



Newsblast

January 26, 2023

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A Message from VBFRC

Hello everyone! We hope you are staying warm in the cool weather. While still in this break from the growing season, we wanted to share upcoming trainings, events, and announcements from across the state. There is a lot coming up so we are sending out our February Newsblast a little early. 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

The Women in Agriculture Gatherings are BACK for 2023 with the 5th Annual Gatherings being held in February. Come gather to learn from agricultural professionals and, more importantly, network with and learn from other women in agriculture. **There will be two opportunities to attend:**

February 16-17: Graves Mountain Farm and Lodges in Madison County

A two-day event with the first day as a business intensive session and the second day as the general Women in Agriculture Gathering with a variety of topics and speakers.

February 16: Willoughby Farm in Prince Edward County

A general gathering format with a variety of activities and speakers.

More information (tentative agenda, registration, location information) can be found on the [website](#) and [Facebook Event page](#). Please feel free to share with your friends and networks. If you have any questions, feel free to reach out to Sarah Sharpe at (434) 985-5236 or seweaver@vt.edu.

Note: Green underlined text is a link

Training Series

Virginia Women in Agriculture Gatherings (2 Locations in Virginia)

The Women in Agriculture Gatherings are BACK for 2023 with the 5th Annual Gatherings being held in February. Come gather with us to learn from agricultural professionals and, more importantly, network with and learn from other women in agriculture. There will be two opportunities to attend:

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Positioning Your Farm Business for Successful Transition (4 Locations Across Virginia)

The opportunity for producers, business and landowners to learn and focus on farm transition planning is here! With most farms in Virginia being family owned and operated, it is very important to take the time to discuss the future. Dick has worked for Farm Credit Administration, successfully managed and transitioned his family's multi-generation farm/ranch, helped family farm businesses as a consultant for three decades, and authored a guidebook titled Building Effective Farm Management Systems. This workshop will be of interest for folks who are facing many different scenarios when it comes to transition. Please **register** to attend. If you have any questions please contact Crysti Hopkins 540-967-3422 hcrysti2@vt.edu or Rachel Henley 804-598-5640 rachelhenley@vt.edu.

February 20: Brandy Station, VA

February 21: Wytheville, VA

February 22: Weyers Cave, VA

February 23: Petersburg, VA

Shenandoah Valley Farm2Fork Affair

Virginia Cooperative Extension has partnered with various localities in the Shenandoah Valley to host another Shenandoah Valley Farm2Fork Affair. This local food tradeshow is an opportunity for Shenandoah Valley producers to connect with buyers from across the region. **This event is taking place during the day on Tuesday, March 14 at the Rockingham County Fairgrounds in Harrisonburg.**

Prior to the event, Virginia Cooperative Extension will be offering workshops to help producers prepare their booth and refine their marketing pitch. **The Farm2Fork Affair Workshops are taking place on Wednesday, February 1st in Woodstock and Thursday, February 2nd in Verona.** Producers from the Shenandoah Valley that are interested in participating can register for the tradeshow and the workshops [through Eventbrite](#). Producers that register soon can reserve their space for \$15.

For questions, contact event planner, Amanda Glover at amanda@sapienceva.com or French Price at frenchprice@vt.edu.

Farm to School Workshops and Regional Network Meetings

Bringing the Farm to School Agricultural Producer Trainings

The Virginia Department of Education, Office of School Nutrition Programs (VDOE-SNP) and Virginia Cooperative Extension (VCE) will host *Bringing the Farm to School Workshops* for agricultural producers seeking to sell food to schools. This one and a half day training is free to attend. Registration must be completed via the [online registration form](#). Training dates are as follows:

- Regions 5 and 8: Thursday, February 16, 2023, 8:30 a.m.-4:30 p.m. and Friday, February 17, 2023, 8:00 a.m.-1:00 p.m. at the Miller Center in **Lynchburg**
- Regions 6 and 7: Tuesday, February 21, 2023, 8:30 a.m.-4:30 p.m. and Wednesday, February 22, 2023, 8:00 a.m.-1:00 p.m. at the Southwest Virginia Housing Center in **Wytheville**
- Regions 3 and 4: Thursday, February 23, 2023, 8:30 a.m.-4:30 p.m. and Friday, February 24, 2023, 8:00 a.m.-1:00 p.m. at the Culpeper Baptist Church in **Culpeper**
- Regions 1 and 2: Wednesday, March 1, 2023, 8:30 a.m.-4:30 p.m. and Thursday, March 2, 2023, 8:00 a.m.-1:00 p.m. at the Smithfield Center in **Smithfield**

