



Newsblast

February 10, 2022

Photo by Chu Tai on Unsplash

A Message from VBFRC

Hello everyone! We hope the sunshine has found you on these warmer winter days. We are excited to send along our monthly newsblast with events coming up this month and next. 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 Highlights

We are partnering with the Appalachian Beginning Forest Farming Coalition (ABFFC) and other partners to offer this special webinar series on forest farming of common NTFPs. Each webinar in this series will bring together experts in the field, experienced forest farmers and learning resources. Topics will be explored in-depth and discussions will be moderated with experienced forest farmers. Hosted on Zoom, each webinar will take place live at 6PM to 7:30PM. Topics include:

- February 10: Tree Saps and Syrups
- February 24: Forest Farming Ramps
- March 10: Forest Farming Fungi
- March 24: Forest Farming Ginseng
- April 14: Goldenseal and other NTFPs

Please visit the [ABFFC Forest Farming in Focus Webpage](#) for more details.

Note: Green underlined text is a link

Announcements

Graze 300 Survey

The Virginia Cooperative Extension Graze 300 team is seeking input from farmers across the Commonwealth on perceptions and attitudes related to grazing practices. A short survey has been developed to gather information to evaluate various factors that influence farmers' attitudes toward adoption of rotational grazing. Findings of this study will help Extension better serve farmers statewide. The goal is to receive input from producers regardless of grazing management or type of grazing animals raised. **No matter what or how you graze, we want to hear from you.** The survey can be completed online at the link below. To access and complete the survey, click on this link: <https://tinyurl.com/Graze300VT> The survey will be open through February 28, 2022. Thank you in advance for your consideration and participation.

Regenerative Agriculture in Virginia – Farmer Survey

American Farmland Trust, in collaboration with partners across Virginia, is launching a major initiative to advance regenerative agriculture in Virginia. As part of this work, we are engaging farmers like you to understand the biggest challenges you face, what could help you become more successful, and if there are new things you'd like to try on your farm. This [survey](#) should take 5-8 minutes to complete. By completing the survey, you will be eligible to win one of several prizes including a Yeti cooler, two \$100 Visa gift cards, and AFT branded Yeti tumblers and apparel. Data collected through this survey will only be used for informational purposes and individualized data will not be shared with others.

Baker Farm Job Announcement

Steve Baker, who runs Baker Farm (a birth to butcher pork facility, selling all meat directly) is looking for someone to come work for his operation. Baker Farm is a small century farm - meaning it has been in the Baker family for over 100 years - located in Shenandoah County. Steve Baker is looking for help, and potentially in the future for someone to take over the operation. The position includes a home that can hold a sizable family. If you or someone you know is interested in a life of farming, and is looking for a position, have them contact Steve!

LEAP in Roanoke, VA is hiring a Director for Administrative Services

Local Environmental Agriculture Project (LEAP) is a 501c3 non-profit based in Roanoke City. LEAP nurtures our food community to create an equitable food and farming system which prioritizes health and abundance. We do this by supporting community initiatives, markets, farms, and farmers. The position is salary at 30 hrs/wk with the possibility for growth into 40 hrs/wk.

Virginia Cooperative Extension fights food insecurity in the commonwealth (news article)

With a multitude of efforts across the state, Virginia Cooperative Extension and the Family Nutrition Program work to fight food insecurity to ensure everyone has adequate access to proper nutrition.

Series

Forest Farming in Focus

The Virginia Beginning Farmer and Rancher Coalition is partnering with the Appalachian Beginning Forest Farming Coalition (ABFFC), the Virginia Tech Catawba Sustainability Center Forest Herb Network and other partners to offer this special webinar series for forest farmers who want to learn more about

common NTFPs and expand their understanding of forest farming practices. Each webinar in this series will bring together our best experts in the field, experienced forest farmers and learning resources. Together we will explore common NTFP species and topics in-depth, as well as engage in discussions with experienced forest farmers with years of specialized expertise. Hosted on Zoom, each webinar will take place live at 6PM to 7:30PM. Topics include:

- February 10: Tree Saps and Syrups
- February 24: Forest Farming Ramps
- March 10: Forest Farming Fungi
- March 24: Forest Farming Ginseng
- April 14: Goldenseal and other NTFPs

Please visit the [ABFFC Forest Farming in Focus Webpage](#) for more details.

