since 1975. Home and commercial users come to preserve their fruits, vegetables, and meats in this great facility. Participants will have a guided tour of the facility and equipment and see a product developed from beginning to end. The production manager for Virginia Food Works will be on hand to personally demonstrate the process “from farm to table” for the food preservation process. Food samples will be available for tasting and taking home.

**January 18, 6:00-9:00 pm: Farm Equipment Safety & Maintenance Basics (Glade Spring, VA)**

Whether you are an expert in farm equipment or not, it is important to note that machinery is one of the top causes of fatal agriculture-related injuries! Most accidents occur due to distracted, overtired, or unprepared operators. Farm equipment safety starts with you! The main goal of this workshop is to emphasize the importance of the basic safety precautions to take while operating farm equipment.

**January 18-20: Future Harvest’s 25th Annual Conference (College Park, MD)**

Nourish and flourish from the ground up!

**January 19-21: First Annual Virginia Association for Biological Farming and VSU Small Farm Outreach Program Summit (Roanoke, VA)**

You won’t want to miss the inaugural Virginia Association for Biological Farming and Small Farm Outreach Program Summit! This power-packed event offers more than ever before. You’ll reap the best benefits of two farming conferences in one dynamic summit: The 24<sup>th</sup> Annual Virginia Biological Farming Conference and the Small Farm Outreach Program Annual Conference. Register today to secure your spot.

**January 19-20: Sheep Basics 101 (Blacksburg, VA)**

This workshop is designed for individuals who have limited or no experience in the care and overall management of sheep. This session will showcase specific management practices required in

preparation for and around the time of lambing. Participants will attend lectures in addition to receiving hands-on experience with ewes and lambs.

**January 27: 2024 VT Beef Cattle Health Conference (Blacksburg, VA)**

Join for the Beef Cattle Health conference is an entire day packed full of educational material, speakers, and labs. Speaker topics include all things hay, VQA marketing requirements and pre-conditioning, bull selection, reasons your cow is open, emergencies and VCPR, and smart farming. [Register today](#) to secure your spot.

**January 30, 1:00-3:00 pm: How to Plan and Purchase a Greenhouse or High Tunnel (Petersburg, VA)**

A representative of RIMOL Greenhouse Systems will conduct a workshop on the various types of greenhouses and high tunnels available for use. He will explain methods for calculating the size needed for a particular farm or home operation. The presentation will also help determine the options available to customize greenhouses for your needs. A USDA representative will be available to present various funding methods through USDA program loans and grants.

**January 31, 10:00-12:00 pm: Understanding Your Soils Using Web Soil Survey (Southill, VA)**

Tammy Holler, nutrient management specialist for SFOP, will teach participants about the benefits of using the USDA online program, Web Soil Survey. WSS provides soil data and information produced by the National Cooperative Soil Survey. The soil survey is a detailed report on the soils of more than 95 percent of the nation's counties. It has maps with soil boundaries, photos, descriptions, and tables of soil properties and features. This will be a hands-on computer workshop. Using the Web Soil Survey program, we will look at each farmer's farm soil data.

## February Events

**February 6, 9:00-11:00 am: Mushroom Cultivation (Norfolk, VA)**

Mushrooms are a small yet mighty culinary ingredient with many health benefits, from cancer prevention to brain health. Jason Hess, of Tidewater Mushroom Company LLC, will introduce participants to common gourmet mushroom varieties and their uses. Learn about the mushroom life cycle, nutrition facts, superfood statistics, and day-to-day operation of this unique urban indoor mushroom farm. Each participant will receive a grow bag, which they will inoculate following a tour with Q&A and an explanation of the lab, equipment, and growing mediums.

**February 10: Woods and Wildlife Conference (Wytheville, VA)**

These long-running full-day conferences provide information, tools, and personal contacts to help private woodland owners keep their woods, and the wildlife that live in them, healthy and productive. A variety of topics are offered to appeal to owners of both small and large tracts, and both new and experienced owners.

**February 12, 12:00-2:00 pm: Basics of Biochar (Petersburg, VA)**

This workshop will be an introduction to biochar and its many benefits. Biochar consists of tiny bits of hardwood charcoal steeped in a high biological and microbial mixture. We will briefly explain how it has been used in poor soils to help rejuvenate microbial life and nutrient capacity. We will also talk about preparing and utilizing biochar to amend poor soil.