Virginia Farm to School Regional Network Meetings

The VDOE-SNP and VCE will host *Virginia Farm to School Regional Network meetings* immediately following the Bringing the Farm to School Workshops. These meetings are an opportunity to gather all farm to school stakeholders throughout the region to network and discuss goals, activities, and upcoming priorities for the year. Regions are based on the [Virginia Superintendent Regions](#). Meetings are free to attend and open to the public. Registration must be completed via the [online registration form](#). Meeting dates are as follows:

- Regions 5 and 8: Friday, February 17, 2023, 1:00–3:00 p.m. at the Miller Center in **Lynchburg**
- Regions 6 and 7: Wednesday, February 22, 2023, 1:00–3:00 p.m. at the Southwest Virginia Housing Center in **Wytheville**
- Regions 3 and 4: Friday, February 24, 2023, 1:00–3:00 p.m. at the Culpeper Baptist Church in **Culpeper**
- Regions 1 and 2: Thursday, March 2, 2023, 1:00–3:00 p.m. at the Smithfield Center in **Smithfield**

For any questions, contact Amber Vallotton, avallott@vt.edu or Bee Thorp, brittany.thorp@doe.virginia.gov

2023 Master Cattlemen's Program (Virtual)

Virginia Cooperative Extension will be offering the Virginia Master Cattlemen's program virtually in 2023. This program will consist of seven sessions that provide essential information for beef producers in the areas of Economics, Genetics, Reproduction, Nutrition, Forages, Herd Health, and Marketing. Participants will receive a certificate as a Virginia Master Cattleman upon successful completion of all seven sessions of the program. The goal of the program is to build foundational knowledge which can be applied to advanced beef cattle educational programs. The program will be held on zoom at 6:30-8:30 pm on March 2, 9, 16, 23, 30 and April 6 and 13. For more information, contact Phil Blevins, pblevins@vt.edu or 276-676-6309. [Please register to attend.](#)

Master Gardener Seed Swaps (2 more Virginia locations)

Virginia Cooperative Extension Master Gardner has been hosting seed swaps in Virginia. They have two more dates coming up.

February 4: Louisa, VA (more information on [their website](#))

March 18, 1:00-3:00 pm: Richmond, VA (more information on [their website](#))

Landowner Woods & Wildlife Conferences (2 Locations in Virginia)

Over 10 million acres of Virginia's woods are privately owned. The Woods & Wildlife 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 wide variety of topics are offered to appeal to owners of both small and large tracts, and both new and experienced owners. [Register online to attend.](#)

February 11: Wytheville, VA

February 25: Culpepper, VA

Woodland Owner Retreats (3 Locations in Virginia)

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.

March 24: Appomattox, VA

May 19-20: Galax, VA

September 8-9: Providence Forge, VA

Build Your Farm Labor Management Know-How (Virtual)

[This 2023 Workshop Series](#) from the [Farm Labor Dashboard](#) project will help farm operators and managers build knowledge and skills they need to successfully recruit and manage the right employees for their farms. The online series (offered via Zoom) is geared to produce and diversified livestock producers who are new to managing employees, and to farmers who are considering changes to how they arrange for, and manage, labor on their farms. Topics include: practical approaches to building more successful work crews; conduct financial planning to meet payroll needs; practical and effective strategies for hiring, training and keeping farm employees, and negotiation basics. Sessions begin January 7 and continue through early March. Advance registration is required. To request a disability-related accommodation to participate in this program, please contact [Beth Holtzman](#) at 802-476-2003x204 so we may assist you. Learn more at the [Farm Labor Dashboard](#).

Announcements

Appalachian Sustainable Development Expands Agroforestry Technical Assistance Program to help local and regional farmers

Appalachian Sustainable Development (ASD) is looking forward to another year of Agroforestry excellence with the expansion of its Agroforestry Technical Assistance program. ASD will provide a variety of free and low-cost services aimed at expansion or implementation of agroforestry practices. For more information,

contact Emilie Tweardy, Agroforester, at etweardy@asdevelop.org. New and experienced farmers and landowners should [apply](#).

