



# Newsblast

February 1, 2026

Photo by Meg von Haartman

## *A Message from VBFRC*

February settles into the heart of winter, offering a quieter rhythm that invites reflection, deeper learning, and steady preparation for the busy months ahead. It's a time when farmers and growers turn inward—fine-tuning plans, strengthening skills, and building the connections that will carry them into spring. Even as fields rest, the work of envisioning, strategizing, and investing in the season to come is fully underway. This month's newsblast highlights opportunities that nurture growth, resilience, and community during this essential pause. Here's to using February's calm to cultivate focus, confidence, and momentum for the year unfolding.

*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 was sponsored by the Beginning Farmer and Rancher Development Program (BFRDP) of the USDA National Institute of Food and Agriculture (NIFA) Award #2023-49400-40885.*

## *Partner Highlight*

### 2026 Catalyzing Agroforestry Grant Program

Are you looking to expand or deepen agroforestry practices on your farm or land? The Catalyzing Agroforestry Grant Program provides financial support and technical assistance to help farmers and land stewards implement USDA-recognized agroforestry systems, including alley cropping, forest farming, food forests, riparian buffers, silvopasture, and windbreaks. In addition to funding, participants gain access to the ARKx Network—a national community offering collaboration, events, and shared resources to strengthen agroforestry efforts. The application deadline is March 3, 2026. For more information, contact Patrick Bowers at [bpatri8@vt.edu](mailto:bpatri8@vt.edu) or visit the website <https://www.catalyzingagroforestry.org/cagp>.

Note: Green underlined text is a link

## Announcements

### 2026 Northern Piedmont Beginning Farmer Program

Are you thinking of starting a production farm or diversifying an existing operation? The Northern Piedmont Beginning Farmer Program (NPBFP) is a multi-class, in-person program designed to help aspiring and diversifying farmers make informed decisions about a new operation. The program's focus is: Introduction to farm planning, marketing, and farm business management. For more information, contact Jim Jenkins at [fauquieredfarm@gmail.com](mailto:fauquieredfarm@gmail.com) or 540-336-43331. The class will meet in person at the Fauquier Cooperative Extension, 24 Pesham St., Warrenton, VA. 20186. Free orientation to outline class goals will be on Feb 21<sup>st</sup> at 1:30 PM. Class meets weekly on Saturday from Feb 28<sup>th</sup> to April 24<sup>th</sup>, at 1:30-3:00 PM. This course costs \$100 per person, \$150 per couple.

### FARMPreneurs Fall Strategic Sprint

Applications are now open for the FARMPreneurs Fall Strategic Sprint, a free, week-long, in-person executive education program designed for regenerative farmers seeking to strengthen their business strategy, leadership skills, and long-term resilience. Participants spend an intensive week developing a 3–5-year strategic plan, refining their farm's mission and vision, and applying entrepreneurial frameworks directly to their operations. Each cohort meets at one of three fall 2026 locations—Pescadero, CA; Creemore, Ontario; or Carthage, TN—and farmers leave with a digital “strategic playbook” plus a powerful network of peers and mentors. Applications for the Fall 2026 sprints are open through March 16, and all program fees are covered for selected farmers.

### Grant Opportunity: Catalyzing Agroforestry Grant Program

The 2026 Catalyzing Agroforestry Grant Program offers funding and technical support for farmers and land stewards implementing agroforestry practices across the U.S. Eligible practices include alley cropping, forest farming, food forests, riparian buffers, silvopasture, and windbreaks—all aimed at advancing regenerative agriculture and ecological resilience. Applicants also gain access to the ARKx Network, a national hub for agroforestry collaboration, events, and resource sharing. The application deadline is March 3, 2026. Send questions to CAGP contact Patrick Bowers at [bpatri8@vt.edu](mailto:bpatri8@vt.edu).

### The Agroforestry Regional Knowledge Exchange Network

The Agroforestry Regional Knowledge Exchange Network (ARKx) is a national platform designed to connect farmers, organizations, and partners practicing agroforestry. Through interactive tools like the National Agroforestry Map, searchable farm and organization profiles, a community calendar, and a curated resource library, ARKx makes it easy to find events, share knowledge, and explore agroforestry practices by region or topic. Whether you're looking to add your farm to the map, discover peer success stories, or access guides and webinars, ARKx helps grow a connected, informed agroforestry community.

