



June 10, 2024

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A Message from VBFRC

Hello everyone! We hope the beginning of summer is treating you well. There are a number of workshops and opportunities we are excited to share with you in this newsblast. 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 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. This funding is led by VSU's Small Farm Outreach Program.

Partner Highlight

Every month Virginia State University's Small Farm Outreach Program offers a Virtual Small Farm Orientation. This two-hour Zoom course is for new farmers with zero to five years of experience operating a farm. Ben Dukes and Derrick Gooden, regional program assistants for the VSU Small Farm Outreach Program, and Dr. Nartea, extension specialist for VSU Integrated Marketing Program, will walk attendees through the process of how to develop a productive and profitable farm. Participants will receive a Small Farm Orientation manual.

June 18, 6:00-8:00 pm; [Register](#) to attend

July 16, 9:00-11:00 pm; [Register](#) to attend

August 20, 9:00-11:00 pm; [Register](#) to attend

Note: Green underlined text is a link

Announcements

Virginia Forage and Grassland Council's Grazer Mentor Network Webinar Recording

Learning for most farmers is most successfully achieved by doing things hands on and with a more experienced counterpart. This is why the Virginia Forage and Grassland Council (VFGC) supports their Grazer Mentor Network where they pair experienced graziers with new or beginner graziers to help show them the ropes when it comes to successfully implementing prescribed grazing practices and techniques on their farms. Join us to hear from Becky Szarzynski and Jacob Gilley about the network and how you can become involved.

Series

360 Beef Discussion Group in Goochland County

Save the Date for the 360 Beef Discussion Group gatherings every month from 6-7 pm in Goochland County! June 11, July 9, August 14, September 17, October 8. More details coming soon.

360 Cut Flower Discussion Group in Goochland County

Save the Date for the 360 Cut flower Discussion Group gatherings every month from 9 – 10 am in Goochland County! June 13, July 18, August 13, September 19, October 15. More details coming soon.

Online Woodland Options for Landowners

This 10-week self-paced on-line course teaches the fundamentals of forest management. The 2024 class will begin July 1 and end September 9.

The Woods in Your Backyard Online Course

This course promotes the stewardship of small parcels of land for the personal enjoyment of the owners and improved environmental quality for society. If you own 1 to 10 acres in the Eastern United States that is forested or has unmowed natural areas, this course is for you. It is for you if you have a mowed lawn area that you want to turn into a woodland. It is also for you if you are a land manager or part of a group that manages natural areas, such as a preserve or a community woodland. This course runs April 8 to June 17.

Virginia Tree Farm Foundation Tree Farm Tours

The Virginia Forest Landowner Education Program partners with the Virginia Tree Farm Foundation to offer an annual series of Tree Farm Tours. These tours bring woodland owners together to visit an active Tree Farm, learn about the Virginia Tree Farm Foundation, and provide fellowship among those who care about healthy woods and active woodland management. You do not need to be a Tree Farmer to attend. Registration is \$20/person; \$35/couple and includes lunch and transportation around the Tree Farm

- June 21 - Pittsylvania County
- July 12 - Sussex County
- July 26 - Highland County
- August 23 - Shenandoah County
- August 30 - Bland County

4 the Soil Highlights



Episode 24-11: Reinvigorating the Local Grain Economy with Madelyn Smith of CGA Part I

How can we reinvigorate the local and regional grain economy? What is possible if grain farmers, millers, maltsters, bakers, brewers, pasta makers, educators, and researchers dream and work together? Why are local, high-quality, sustainably raised small grains like rye, oats, and others not more easily available in the Virginia and the Mid-Atlantic Region marketplace? Mary Sketch Bryant, Jeff Ishee, and Eric Bendfeldt speak with Executive Director Madelyn Smith of the Common Grain Alliance (CGA) about these questions and the growing effort to reinvigorate the local grain economy. Madelyn shares her journey of working on conservation and facilitating policy development for soil health and conservation practices. She also shares how CGA started in Virginia and continues growing as a network of over 120 farmers, millers, bakers, and food businesses from southern Pennsylvania to northern North Carolina.

Episode 24-12: A Freshly Milled Perspective with Madelyn Smith of CGA Part II

The aroma of freshly milled and ground grain is distinct and inviting whether in preparing bread, pizza, or a vat of beer. Madelyn Smith of the Common Grain Alliance offers a freshly milled perspective on a range of topics needed to strengthen the regional food system and build the supply of regional grains to meet consumer demand. Madelyn says that bakers and chefs are often the best storytellers of why local grains are so important to their businesses, however, it is often the taste, flavor, and aroma of the food and beverages that create a lasting love and commitment to local and regional grains.