Technical assistance and services include:

- Agroforesters on staff can provide remote Technical Assistance (phone calls, email support, online meetings) to those interested in learning more about Agroforestry resources and options on their land, including Forest Farming, Silvopasture and Alley Cropping.
- For eligible applicants, a site visit conducted by ASD's Agroforestry team to discuss details, implementation, design, maintenance and other site specifics may be available. Visits are \$50 to help cover ASD's time and travel.
- Site visits and technical support specifically for up to 8 aspiring maple syrup producers is available to qualified applicants.

[CattlePulse Podcast](#)

If you are a cattle producer, then we would like to invite you to listen to the first ever CattlePulse Podcast! From Virginia Farm Bureau, this monthly podcast is an update on Virginia feeder cattle marketing, national economic trends, educational resources, and stories from producers.

[Dug In Farms For Sale](#)

In the heart of the Northern Neck of Virginia, this sustainable market farm is ready for its next chapter. With over 2 acres actively farmed, there are two high tunnels and drip irrigation systems being utilized 12 months of the year. Using sustainable and organic methods the farm produces fresh produce, flowers, and nursery plants that are native to the area. These products along with special finds from a list of exclusive vendors and local partnerships are sold in the open air market from March 1 to December 24, seven days a week. The market selections change weekly, driven by each growing season. A nursery with a wide variety of shrubs, vines, grasses, perennials, and annuals is also on site. During the spring and fall the nursery sells vegetable and herb starts. Native and pollinator friendly plants are a specialty. Community is the anchor that has supported and helped this unique property grow and flourish over the years. This thriving farm offers a unique experience to its visitors. The community who frequent its fields makes this market farm a hallmark destination in one of Virginia's finest coastal regions.

[Bee's Wing Farm is Hiring](#)

Team members work together to raise cut flower crops, and will participate in most farm tasks, including; planting, weeding, seeding, and cultivating. An interest in and willingness to design and arrange flowers is necessary. Our ideal candidate is hardworking and lighthearted, flexible and dependable, kind and thoughtful, resourceful and creative, strong (able to lift 50 lbs) and has the ability to work independently, and enjoys being outdoors in all kinds of weather. Most importantly, Bee's Wing Farm team members know how to hustle! This is a growing business, and we get to wear many hats! This position is part-time, 24 hours a week, beginning in mid-March or early April and ending in early November. We work no matter the weather. Ideal work days are a full 8-hour day on Wednesdays and Thursdays, and a six-hour day on Fridays. If seeking full-time work we would consider this for the right individual. For more information see [their website](#) or email beeswingfarm@gmail.com.

[2022 Census for Agriculture](#)

As you may know, the 2022 Census of Agriculture is open and accepting responses! Farmers and ranchers are encouraged to respond online at agcounts.usda.gov using their survey code or return their paper questionnaires by mail. We recognize that some individuals may have concerns regarding submitting information to a government agency, however, we want to assure you that all personal and individual operation information submitted as a part of the census is confidential. *NASS is bound by law (Title 7, U.S. Code, and the Confidential Information Protection and Statistical Efficiency Act of 2018, Title III of Pub. L.*

No. 115-435, codified in 44 U.S.C. Ch. 35) – and pledges to every data provider – to use the information for statistical purposes only, and to only publish aggregated data so that no individual or farm can be identified. Again, the law requires NASS to keep all personal information confidential, to use the data only for statistical purposes, and only publish in aggregate form to prevent disclosing the identity of any individual producer or farm operation. To align with this law and show our commitment to keeping the data safe, the USDA has a [confidentiality pledge](#) and [security pledge](#). For more information regarding how census data is used, please refer to our [census FAQ](#).

Why respond?

- Combined responses show the value and importance of U.S. agriculture.
- Census data inform decisions about policy, farm and conservation programs, infrastructure and rural development, research, education, beginning farmer programs, and more.
- Response is required by federal law. The same law requires USDA to keep all personal information confidential.
- The Census of Agriculture is your opportunity to have a voice in the future of U.S. agriculture

A Taste of Farming

Are you aspiring to farm or just starting out with farming? If so, this series is for you. We designed this “learn as you go” online series so you can get a taste of different farming practices and concepts to help you explore your interests, gain a basic understanding of many different farming topics, avoid common pitfalls, and get to know the Extension professionals in Virginia who are here to assist you.