### **Farms hiring in the Roanoke region**

- **Kat the Farmer LLC** is hiring part-time, seasonal team members to support both its salad-centric farm and its small-batch prepared foods operation in Check, Virginia. Opportunities include a Farm Hand position focused on hands-on fieldwork and a Prepared Foods Tech role centered on kitchen production, delivery, and quality control—both ideal for detail-oriented, motivated individuals who enjoy meaningful, community-rooted work. These roles offer paid breaks, farm produce, and the chance to contribute to a mission-driven local food business built on quality, sustainability, and connection.
- **Thornfield Farm** offers a chance to work outdoors and gain hands-on experience in sustainable vegetable, flower, and meat production on a deeply community-minded farm in Fincastle, Virginia. Rooted in a commitment to local food access and partnerships that strengthen equitable food systems, the farm provides a learning-rich environment for those passionate about land, food, and community. It's an

opportunity to join a small, values-driven team dedicated to high-quality production and meaningful regional impact.

- **Glade Road Growing** is hiring for its 2026 farm crew, offering seasonal positions on a certified naturally grown vegetable and pasture-based livestock farm in Blacksburg. Opportunities include full-time and part-time vegetable crew roles, as well as a poultry processing assistant position—each suited for hardworking, reliable individuals who thrive in fast-paced, outdoor, team-oriented environments. Crew members gain hands-on experience in all aspects of diversified farm production, enjoy homemade lunches, free produce, and a positive work culture, and contribute directly to a mission-driven local food operation.
- **Stonecrop Farm** is hiring a part-time or full-time team member for the 2026 growing season, offering the chance to work with sustainably grown, artfully arranged cut flowers in the heart of Giles County. The role includes growing, harvesting, and designing with seasonal blooms—plus tending a few vegetable crops—alongside a small, creative, and experienced farm team. Ideal candidates bring horticulture or agriculture experience or an artistic eye and a willingness to dive into hands-on, outdoor work from April through November.
- **Crooked Porch Farm** is hiring two additional crew members for the 2025 season, offering both full-time and part-time positions from April through November with a two-week paid trial period. Crew members will join a small, family-run team growing 4–6 acres of vegetables using a mix of mechanized, hand-tool, and no-till systems, with work ranging from cultivating and planting to harvesting and high-tunnel production. It's a great fit for people who love outdoor work, value sustainable agriculture, and want to be part of a year-round, community-focused farm.
- **Yarrow Springs** is hiring a Flower Harvest and Farmers Market team member for the 2026 season, offering a steady 16-hour weekly schedule focused on harvesting blooms, arranging bouquets, and running the farm's stand at the Floyd Farmers Market. The role blends hands-on fieldwork with customer-facing market responsibilities, making it a great fit for someone who enjoys flowers, creativity, and engaging with the community. It's a seasonal position running March through December, with room to grow into expanded responsibilities in the second year.

### **Job Opportunities with Project Grows**

Are you passionate about local food, community, and building a more equitable food system? Project GROWS is hiring for two positions that support fresh food access from farm to market: Waynesboro Farmers Market Manager and Farm Manager. These positions are right for you if you're excited about local agriculture, teamwork, and making a tangible impact in community.

## Series

### **Digging into Soil Health Webinar Series**

The Digging into Soil Health webinar series offers two evening sessions designed to help farmers strengthen their understanding of soil ecology and practical soil-health management. The February 12 session, From Microbes to Markets, introduces the living soil ecosystem and how it influences crop and forage success, while the March 5 session, Healthy Soils, Resilient Farms, explores the four core principles of soil health and how to apply them on the farm. Both webinars are held via Zoom at 7 p.m. and are open to anyone interested in building more resilient, productive soils. For questions, contact [meganw24@vt.edu](mailto:meganw24@vt.edu).

### **March 7 - June 27, 9:00 AM - 3:00 PM: Sustainable Urban Agriculture Certification Program (Petersburg, VA)**

VSU's 12-Week Urban Agriculture Certificate Course kicks off March 7, offering a deep, practical introduction to growing food in urban spaces. Participants meet on Saturdays for a mix of classroom learning and hands-on training at Randolph Farm, with both in-person and virtual options available. The course covers essential topics for new growers, including botany, pest management, permaculture, greenhouse production, and safe gardening on challenging sites. Students also explore business basics, plant propagation, and small-scale livestock care to build a well-rounded foundation. An all-day orientation on March 7 is required for all participants. This is a great

opportunity for beginning farmers looking to strengthen their skills and confidence in urban agriculture. For more information, contact Dr. Leonard Githinji at [lgithinji@vsu.edu](mailto:lgithinji@vsu.edu) or call (804) 524-5962.

