



Newsblast

June 8, 2022

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A Message from VBFRC

Hello everyone,
We June is finding you well as the growing season is in full swing. We are excited to send along our monthly newsblast with a number of events coming up in the next few months along with a few announcements. We hope you 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

New to farming? Consider joining for one of VSU Small Farm Outreach Program's Virtual Small Farm Orientation Sessions. These two-hour Zoom courses are 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 walk attendees through the process of how to develop a productive and profitable farm. Participants will receive a Small Farm Orientation manual. Click the dates below to register.

[June 13](#)

[August 8](#)

[September 12](#)

Note: Green underlined text is a link

Announcements

[AgrAbility Virginia Job Opening](#)

The AgrAbility Virginia Community Outreach Specialist position is housed by AgrAbility Virginia Program partner, [Easterseals UCP](#). The AgrAbility Virginia Community Outreach Specialist is responsible for coordinating AgrAbility Virginia networking and marketing objectives by providing administrative support and assisting in the development and implementation of a marketing strategy to include print media, social media and community engagement. This position is based at the Easterseals UCP office in Roanoke, with the option of remote work from within Virginia. Find more information about the position and how to apply on the [AgrAbility Virginia website](#).

[Catalyzing Agroforestry Grant Program \(Application Open\)](#)

A new grant opportunity is available to farmers wanting to establish silvopasture or forest farming agroforestry practices. Farmers can receive \$1,500/acre for silvopasture and \$1,000/quarter acre for forest farming establishment.

4 the Soil Highlights



[Increased Water Retention: Co-Benefits of Soil Health Series Blog](#)

Have you ever seen a field with standing water after a rainstorm, then dried up in the heat of summer? It might seem normal, particularly as we experience more extreme weather patterns. But what if the soil could retain more water, store it deeper, and use it when necessary? Read the blog post to learn more.

[Episode 22-12: From Picking Beans to Taking Care of the Soil with Cory Guilliams of Virginia USDA-NRCS](#)

How did a grandmother's passion for gardening inspire her grandson's career in taking care of the soil? In this episode, Cory Guilliams, district conservationist with Virginia USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), recalls the influence and lessons learned from his grandmother about soil health and winter cover crops as he helped her as a youth in picking and weeding beans and potatoes. Cory shares the history and definition of no-till farming in Virginia and the Mid-Atlantic Region and how important the practice is for aggregating soil particles and reducing erosion. Tillage can be extremely destructive so minimizing soil disturbance is critical. We can all be 4 The Soil and do our part to build health from the soil up.

Episode 22 - 11: Soil as a Foundation to Nourish and Sustain Life with Janet Aardema and her daughter Sylvie of Broadfork Farm

Soil is an amazing foundation for all of us. Soil nourishes, fuels, and sustains all life. In this episode, Jeff Ishee, Mary Sketch Bryant, and Eric Bendfeldt speak with Janet Aardema and her daughter Sylvie of Broadfork Farm who share their enthusiasm and experiences with farming and soil health as the basis for their business and educational outreach. Janet and Sylvie discuss how they use the core principles of soil health but also composting, permaculture, forest farming, and food recovery to capture carbon and decrease our carbon and ecological footprints. They elaborate on specific practices they use to keep the soil covered and maximize living roots as they grow more than fifty diverse vegetable crops but also how they are working with their peers and classmates.

June 16: Virginia Soil Health Coalition Quarterly Meeting (Virtual)

Register today for the upcoming Quarterly Coalition Meeting. The meeting is open to all and a great chance to learn about what is happening around soil health in Virginia. Stay tuned for more information including the full agenda, speaker list, and more in the coming weeks. Have any questions or thoughts? Reach out to the Coalition Coordinator, Mary Sketch Bryant at msketch2@vt.edu.

June Events

June 8: An Introduction to Virginia Farm Link's New Website (Virtual)

The Virginia Farm Link Program recently relaunched their website with a new and improved system for helping farm owners and farm seekers connect to explore leasing and sale options. Jen Perkins, Coordinator at the Office of Farmland Preservation, will be providing an overview of the program and a walk through of the new site.

June 12: Farm Tour Weathertop Farms (Check, VA)

On June, 12th, 11 am to 5 pm, Weathertop Farms is hosting a farm day. The activity is free to attend and includes tours of the farm, food tasting, and time with baby animals. Their farm store will also be available to purchase their products.

June 13: Small Farm Orientation (Virtual)

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.

June 15: Elephant Garlic Trials (Surry, VA)

Clif Slade, owner of Slade Family Farm in Surry, Virginia, is a retired Extension Agent and VSU SFOP Agent. Clif will demonstrate how he has conducted Elephant Garlic trials utilizing different color plastic mulch to see if the color of the plastic mulch affected the yield or quality of the Elephant Garlic bulbs. Clif will also discuss how to braid and store Elephant Garlic and offer insight on marketing strategies. In the event of rain, this event will be rescheduled for June 22, 2022, from 10:00 am to 12:00 pm.