In this Series, Virginia Cooperative Extension (VCE) agents and VSU Small Farm Outreach Program Associates post short videos (15-20 min) highlighting key information and considerations about different farming practices and concepts on topics they have had years of experience helping aspiring and new farmers navigate. Season 1 ran from October 2021 to March 2022 and videos are archived on [the VBFRC website](#). Season 2 is now live! Each month between October 2022 and March 2023 we will release two new Taste of Farming videos for you to watch. A few weeks after a moderated Q & A session will be held with the video presenters where you can hear more from them and have your questions answered. Check out our full schedule on [the website](#) and see below for our new videos and upcoming moderated Q&A Session.

- **New Video: Sheep and Goat Production [coming soon]**
Hear from Mandy Fletcher, VSU Small Farm Outreach Assistant, about Sheep and Goat production.
- **New Video: Direct Marketing Meat [coming soon]**
Hear from Sarah Sharpe, Greene County VCE Ag Agent, about Direct Marketing Meat
- **February Moderated Q&A Session: Thursday, February 23 from 7-8 pm ET**
Hear more from Mandy and Sarah! [Register to join.](#)

4 the Soil Highlights



February 23, 1:00-3:00 pm: Quarterly Soil Health Coalition Meeting

Join virtually on Thursday, February 23rd from 1-3 PM for the next Quarterly Coalition Meeting. As a reminder the meetings are open to everyone and a great way to hear what is going on in the world of soil health in Virginia and beyond. See more about past meetings [on their website](#). [Please register to join](#) and [check out the draft agenda here](#).

Roots and Ripples of Soil Health Webinar: A Conversation with David Montgomery

Mary Sketch Bryant and Eric Bendfeldt held a one-hour webinar with Dr. David Montgomery just before the Holidays. David and his wife Anne Biklé are the co-authors of four books that explore the ties of soil health to our history, environment, and human health and well-being. As we kick off 2023, David's words help us reflect on how we are all connected to and through the soil. We hope you enjoy this conversation as much as we did, and may it spark inspiration and action to care for the soil in the coming new year. Listen to the conversation on the [Virginia Soil Health Coalition's YouTube channel](#) and most recently to the [4 The Soil VA Facebook page](#).

Podcast Episode 23 – 1: Down in the Pit with Clare Tallamy of Virginia Tech's Soil Judging Team Part I

Do you have a vision and picture of what happens in a soil judging pit? Clare Tallamy, a recent graduate of Virginia Tech's School of Plant and Environmental Sciences (SPES), shared her passion for soil health and soil judging in this episode. Clare was a member of Virginia Tech's Soil Judging Team and helped the team win its seventh collegiate national championship. Clare also distinguished herself as the individual winner at the 2022 International Soil Judging Contest that was held in Scotland. As an avid gardener growing up in Northern Virginia, Clare took a keen interest in soil science and joined Virginia Tech's Soil Judging to follow her passion to learn more about soil physics, chemistry, and ecology in a very practical way -- as part of a team down in a soil pit. Clare describes how a soil pit is dug and shares a picture to understand and judge the different layers of a soil's profile. Additionally, Clare emphasizes that we can learn a lot about the history of how the soil was formed and why keeping soil covered is important to building soil health through the soil judging process down in the pit.

Podcast Episode 23 – 2: The Stories Soils Tell with Clare Tallamy of Virginia Tech's Soil Judging Team Part II

You might know soil remembers and has a long memory but do you know soils continually tell stories? Soils often tell an overarching story based on history and geology that includes how soils were formed due to factors such as parent material, climate, landscape position, time, and the presence or absence of soil organisms. Current and past management of topsoil and the soil ecosystem adds new chapters to a soil's history and memory. Clare Tallamy, a recent graduate of Virginia Tech's School of Plant and Environmental Sciences (SPES), shared several stories from her experience as a member of Virginia Tech's

Soil Judging Team and the team's time in many different soil pits in Virginia and across the U.S. and world.

[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!

January Events

[January 28, 2:00-3:30 pm: Edible Landscapes for Virginia \(Roanoke, VA\)](#)

Want to learn about edible fruits and berries that will grow well in your landscape? Come to this entertaining presentation by renowned fruit expert, and owner of Edible Landscaping Nursery, Michael McConkey. Michael has been written about in the Washington Post, New York Times and Organic Gardening Magazine, and is credited with introducing many new fruiting plants to the United States over his 44 years of experience in the nursery business. Learn from Michael's extensive knowledge of attributes and short comings of fruits for our area. Michael is also a singer and songwriter and you'll hear a few tunes to keep you entertained during the show.