### **Listening Sessions on Agricultural Resilience**

Two upcoming Resilient Agriculture Community Listening Sessions invite coastal Virginia farmers, educators, agencies, and community members to share their experiences with extreme weather and its impacts on local agriculture. Hosted by the CARE Project, these sessions—held [February 5 on the Eastern Shore](#) and [February 12 in Petersburg](#)—create space to discuss challenges like drought, flooding, saltwater intrusion, and extreme heat. Participants will explore community strengths, identify barriers to resilience, and voice the resources and support they need to thrive. Insights gathered will directly shape future Extension programs and tools designed to strengthen agricultural resilience across the region. Registration is open to anyone connected to coastal agricultural communities, and breakfast is provided at both events.

### **Before You Buy the Farm: Land & Livestock Decisions That Matter**

Thinking about starting a farm or homestead, getting into livestock, or purchasing your own property? Join Virginia Cooperative Extension for a four-session Zoom series exploring the key considerations you should understand before you take the leap into farm ownership. The Zoom meeting will be from 7:00-8:00 PM. Please [Register](#) to attend.

- 2/5 — The Grass Is Always Greener  
Learn what it takes to renovate and rehabilitate pastures for livestock, stocking rates, and more!
- 2/12 — The Livestock Lowdown  
Dive into livestock management and components of a successful farm, including finding a vet and how to plan feeding your animals year-round.

### **Out of the Woods: Growing Income from Your Forest**

Red Maple, Real Results: Yields, Flavor & Smarter Tapping Red maple isn't just a pretty canopy—it's a serious production opportunity. In this Out of the Woods webinar, Dr. Abby van den Berg breaks down current research on red maple yields, syrup flavor profiles, and tapping guidelines. They will cover site factors, timing, and trade-offs that producers actually face, then translate the findings into practical steps for woodwork and sugarhouse decisions. Whether you're expanding beyond sugar maple or pressure-testing your red maple strategy, come for clear takeaways and research-backed answers.

Time shows in Eastern Time (US and Canada)

- Feb 19, 2026 07:00 PM

### **Woods & Wildlife Conferences**

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 is offered to appeal to owners of both small and large tracts, as well as to new and experienced owners. Online registration is open for both events.

- February 21
  - [Squires Student Center](#), Blacksburg
  - [Agenda](#)
  - Register by mail coming soon
- February 28
  - Daniel Technology Center, Germanna Community College, Culpeper.
  - [Agenda](#)
  - Register by mail coming soon
- [Register online](#)

## **Landowner Retreats**

Beginning Retreats provide information on hardwood and pine forest management, legacy planning, management planning, and more. Beyond the Basics Retreats take a deep dive into a specific forest management topic. All Retreats combine classroom instruction, field trips, and hands-on activities. Registration opens 10 weeks before events.

- Beyond the Basics Woodland Owner Retreat: Managing Your Forest for Timber Income
  - March 13-14
  - [Holiday Lake 4-H Educational Center](#), Appomattox
- Southwest Virginia Beginning Woodland Owner Retreat
  - May 8-9
  - [Southwest Virginia 4-H Educational Center](#), Abingdon
- Southeast Virginia Beginning Woodland Owner Retreat
  - September 11-12
  - [New Kent Conference Center](#), Providence Forge

Visit the [Blue Ridge PRISM](#) website for programs on non-native invasive species.

## **Virginia Master Cattlemen's Program 2026**

Virginia Cooperative Extension will be offering the Virginia Master Cattlemen program online in Spring 2026. The program will consist of seven sessions that provide essential information for beef producers in 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 program sessions. The goal of the program is to build foundational knowledge that can be applied to advanced beef educational programs. This program will be held on Zoom weekly from 6:30 to 8:30 pm on Thursdays from February 12 to March 26. All participants will receive a hard copy course notebook. Internet access and email are required for this course. Registration deadline is February 5, 2026. For more information, contact Phil Blevins at the Washington County Extension Office, Phone: (276)676-6309 or by email: [pblevins@vt.edu](mailto:pblevins@vt.edu).

## **360 Cut Flower Discussion Group (Prince Edward, VA)**

The 360 Cut Flower Discussion Group is a seasonal series designed to connect growers and build skills from field to vase through farm tours, hands-on workshops, and interactive field days. Events run monthly from April through September 2026, offering opportunities to learn, share, and grow alongside fellow flower producers. Whether you're just starting out or expanding your operation, this group provides practical knowledge and community support. The dates in this series are as follows: April 16, May 14, June 18, July 23, August 20, and September 25. For more information, or to register, contact Erin Small at (434) 392-0300, [erins96@vt.edu](mailto:erins96@vt.edu).