**February 14, 9:00-12:00 pm: Environmental Management of Nutrients (Petersburg, VA)**

Learn about how to maximize your crop yields while being environmentally friendly. Find out why we manage phosphorus and nitrogen differently. Discover the best times to apply nutrients for healthy

plant growth. Find out about how you can do your part to protect your rivers and streams. This presentation will benefit students, farmers, gardeners, and other growers.

**February 15, 10:00-12:00 pm: Eat Well – Live Well (Chase City, VA)**

Jane Henderson, senior extension agent for family & consumer science in Amelia County, will provide research-based information on how incorporating fruits and vegetables into the diet leads to optimum health results. In this workshop you will enjoy food tastings and learn how to prepare delicious and healthy snacks and meals that will have you craving the good life!

**February 20, 9:00-3:00 pm: Filing Farm Taxes (Southill, VA)**

Even if you hire an accountant to assist with filing your farm taxes, there is important information that you need to know as a farmer. This workshop will cover the following topics: new tax laws and changes, completing Schedule F, recordkeeping, reporting business expenses & deductions, managing enterprise sales, social security management, managing wages, and working with nonprofits.

**February 20, 9:00-11:00 am: Aerial Imagery for Farmers (Petersburg, VA)**

This workshop will provide farmers and gardeners with an excellent opportunity to learn about the history of aerial imagery, how it has been used, how to apply it to profitable agriculture production, how it can assist in making real-time decisions on disease and insect issues, and how it can have an impact on forestry management and herd health.

**February 20, 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. Ben Dukes, 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.

**February 21, 9:00-1:00 pm: Whole Farm Planning (Petersburg, VA)**

Whole Farm Planning helps beginning farmers maintain or improve profitability while enhancing their sustainability. With Whole Farm Planning, beginning farmers define long-and short-term goals to achieve a better quality of life at home and in the community.

**February 21, 10:00-12:00 pm: Recordkeeping on Your Computer or Smart Phone (Virtual)**

Farming is a business; 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.

**February 22: Filing Farm Taxes (Petersburg, VA)**

Even if you hire an accountant to assist with filing your farm taxes, there is important information that you need to know as a farmer. This workshop will cover the following topics: new tax laws and changes, completing Schedule F, and reporting business expenses & deductions.

**February 24: Woods and Wildlife Conference (Culpeper, VA)**

These long-running full-day conferences provide information, tools, and personal contacts to help private woodland owners keep their woods, and the wildlife that live in them, healthy and productive. A variety of topics are offered to appeal to owners of both small and large tracts, and both new and experienced owners.

## March Events

### **March 6-7: Produce Safety Alliance Grower Training Course (Virtual)**

The Food Safety Modernization Act (FSMA) Produce Safety Rule is the first federally regulated standard for growing, harvesting, packing, and holding fresh produce in an effort to reduce microbial contamination and foodborne illness outbreaks. If you grow fruits or vegetables, attend a training for information about best practices, risk management, and regulatory requirements. The PSA Grower Training Course is one way to satisfy the FSMA Produce Safety Rule requirement.

### **March 7, 6:30-8:30 pm: Generation NEXT Legacy Planning Workshops (Virtual)**

Learn how to pass your land and your legacy on to the next generation while keeping it intact, in forest, and in family ownership.

### **March 22-23: Beyond the Basics Advanced Landowner Retreat (Appomattox, VA)**

Landowner Retreats are co-hosted by the Virginia Department of Forestry and Virginia Cooperative Extension. Retreats provide information on hardwood and pine forest management, legacy planning, management planning, and more. They combine classroom, field trip, and hands-on activities to teach concepts of sustainable woodland and wildlife management.

### **March 22-24: Gather to Grow: A Conference to Honor the Past and Shape the Future of Forest Farming**

The Appalachian Beginning Forest Farmer Coalition's (ABFFC) Gather to Grow multi day Forest Farming Conference will be held in Roanoke, Virginia from March 22-24, 2024 and feature learning, networking, and strategic planning programs that will shape the future of forest farming of woodland crops such as botanicals, mushrooms, and decorative products in Appalachia and beyond.

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