A Taste of Farming: An Online Series for Aspiring and New Farmers

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. From October 2021 to March 2022, Virginia Cooperative Extension (VCE) agents and Small Farm Outreach Program Associates will be posting 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. A week after each video is posted, the VCE professional will offer a live-time Q & A session by Zoom where aspiring and new farmers can ask their questions directly and discuss their needs with the agent.

Episode 22-3: Learning from History...and Soil Tests with Dr. Rory Maguire of Virginia Tech

In this episode of the 4 the Soil Podcast, Jeff Ishee and Mary Sketch talk with Dr. Rory Maguire, professor at Virginia Tech in the School of Plant and Environmental Sciences, and the supervisor of the Virginia Tech Soil Testing Lab. Rory discusses his background in agriculture in Ireland, the complexity of soil in Virginia, and the importance of testing your soils. He also shares his appreciation for American history, particularly the Lewis and Clark Expedition, and what the expedition and history have to teach us today.

Master Cattleman Course to be Offered Spring 2022

Virginia Cooperative Extension will be offering the Virginia Master Cattlemen program online Spring 2022. 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 educational programs. Online classes will be held weekly on Monday evenings from 6:30-8:30 p.m., starting March 7 and concluding April 18. The cost of the program is \$70 per participant. With support from the Virginia Cattle Industry Board, the first 100 participants will receive discounted registration rate of \$35. All participants will receive a course notebook, and a course website will be used to provide educational materials and supplemental instruction. [Register to join](#). Registration deadline is February 25. For additional information please contact your local Virginia Cooperative Extension Office.

Optimizing Profitability Through Grazing

A three week, six session, online educational opportunity that discusses the basics of grazing. Sessions start March 14, 2022 and run through March 31, 2022. [Register to attend](#).

February Events

February 14: Small Farm Orientation

The two-hour Zoom course is geared to new farmers with zero to five years of experience operating a farm. Vernon Heath, a VSU Small Farm Outreach Program Assistant with over 40 years of experience in the Virginia Agricultural industry, will teach the course. He will walk attendees through the process of how to develop a productive and profitable farm. Participants will receive a Small Farm Orientation manual. For more information, contact the Small Farm Outreach Program at (804) 524-3292 or smallfarm@vsu.edu.

February 16: Asset-based Food Economies in Appalachian Ohio: A Focus on Rural Resiliency

From 10-11 am Eastern hear from [Tom Redfern of Rural Action](#) and [Leslie Schaller of the Appalachian Center for Economic Networks \(ACEnet\)](#) about their experiences building asset-based food economies in Rural Ohio.

February 18: A Taste of Farming Strawberries

Hear from Roy Flanagan, Virginia Beach's Agriculture and Natural Resources Agent, who will share the basics of strawberry growing.

February 19: Starting a Community Garden

Whether you have a green thumb or not, join Michael Carter Jr., VSU Small Farm Resource center coordinator and grower at Carter Farms and Africulture, and Michael Carter Sr. of Virginia State University's Small Farm Outreach Program as they share the benefits of gardening, agriculture, and community gardens. Get your questions answered as we prepare for Spring 2022. Learn about Africulture, the principles, practices, plants, and people of African descent that have shaped and changed agriculture. Explore how community gardens grow people, strengthen students, encourage diversity and serve to unify communities. These workshops will plant a seed that will encourage a positive harvest for you in the season. This is a hybrid workshop that can be joined in person in Milford VA, or via zoom.

February 19: Woods and Wildlife Conference (Wytheville, VA)

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. [Registration online](#) or by mail.

February 23: DCR Informational Meeting

Join us for a conversation with Darryl M. Grover, 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 23: Early Production in Raised Beds

This workshop will show you how to design and construct a raised bed that can be used for early spring production of cold-tolerant crops, so that you may bring your products to market earlier. Topics will

include design and layout considerations; building materials; soil and amendments; plastic mulch; drip irrigation; crop selection; integrated pest management; and low tunnel designs and materials.

February 24: Livestock Risk Protection

Livestock Risk Protection (LRP), a virtual presentation by and discussion with Kenny Burdine, University of Kentucky, Livestock Economics specialist. [Register in advance for this meeting.](#)

February 24: VDACS Farmer Farmland Match & Virginia Market Maker

Are you a farmer looking for some Virginia Farmland to lease, rent or own? Are you a Virginia Farm landowner looking for a potential farmer or new owner? Join Jennifer Perkins, of the Virginia Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services, as she shares the features and highlights of VDACS's updated website (<https://farmlink.va-vdacs.com>). French Price will also be there to share how to use the Virginia Market Maker website (<https://va.foodmarketmaker.com>) to find more markets for your new or existing farm operation. This engaging presentation should match Virginia farmers up with more success going into the season.