[January 30, 6:00-8:00 pm: Filing Farm Taxes \(Virtual\)](#)

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. Darrell Tennie, the founder and CEO of the Tennie Group, LLC, a tax and accounting firm located in Raleigh, North Carolina, will be leading this workshop.

[January 30, 10:00-1:30 pm: Filing Farm Taxes for Hispanic Farmers \(Petersburg, VA\)](#)

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. Darrell Tennie, the founder and CEO of the Tennie Group, LLC, a tax and accounting firm located in Raleigh, North Carolina, will be leading this workshop, and Leonel Castillo, State Program Assistant and Hispanic Outreach specialist, will be on hand to translate.

[January 30-21, 1:00-5:00 pm: 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, and regulatory requirements. The PSA Grower Training Course is one way to satisfy the FSMA Produce Safety Rule requirement. Cost \$25. Registration required.

February Events

[February 9, 7:00-8:00 pm: Changes to Livestock Antibiotic Regulations in 2023 \(Virtual\)](#)

Dr. Chris Fletcher D.V.M., a large animal veterinarian, will provide instruction for livestock producers on the following topics: 1) Brief history of antibiotic use in the U.S., including examples of antibiotic resistance, 2) Recent changes involving veterinary feed directive and using antibiotics, 3) New and upcoming changes to all livestock antibiotics in June 2023, and 4) Adopting good stewardship when using antibiotics. A question and answer session will wrap up the meeting.

[February 14, 10:00-11:00 am: Preparation for a Successful Growing Season – For Hispanic Farmers \(Petersburg, VA\)](#)

The soil is your farm's most precious natural resource. Soil testing is the first step to unlocking your soil's full potential. Tammy Holler, Nutrient Management Specialist with the Small Farm Outreach Program, will discuss the importance of having soil testing done to determine the necessary amendments needed for a successful growing season. She will discuss reading and understanding the test results and what steps are needed in order to improve your soil and have a productive yield. Leonel Castillo, State Program Assistant and Hispanic Outreach specialist, will be on hand to translate.

February 15, 4:00-6:00 pm: Appalachian Harvest Herb Hub Open House (Duffield, VA)

The Appalachian Harvest Herb Hub is hosting an open house event! Join us on February 15th between 4 and 6pm at Appalachian Harvest in Duffield, VA. We plan on having a local food vendor available onsite (subject to availability). Come and tour the Herb Hub, ask questions, and receive information on all things herbs!

February 15, 10:00-12:30 pm: DCR Information Session (Virtual)

Join us for a conversation with Darryl M. Glover, of the Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR), who will explain DCR's cost-share programs. These programs are administered through local Soil and Water Conservation Districts (SWCD). The goal is to improve water quality in our streams, rivers, and the nearby Chesapeake Bay. The cost-share programs support various practices in conservation planning to treat cropland, pastureland, hay land, and forested land. As an incentive, cost-share assistance is offered to implement Best Management Practices. Participation in the programs is voluntary, and the Conservation Districts offer their expertise at no cost. Funding is based on what each District has available and how your small-scale farm ranks compared to the other applications they receive. Funding is not guaranteed.

February 15, 10:00-12:00 pm: Drones in Agriculture (Boydton, VA)

Artificial Intelligence available for drones can help small-scale farmers improve yields and lower operational costs. In this workshop, we will capture footage to create a 3D active map, a 360 degree Panorama active view, aerial photos of infrastructure, and a video of the farm. Leonel Castillo, UAS- FAA Pilot, will discuss how you can use this aerial photography with software that interprets the images to determine elevation differences, acreage, crop health, soil moisture and waterlogging. You can view structures and topography in 3D. Participants will also learn how spray drones can be used for precision spray applications of nutrients and for insect and pest control, covering areas difficult to access by hand, tractor, or conventional aircraft.

February 15, 1:00-3:30 pm: USDA Information Session (Virtual)

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.

February 16, 6:00-8:00 pm: Vegetable Marketing Meeting (Lawrenceville, VA)

Want to increase your farm income and identify new markets for your vegetable and fruit crops? Please join us as the Southside Virginia Fruit and Vegetable Producers Association highlights new marketing opportunities for area growers. Join us to learn more about the history of SVFVPA and its plans to

purchase more produce from local farmers. Dinner will be served. Sponsored by Brunswick County Department of Economic Development.

