



Newsblast

May 5, 2022

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A Message from VBFRC

Hello everyone,
We hope May is finding you well as the growing season gets underway. 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

May 24: Boots to Roots 2: Down on the Farm (Petersburg, VA)

This workshop is an on-the-farm event for military veteran farmers, ranchers, and landowners, especially for those new and beginning veteran farmers who want to learn more about what it takes to farm profitably and sustainably. There will be a tour the Randolph Farm and participants will learn about various enterprises such as urban farming, aquaculture, small ruminants, vegetable production, berry production, high tunnel production, and more. Participants will also learn about the USDA and other agencies that partner with us to support farmers. [Register to attend](#). We will be there representing the Coalition with a table, come join us!

Note: Red underlined text is a link

Announcements

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.

Roanoke Agrarian Trust Farm Purchase

Agrarian Trust is collaborating with the Southwest Virginia Agrarian Commons to purchase the 3.5-acre Lick Run Farm in urban Roanoke, Virginia. With your help, the farm can be acquired and 99-year leasehold interest can be conveyed to Garden Variety Harvests to produce chemical-free vegetables, flowers and fruits using regenerative methods. Consider donating to support the acquisition, see link in header.

The Little Regenerative Farmer

A Virginia Native has written a children's book about regenerative farming. It is available in hard and e-copy. It is the story of one little girl's journey from falling in love with farm animals to starting her own backyard farm using Regenerative Agriculture techniques. This book is a perfect story of overcoming challenges to do what you love while helping improve the world. A must have for those who love the planet and support the regenerative agriculture movement!

Top Global Rankings Highlight Virginia Tech's Commitment to Sustainability

Virginia Tech has ranked in the top 100 overall in all categories of the Times Higher Education Impact Rankings, according to this article from VT News. The Times Higher Education Impact Rankings assess universities' efforts in areas related to the United Nation's Sustainable Development Goals. Our Center for Food Systems and Community Transformation is recognized in this article as having contributed to the high ranking (No. 36 out of 553 institutions) in the category of 'zero hunger.' This category factors in a university's research efforts related to hunger, teaching in the area of food sustainability, addressing food waste on campus, and the University's commitment to addressing hunger on and off campus.

Appalachian Beginning Forest Farmer Coalition 2022 Forest Farming Events

The Appalachian Beginning Forest Farmer Coalition and their partners invite you to join for their 2022 events! These special partner events will offer workshops, classroom sessions, farm tours, and in-depth learning geared toward potential, beginning and experienced forest farmers. These regional events are a great place to learn, share, and network with the vibrant forest farming community. All experience levels are welcome!

2022 West Virginia Forest Farming Forum in Marlinton, WV & Yew Mountain Center, May 21 & 22. Explore forest farming topics in downtown Marlinton, WV and the Yew Mountain Center!

2022 Southern Ohio Forest Farming Conference at the United Plant Savers Botanical Sanctuary, Rutland Ohio, June 24 - 26. Join us for everything forest farming: from botanical basics to best business practices!

2022 WNC Forest Farming Series on Location, Western North Carolina, June 4, August 14 & 28. A series of hands-on forest farming workshops and farm tours in Western North Carolina!

2022 Sassafras Moon Herbal Festival in Erwin, Tennessee, September 24 & 25. Join us on 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!

Fauquier Education Farm is hiring an Education Specialist

The Fauquier Education Farm Education Specialist will run educational programming for youth and adults. They will expand and improve on existing programming including: The Northern Piedmont New and Beginning Farmer Program, the Introduction to Getting Your Hands Dirty, the New Farmer Incubator Program, and The Workshop Series. This position will use in person classes and workshops, social media, on-line and remote teaching options to share the message of the farm. They will work with community partners to share quality educational programs with commercial growers, home gardens and the youth in the community. This person would also serve as a backup for the Executive Director. This individual will be supervised by the Executive Director. See [the full job description](#) for more information. To apply, send a cover letter and resume to Executive Director, Jim Hankins, at fauquieredfarm@gmail.com. Interviews for this position will begin soon.

