

Newsblast

July 5, 2023

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A Message from VBFRC

Hello everyone! We hope you are doing well as we enter summer. We are excited to share this month's newblast with upcoming trainings, events, and announcements from across the state. 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

**Coalition Partner Mini-Grant Project Update on July 17, 2023
from 1:00-2:15 pm ET**

Join us for this webinar where we will hear summaries from Coalition partner mini-grant recipients about their recent projects. Please [REGISTER](#) to join!

You will hear about:

- The 2022 Women in Agriculture Gatherings from Sarah Sharpe, Ag Agent for Greene County Cooperative Extension
- The Beginning Farmer Track at the 23rd Annual Virginia Biological Farming Conference from Brent Wills, Program Coordinator of the Virginia Biological Association
- Sharing and Demonstrating the Benefits of Vermicomposting on the Farm with Virginia New and Beginning Farmers from Anita Roberson, owner and operator of Botanical Bites & Provisions, LLC
- Independence Farmers Market Winter Workshop Enhancement Project from Michelle Pridgen, Executive Director of Grayson LandCare

Note: Green underlined text is a link

Announcements

An American Farmland Trust grant program providing direct support to farmers and ranchers

Grants will be awarded in amounts up to \$10,000 per project. A project may involve one or more individual farmers or farm families. Only one grant can be awarded per farmer/farm family. Funding for this program is limited. As funding remains, awards will be made on an ongoing basis to eligible applicants that fulfill all application requirements and meet selection criteria. Land tenure (ownership, a lease, license, or other written agreement) for a reasonable time period will be required for projects that involve on-the-ground improvements to farmland. If tenure is less than five years, please be prepared to demonstrate in the application that the tenure is sufficient in relation to the improvements being made or services being provided.

Appalachian Sustainable Development's Ask an Agroforester Recordings, Now Available!

Check out the recordings of ASD's Ask an Agroforester webinar series for free on YouTube! These sessions were a big hit, and each one includes a presentation from our featured guest, followed by lots of targeted Q and A from the audience. Individual video links are below.

- [Tree Protection in Animal Systems with Wyn Miller](#)
- [Forages in Silvopasture Systems with Dr. John Fike](#)
- [Tree Propagation from Seed with Sean Dembrosky](#)
- [Silvopasture on a Shoestring with Austin Unruh](#)
- [Wildly Homegrown with Jonathan McRay](#)
- [Live Agroforestry and Silvopasture Consultation with Eliza Greenman](#)
- [Getting Started in Coppice Agroforestry with Mark Krawczyk](#)

Appalachian Sustainable Development Agroforestry Technical Assistance

ASD can provide a variety of free and/or low-cost Agroforestry Technical Assistance services.

VABF is Hiring an Operations Manager

This position is part time at 20 hours per week and pays \$30-40/hr commensurate with experience. 100% remove with occasional travel to attend meetings. Reports to board of directors. Submit resume with cover letter to adamht@vt.edu by June 16, 2023.

Training Series

Mapping with Drones (Virtual, 4 dates)

This 2-day virtual workshop will prepare participants with the knowledge necessary to take the FAA Remote Knowledge Aircraft Test (aka Part 107). All workshop materials are provided to participants (via snail-mail) prior to the workshop. The workshop has been well received by educators (high school, 2-year, 4-year), state & federal agency employees, the private sector (ranging from engineers to realtors), Cooperative Extension, and a slew of folks from various NGO's. This workshop is a great place to start for individuals who are considering using drones to support business applications, or managers who want to make solid decisions regarding drone issues moving forward.

- August 14 – 15, 2023
- December 14 – 15, 2023
- January 4-5, 2024

[Online Woodland Options for Landowners, June 5-August 11](#)

This 10-week self-paced online course teaches the fundamentals of forest management. Upon completion of the class, you can have a draft forest management plan. The class wraps up with an optional end-of-the-semester hands-on field trip in Appomattox on Saturday August 5th. \$55/family. Register [online](#) or register by mail.