February 21, 8:00-3:15 pm: Virginia No Till Alliance (VANTAGE) Winter Conference (Harrisonburg, VA)

VANTAGE's free Annual Winter Conference will feature Dr. Greg Roth, Professor Emeritus of Agronomy at Penn State and Leslie Bowman, crop manager at Leshner's Poultry Farm near Chambersburg, PA.

February 21, 9:00-11:00 am: Small Farm Orientation (Zoom)

This two-hour Zoom course is geared to new farmers with zero to five years of experience operating a farm. Herbert Brown, Assistant Director of the VSU Small Farm Outreach Program, 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.

February 21, 10:00-12:00 pm: Pruning Fruit Trees for Beginners (Unionville, VA)

Good pruning technique can increase the potential for quality fruit. Pruning is often neglected either due to a lack of skill or fear that improper pruning could lead to the injury or death of a tree. Pruning reduces overall tree size, improves structural strength, increases fruit production and improves the quality of fruit. Come and join us for this hands-on demonstration on pruning fruit trees for the beginner. Please feel free to bring any pruning tools that you may have for this workshop.

February 22, 8:00-3:00 pm: Richmond Area Vegetable Growers Conference (Richmond, VA)

Come here from over 8 speakers including Virginia Cooperative Extension Agents, Specialists, and Virginia Tech researchers about Vegetable Growing special topics.

February 23, 10:00-12:00 pm: Pruning Thornless Blackberry Canes (Boydton, VA)

Gardeners prune thornless brambles in late winter to help the plants produce more fruit in the growing season. In addition to producing more and better fruit, pruning can help prevent diseases and insect pests. Participants in this workshop will learn how to prune the canes when the plants are dormant, forcing them to branch out when they start to grow.

February 24, 12:00-1:00 pm: Let's Get Ready for your 2023 Farmers Market Display! (Virtual)

Success at the farmers market starts well before you get to the market. This online class is targeted to new and beginning farmers. VSU Small Farm Outreach Program's Dr. Theresa Nartea and Marilyn Estes will help you understand how to plan and set up an attractive market display. This workshop will cover from harvest to market. First, we will suggest essential market items, second, we will give you handy harvesting and packaging tips, third, we'll talk about how to plan loading and unloading the truck. We will wrap up by discussing ideas on setting up your display for maximum sales potential!

February 27, 3:00-6:00 pm: Riverstone Organic Farm Tour (Floyd, VA)

Join us for a farm tour and networking social at Riverstone Organic Farm. Farmers Tiffany Thompson and Alex Hessler will share their passion and experience as they've scaled the operation to 12 acres under production. Tiffany managed the educational organic vegetable farm at the University of Kentucky for five years and Alex spent 7 years as an instructor in the School of Plant and Environmental Science at Virginia Tech before farming at Riverstone in 2019. Both Tiffany and Alex hold master's degrees in horticulture from the University of Kentucky. Don't miss this opportunity to learn from Tiffany and Alex and tour Riverstone Organic Farm. Alex and Tiffany will share details on how they produce their beautiful winter greens as well as their updated packing shed design and equipment. For more information, contact Shawn Jadrnicek at shawnj@vt.edu. Please [register to join](#).

February 28, 10:00-1:30 pm: Pruning Fruit Trees for Beginners (Salem, VA)

Good pruning technique can increase the potential for quality fruit. Pruning is often neglected either due to a lack of skill or fear that improper pruning could lead to the injury or death of a tree. Pruning reduces

overall tree size, improves structural strength, increases fruit production and improves the quality of fruit. Come and join us for this hands-on demonstration on pruning fruit trees for the beginner. Please feel free to bring any pruning tools that you may have for this workshop.

March Events

March 1, 10:00-12:00 pm: Planting and Caring for Spring Flowers: From Seeds and Starts to Beautiful Blooms (Virtual)

Flowers fill a garden with color and excitement. Join Anita Roberson of Botanical Bites & Provisions, LLC to discuss floral gardening tips. We will explore how to grow spring flowers from seeds and flower seedlings. We'll compare and contrast growing methods, flower placement, soil preparation and maintenance for a lush flower garden. Growing flowers can be one of the most fulfilling things you can do.