Cultivate Charlottesville is Seeking Applications for Three Positions

1) Organizational & Finance Systems Director. The Organizational & Finance Systems Director is primarily responsible for creating and maintaining efficient and equitable organizational systems that build a culture of care, inquiry, and excellence among our team, maintaining high standards of financial records and accounting, and ensuring smooth organizational operations, 2) Summer Food Justice Intern Coordinator. The Summer Food Justice Coordinator is primarily responsible for engaging youth ages 14-18 in leadership development, experiential garden experiences, and food justice advocacy leading our summer intern program. 3) Food Justice Network Program Associate. The Food Justice Network Program Associate is a dynamic role primarily focused on advancing food equity in Charlottesville through supporting community advocacy efforts to build a healthy and just food system. More information is available on the website.

4 the Soil Highlights



Episode 22 - 9: From Playing in Dirt to a Soil Ecology Career with Dr. Alan J. Franzluebbers of North Carolina State University and USDA-ARS

In this episode, available on the Spreaker site, Jeff Ishee and Eric Bendfeldt spoke with Dr. Alan Franzluebbers at the 2022 Winter Forage Conference. Dr. Franzluebbers is a professor and researcher of soil ecology and management with North Carolina State University and USDA's Agriculture Research Service (USDA-ARS) based in Raleigh. Alan played in the dirt at a young age and this early interest grew into a lifelong career in studying and researching soil microbial life. He speaks of how important soil organic matter and biology are to nutrient cycling and how earthworms are an indicator of resources for decomposition being present. Additionally, he encourages a whole-system view of agriculture to enhance diversity to improve soil structure and overall ecosystem activity. View the description on [the Spreaker site](#) for a list of resources that Dr. Franzluebbers mentions in the interview.

4 the Soil New Blog Post: Improved Nutrient Cycling: Co-Benefit Series of Soil Health

"If you don't take care of the soil here, the soil won't take care of you," said Robert Spiers Jr., a seventh generation Virginian farmer of Spiers Farms, LLC. Virginia farmers face major fertilizer shortages this year. While soil health takes time to build, the long term impacts can lead to many benefits, including less fertilizer inputs as nutrient cycling improves and soil biology is enhanced. Mark Spiers, Robert's son and an eighth generation farmer of Double Branch, LLC, described how managing soil health allowed him to cut costs, labor, and increase field health. He focused on planting cover crops, which implements the principles to keep the soil covered and maximize living roots.

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.

May Events

May 7: Education and Outreach Pilot: Removing Barriers to USDA Good Agricultural Practices (GAP) Audit Program (Danville, VA)

The NASDA Foundation, along with Virginia Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services, Brunswick Farms to Families, and SFOP, is hosting a workshop on Good Agricultural Practices (GAP). A light lunch will be provided. If you would like to attend, RSVP to Cartellius Travis, at ctravis@vsu.edu.

May 7: Vermicomposting Workshop (Rapidan, VA) [Now Full]

This in-person training session is designed to demonstrate and promote the basics of vermicomposting as a natural cost-effective method of recycling organic matter (e.g., like garden/farm and some forms of common kitchen waste) and transforming it into productive soil amendments by creating a worm station (worm farm). Program sponsors will supply each participant with instruction and helpful tips to get started. Attendees will also receive an initial supply of composting worms, coir and newspaper bedding, and a transportable container to create their own vermicomposting station to take home so that they can incorporate this valuable composting technique in their vegetable/flower production garden/farm and prevent the often-needless added expense of relying on store-bought amendments. This vermicomposting workshop is limited and will be offered to the first 25 people who sign up. Find more information in the linked flyer in the title. Registration: <https://tinyurl.com/worms-4-9>

May 7-8: The Virginia Farm Festival at Meadow Event Park (Doswell, VA)

The vision for the Virginia Farm Festival grew out of a desire to expand the educational components of the State Fair of Virginia into a new spring event in order to tell the story of spring planting and bring families together as we work to grow our yearlong commitment to serving Virginia's youth, families, and agricultural communities as Virginia's Largest Outdoor Classroom. Join as an attendee or vendor!