## **May 12 & 13: Virginia Forage and Grassland Council Basic Grazing School**

The 2026 VFGC Grazing School offers a practical, two-day learning experience that helps producers strengthen their grazing skills and confidence. Participants get hands-on time in the field, learning how to assess pasture conditions, set up fencing, and apply core principles of forage and soil management. The course blends expert instruction with real-world practice so attendees can immediately apply what they learn. By the end, each producer begins shaping a customized grazing plan tailored to their own farm. Contact Matt Booher at [mrbooher@vt.edu](mailto:mrbooher@vt.edu) or 540-325-7503.

## 4 the Soil Highlights



### **S6 - E2: Living a Beautiful Life through Fresh Flowers with Jessica Hall of Harmony Harvest Farm, Pt. I**

Jessica Hall of Harmony Harvest Farm shares how a simple dream to help people live better through fresh flowers grew into a thriving family-run business rooted in soil health, creativity, and community. In this episode, Jessica reflects on the farm's mission to make Virginia-grown and American-grown flowers accessible to everyone, and how thoughtful land stewardship—from erosion control to irrigation design—has shaped their success. She highlights the importance of having the right tools, mentors, and networks to build a sustainable business that truly lives its values. Jessica also invites listeners to explore Harmony Harvest's heirloom chrysanthemums, pick-your-own experiences, virtual events, and educational offerings that celebrate the beauty and resilience of flowers.

### **S6 - E1: Rooted in a Passion for the Earth, Soil, and the Bioeconomy with Ms. Fatema Mohajir**

A desire and passion for caring for the earth, soil, and the natural environment can start at a young age. Fatema Mohajir and her family are from the Bamyan province in central Afghanistan. As a child, Fatema's family lived in Iran, where her father worked at a large-scale vegetable farm. Fatema's father and older brother inspired her interest in soil science and farming. Fatema studied at Kabul University and graduated in 2020. As a part of her studies, Fatema participated in a year-long Permaculture Program led by Rosemary Marrow from Australia. After graduating, Fatema received a scholarship to study in Uzbekistan, where she focused on bioeconomy and irrigation. Fatema moved to the United States in 2023 and has been working at the Farm at Willow Run in Harrisonburg for the past two seasons. Fatema shares about her interest in organic farming and her overall aim to be a role model for others in caring for the earth, soil, and the bioeconomy.

**4 the Soil Blog** Check out the latest 4 the Soil blog!

## February

### **February 3, 9:00 AM - 12:00 PM: Aerial Imagery for Small Farms (Suffolk, VA)**

Farmers and Growers will learn how aerial imagery can be useful for small farmers and also economical. Learn how it can save time and money through early detection of disease and pests, as well as other environmental issues. By analyzing imagery, you may be able to incorporate other precision agricultural practices. For more info, contact: Tim Sexton, (804) 524-1028 | [tsexton@vsu.edu](mailto:tsexton@vsu.edu).

### **February 3, 1:30 – 3:00 PM: Virginia Urban Agriculture and Small Acreage Landowner Information Session (Fairfax, VA)**

You are invited to join an in-person information session with representatives from the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Farm Service Agency and Natural Resources Conservation Service to learn about the financial, cost-share, and technical assistance programs and resources that are available through the USDA. The session will provide urban agriculture and small-acreage farmers with details on how and where to get started.

### **February 3, 5:30 - 7:00 PM: Grant Writing for Farmers (Harrisonburg, VA)**

Learn tips and tricks from the Shenandoah Valley Small Business Development Center about how to apply for grants to support your farm. This workshop will also cover available grant opportunities from federal and state agencies, as well as foundations that can give your farm a financial boost to become successful. Hear from a farmer's testimony about her experience applying for and managing a grant. For more info, contact: Marian Dalke, (540) 232-6010 | [mdalke@vt.edu](mailto:mdalke@vt.edu).

### **February 4, 10:00 AM -12:00 PM: Herd Health and Forage Improvement (Rapidan, VA)**

February is the perfect time to prepare for the upcoming year by calving and improving pastures. There will be discussions on how to improve forage quality to enhance herd health and weight gains, thereby increasing profits. There will be discussions on alternative forages to help deal with drought stress, or winter freezes, and other management issues. For more information, please contact Roland Terrell at (804) 892-4612 or [rterrell@vsu.edu](mailto:rterrell@vsu.edu)