4 the Soil Blog

Check out the latest 4 the Soil blog!

June

June 12, 10:00-12:00 pm: Grazing and Herd Management (Petersburg, VA)

J.B. Daniels from USDA-NRCS will share grazing practices that provide higher-quality animal forage. Farmers and Ranchers will learn about alternative forages that have potential during drought, intensive grazing, herd health, increasing weight gains, the potential reduction in needed hay during the off-season, and USDA assistance opportunities. NRCS has cost-share practices available to participants, and Mr. Daniels will explain how to enroll.

June 14, 12:00-1:30 pm: How to Create Worm Castings (Petersburg, VA)

Worm castings are known to help soil water retention, improve soil aeration, and help prevent the leaching of nutrients. Learn how to make your own high quality castings to help amend the soil. This

course will cover the benefits of worm castings, and show you how to create the castings by utilizing different breeds of worms.

June 15, 12:00-4:00 pm: Juneteenth at Sweet Vines Farm Winery (Unionville, VA)

Libation ceremony, ancestor acknowledgment, presenting of the colors, vegan food options, moon

June 19, 9:00 am–12:00pm: Environmental Management of Nutrients (Petersburg, VA)

Learn about how to maximize your crop yields while being environmentally friendly. Find out why we manage phosphorus and nitrogen differently. Discover the best times to apply nutrients for healthy plant growth. Find out about how you can do your part to protect your rivers and streams. This presentation will benefit students, farmers, gardeners, and other growers.

June 18, 6:00-8:00 pm: Small Farm Orientation (Virtual)

This two-hour Zoom course is for new farmers with zero to five years of experience operating a farm. Ben Dukes and Derrick Gooden, regional program assistants for the VSU Small Farm Outreach Program, and Dr. Nartea, extension specialist for VSU Integrated Marketing Program, will walk attendees through the process of how to develop a productive and profitable farm. Participants will receive a Small Farm Orientation manual.

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June 19, 10:00-2:00 pm: Liberation and Light: A Juneteenth Summer Solstice Celebration (Salisbury, MD)

Join the Lower Shore Value-Aligned Partnership at Pemberton Historical Park for a day of reflection, celebration, and connection. The "Legacy Talk & Walk" will start at the amphitheater before guiding you through the park, where you'll discover the vibrant history of African American leaders of Salisbury. We will honor the lives and stories of those who once lived on this land, including the courageous spirits of former slaves.

June 23, 2:00-8:00 pm: Mushroom Cultivation Workshop and Mushroom Farm Dinner (Riner, VA)

This workshop experience will focus on using a variety of agricultural and forestry byproducts to grow several species of mushrooms, including: Oysters, Shiitake, Lion's Mane and Reishi. Each participant will create and take home their own GYO Mushroom Kit, along with the knowledge and experience to cultivate mushrooms in their homes, gardens and landscapes. Following the workshop, the mushroom dinner will be held on the farm - featuring the fantastic cuisine of Executive Chef Richard Perry (Longfin Grill and Fat Spoon). This dinner will showcase the seasonal bounty of cultivated and foraged mushrooms available at this time in the season. It's an incredible menu! The workshop costs \$75 and starts at 2 pm. The dinner costs \$60 and starts at 6 pm. Email gnomestead.hollow@gmail.com to register.

June 24, 2:00-4:00 pm: Farm Photography and Authentic Marketing (Bluemont, VA)

Join us at Great Country Farms in Bluemont, VA for a hands-on, cameras-on, phones-on workshop, internationally published farm & food photographer Molly Peterson will not only inspire you authentically market yourself and product, but will share technical, professional photography tips to ensure your accompanying photos grab people's attention. Snacks and refreshments will be provided courtesy of The Hamilton Mercantile and attendees are invited to stay for a wagon tour of the farm at 4:00 pm. \$10/ Future Harvest Members; \$20/Non-Members; FREE/BFTP & ALDI

June 24, 4:00-7:00 pm: Future Harvest Member Meet Up (Bluemont, VA)

Farmer Happy Hour, anyone? We're excited to announce that our first Member Meet-Up for the 2024 season will be at Henway Hard Cider Company in Bluemont, Virginia. Join us for a laid-back evening and a hard cider. All are welcome! It is our great pleasure to facilitate networking, community-building, and peer-to-peer learning amongst farmers in our region. Future Harvest members will have a drink ticket on us. Non-members – please come! Surprise: You will become a member with your ticket purchase. Cider and soda for all.