February 24: Cooking Seasonally: Winter Veggies

Join us on Zoom for a winter vegetable cooking class! Together we'll learn about the classic winter vegetables we grow at the AMI Farm at Augusta Health. We'll discuss the history of collard greens, the cultural and nutritional value of pot liquor, and how to add peanut butter for some extra protein. Then we'll explore different methods for extracting the most flavor out of your winter squash to make soup with a secret ingredient that will take your dish over the top.

February 25: Agritourism

Hear from Livvy Preisser, Isle of Wight County's Agriculture and Natural Resources Extension Agent, who will share an introduction to agritourism.

February 26: Woods and Wildlife Conference (Culpeper, VA)

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. [Registration online](#) or by mail.

February 28: Estate Planning for Farmers

Lillian "Ebonie" Alexander lives on her family farm in rural Southside Virginia. She is the Executive Director of the Black Family Land Trust, Inc. (BFLT). According to the US Department of Agriculture National Agricultural Statistics Service (NASS), family-owned farms account for 97 percent of the 2.1 million farms in the US, yet only 30 percent of these farms survive into the second generation, and only 12 percent are still operating by the third. Farmland preservation has become especially important with higher prices due to the flood of residential and commercial development. Farmers need to plan for passing their farms to the next generation to ensure that they stay in the family and the farming industry. Ebonie will talk about the importance of farm estate planning and show you that it's not complicated. She will demonstrate why you need to take action and make a plan.

February 28: The Northern Piedmont 2022 Hybrid Winter Vegetable School

Featuring presenters from California, Virginia, and Maryland. There is no fee both virtual and in person options for attendance are available; registration is required for either option by February 25, 2022. Space is limited for in person and is held at the Virginia Cooperative Extension building in Loudoun County. If you have questions please reach out to Beth Sastre at flores69@vt.edu or 703-737-8978

February 28-March 1: Mid-Atlantic Strawberry Programs

Our Strawberry Field Walk will be on February 28th from 12:30 p.m. until dark. Our Evening Program will take place immediately following the Field Walk and will be Soil Fumigant Certified Applicator Training

(for VA growers this is required every 3 years, and this is the year) starting at 5:30 p.m. with a sponsored meal, followed by the training and certification at the Creeds Ruritan Community Complex. Our Strawberry School and Tradeshow is the following day, March 1st, at the Advanced Technology Center from 8:00 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. Additional details are enclosed on the reverse of this letter for your review.

March Events

March 3: Forestry Hot Topics

Join fellow forest landowners and the Small Farm Outreach Program for a workshop designed to help you manage your timber in a biologically and economically sound manner. We'll look at current trends and issues that impact your forest ownership interests, such as markets, timber sales, and harvesting dynamics, as well as some unique opportunities.

March 4: Hydroponic Production

Hear from Ashley Appling, Culpeper County's Agriculture and Natural Resources Extension Agent, who will share an introduction to hydroponic production.

March 8: Novel Tall Fescue Renovation Workshop

Toxic tall fescue reduces livestock weight gains and lowers reproductive performance. This virtual workshop will give you the tools and information needed to remove toxic tall fescue and replace it with novel tall fescue varieties. Speakers include researchers from across the country.

March 9: Pastured Poultry

This workshop will be a hybrid presentation. The presentation will be in person at the VSU Randolph Farm Pavillion and be live-streamed on Zoom for those who are unable to attend in person. Topics include layer and broiler operation considerations; laws and regulations pertaining to poultry; brooding; feed, water, and care; predator control with permanent, movable, and solar-powered electric fence options; mobile coop designs; pasture rotation; and marketing eggs and meat. The workshop will cover both urban and agricultural settings.

March 10: Farm Equipment Safety & Maintenance

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.

March 12: Agribusiness Production and Financial Management Program

Managing a farm is more than planting and harvesting crops or raising livestock. Farming is a business, and like any business, its success depends on proper planning and financial management. Megan Harrison and Jordan Scott will conduct the program. They are both Virginia State University College of Agriculture alumnae with expertise in farm financing. The session will help new and established farmers and ranchers learn to develop business plans, keep efficient records and discover tips on mitigating business risks, as well as how to establish credit and borrow money. Participants will learn financial management strategies to help their businesses become more profitable and sustainable. They will also visit local farms through virtual tours and have an opportunity to talk with farmers about their business enterprises. Everyone will receive an Agribusiness Production and Financial Management Manual. At the end of the workshop, participants will know how to develop and maintain a business plan and set goals for their farm operations and enterprises.