4 the Soil Highlights



[Episode 23 – 14: Grazing with Intent with Carl Stafford of VCE Culpeper County](#)

What does the health of plants and animals have to tell us about life underground? In this episode, Jeff Ishee, Eric Bendfeldt, and Mary Sketch Bryant talk with Carl Stafford of Virginia Cooperative Extension in Culpeper County about the importance of grazing with intent for the benefit of plants, animals, and the soil. Carl is the Agricultural and Natural Resources Extension Agent in Stafford County and has an expertise in livestock forages, beef cattle management, and is an active leader in the Graze 300 program. In this episode, Carl discusses the importance of paying attention to the biological components of soil and the role that well managed livestock and grass management systems can play in supporting life underground. He shares who his mentors have been over the years and the importance of peer-to-peer networks for promoting innovation.

[Episode 23 – 13: A Soil Your Undies Challenge with Elizabeth Baldwin and Meagan Dyer of VCE Page County](#)

How can you really know your soil is alive, biologically active, and not sterile? Well, the answer is brief. Yes, really! Soil your undies, that is, bury a pair of your 100% cotton undies in an area of your garden or cropland where you are curious about its biological activity and wait about 60 days to see what happens and if the undies decompose through time due to the microbial life in the soil.

[July 18, 10:30 – 2: 00 pm: Soil Health Show & Tell On Farm Visit at Bramble Hollow Farm](#)

Join the Virginia Soil Health Coalition for one of three Soil Health Show & Tell Farm Visits to learn about how soil health champion farmers across Virginia are implementing soil health on their operation, what challenges and opportunities they are realizing, and how you can most effectively work with producers to implement holistic soil health systems.

[August 8, 2:00 – 3:30 pm: Soil Health and Organic Fundamentals with Mark Schonbeck \(Virtual\)](#)

The Virginia Soil Health Coalition is hosting a 3-part soil health webinar series led by Mark Schonbeck. Join

us for the first installment from 2-3:30 PM on August 8th to learn about soil health and organic fundamentals. Mark Schonbeck has worked for 31 years as a researcher, consultant, and educator in sustainable and organic agriculture. Stay tuned for the second webinar in the series coming in late August.

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!

July Events

July 8, 9:00-11:00 am: Blueberry Pruning (Virginia Beach, VA)

Brad Baker has cleared about 1 acre of 30–40 foot trees that had been overgrown to cover blueberry bushes planted in the mid-1990s. He will demonstrate his pruning methods, which help to produce fruit for a U-Pick operation. The farm does not have installed irrigation and survives solely on what the weather brings. Bring your own pruners for supervised assistance.

July 10, 10:00-12:00 pm: High Tunnel Production for Season Extension (Petersburg, VA)

High tunnels are basically unheated greenhouses that are used to extend the growing season. This workshop will cover the basics of high tunnel production for new and beginning growers. It will cover crops that are traditionally grown as well as ideas for some specialty crops. The workshop will cover high tunnel structures and grower tips for year round growth in the high tunnel.

July 10, 3:00-5:00 pm: Growing Strawberries (Petersburg, VA)

This workshop will cover the basics of strawberry production for producers who are interested in growing strawberries on their farm. The workshop will cover the steps that growers should take to prepare their soil, source plugs and transplants, understand planting dates and growing methods. Suppliers are currently accepting preorders for plugs so growers need to know what supplies they will need for a successful crop planting.

July 10, 5:00 – 8:00 pm: Sow it, Grow it, Can it Class (Rocky Mount, VA)

During this 3-hr workshop, participants will learn tips and techniques for sowing and growing quality fresh products from their own garden that can be preserved at home by canning. Participants will also learn how to breakdown and can bulk purchases of meats like chicken, beef, or pork. During the canning lab, participants will learn about both water bath and pressure canning techniques. In this hands-on workshop, you will learn from VCE agriculture agents and a farm Bureau Women's Committee member who knows the art of canning. Cost is \$35 per participant and everyone will go home with items. [Please register to attend.](#)

July 11, 9:00 am – 4:00 pm: Southside Sustainable Ag Tour (Halifax, VA)