June 25, 10:00am–1:00 pm: Growing Flowers for Profit (Church Road, Virginia)

Kathleen Hesse will speak about getting started growing flowers. She will talk about attending workshops through the Small Farm Outreach Program to gain more knowledge in the areas necessary to be successful. She has grown her business with the addition of value-added products and a CSA. Join us for a full morning and learn about growing flowers for profit.

June 25, 6:30–8:00 pm: Growing Ethnic Crops for Soil Health and Nutrient Density (Unionville, Virginia)

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.

June 27, 6:30-9:00 pm: Small Ruminants: Farm Safety & Humane Handling (Glade Spring, VA)

Small ruminants can be handled without expensive facilities. Generally, sheep and goats are friendly, calm, and a joy to raise. Despite their smaller size compared to cattle, it's easy to underestimate their strength! Respecting them and being mindful of human and livestock safety measures is essential. Safety is paramount if you're working sheep or goats alone, without someone to watch your back or lend a hand if needed. Beginning and experienced shepherds will enjoy a hands-on experience at Shepherd's Way Farm. You will learn to understand animal behavior better, handle small ruminants humanely and safely, and take steps toward good stockmanship. Participants will gain experience in calmly working sheep or goats in pastures, pens, chutes, and handling facilities. Registration is required. A free dinner will be provided.

July

July 2, 9:00 am–12:30 pm: Setting Up a Whole Farm Irrigation System (Dundas, Virginia)

Being able to water your field crops is essential during the summer months to keep your production going. Bruce and Walter Thompson, owners of Willowland Farm in Dundas, Virginia, will explain how they set up an irrigation system from the pond to each of their fields. They will show how the irrigation pump works and how they can control which fields are irrigated through an underground pipe system and control valves. They will also speak about using crop rotation for better production.

July 2, 10:00 am –11 am: All About Peanuts (Virtual)

Peanut production may be confined to only one area in Virginia, but the peanut industry has deep roots here and is still thriving today. Come and learn all about what makes Virginia peanuts so unique. We will take a deep dive into the history of Virginia peanuts, the peanut plant, and the peanut industry in Virginia and the United States.

July 9, 11:00-5:00 pm: The Life Project 5th Annual Farming and Assistive Technology Workshop (Petersburg, VA)

Please join the Small Farm Outreach Program at Randolph Farm for: Assistive Technology—with a live hands-on demonstration, Aquaponics and Value Added Ag, Land Succession, Farmer Panels, and Food trucks. They have developed an awesome roster of workshop seminars and interactive programs that will engage and empower you to take your agriculture lifestyle to the next level. This is a workshop you don't want to miss!

July 10, 9:00–1:00 pm: What is Heirs Property (Rapidan, VA)

Discover Heirs Property 101: estate planning, land transition, access, and succession. Join us for an engaging training session designed to empower underprivileged producers and landowners. Special guest Lillian “Ebonie” Alexander from the Black Family Land Trust, Inc., offers invaluable insights on land retention and succession. Presented in partnership with the VSU Heirs Property team and collaborating partners.

July 11, 3:00-6:00 pm: No-till Vegetable and Rotational Grazing Field Day (Havre de Grace, MD)

Join Future Harvest for a hands-on no-till vegetable production and rotational grazing field day with Tommy and Michelle Shireman of Third Way Farm in Havre de Grace, Maryland. During this workshop, participants will learn about seedling production, no-till bed prep and planting, harvesting and post-harvest handling, and get a brief overview of rotational grazing.

July 11, 1:00 –4:00pm: How to Plan and Purchase a Greenhouse or High Tunnel (Petersburg, VA)

If you plan to purchase a greenhouse or high tunnel, this educational program is for you! Harry Edwards of RIMOL Greenhouse Systems will explain the various types of greenhouses and high tunnels that are available. You will learn about methods for calculating size and what customization options are available. Dr. Theresa Nartea of VSU Integrated Marketing will bring snacks and help you visualize how to plan your marketing based on what you grow. A USDA representative will be on hand to present various funding methods through USDA program loans and grants. At the end of the workshop, we will visit the VSU Randolph Farm high tunnel with Mr. Edwards and Dr. Nartea to look at typical high tunnel space and step through a potential layout plan together. What does and doesn't work? Come find out!