### **February 4, 12:00 - 1:00 PM: The Phenology of Southwestern Virginia Farms and Landscapes (Virtual)**

This workshop will explore how the climate and microclimate of southwestern Virginia drive a continuous flow of repetitive cycles and rhythms in which the natural world operates. Anyone wishing to grow and raise anything on a farm, or in their backyard, will benefit from this high-level overview of these amazing natural interactions. Ideas for working in harmony with these natural rhythms and for modifying them to benefit production will be discussed. While tailored to the three-dimensional, complex terrain of the Virginia mountains, concepts can be applied to any location. For more information, please contact Wayne Browning at (804) 760-3932 or [wbrowning@vsu.edu](mailto:wbrowning@vsu.edu)

### **February 5, 12:00 - 1:00 PM: VSU SFOP Beginning Farmers - Lunch and Learn - How do you price your farm products ( Virtual)**

This workshop will explore how the climate and microclimate of southwestern Virginia drive a continuous flow of repetitive cycles and rhythms in which the natural world operates. Anyone wishing to grow and raise anything on a farm, or in their backyard, will benefit from this high-level overview of these amazing natural interactions. Ideas for working in harmony with these natural rhythms and for modifying them to benefit production will be discussed. While tailored to the three-dimensional, complex terrain of the Virginia mountains, concepts can be applied to any location. For more information, please contact Michael Carter Sr at (804) 481-1163 or [mcarter@vsu.edu](mailto:mcarter@vsu.edu).

### **February 6, 10:00 - 12:00 PM: High Tunnel Soil Preparation for Spring Planting (Petersburg, VA)**

This workshop will demonstrate to farmers how to manage nutrients. There will be lessons about the proper rates, timing, and placement of Nitrogen and Phosphorus, soil testing, the addition of lime, and how soil nutrients affect the water quality of our groundwater and surface waters. There will be lessons on why soils vary in their ability to grow a particular crop. Dress appropriately; this is an outdoor event. For more information, please contact Tammy Holler at (804) 895-9472 or [tholler@vsu.edu](mailto:tholler@vsu.edu).

### **February 7, 10:00 - 11:00 AM: High Tunnel Soil Preparation for Spring Planting (Warfield, VA)**

This workshop will demonstrate to farmers how to manage nutrients. There will be lessons about the proper rates, timing, and placement of Nitrogen and Phosphorus, soil testing, the addition of lime, and how soil nutrients affect the water quality of our groundwater and surface waters. There will be lessons on why soils vary in their ability to grow a particular crop. Dress appropriately; this is an outdoor event. For more information, please contact Tammy Holler at (804) 895-9472 or [tholler@vsu.edu](mailto:tholler@vsu.edu).

### **February 7, 11:00 AM - 12:30 PM: Growers' Protections under the Perishable Agricultural Commodities Act (PACA) Part I (Virtual)**

As a grower, you are protected under the Perishable Agricultural Commodities Act (PACA). The PACA protects growers and businesses dealing in fresh and frozen fruits and vegetables by establishing and enforcing a code of fair business practices and by helping companies resolve business disputes. Learn how the PACA provides a forum where firms that buy and sell fruits and vegetables can settle commercial disputes outside civil courts by understanding your rights and responsibilities. In addition, PACA, you will broaden your understanding of trade terms, payment requirements, federal inspection certificates, and more. This is part 1 of a two-part series. For more information, please contact Yowei Peralta at (804) 892-0282 or [yperalta@vsu.edu](mailto:yperalta@vsu.edu).

### **February 9-11, 9:30 AM - 12:30 PM: Care Farming Network National Conference (Gaithersburg, MD)**

Join for the 2nd Annual Care Farming Network National Conference — February 9–11, 2026, at the Gaithersburg Marriott Washingtonian Center in Maryland! Be part of a one-of-a-kind gathering of care farmers, practitioners, and advocates from across the country as coming together to learn, connect, and grow. This year's event will feature: Dynamic speakers and sessions to inspire care farmers of all levels with new ideas; A special farm tour at Red Wiggler Care Farm; A welcoming reception to kick off the conference in the community; Unparalleled opportunities to connect with care farmers and allies nationwide. Check out the Agenda at a Glance on our website for a detailed schedule. Stay at the Gaithersburg Marriott Washingtonian Center for a seamless, connected experience. Attendees receive a discounted hotel rate and enjoy the added benefit of being right in the heart of the action — sharing morning coffee, evening conversations, and those spontaneous connections that make this gathering so memorable.

### **February 11, 9:00 AM -12:00 PM: Irrigation and Soil Moisture Management For Farmers (South Hill, VA)**

February is a perfect time to learn about irrigation options and how to determine when the soil and the plants need supplemental irrigation. You will learn about the moisture availability of different soils, how to use irrigation methods to reduce pests and disease, and how it can also assist with nutrient application. For more information, contact Tim Sexton at (804) 524-1028 or [tsexton@vsu.edu](mailto:tsexton@vsu.edu).