Join us for a one-day tour of Southside area farms to see four operations with various planting, growing and harvesting techniques, as well as successful marketing strategies. Tiver Farm. Bill Tiver produces 11 acres of mixed vegetables, including seven acres of sweet corn. He will share methods for operating without hired labor, using planting, recordkeeping and other strategies for efficiency. Clark Farm. Container crops are featured. Jimmy Clark grows nearly 20 different crops in more than 150 containers. Chandler Farm. Mark Chandler will show the farm's greenhouse and high tunnel, the pond, and a commercial aquaculture operation. Thaxton Farm. High tunnels and livestock production are featured at the Thaxton Farm where owners Robert and John Thaxton each have individual businesses of vegetables,

eggs, chickens, pigs and goats. Robert has been able to produce fresh vegetables throughout the winter months in his high tunnel over the past five years.

July 11, 3:30-6:30 pm: Flower Production Field Day (Rohrersville, MD)

Join Future Harvest at Winding Root Farm for an in-depth field day on the inner mechanics of running a flower farm operation from production methods to diversifying sales modes.

July 14, 6:30 – 8:30 pm: Farm Safety Dinner (Rocky Mount, VA)

Calling all farmers! Join VCE for a free farm safety dinner. You will enjoy a delicious free meal while listening to farm safety topics that will be addressing common issues that add to the daily stress in our lives. Talking about mental health can be difficult, but it is a very important topic for the agriculture community.

July 17, 1:00-4:00 pm: Free Union Flower Farm Day (Free Union, VA)

Owners Molly Schwoebel and Joel Slezak will welcome you to their farm, and demonstrate seeding, planting and transplanting techniques. You will hear about annual and perennial gardening and how they plan, plant, harvest, and make bouquets for farmers markets and other local sales. You'll see the seedling operation, the hoop house, and irrigation techniques. The farm is co-located with the Free Union Grass Farm, and part of the tour will show the poultry operation. Best of all, you'll hear how all this gets done with a toddler in tow. The tour will feature a farm honey tasting.

July 17, 5:00 – 7:30 pm: Cheese Making with New Dawn Acres Farm (Rocky Mount, VA)

During this 2.5 hour class, participants will learn the art of making ricotta stuffed mozzarella from fresh milk. You will learn about proper milk handling procedures when working with fresh milk while turning it into a delicious product. The session will showcase a variety of produce produced and distributed by New Dawn Acres Farm. Summer Pate will guide participants through a fun and exciting night of learning how they can turn the fruits of their labor into amazing fresh products. Cost is \$45 per participant. [Please register to attend.](#)

July 18, 2:00 – 3:30 pm: GROW Farmer Forum on Cover Crop Seeding (Virtual)

Panelists, Jay Baxter, Donn Branton, and Matt Ensor, will discuss their varied experiences with cover crop species and mixes, seed sources, seeding rates, seeding methods, and timing. [Register to attend.](#)

July 18, 9:00-11:00 am: Small Farm Orientation (Virtual)

This two-hour Zoom course is for new farmers with zero to five years of experience operating a farm. Brent Noell, regional program assistant for the VSU Small Farm Outreach Program, will walk attendees through the process of how to develop a productive and profitable farm. Participants will receive a Small Farm Orientation manual.

July 18, 8:30 am – 12:00 pm: Control of Varroa Mite (Petersburg, VA)

Dr. James Wilson, VA Tech Collegiate Assistant Professor, and Keith Tignor, VDACS State Apiarist, will present information on the life cycle and control of the Varroa mite. Find out how this pest is impacting honey bee populations and what beekeepers can do to minimize colony losses resulting from Varroa mite infestations. Presentations will include discussion of integrated pest management strategies to control this mite. Both presenters will be available in the Randolph Farm apiary during the afternoon to demonstrate how to inspect a hive to identify, sample for and control this pest of the honey bee. All individuals going to the bee yard must bring their own bee suit and wear light-colored clothes, gloves and closed-toe shoes. Please do not wear fragrances or perfumes. If you are allergic to bee venom, you must bring your own EpiPen.