July 14-16: Virginia Beef Cattle University (Blacksburg, VA)

The Virginia Beef Cattle University will feature trade show vendors, entertainment, and a variety of educational topics for youth and adults! This event is an all-inclusive event for beef producers and the industry to connect with one another more personally.

July 15, 12:00-1:30 pm: The Benefits of Lactic Acid Bacteria Serum (Petersburg, VA)

Are you looking to improve soil health, create better compost, improve the health of your livestock, and make your own organic fertilizer for pennies on the dollar? This workshop will cover all of these topics, along with the benefits of incorporating lactic acid bacteria (LAB) into your farm inputs. We will also discuss how to create LAB and store it to make it shelf-stable.

July 16, 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. Ben Dukes and Derrick Gooden, regional program assistants for the VSU Small Farm Outreach Program, and Dr. Nartea, extension specialist for VSU Integrated Marketing 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 16, 9:00-12:00 pm: Aerial Imagery for Farmers (Petersburg, VA)

This workshop will provide farmers and gardeners with an excellent opportunity to learn about the history of aerial imagery, how it has been used, how to apply it to profitable agriculture production, how

it can assist in making real-time decisions on disease and insect issues, and how it can have an impact on forestry management and herd health.

July 24, 10:00-1:00 pm: Whole Farm Planning (Halifax, VA)

Whole Farm Planning helps beginning farmers maintain or improve profitability while enhancing their sustainability. With Whole Farm Planning, beginning farmers define long-and short-term goals to achieve a better quality of life at home and in the community.

July 25, 7:30-8:30 pm: Small Ruminants: Flock/Herd Considerations for Breeding (Virtual)

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—whether to cull, ram selection, breeding soundness exams, caring for ewes and proper nutrition—will influence the next 8 to 10 months of the year in your flock or herd. Learn best management practices regardless of the size of your operation.

July 30 10:30 am–12:30 pm: Agricultural Community Outreach Information Session (Virginia Beach, VA)

Partnerships and Education Resources for 1890s and Underserved Communities—providing information on fostering opportunity, wealth creation, and asset building in rural and underserved communities. Herbert Brown Jr., USDA Liaison for Office of Partnerships & Public Engagement at Virginia State University, will discuss partnerships, education resources, and wealth creation in rural areas. Facilitators Perry Hickman, Joe Boatwright, and Tracey Krespach from USDA Rural Development will introduce grants and resources for farmers and rural Americans. Dr. Ronald M. Howell Jr., State Executive Director of the USDA Farm Service Agency, will explore opportunities in urban agriculture.

July 31, 5:00-8:30 pm: Virginia Forage and Grassland Council Summer Field Day on “Summer Stockpiling to Extend the Grazing Season and Improve Grassland Bird Habitat” (Swoope, VA)

The program will be held on Wednesday, July 31, 2024 at the Wheatland's Farm at 304 Cattleman Road, Swoope, VA 24479 from 5 pm to 8:30 pm. Please save the date if you are interested in attending. Full registration information will be forthcoming later this spring and should be available on the Virginia Forage and Grassland Council website.

August

August 4-6: National Urban Agriculture (NUAg) Conference (Detroit, MI)

This will be a national opportunity to celebrate the advancement, investment, and dedication to urban agriculture. The conference will focus efforts to “bridge the gap” for all those working to advance urban agriculture across the nation by building stronger connections among USDA programs and the stakeholders that they serve. This conference will intentionally increase awareness and transparency about USDA programming and bring stakeholders together for training, networking, resource connecting, and relationship building. See the attached flyer for more information. Learn more about the initiative at: National Urban Agriculture Initiative (nuaginitiative.com)

August 7, 2:00-4:00 pm: USDA Information Update (Raphine, 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 7: 2024 Shenandoah Valley AREC Field Day (Raphine, VA)

The Virginia Tech Shenandoah Valley Agricultural Research and Extension Center 2024 Field Day will be held on Wednesday, August 7, 2024. We will feature 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 1 pm, followed by an evening presentation before dinner. The tour will feature recent work on creep-grazing for fall calves, bale grazing, silvopasture, and native warm season grasses and wildflowers, among other topics. If you are planning to attend this event, please register soon as space is limited.