June 15: Food Safety, Reputation, and Regulation: An Economic Perspective (Virtual)

This presentation hosted by the Center for Food Systems and Community Transformation, from 2-3pm ET, will review the empirical economic literature on food safety, reputation, and regulation. To achieve improved food-safety outcomes, Dr. Bovay suggests that food-safety regulations should focus on outcomes rather than on practices or processes.

June 18: Agribusiness Production & Financial Management Program (West Point, VA)

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.

June 18: Improving Rotational Pastures and Pasture Walk (Abingdon, VA)

Rotational grazing is a system designed to maximize grazing efficiency, and protect and improve soil and forage health. The factors to consider when developing a rotational grazing program are the intensity and duration of grazing, recovery period, and the size and number of paddocks. VSU Small Farms Outreach Program Nutrient Management Specialist Tammy Holler will discuss the steps to take and ways that you can work to improve soil and crop production.

June 21: Southside Sustainable Agriculture Tour (Cullen, Virginia)

Join us for a one-day tour of the Southside Produce Auction, and take a close look at their operation. We will discuss planting, growing, and harvesting techniques; successful marketing strategies; and other methods used by farmers in Virginia's Southside. We will also experience a live auction, with an emphasis on preparation, buying and selling, and networking.

June 22: Vegetable and Strawberry Field Day (Painter, VA)

Join for a day with researchers, growers, students, and industry to cultivate ideas and share the latest technology relating to vegetable and strawberry production. RSVP required.

June 24-26: 2022 Southern Ohio Forest Farming Conference (Rutland, OH)

Join for everything forest farming: from botanical basics to best business practices!

June 28: Small Diversified Farm Tour (King William, VA)

Luke Hallman is the owner and operator of a 40-acre diversified farm in King William County, providing fresh produce to markets in Virginia, DC, and Maryland. He will give a tour of the operations and describe each of his enterprises. Each year, Luke grows two acres of heirloom tomatoes, fifteen acres of melons, and ten acres of soybeans. He utilizes cover crops, crop rotation, drip irrigation, fertigation, and starts transplants in his own greenhouse.

June 29: Increasing Yields by Improving Soil Health (Emporia, VA)

Tammy Holler, Nutrient Management Specialist, will explain why nutrient management is important, and provide information on techniques farmers can use to improve soil health and increase crop productivity.

July Events

July 6: How to Dig, Cure and Store White Potatoes (Petersburg, VA)

Tracy Porter, Sr., VSU SFOP Regional Program Assistant for Eastern Virginia and Crenshaul Turner, SFOP Farm Technician, will provide an in-person workshop at VSU Randolph Farm on how to dig, cure and store Irish (White) Potatoes. Topics will include varieties and their characteristics; integrated pest

management to mitigate disease, weed pressure, insects and wildlife damage; drip irrigation; when to fertilize; digging techniques; and how to cure and store white potatoes.

July 8: How to Plant and Grow Sweet Potatoes (Petersburg, VA)

Tracy Porter, Sr., VSU SFOP Regional Program Assistant for Eastern Virginia, and Crenshaul Turner, SFOP Farm Technician, will provide an in-person workshop at VSU Randolph Farm on how to plant sweet potato slips in traditional hills. Topics will include sweet potato varieties; soil amendments; how to use a 3-point hiller attachment to make your hills; how to plant your slips; drip irrigation; and integrated pest management to mitigate disease (weed pressure; insects and wildlife damage; and when to fertilize).

July 16: Agribusiness Production & Financial Management Program (Rapidan, VA)

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. Attendees 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.

July 18: How to Sell Your Products to the State and Get Paid (Virtual)

Do you have a product or service that you would like to sell to state agencies? Would you like to provide goods or a service to VSU and get paid? If so, you must understand that the state will only pay you through the state online procurement site called “eVA.” State agencies are required to attempt to find and purchase products and services from a “micro vendor” or a SWaM vendor (a Small, Women-owned or Minority-owned business). Sarah Williams, owner of Bees Knees Farm and Creamery in King William County, Virginia, recently became a micro SWaM vendor and will walk you through the steps necessary to set up your business in eVA.

July 29-31: Virginia Bureau Young Farmers Summer Expo (Wytheville, VA)

This the 17th annual Young Farmer Summer Expo with tours, networking, Young Farmers contests, certifications for BQA and Pesticide Application, and a special conversation with our new VDACS Commissioner, Joe Guthrie! Registration is required and is free of cost.

August Events

August 3: Shenandoah Valley AREC 2022 Field Day (Raphine, VA)

The field day will include field tours of ongoing forage, livestock and forestry demonstration and research projects. Please consider joining us for this free, in-person tour of the farm. The tour will begin at 1pm, and faculty will present brief summaries of their projects during an evening program, followed by dinner. If you wish to participate in this event please complete the [2022 Field Day Registration Form](#).

August 8: Small Farm Orientation (Virtual)

This 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.