July 18, 6:00 – 8:00 pm: From My Head To-Ma-Toes (Warrenton, VA)

At the Fauquier Education Farm we have grown a wide variety of tomatoes in a multitude of methods.

Come join us in this workshop all about tomatoes to see what works, and what doesn't. Registration required.

July 18, 10:00 – 1:00 pm: Filing Farm Taxes (Rapidan, 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. Program assistants Leonel Castillo and Michael Carter will be on hand to assist. Translation for Hispanic Farmers will be available if needed.

July 19, 7:00 am – 5:00 pm: Summer Vegetable Marketing Tour –Raleigh State Farmers Market

New and beginning farmers, ranchers, and military veterans are invited to take a bus trip to the State Farmers Market in Raleigh, North Carolina, to learn about retail and wholesale marketing of agricultural products. Participants will have an opportunity to talk with vendors and learn techniques for selling products to the public. The farmers market is one of the nation's premier markets, with over 75 acres of indoor and outdoor specialty shops, restaurants, and a garden center that sells fruits, vegetables, meats, and gifts from across the state.

July 19, 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.

July 19, 10:30 am: Future Harvest Regenerative Grazing, Silvopasture and More (Woodbine, MD)

Join The Million Acre Challenge at Porch View Farm, in Woodbine, MD for a multi-faceted, on-farm learning experience. Our host, farm owner Keith Ohlinger, will share his experience implementing practices like silvopasture, rotational grazing, biochar, composting, keyline planting and more! We will begin the day with a farm walk-about, led by Keith, and discussions centered on practices and resources to help support their implementation. After the included lunch, we'll hear from Sam Engler, Howard County NRCS District Conservationist to find out more about state and federal funding opportunities to complement these and other soil-building practices.

July 20, 10 am – 1 pm: All About Herbs! (Farmville, VA)

Come on out to the extension office for a free program all about herbs! Participants will have the opportunity to learn hands-on, take products home, and ask questions from the experts! Must register by July 14 to participate.

July 20, 6:00-8:00 pm: Growing Ethnic Crops for Soil Health and Nutrient Density (Unionville, VA)

Join us at Carter Farms to explore how various ethnic specialty crops impact soil health, soil erosion, resource management and native pollinators. We will learn about leaf nutrient analysis and how these plants compare to more traditionally grown produce in Virginia. We will also discuss Climate Smart Agriculture and how to practice it in your farming operations. Learn with Michael Carter Jr. of Carter Farms and Africulture as we dive deeper into the soil and the plants he grows.

July 25, 10:00 am – 12:00 pm: Business Management (Petersburg, VA)

In this workshop, participants will learn how to create quotes and invoices, complete W-9 forms, and how to register in the eVA system so that you can be able to sell goods and services to state agencies. You will also learn how to use Microsoft Office and Adobe Acrobat Reader, as well as other information that will help you have a successful farming business in Virginia. Sign up today!

July 25, 10:00 – 12:00pm: Increasing Profits through Rotational Grazing with Rabbits (South Hill, VA)

Tammy Holler, VSU-SFOP Nutrient Management Specialist, will discuss how planting cover crops suitable for rabbits can improve the health of your soil. She will identify crops that are both beneficial to rabbits and easy to grow. Tammy will also talk about the best breeds of rabbits to purchase for rotational grazing.

July 26, 1:00 – 4:00 pm: Estate Planning and Land Transition (Virtual)

Lillian “Ebonie” Alexander, the Executive Director of the Black Family Land Trust, Inc., lives on her family farm in rural Southside Virginia. 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. 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.

July 26, 1:00 – 3:00 pm: Dug In Farm Tour (White Stone, VA)

Dug In Farms is a small market farm located just miles from the Chesapeake Bay. As a thriving 12-month production farm utilizing many of Virginia’s nutrient management practices, Dug In Farms has quickly adopted a variety of sustainable and organic methods to reduce non-point pollution in the Bay. Join us for a delightful afternoon farm tour with Carolyn Quinn as she shares her challenges and successes while growing her farm business, utilizing the available resources provided to farmers through DCR, FSA and NRCS.