May 9: 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.

May 10: How to Start a Farm (Virtual, In Person, Hybrid)

This workshop is perfect for anyone who is thinking about getting a farm started. It will cover some basic farm planning and how to decide what to grow and then how to sell it. A few different resource agencies will be available to talk about how they can help new farmers. These series will start on May 10th and run for 3 weeks with in person, virtual, and hybrid attendance options. Registration can be found here: www.tinyurl.com/howtostartafarm2022

May 11: Growing and Harvesting Garlic Scapes (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 to plant, grow and harvest elephant garlic scapes. Clif will also describe his garlic trials under different colored plastic mulch and offer insights on marketing scapes. In the event of rain, this event will be rescheduled for May 18, 2022, from 10:00 am to 12:00 pm.

May 12: Agricultural Marketing Bus Tour (Petersburg, VA)

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.

May 12: Berry and Ginger Production (Halifax, VA)

Dr. Reza Rafie, Extension Specialist and Professor of Horticulture at VSU will present this workshop. Attendees will learn about innovative methods for producing berry crops, including blueberry, blackberry, and raspberry. You will also learn about growing ginger. He will go over new varieties and comparative production data, planting methods and improved cultivation practices, and yield in field production compared to growing in a high tunnel. This workshop will highlight applied research that will benefit small farmers.

May 12: Food Safety in the Supply Chain: The Web You Can't Escape (Virtual)

This webinar, organized by CONTACT, a USDA-funded project led by the University of Florida, will feature the talented and knowledgeable Dr. Bob Whitaker and a panel of experts from industry and academia to untangle the complex, and often challenging web that is the produce supply chain. This webinar will include an interactive Q&A with the audience. This webinar is free and will be held via Zoom. Registration is required, more information is provided at the registration link. Produce safety industry, government, and academia are encouraged to come. All are invited!

May 14: Agribusiness Production & Financial Management Program (Farmville, 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.

May 18-19 2022 Virginia Forage and Grassland Council's Beginner Grazing School (Orange, VA)

This 2-day intensive course is designed with both beginning and experienced producers in mind. It will cover everything you need to know to better manage grazing on your farm including forage and plant ID, pasture assessment, fencing and water system options, matching forage quality and livestock needs, and understanding a forage budget. Most importantly it will involve many hands-on activities to reinforce the concepts covered in the classroom portion of the school.

May 19: Virginia Small Grains Field Day (Warsaw, VA)

Join us on May 19 here at Eastern Virginia AREC for the Virginia Small Grains Field Day!

May 20-21: National Cattleman's Beef Association Stockmanship & Stewardship Event (Blacksburg, VA)

Stockmanship & Stewardship is a unique two-day educational experience for cattle producers featuring low-stress cattle handling demonstrations, Beef Quality Assurance (BQA) educational sessions, facility design sessions and industry updates that you won't find anywhere else. Registration is now open.

May 20-21: Beginning Woodland Owner Retreat (Galax, VA)

This retreat is hosted by the Virginia Department of Forestry and Virginia Cooperative Extension. It is 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.

May 21: Sheep and Goat Workshop (Montpelier, VA)

Join us for a FREE small ruminant workshop on Saturday, May 21 at Whispering Springs Farm in Hanover (15181 Whispering Springs Pl, Montpelier, VA 23192). Rain or Shine. Speakers include: Dr. Dahlia O'Brien, Extension Small Ruminant Specialist; Dr. Bom Harris, Local Livestock Veterinarian; and Laura Maxey-Nay; Hanover Agricultural Extension Agent. Topics will include: basic animal care, common veterinarian emergencies, and small ruminant forage production.