March 14: Small Farm Orientation

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

March 15: Estate Planning for Farmers

Lillian “Ebonie” Alexander lives on her family farm in rural Southside Virginia. She is the Executive Director of the Black Family Land Trust, Inc. (BFLT). According to the US Department of Agriculture National Agricultural Statistics Service (NASS), family-owned farms account for 97 percent of the 2.1 million farms in the US, yet only 30 percent of these farms survive into the second generation, and only 12 percent are still operating by the third. Farmland preservation has become especially important with higher prices due to the flood of residential and commercial development. Farmers need to plan for passing their farms to the next generation to ensure that they stay in the family and the farming industry. Ebonie will talk about the importance of farm estate planning and show you that it’s not complicated. She will demonstrate why you need to take action and make a plan.

March 16: Laying Plastic Using a Seeder

Herbert Brown, of Browntown Farm, will demonstrate the proper techniques for preparing the soil and how to use a plastic laying machine to cover beds for planting. He will show how to use a seed planter and make the appropriate adjustments for different sizes and types of seeds. He will also speak about the benefits of both methods for improving productivity and saving on time and labor.

March 16: Bedding Sweet Potatoes for Slip Production

This virtual presentation will include prerecorded video footage of Clif Slade, a retired VCE Extension Agent and Small Farm Outreach Program Assistant. Clif has been growing sweet potatoes for over 35 years. He will demonstrate his techniques for bedding sweet potatoes in February for sweet potato slip production for spring planting. Clif Slade will also share his knowledge of varieties and proven methods for bedding sweet potatoes in the field and in high tunnels.

March 16: Basic Computer Skills for Farmers

Small-scale farmers are invited to join the Basic Computer Skills for Farmers workshop to learn techniques that are beneficial for use at home and in farm business operations. The workshop is designed especially for those with minimal computer experience. Participants will be introduced to computer operating systems, how to use a mouse, how to create, save and manage documents and images, how to create an email address, send email, navigate the Internet safely and effectively, and more.

March 17: VDACS Farmer Farmland Match & Virginia Market Maker

Are you a farmer looking for some Virginia Farmland to lease, rent or own? Are you a Virginia Farm landowner looking for a potential farmer or new owner? Join Jennifer Perkins, of the Virginia Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services, as she shares the features and highlights of VDACS’s updated website (<https://farmlink.va-vdacs.com>). French Price will also be there to share how to use the Virginia Market Maker website (<https://va.foodmarketmaker.com>) to find more markets for your new or existing farm operation. This engaging presentation should match Virginia farmers up with more success going into the season.

March 17: Mapping with Drones for Precisions Agriculture

With increasingly more potential benefits from the use of drones in agriculture and the availability of drones designed especially for agricultural applications, small-scale farmers need this basic introduction

to drones in agriculture. New applications can readily facilitate information through aerial photography and maps to help to improve yields and lower operational costs. Leonel Castillo, UAS-FAA Drone Pilot, will introduce the concept of precision agriculture, employing drone applications such as map interpretation and utilization, and showing how to detect soil conditions and plant health. Participants will also learn about drone abilities such as precision spray applications for nutrition and pest control, which can cover areas difficult to access by hand, tractor, or conventional aircraft applications that are costly and difficult to mobilize.

March 17: Good Agriculture Practices Dos and Don'ts

USDA's Good Agricultural Practices (GAP) certification is achieved through voluntary audits performed by federal or state agency representatives to verify that fruits and vegetables are produced, packed, handled, and stored as safely as possible to minimize risks of microbial food safety hazards. Join Michael Carter Jr., coordinator of the Virginia Small Farm Resource Center, and Stasia Greenewalt, of Local Food Hub, and become an auditor for the evening. Audit your farm with your own food safety plan to see how close to GAP certification it is. You will be guided through a working, mixed-use farming operation, highlighting do's and don'ts related to GAP certification and requirements. This will be a hybrid event, so join us at Carter Farms or via Zoom.