### **February 11, 10:00 AM - 1:00 PM: Agriculture, Floriculture & Greenhouse Systems Student Tour (Petersburg, VA)**

This tour introduces students to agriculture, floriculture, greenhouse systems, and career pathways within the College of Agriculture and Life Sciences (CALs). Students will meet faculty and staff, learn about USDA scholarships, internship opportunities, MANRRS, and careers in agricultural sciences. Demonstrations include drone technology for pasture management, indoor production in Cropbox units, aquaculture greenhouse activities, trolley talks, and hands-on experiences such as weeding or hydroponic transplanting. The visit also includes an overview of academic majors, success stories of former students, scholarships, and admissions guidance. Ideal for schools exploring agriculture careers, STEM pathways, and hands-on learning. For more information, contact Tabitha Bugg at 804.892.2997 or [tbugg@vsu.edu](mailto:tbugg@vsu.edu).

### **February 11, 3:00 - 5:00 PM: Fruit Tree Pruning (King George, VA)**

Good pruning techniques 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 tree's injury or death. Pruning reduces overall tree size, improves structural strength, increases fruit production, and improves the quality of fruit. Come and join 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. For more information, contact Michael Carter Sr. at (804) 481-1163, or [mcarter@vsu.edu](mailto:mcarter@vsu.edu). or Forrest Hobbs at (804)892-5910 or [fhobbs@vsu.edu](mailto:fhobbs@vsu.edu).

### **February 11, 5:00 -7:00 PM: Basic organic urban gardening and composting (Petersburg, VA)**

Urban gardening is the practice of growing plants, fruits, and vegetables in urban environments, using spaces such as balconies, rooftops, community plots, and vacant lots. It encompasses a wide range of activities from small-scale container gardening to large urban farms and offers benefits such as improved access to fresh food and environmental sustainability. Contact: James Gibson at (804) 720-6826, or [jegibson@vsu.edu](mailto:jegibson@vsu.edu).

### **February 17, 9:00 - 11:00 AM: Small Farm Orientation (Norfolk, VA)**

This two-hour Hybrid (In Person and Virtual) 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, and Dr. Nartea, extension specialist for the VSU Integrated Marketing Program, will walk attendees through the process of developing a productive and profitable farm. Participants will receive a Small Farm Orientation manual. For more information, contact Ben Dukes at (804) 731-7916 or [bdukes@vsu.edu](mailto:bdukes@vsu.edu).

### **February 17, 9:00 -11:00 AM: Agriculture Business Structure Planning Workshop (Norfolk, VA)**

Agriculture and rural businesses will have the opportunity to review different business structures. Planning correctly will protect individuals from personal liability for business debt and reduce some of the financial risk involved in agriculture. Specialists will present multiple options for agricultural businesses to choose from when planning their business structure. For more information, contact Forrest Hobbs at (804) 892-5310, or [fhobbs@vsu.edu](mailto:fhobbs@vsu.edu).

### **February 18, 9:30 AM - 12:30 PM: Farm Tax Preparation (South Hill, VA)**

Filing your farm taxes is one of the most important skills for successful farming! Join Darrell Tennie from the Tennie Group to gain the knowledge needed to maximize your tax refund by learning how to correctly file your Schedule F. He will also discuss the benefits and requirements of setting up the different tax entities of an LLC, Soil Proprietorship, etc. For more information, contact Marilyn Estes at (804) 481-0485, or [mestes@vsu.edu](mailto:mestes@vsu.edu).

### **February 18, 10:00AM - 12:00PM: How to Find and Apply for Your Small Farm (Virtual)**

This webinar is for small farmers who are new to grant research and application. You will learn about: where to find grants (private, corporate), government and non-government, and community foundations; how to determine eligibility and learn to write proposals, if needed. Other topics discussed will be notice of funding availability and general call for applications. For more info, contact: Ben Dukes at (804) 731.7916 or [bdukes@vsu.edu](mailto:bdukes@vsu.edu).

### **February 18, 1:00 PM - 4:00 PM: Pine Bark Beetle (Courtland, VA)**

Pine bark beetles are insects that attack and breed in the inner bark of pine trees, often killing them by introducing a symbiotic fungus that disrupts the flow of nutrients while usually targeting stressed and weakened trees. Some species, like the Southern pine beetle, can cause major damage during outbreaks, which are exacerbated by factors such as drought and warmer winters. Contact: Garry Banks at (804) 760-3615, or [gbanks@vsu.edu](mailto:gbanks@vsu.edu).