The workshop will start at 10 am and go until 2pm. Lunch will NOT be provided so please pack yourself a brown bag lunch. Also, please bring your own portable chair.

May 21: Small Engine Repair (Catawba, VA)

Is your lawn and garden equipment ready to spring into action? Does your grass say "grow," but your mower says "no?" Does your garden scream "till," while your tiller sits still? Come and explore how something as simple as changing spark plugs, oil, and oil/air filters can increase the performance of your equipment and make your lawn and garden work a breeze. Attendees may bring in garden equipment such as lawnmowers, weed eaters, tiller, etc., to troubleshoot problems.

May 23: Sustainable Forestry Management (Halifax, VA)

Sustainable forestry management can be a complex project, with the need to manage trees, wildlife, and the environment. In this workshop, 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 conclusion of the workshop, we will visit two forestry sites.

May 24: Boots to Roots 2: Down on the Farm (Petersburg, VA)

This workshop is an on-the-farm event for military veteran farmers, ranchers, and landowners, especially for those new and beginning veteran farmers who want to learn more about what it takes to farm profitably and sustainably. We will tour the Randolph Farm and learn about various enterprises

such as urban farming, aquaculture, small ruminants, vegetable production, berry production, high tunnel production, and more. We will also learn about the USDA and other agencies that partner with us to support farmers.

May 24: USDA Non-Insured Crop Disaster Program for Farmers (Abingdon, VA)

Wayne Harless from USDA Farm Service Agency will be sharing information about the Non- insured Crop Disaster Program. A meal will be served! Register no later than May 20th to reserve your spot. Call, text, or email Mandy Fletcher at 804-892-0108 or afletcher@vsu.edu for more information.

May 25: Large-Scale Solar Projects and Land Use Planning (Virtual)

This session will highlight research from West Virginia University's Land Use and Sustainable Development Law Clinic regarding solar land-use practices around the United States. The session will also include an update from Jennifer Friedel, Esq., Associate Professor of Practice at Virginia Tech on new policies in Virginia.

May 26: Mapping & Crop Spraying with Drones for Precision Agriculture (Rapidan, VA)

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 which are costly and difficult to mobilize.

May 28: Hispanic Market Tour (South Hill, VA)

Pedro Lopez, Hispanic Mentor Farmer, will host participants on a tour of his market activities at the South Hill and Bracey Farmer's Markets. Of interest will be the ethnic Hispanic produce, local vegetables, and an assortment of hot peppers. In addition to this, he will share his marketing strategies and networking, including how he copes with market demand by supplying from other sources or redirecting volume to another market.

June Events

June 1: Forest Carbon Symposium (Staunton, VA)

Forest carbon markets are expanding rapidly in the commonwealth. If you are a forester, landowner, county leader, or just interested in this topic, please consider attending the first ever Forest Carbon Symposium hosted by the Virginia Department of Forestry. In this symposium, you will learn about the importance of forest carbon markets, what this market means to Virginia, and what opportunities are available for our state's forestry community.

June 4: Basic Beekeeping (Salem, VA)

Bee ownership is more than just the sweet taste of honey! Join us for the opportunity to see the inner workings of a beehive. This workshop will give you a basic understanding of what it takes to start your own hive, from site location to queen management, including an overview of what kinds of tools and equipment you will need, and the knowledge to treat pests and diseases.

June 7: Silvopasture Demonstration (Burkeville, VA)

This in-person farm workshop will show how a silvopasture can provide higher-quality forage and

increase short- and long-term income, through managed trees, weeds and livestock. The demonstration will show cattle producers how a silvopasture can improve pasture performance and add value to a farmer's land management. It will also show how a silvopasture can reduce erosion and improve pasture forage.

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 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 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.

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.