March 22: Using the High Tunnel for Vegetable Production

A high tunnel is an agricultural structure that allows a grower to extend the growing season and protect crops from adverse weather conditions. Vegetables can be an important crop for both small-scale farmers and home gardeners. Workshop participants will learn about using high tunnels to grow horticulture crops. Topics covered will be structures selection, management, maintenance, and costs associated with high tunnel production. Special emphasis will be placed on proper techniques for transplant production, alternative production systems, tillage, potential pests, and planning for crops with market potential and health benefits.

March 22: Making Wreaths Highlighting Plant Materials

Wreaths can be easily created from materials on the farm or from the garden and are not solely limited to holidays. Wreaths may be used to beautify more than your front door and can be seen spicing up garden sheds, windows, and more. Join Cut Flower Farmers, Anita & Thomas Roberson, who will be discussing ways cut flower farmers can increase their bottom line by creating wreaths primarily from foraged plant and flower materials on their farms or gardens.

March 23: Preparing for Honeybees: New Hives and Hive Expansion

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. Those attending the hands-on portion of this workshop must bring their own bee suit, wear closed-toe footwear and light-colored clothes, and be fragrance-free in order to enter the bee apiary.

March 23: Greenhouse Ethnic Vegetable Production

Increasing demand for ethnic food offers small farmers a tremendous opportunity to diversify their food production to appeal to immigrants, particularly West and East African, Caribbean, Asian, and Hispanic populations. Small Farm Resource Center coordinator, Michael Carter Jr. of Carter Farms, and Dr. Nadine Burton of University of Maryland Eastern Shore and Tallawah Farms, will lead this workshop to show small farmers how to grow and market crops that appeal to these customers by getting an early start in the greenhouse. While some ethnic vegetables are unique and exotic, others can include familiar vegetables such as tomatoes, peppers, and squash, which are known by different names in varying

cultural communities. Growing specific crops and varieties for ethnic groups can open new and exciting markets. Farmers who understand their communities' demographics and which vegetables are in demand can consider diversifying vegetable crops to increase their customer base and improve profits.

March 24: Small Ruminant Series: Weaning for Success

Small ruminant producers of all experience levels will learn about the pros and cons of early vs. late weaning, post-weaning vaccinations, deworming, and other best management practices for promoting growth and weight gain for lambs and kids. A question/answer session for problems associated with weaning and post-weaning will provide valuable learning opportunities. Lee Wright, Superintendent and Sheep Specialist of the Southwest VA Agricultural Research and Extension Center, will provide instruction and demonstration.

March 26: Spring Gardening: Early Growing Tips

Join us at Big Jake's Garden and get a springing head-start on planting your crops! Jake Caldwell, Owner and Operator of Big Jake's Garden, will discuss how to successfully grow garden greens early, while avoiding frost. VSU Small Farm Outreach Program Beginning Farmer Mentor, Emily Robinson will present gardening tips for first-time growers along with no-till growing methods for small farms. NRCS staff will discuss the importance of taking a soil sample of your garden plot, as well as showing you how to do it. As a gift from Jake, all participants will be able to take a plant home

March 29: Farm Equipment Safety & Maintenance Basics

Each year more than 300 commercial tractor-related deaths occur in the United States. Many of these are caused by power take-offs (PTO). Other causes of accidents include vehicle collisions, hitting overhead objects such as tree limbs, rollovers, or burns during refueling. This workshop will review practices to help you remain safe on the farm, including how to use the tractor safely and properly, conducting pre-operational safety checks, and taking special precautions necessary for operating equipment on rough terrain and slopes. We will also review the use of personal protection equipment (PPE).

March 30 1:00 pm ET: Food and the Senses: Relating Sensory Science to the Food System

Hear from Dr. Jacob Lahne, Assistant Professor, Food Science and Technology at Virginia Tech. Sensory science is the set of methodologies within food science that attempts to "objectively" measure human perceptions and experiences with foods through empirical methods. However, because of its origins within the food-industrial complex, sensory science as a discipline tends to dismiss many key aspects of foods as "extrinsic" or "biasing" and thus not capable of relating to "objective" sensations. In my research group at Virginia Tech, I use sensory-science methodologies to understand the sensory attributes of foods produced in Virginia and beyond, and in doing so I often encounter these contradictions of doing sensory science with local, regional, craft, and artisan products. In this talk, I will present my research program, particularly in relation to Virginia food products, and so I will also explore some of this contested history and epistemology of sensory science as a discipline. In doing so, I hope to spark a discussion about how my work in sensory and food sciences can contribute to more general food-systems work. [Please register to attend.](#)

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.