March 2, 10:00-1:00 pm: Preparation for a Successful Growing Season (Petersburg, VA)

The soil is your farm's most precious natural resource. Soil testing is the first step to unlocking your soil's full potential. Tammy Holler, Nutrient Management Specialist with the Small Farm Outreach Program, will discuss the importance of having soil testing done to determine the necessary amendments needed for a successful growing season. She will discuss reading and understanding the test results and what steps are needed in order to improve your soil and have a productive yield.

March 8, 9:00-11:30 am: Starting and Growing in Beekeeping (Petersburg, VA)

Our state apiarist, Keith Tignor, will present a classroom lecture followed by a hands-on demonstration at the VSU apiary. This workshop is designed for people interested in getting started in beekeeping and beginning beekeepers with less than five years of experience. Topics will include bee ecology, hive components and construction, beekeeping equipment, bee nucs, bee packages, feeding and caring for bees, integrated pest management, and colony collapse disorder.

March 8, 10:00-12:00 pm: Making Dollars and Sense out of Backyard Poultry (Virtual)

Partly due to the pandemic and the new trend towards homesteading, many homeowners want to keep poultry in their backyards for meat, eggs, or profit. This workshop is for people with little or no experience raising poultry. Learn the basics of housing, feeding, disease control and predator control. Adrian Gilbert, of Thankful Acres Farm and Stephanie Miller, of Mystic Pines Farm will share their personal stories.

March 9, 10:00-12:00 pm: USDA Information Session (Virtual)

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.

March 9, 12:00-1:30 pm: DCR and Soil & Water Conservation District Information Session (Virtual)

The Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation and the Tidewater Soil & Water Conservation Districts will give presentations about technical assistance and financial incentive programs for landowners and agriculture producers to implement conservation practices. Topics to be covered include

program eligibility requirements, application processes and timelines, benefits to participation, and ways to improve soil and water conservation on your farming operation or property. Attendees will be able to ask questions at the end of each presentation.

March 11, 10:00-12:00 pm: Small Engine Maintenance and Repair (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.

March 14, 6:00-8:00 pm: DCR Information Session (Wytheville, VA)

Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation CostShare Programs are administered by the Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR) through local Soil and Water Conservation Districts (SWCD). The goal is to improve water quality in our streams, rivers, and the nearby Chesapeake Bay. As an incentive, costshare assistance is offered to implement Best Management Practices. Participation in these programs is voluntary, and we offer our expertise at no cost. Funding is based on what our District has available and how your practice ranks compared to other applications we receive; though funding is not guaranteed.

March 16, 10:00-12:00 pm: Preparation for a Successful Growing Season (Altavista, VA)

The soil is your farm's most precious natural resource. Soil testing is the first step to unlocking your soil's full potential. Tammy Holler, Nutrient Management Specialist with the Small Farm Outreach Program, will discuss the importance of having soil testing done to determine the necessary amendments needed for a successful growing season. She will discuss reading and understanding the test results and what steps are needed in order to improve your soil and have a productive yield.

March 21, 10:00-1:00 pm: Drones in Agriculture (Rapidan, VA)

Drones designed for agricultural applications can help small-scale farmers improve yields and lower operational costs. In this workshop, we will look at footage that we recently captured using a 3D active map, a 360° Panorama active view, aerial photos of infrastructure, and a video of a farm. Leonel Castillo, UAS-FAA Pilot, will discuss how you can use this aerial photography with software that interprets the images to determine elevation differences, acreage, crop health, soil moisture and waterlogging. There are also tools to measure distances and acreage, and you can view structures and topography in 3D. Participants will also learn how spray drones can be used for precision spray applications of nutrients and for insect and pest control, covering areas difficult to access by hand, tractor, or conventional aircraft.

March 23, 10:00-12:30 pm: How to Bed Sweet Potatoes for Spring Slip Production (Surry, VA)

If sweet potatoes do not grow from seeds like most vegetables, nor from buds, like the eyes of a potato, then how do you grow them? Come discover how to cultivate sweet potato slips now for early spring planting. Clif Slade, a retired Extension agent and SFOP program assistant, has been growing sweet potatoes for over 35 years on his family farm in Surry, Virginia. He also will discuss sweet potato varieties, integrated pest management and mitigating viruses and diseases. This is an in-person event—please dress for the weather.

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.