August 8, 9:00-12:30 pm: Getting More From Your Milk (Alberta, VA)

Stacey West will host this workshop at her dairy farm, Golden View Guernseys, in Alberta, Virginia. She will talk about the breed of dairy cows she selected, the benefits and their care. She will demonstrate how she makes value-added products for her herd-share customers by modifying A2/A2 whole milk, from which she produces cream, buttermilk, butter, yogurt and flavored milk. Register for this workshop today to learn how to expand your milk production to include value-added products.

August 9-10: Generation NEXT Legacy Planning Workshop (Staunton, VA)

Generation NEXT is an award-winning, nationally recognized educational program that will get you started on the right path to keeping your land intact, in forest, and in family.

August 12, 9:00-10:00 am: Virtual Farm Tour (Virtual)

Atlanta, Georgia, served as the kickoff meeting site for the USDA Farm Service's National Urban Agriculture (NUAg) Initiative, along with sixteen other cities nationwide in October 2023. An additional ten cities have recently been added to this pilot program. Come take a virtual tour to see what strides are being made at the Historic Westside Gardens with your host, Quinton "Farmer Qu" Arnold. He will explain their farming methods, crops grown, volunteerism, and how his organization supports the local community. A demonstration on how to construct a raised bed will take place, as well as their new venture into hydroponics.

August 14, 2:00-4:00 pm: How to Start an Ecological Farm (Petersburg, VA)

Farming with natural inputs can be challenging. From pest control to fertilizing, this workshop will take the mystery out of this approach to agriculture. We will also explore basic startup concepts. Mr. Patrick Johnson of Nanih Farm will lead the workshop. He is an organic farmer with many years of experience in the production of organic fruits and vegetables.

August 16, 10:30-4:00 pm: Timber Cruising for Woodland Owners (Raphine, VA)

Hiring a professional forester is the best way to ensure an accurate accounting of your timber volume and value. And it's also important for you to understand where those numbers come from. This hands-on class will teach you why and how timber cruises are conducted.

August 16, 12:00-1:30 pm: Introduction to JADAM Farming (Petersburg, VA)

Organic farming can be expensive. The fertilizers and pesticides required to improve crop health for bountiful harvests can add up quickly. What if there was a way to create your own products from the

waste and excess that you have around your farm or property? This workshop will introduce you to JADAM farming techniques. These procedures utilize organic and natural inputs around your immediate area to create natural fertilizers and pesticides.

August 20, 9:00-11:00 am: Small Farm Orientation (Virtual)

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August 22, 9:00-12:00 pm: Plastic-Laying Demonstration (Virginia Beach, VA)

For over half a century, farmers have used plasticulture for increased crop yields, soil moisture retention, improved weed control, and to lengthen the growing season without using a greenhouse. This workshop will teach you the basics of plastic-laying equipment, various irrigation and plastic products available to the industry, and the unique method of planting developed by Creekmore's Place called "2-10-T." There will be a short farm tour, followed by a plastic-laying demonstration. Afterwards there will be a short beekeeping talk and a honey, jelly and jam tasting.

August 23, 2:00-4:00 pm: Southwest Virginia Biochar Facility Tour (Floyd, VA)

Bring a friend and join us in the beautiful town of Floyd for a special tour of one of Southwest Virginia's most interesting and rapidly growing companies! Founded in 2021, SWVA Biochar produces highly absorbent, specially produced carbon with a wide variety of environmentally positive applications and carbon-sequestering properties. The company's biochar is produced using biomass obtained from Virginia companies. Space is limited! Register today.

Fall

September 20-21: Beginning Woodland Owner Retreat (Providence Forge, VA)

Landowner Retreats are co-hosted by the Virginia Department of Forestry and Virginia Cooperative Extension. Retreats provide information on hardwood and pine forest management, legacy planning, management planning, and more. They combine classroom, field trip, and hands-on activities to teach concepts of sustainable woodland and wildlife management.

Fall Forestry and Wildlife Field Tours

Join landowners, natural resource professionals, and other outdoor lovers for day-long tours that explore a variety of sustainable forestry and wildlife management practices. Tours visit private, public, and industry-owned lands.

- October 3 -Wise County
- October 11 – Rockingham County
- October 24 – Bedford County
- October 25 - Dinwiddie County

October 26: Generation NEXT Legacy Planning Workshop (Lynchburg, VA)

Generation NEXT is an award-winning, nationally recognized educational program that will get you started on the right path to keeping your land intact, in forest, and in family.

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, sex (including pregnancy), gender, gender identity, gender expression, national origin, political affiliation, race, religion, sexual orientation, genetic information, military status, or any other basis protected by law.