### **February 18, 3:00 PM - 5:00 PM: How to Plant A Tree the Right Way (Petersburg, VA)**

Sometimes, digging a hole and dropping a young sapling in it will suffice, and your tree will survive. However, to increase the odds of the sapling living and becoming mature, there are correct planting steps that will increase the likelihood of it reaching its full potential and will be enjoyed for generations to come. For more information, contact James Gibson at (804) 720-6826, or [jegibson@vsu.edu](mailto:jegibson@vsu.edu).

### **February 19, 10:30 AM - 12:30 PM: Hands-On Rabbit Processing Demonstration (Petersburg, VA)**

This live demonstration walks participants through each step of ethical rabbit processing, from safe handling and dispatch to skinning, evisceration, sanitation, cooling, and packaging. The training emphasizes proper technique, food safety requirements, and efficiency for both home use and small-scale on-farm sales. Participants will observe professional methods, ask questions in real time, gain confidence, and prepare rabbits in a respectful, efficient manner. This session is ideal for producers who want to build self-sufficiency, improve processing skills, or expand value-added opportunities within their livestock and homestead operations. For more information, contact Tabitha Bugg at (804) 892-2997, or [tbugg@vsu.edu](mailto:tbugg@vsu.edu).

### **February 19, 10:00 AM - 12:30 PM: Small Fruit Workshop (Green Bay, VA)**

This Small Fruit Workshop offers a practical introduction to growing blueberries and blackberries, led by Extension Specialist Jayesh Samtani. Participants will get hands-on experience with pruning, along with guidance on irrigation basics and trellising methods. The program includes visits to two farm sites, giving attendees the chance to see real-world production and management techniques in action. It's an accessible, low-cost training designed for hobby farmers and beginners who want to build confidence with small fruit production. For more information, contact Erin Small at (434) 392-0300, [erins96@vt.edu](mailto:erins96@vt.edu).

### **February 19, 5:30 PM -7:30 PM: Shenandoah Valley Small Farm Celebration (Harrisonburg, VA)**

Gather with other small farmers in the Valley to celebrate your successes over the past year and prepare for the season ahead. In addition to networking, this event will feature an interactive program titled "A Farmers' History of the Shenandoah Valley." Come add your farm's history to the timeline and help develop this community resource that farmers can build on year after year. Contact: Marian Dalke at (540) 232-6010 or [mdalke@vt.edu](mailto:mdalke@vt.edu).

### **February 23, 6:00 PM - 8:00 PM: Chowan Basin Board Meeting (Courtland, VA)**

Join the Chowan Basin Soil & Water Conservation District's monthly board meeting for updates on conservation planning, producer assistance, and priority watershed activities in the region. Board members review participation in cost-share programs and ongoing conservation practices, such as cover cropping, rotational grazing, riparian buffers, and waterwise management. Attendees can learn how district decisions support soil health, protect waterways, and enhance local agricultural sustainability. This meeting is a great opportunity for producers and residents to stay connected with conservation efforts, voice local concerns, and understand emerging opportunities for technical or financial support throughout the Chowan Basin service area. For more information, contact Tabitha Bugg at (804) 892-2997, or [tbugg@vsu.edu](mailto:tbugg@vsu.edu).

### **February 24, 1:00 - 3:00 PM: Fruit Tree Pruning for the Beginner (Salem, VA)**

Proper pruning techniques are essential for maximizing fruit quality, improving tree health, and increasing overall productivity. However, many growers neglect pruning due to a lack of experience or concerns about damaging their trees. Effective pruning helps control tree size, enhances structural strength, and promotes higher yields of better-quality fruit. Join us for a hands-on workshop designed for beginners, where you will learn the fundamentals of fruit tree pruning through expert guidance and live demonstrations. Participants are encouraged to bring their own pruning tools for a more interactive learning experience. Don't miss this opportunity to gain the skills and confidence needed to care for your fruit trees successfully. For more information, contact Brent Noell at (804) 892-0140, or [bnoell@vsu.edu](mailto:bnoell@vsu.edu).

### **February 26, 10:30 AM - 12:30 PM: Piedmont SWCD Board Meeting (Farmville, VA)**

Attend the Piedmont Soil & Water Conservation District Board Meeting to gain an in-depth look at agricultural and conservation initiatives serving Amelia, Nottoway, and Prince Edward counties. Discussions typically include cost-share program updates, best management practices, landowner outreach, watershed priorities, forestry and grazing initiatives, youth education, and upcoming workshops. Attendees gain insight into district decision-making, project planning, and local resource concerns. Producers, educators, and community members are encouraged to attend to learn about opportunities for partnership, conservation funding, and technical assistance that support farm productivity, soil health, and water quality across the region. For more information, contact Tabitha Bugg at (804) 892-2997, or [tbugg@vsu.edu](mailto:tbugg@vsu.edu).