July 27, 6:30 – 8:30 pm: Small Ruminants: Flock/Herd Selection Considerations for Breeding Season (Glade Spring, VA)

Breeding season and reproductive management of flocks and herds vary from farm to farm and are dependent on many factors. Regardless of management practices, most sheep and goat producers attempt to increase their flock’s or herd’s profitability and optimize the number of healthy offspring. What choices you make now—including whether to cull—will influence the next 8 to 10 months of the year in your flock or herd. Join other small ruminant producers to learn best management practices that are recommended regardless of the size of your operation.

July 27, 5:00 pm: 2023 Southern Piedmont AREC Field Day (Blackstone, VA)

This field tour will include concurrent tours of field crops and forage/livestock research field trials followed by dinner. Virginia Tech’s Center for Advanced Innovation in Agriculture (CAIA) will be introduced. Please [register to attend](#).

July 27-29: Beef Up: Efficient, Progressive, Profitable, Beef (Blacksburg, VA)

The School of Animal Sciences, in collaboration with VT Meat Center, Virginia Cooperative Extension, and Virginia Beef Industry Council will be hosting Beef-Up on July 27-29 on campus. Beef-Up is a 3-day hands-on beef processing course aimed at improving the efficiencies and capacities of beef processing workforce and facilities within the Commonwealth. Through hands-on learning of both beef harvesting and fabrication, participants will be able to learn progressive processes and techniques to help improve their skill-sets and production goals. Furthermore, participants will engage in informative learning sessions covering an array of topics aimed at increasing current understanding of food safety and

regulatory compliance, as well as methods for producing high quality beef that meets the modern consumers demands. Individuals who are seeking to expand their knowledge of beef processing, as well as individuals who are currently working within the beef processing industry, or those who are looking to enter it - are highly encouraged to attend. Spaces are limited and application process is required.

August Events

August 3, 9:00 – 3:00 pm: Tri State Beef Conference (Blountville, TN)

The fifteenth Annual Tri-State Beef Cattle conference will be held at the Ron Ramsey Regional Ag Center in Blountville, Tennessee on August 3rd. This year's conference will address topics of interest to both stocker and cow-calf producers. The conference will be a one-day event and will include educational sessions covering such topics as approaching your lender, pasture management, beef cattle outlook, predator control, and antibiotic rules and colostrum quality. There will once again be virtual tours of operations from each of the three states and then a time of questions and answers with the producers themselves.

August 4, 9:00-11:00 am: Agroforestry Farm Tour with Q&A (Virginia Beach, VA)

Chris and Kelly Shepherd, owners of What The Farm, incorporate farming and grazing practices that rebuild the soil organically while restoring degraded soil biodiversity in hopes to improve soil health. What The Farm is on a 33 acre plot with approximately 10 wooded acres used for agroforestry. They specialize in Dexter cattle, Dorper and St. Croix hair sheep, Duroc pigs, Cornish Cross chickens, and white turkeys. The Shepherds believe there is a better way compared to commercial farming operations and have focused on a simple mission of: serve the SOIL, serve the ANIMALS, serve the COMMUNITY.

August 8, 5:30 – 7:00 pm: Tree Fruit Basics: Apples (Roseland, VA)

This tree fruit basics class will cover everything you need to know about growing your own apples. Topics include site selection, cultivar selection, pruning, pest and disease management, and harvest. Whether you already have a tree or you're thinking about planting apples, this is the class for you! Taught by Dickie Brothers Orchard's very own John Bruguiera and your local tree fruit Extension Agent, Grace Monger. This educational workshop-style series is organized by Nelson County VCE and hosted by local tree fruit producers. Dress appropriately for the weather as we will be outdoors and an educational walking tour is part of our program.

August 9, 10:00 – 12:00 pm: Dexter 101 (Keysville, VA)

This workshop will introduce participants to Dexter cattle and provide guidance and decision-making tools for small beef producers who are considering herds that include Dexter genetics. The information presented is based on current research being conducted at Virginia State University to assess the appropriateness of Dexter and Dexter x Mashona crosses for small beef producers in Virginia. Dexter cattle are a small frame dual-purpose breed with the potential for meat to be more marbled than that of commercial breeds. Mashona cattle are hardy and known for their resistance to high temperatures, ticks and flies; and their ability to maintain reproductive efficiency in semi-arid regions.