August 10: Recordkeeping on your Computer or Smart Phone (Rapidan, VA)

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 12: Small Ruminant Guardian Animals: Choosing a Good Protector (Virtual)

The American Sheep Industry Association notes that predation is the leading cause of death in American sheep flocks. By using livestock guardian animals, you can give your flock or herd 24-hour, around-the-clock bodyguards, and allow the animals to stay out grazing on the farm. Effective guardians prevent injuries and deaths of your sheep and goats and give you—the farmer—peace of mind. They are well worth the cost!

August 23: Weed Control Using Goats (Surry, VA)

Join us on Slade Family Farm in Surry, Virginia, to learn how to use goats to control weeds on your farm. Clif Slade will start us off with a demonstration of how he uses goats in his high tunnel to clean up his sweet potato slip production. He will also share his experience using goats to clean his fields during the off-season. Tracy Porter, VSU SFOP Program Assistant, will explain how to build your own robust and dependable solar-powered fence charger to keep your goats in and predators out. And Dennis Williams of Bees Knees Farm in King William, Virginia, will demonstrate two mobile fence systems that he uses for rotational and mob grazing.

September Events

September 6: Grants to Fund Trees & Orchards (Kinsale, VA)

Learn how the VSU Small Farm Outreach Program provided grant assistance for Sandra Brackett to realize her lifelong dream of having an English Walnut orchard. Sandra will take us on a tour of the orchard she planted in April with grant funding assistance from SFOP. She will describe all of the steps she took to design, plant and maintain it. Tracy Porter, VSU SFOP Program Assistant for Eastern Virginia, will be on hand to explain the Renewable Resource Extension Act Capacity Grant, and show how he can assist small-scale and beginning farmers with locating tree vendors and designing an orchard, windbreak, pollinator habitat or silvopasture. Grace Summers, VSU SFOP drip irrigation specialist, will explain how to set up a drip irrigation system for trees.

September 7: Planting Garlic in the Fall (Unionville, VA)

Garlic can be grown either in the ground or in a raised bed. October is the most popular month to plant garlic, but depending on where you live, you could plant sooner or later. Late September and October are the best times to plant garlic in the northern Piedmont. It should be done at least two weeks before the first frost, and must be done before the ground freezes. This workshop will teach you the proper way to plant garlic, how to prepare the ground, and take proper care during the season.

September 7: National Conference on Next-Generation Sustainable Technologies for Small-Scale Producers (NC A&T)

The purpose of this conference is to create a road map for developing and delivering the next generation of soil, air and water technologies in support of sustainable production systems on small and limited resource farms; identify gaps, needs and recommendations for NIFA; and ensure access to technology with consideration for affordability and applicability.

September 8: Small Ruminants: Using Fecal Egg Counts on Your Small Farm (Clintwood, VA)

What are Fecal Egg Counts and what do they tell us? You will not want to miss learning the answers to these common questions. Learn how to consider the true needs of your flocks/herds, and stop blindly and routinely treating for parasite infection. Attendees will gain a hands-on opportunity to learn the McMaster Egg Counting procedure. Dr. Chris Fletcher from Washington County Veterinary will provide instruction and Mandy Fletcher from VSU Small Farm Outreach Program will assist small ruminant farmers with fecal analysis. All necessary workshop supplies will be provided but BYOF (bring your own fecals).

September 12: Small Farm Orientation (Virtual)

This 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.

September 14: Value Added Hemp Production on a Small Farm (West Point, VA)

Ben Clark is a successful beginning farmer and owner of Glow Holistic, an all-natural online retail store for CBD and value-added hemp products. He will provide a tour of his farm and discuss the regulations, marketing, financial risk management challenges and strategies for the production of hemp and value-added hemp products. He will also discuss how he markets his products online and at various farmer's markets, including the Virginia State Fair.

September 15: Farm Equipment Safety (Unionville, VA)

Each year more than 300 commercial tractor-related deaths occur in the United States. Many of these are caused by power take-offs. Other accidents are caused by 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.

September 17: Small Engine Maintenance and Repair (Middleburg, VA)

Each year more than 300 commercial tractor-related deaths occur in the United States. Many of these are caused by power take-offs. Other accidents are caused by 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.

September 9-10: Woodland Owner Retreat (Providence Forge, VA)

Retreats are hosted by the Virginia Department of Forestry and Virginia Cooperative Extension. They are geared towards landowners who are new to forest management, provide information on both hardwood and pine forests, offer chances for interaction with natural resource professionals from various agencies in Virginia, as well as with other landowners, provide information on estate planning,

management planning and certification, and provide hands-on experience with tree identification, forestry equipment, and more.

September 24-25: 2022 Sassafras Moon Herbal Festival (Erwin, TN)

Join for a Saturday in beautiful downtown Erwin Tennessee for a day of free herbal classes and herbal product vendors, followed by a day of hands-on intensive learning at the Forest Farming Conference on Sunday!

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