### **February 26, 1:00 - 3:00 PM: Preparing Your High Tunnel for Production (King George, VA)**

Do you have a new high tunnel or are you preparing to start production in one? Join the Tarlton family at Favor Tree Farms to learn the steps to preparing your high tunnel for the upcoming growing season. They will discuss the steps to setting up all the necessary equipment and proper soil preparations to ensure a successful growing season. For more information, contact Michael Carter Sr. at 804.481.1163 or [mcarter@vsu.edu](mailto:mcarter@vsu.edu).

## March

### **March 3, 1:00 - 3:00PM: Pruning your Grapes for Improved Production**

If your grape or muscadine vines aren't producing well, this workshop can help. Forrest Hobbs will guide participants through the essentials of proper pruning—what to cut, why it matters, and which tools make the job easier. By removing old wood and opening the canopy, growers can boost fruit production and reduce disease pressure. The session is designed with beginners in mind and offers clear, practical steps you can apply right away. For more information, contact Marilyn Estes at (804) 481-0485 or [mestes@vsu.edu](mailto:mestes@vsu.edu).

### **March 10, 8:30 AM - 4:00 PM: Agripalooza**

Agripalooza returns on March 10, 2026, bringing together agriculture entrepreneurs and business owners for a full day of learning, networking, and innovation. Held at Virginia Western Community College in Roanoke, this dynamic event blends tradition with technology to tackle today's ag industry challenges. Attendees can expect breakout sessions, resource connections, and practical takeaways to help grow their operations. Whether you're just starting out or scaling up, Agripalooza is your gateway to fresh ideas and a thriving ag community.

### **March 11, 10:00 - 11:00 AM: Web Soil Survey Basics (South Hill, VA)**

Learn 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, you will look at each farmer's farm soil data. For more information, contact Tammy Holler at 804.895.9472 or [tholler@vsu.edu](mailto:tholler@vsu.edu).

### **March 12, 8:00 AM - 4:30 PM: Virginia Agritourism Conference (Virginia Beach, VA)**

The 2026 Virginia Agritourism Conference – Exploring the Coast brings together agritourism producers from across the Commonwealth for a full day of learning, collaboration, and partnership-building on Thursday, March 12, 2026, in Virginia Beach. Hosted at the Embassy Suites Virginia Beach Oceanfront Resort, the conference offers educational sessions, networking opportunities, and space to explore new ideas that strengthen Virginia's agritourism sector. Registration is open through February 18. Contact Rachel Foutz at [rachel.foutz@vafb.com](mailto:rachel.foutz@vafb.com) for help with hotel accommodations.

### **March 18, 11:00 AM - 3:00 PM: VSU AgFest (Petersburg, VA)**

VSU AgFest returns on March 24, offering a lively, hands-on celebration of agriculture for farmers and families alike. Visitors can explore interactive exhibits, meet small farm animals, and learn about practical tools like hydroponics and climate-smart practices. The day also features local food trucks, live music, and a bustling farmers' market showcasing regional growers. With activities for all ages and plenty of opportunities to connect, AgFest is a great stop for anyone starting their farming journey. It's a fun, welcoming way to learn, taste, and experience the many sides of agriculture. For more information, contact Jessica Harris at 804-524-5964 or [jharris@vsu.edu](mailto:jharris@vsu.edu).

## April

### **April 23-24: 2026 Women in Ag Gathering - Save the Date!**

Dear Women in Ag Network and Ag Extension Agents, SAVE THE DATE for Women in Ag Gathering 2026 - "Exploring Agritourism in the Shenandoah Valley." This year's event is all about Agritourism! The event will be held on April 23-24, 2026. Day 1 includes: Learning how to work with local government; Networking with fellow women farmers and ranchers and learn how to leverage your online presence; Learning how to develop a risk mitigation plan or review and improve what you already have; Hearing from fellow producers about their experiences in agritourism. Day 2 takes participants on 1 of 3 tours, covering horticulture, livestock, and fruit and vegetable production. Tours and accommodations will take place in and around Rockingham and Page Counties. Registration will be shared in the New Year. Don't forget to follow along on [Facebook](#) or contact your local [Extension Office](#) for more information.

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