August 9, 10:00 -12:00 pm: Recordkeeping on your Computer or Smart Phone (Virtual)

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

diversified farming operation, using the lessons he learned in business. Now he shares this knowledge with other farmers.

August 9, 10:00 – 12:00 pm: USDA Information Session (South Hill, VA)

Learn about eligibility requirements and how to apply for USDA Farm Service Agency (FSA) direct or guaranteed loans as well as programs, service and cost share opportunities from other USDA agencies. Beginning, socially disadvantaged, and veteran farmers can get help to prepare applications for farm ownership and operating loans and learn about the requirements for borrowing. Find out about the resources and current grants that are available from USDA, including the Rural Development Renewable Energy for America (REAP) grant and loan guarantee program, Value-Added Producer Grant (VAPG) program, and Rural Business Enterprise Grant (RBEG) program. USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) programs are also available. These programs can help you implement conservation practices to reduce soil erosion, enhance water supplies, improve water quality, increase wildlife habitat and reduce damages caused by floods and other natural disasters.

August 15, 10:00-12:00 pm: Invasive Species Affecting Virginia: Spotted Lanternfly and Asian Longhorn Tick (Virtual)

The Spotted Lanternfly is an invasive species native to Asia. In 2014 it was found in Pennsylvania, and has since spread to multiple counties in Pennsylvania, Maryland, and Virginia. This insect is a threat to many fruit crops and trees. The Asian Longhorn Tick is native to eastern Asia. It is a serious pest of livestock as well as pets. Cattle producers and homeowners should be aware of it. This important information will be presented by Scott Baker, ANR Agent in Bedford County.

August 17, 9:00-3:00 pm: SNAP Program for Small Farmers (Petersburg, VA)

Learn how SNAP EBT and Virginia Fresh Match empower families with tight food budgets to bring home more fresh fruits and vegetables by increasing their purchasing power. Learn how it can help expand local farmers' customer base. Discover how nutrition incentives work in your community, and how participating in the Virginia Fresh Match network can benefit your farming operation and help you reach new customers.

August 22, 9:00-11:00 am: Small Farm Orientation (Virtual)

This two-hour Zoom course is for new farmers with zero to five years of experience operating a farm. Marilyn Estes, regional program assistant for the VSU Small Farm Outreach Program, will walk attendees through the process of how to develop a productive and profitable farm. Participants will receive a Small Farm Orientation manual.

August 22, 4:00-6:30 pm: USDA Information Session (Petersburg, VA)

Learn about eligibility requirements and how to apply for USDA Farm Service Agency (FSA) direct or guaranteed loans as well as programs, service and cost share opportunities from other USDA agencies. Beginning, socially disadvantaged, and veteran farmers can get help to prepare applications for farm ownership and operating loans and learn about the requirements for borrowing. Find out about the resources and current grants that are available from USDA, including the Rural Development Renewable Energy for America (REAP) grant and loan guarantee program, Value-Added Producer Grant (VAPG) program, and Rural Business Enterprise Grant (RBEG) program. USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) programs are also available. These programs can help you implement conservation practices to reduce soil erosion, enhance water supplies, improve water quality, increase wildlife habitat and reduce damages caused by floods and other natural disasters.

August 24, 5:30 – 8:30 pm: High Tunnel Vegetable Production (Wytheville, VA)

High tunnel vegetable production is a game changer in the commercial vegetable world, allowing for year-round growing conditions. Grace Summers, SFOP State Program Assistant, will share her many years

of experience and extension expertise in high tunnel commercial vegetable production. She will cover the topics of management, irrigation, crop selection, planting dates, and production practices.

August 29, 10:00 – 12:00 pm: Dexter 101 (Rapidan, VA)

This workshop will introduce participants to Dexter cattle and provide guidance and decision-making tools for small beef producers who are considering herds that include Dexter genetics. The information presented is based on current research being conducted at Virginia State University to assess the appropriateness of Dexter and Dexter x Mashona crosses for small beef producers in Virginia. Dexter cattle are a small frame dual-purpose breed with the potential for meat to be more marbled than that of commercial breeds. Mashona cattle are hardy and known for their resistance to high temperatures, ticks and flies; and their ability to maintain reproductive efficiency in semi-arid regions.

August 31, 7:00-8:00 pm: Extending the Sheep & Goat Grazing Season Virtual Pasture Walk (Virtual)

An important goal for most livestock producers is to extend the grazing season, filling gaps in the availability of pasture forage. During this virtual pasture walk, we will look at ways to improve your pastures, increase carrying capacity and lengthen your grazing season. Learn how to improve pasture quality, increase production, and lower grazing expenses for sheep and goats.

September Events

September 7, 9 am – 12:00 pm: Sustainable Forestry & Small Wood Lot Management (Halifax, VA)

Sustainable forestry management is complex, with the need to manage trees, wildlife and the environment. We will discuss topics such as determining your management goals; working with forest professionals; timber sales and harvest; water quality; forest health; wildlife and other unexpected factors. We will also provide information on USDA programs and services relating to forestry management, tree planting and financial assistance. At the end of the workshop we will visit two forestry sites.

September 8-9: Advanced Woodland Owner Retreat (Providence Forge, VA)

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. Past participation in landowner education programs is required.

September 9, 10:00-12:00 pm: Small Engine Maintenance (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.

September 14, 5:30-8:30 pm: High Tunnel Vegetable Production (Blacksburg, VA)

High tunnel vegetable production is a game changer in the commercial vegetable world, allowing for year-round growing conditions. Grace Summers, SFOP State Program Assistant, will share her many years of experience and extension expertise in high tunnel commercial vegetable production. She will cover the topics of management, irrigation, crop selection, planting dates, and production practices.

September 14, 6:00 – 8:00 pm: Preparing the High Tunnel for Fall Tropical Plant Production (Unionville, VA)

As fall and winter approach, it is time to prepare our high tunnels. Season extension starts with preparation and maintenance. Michael Carter Jr., of Africulture and Carter Farms, will share tips and

practices on how to grow tropical crops into the colder months. Let's warmly grow into the fall and winter seasons!

September 19, 9:00-11:00 am: Small Farm Orientation (Virtual)

This two-hour Zoom course is for new farmers with zero to five years of experience operating a farm. Leonel Castillo, state program assistant for the VSU Small Farm Outreach Program, will walk attendees through the process of how to develop a productive and profitable farm. Participants will receive a Small Farm Orientation manual.

September 21, 3:00-5:30 pm: Farm Viability Issues (Petersburg, VA)

Farms and homesteads can be dangerous. With a myriad of perils, it is important that landowners understand their responsibility to keep visitors safe and the liability they may incur if an injury occurs. Agents from the Virginia Farm Bureau will discuss why you, as a landowner, need the correct amount of liability insurance to protect yourself from financial ruin. There will be an opportunity to ask questions at the end.

September 21, 5:30-8:30pm: High Tunnel Vegetable Production (Montvale, VA)

High tunnel vegetable production is a game changer in the commercial vegetable world, allowing for year-round growing conditions. Grace Summers, SFOP State Program Assistant, will share her many years of experience and extension expertise in high tunnel commercial vegetable production. She will cover the topics of management, irrigation, crop selection, planting dates, and production practices.

September 28, 6:30-8:30 pm: Farm Insurance: Do I have the Correct Coverage? (Bristol, VA)

Enjoy the season, network with other Southwest VA farmers and friends of agriculture, and enjoy a free picnic dinner, as you hear from Mike Felty about farm insurance. Many factors are involved in finding the right coverage for your farming operation. It is usually highly customized, and can include insurance for buildings, such as barns; dwellings; livestock; seed; hay; tools and equipment. He will give a short overview and answer your questions about coverage.

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.