



June 2, 2025

Photo by Katie Trozzo

## *A Message from VBFRC*

As June brings its mix of sun and rain, we hope this newsblast finds you well. There are a number of workshops, programs, and opportunities we are excited to share with you. We hope you enjoy and find something meaningful to dig into!

*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.*

## *Partner Highlight*

The Virginia Beginning Farmer and Rancher Coalition invites you to join a webinar on risk management on the farm. In the webinar, you will learn about the types of agricultural risks, ways of assessing and prioritizing risks and developing a plan of action for minimizing risks. Key resources will be shared as well. The webinar is scheduled Tuesday, June 17, 2:00-3:00 PM Eastern.

Please [register](#) to attend

Note: Green underlined text is a link

## Announcements

### Agroforestry Regional Knowledge Exchange (ARKx) Network

Check out the Agroforestry Regional Knowledge Exchange (ARKx) Network housed on the [Catalyzing Agroforestry website](#)! The ARKx is a peer-to-peer learning network where land managers/farmers, technical service providers, agricultural educators, business owners, non-governmental organizations, and universities can generate and share knowledge with one another to help promote agroforestry throughout the regions of the United States. The ARKx website highlights a network of agroforestry profiles, a national map of demonstration sites and partners, and a community calendar. The network has been evolving over the last two years and has been continuing to build out this great web resource for the agroforestry community.

Check out these ways to engage!

1. Sign up for the [ARKx Newsletter](#) (scroll to the bottom to enter your information)
2. Add to the [Agroforestry Community Calendar](#)
3. Peruse the [ARKx Network Map](#) to find out about agroforestry near you (more locations being added soon)
4. Create an [Agroforestry Profile \(Peer to Peer\)](#) or [Demonstration Site Profile](#)

### The Virginia Cattle Industry Board 11<sup>th</sup> Round of Grant Funding (Deadline: July 8, 2025)

The Virginia Cattle Industry Board (VCIB) is excited to announce its 11th round of grant funding. Grant Submissions are Due Tuesday, July 8, 2025, at 5 P.M. Grant submissions are to be emailed to [matthew.sponaule@vdacs.virginia.gov](mailto:matthew.sponaule@vdacs.virginia.gov) and [sarah.keyser@vdacs.virginia.gov](mailto:sarah.keyser@vdacs.virginia.gov). You can expect to receive a conformation email including an official grant request identification number within 48 hours of submission. If you have any questions about VCIB grant ideas or questions about the submission process, please do not hesitate to reach out to Matthew Sponaule at 540-383-7983.

# Series

## **2025 Agroforestry Farm Tour Series: Now Open for Registration (Multi-State)**

Join Appalachian Sustainable Development (ASD) for a regional tour series showcasing silvopasture, alley cropping, forest farming, and more. These on-farm events highlight how producers have successfully integrated trees and shrubs into their farming operations to support sustainability and productivity. Space is limited—register early to reserve your spot!

- Tuesday, June 3, 2025: Alley Cropping at ASD (Bristol, VA)
- Friday, June 13, 2025: Silvopasture at Bellaire Farm (Charlottesville, VA)
- Wednesday, July 30, 2025: Forest Farming at Boring Roots and Herbs (Dunlap, TN)
- Thursday, September 25, 2025: Silvopasture at Caney Fork Farm (Carthage, TN)

## **Agroforestry Trainings for Natural Resource Professionals: Registration Open (Multi-State)**

Are you a land manager or natural resource advisor looking to strengthen your agroforestry knowledge? This professional development series, led by Appalachian Sustainable Development and its partners, offers in-person and online training on the fundamentals of silvopasture, alley cropping, and forest farming. Ideal for those who provide technical assistance in forestry and land stewardship.

- Tuesday, June 17, 2025: Alley Cropping Fundamentals (Asheville area, NC)
- Tuesday, June 24, 2025: Silvopasture Fundamentals (Goldsboro, NC)
- Tuesday, July 8, 2025: Silvopasture Fundamentals (Raphine, VA)
- August TBD: Forest Farming Intensive (VA – Details coming soon)
- Friday, September 26, 2025: Silvopasture Fundamentals (Carthage, TN)

## 4 the Soil Highlights



### **S5 - E11: Common Ties: Cooperation and Sustainability with Elizabeth McMullen and Garland Mason of Organic Valley (Pt. I)**

Public Relations Specialist Elizabeth McMullen and Sustainability Funding and Communications Specialist Garland Mason of Organic Valley Cooperative join Mary and Eric to discuss the power of cooperation in preserving small and mid-size family farms. In this episode, they share the history of Organic Valley, which began as a vegetable cooperative in 1988 and now supports over 1,500 dairy farmer-members across 29 states. Discover how sustainable practices, such as composting, solar energy, nutrient management, and the use of Agolin Naturu (a natural feed supplement), are helping farmers reduce emissions and remain profitable.

### **S5 - E10: Farmers Talking with Farmers with Anthony Beery of Beery Farms, Part II**

Farmer-to-farmer connections are crucial for enhancing soil health, promoting innovation, and fostering mentorship. In this episode, Anthony Beery of Beery Farms and Cumberland Hay and Straw LLC shares his approach to learning, experimenting, and mentoring with hosts Mary Sketch Bryant and Jeff Ishee. Anthony reflects on how peer support, including his father's guidance, shaped his farming philosophy—and how he pays it forward through the Virginia No-Till Alliance (VANTAGE) and Virginia's Integrated Cropland Agronomy (ICA) program. From composting to cover crops and the Smart Mix Calculator, Anthony's story is packed with practical tips and a passion for learning.

### **4 the Soil Blog**

Check out the latest 4 the Soil blog!



# June

## **June 3, 7:00 - 8:00 PM: Join Future Harvest and Agricultural Law Education Initiative Webinar (Virtual)**

Join Future Harvest and Agricultural Law Education Initiative (ALEI) for a two-part webinar series offering farms a comprehensive overview of the legal considerations for businesses engaged in, or planning to engage in, direct online sales and marketing. Part two of the 2-part webinar will feature knowledge on a) Compliance with selling farm products online, including food safety compliance in e-delivery businesses, b) Labeling regulations and food delivery obligations for direct-to-consumer e-commerce sales of food, c) Sales tax regulations for selling into other states.

## **June 4, 9:00 AM – 12:00 PM: Basic Soil Science for Farmers (Ettrick, VA)**

Gain a deeper understanding of Virginia's diverse soils in this interactive workshop. Learn about soil formation, mineral composition, particle size, and structure—and how these factors influence plant growth. The session will also explore organic matter, soil-water relationships, and how to use the Soil Survey for better decision-making on your farm.

## **June 4, 6:00 – 8:00 PM: Young Farmers Meet-up and Potluck (Linville, VA)**

Join the Shenandoah Valley Young Farmers Coalition for a Farm Tour & Potluck on Wednesday, June 4, from 6–8 PM at Friendly Neighbor Gardens in Linville, VA. Hosted by Stefan, Price, and Marian, this event is a great opportunity to connect and engage with fellow young farmers from across the Valley. Come explore the farm, share a meal, and enjoy an evening of community building. Please bring a dish to share! For more information, contact: [mdalke@vt.edu](mailto:mdalke@vt.edu) | 540-232-6010

## **June 5, 12 PM: Marketing Communications Speaker Series- Better Berries Campaign: Messaging for Small Fruit Growers (Virtual)**

The Agroforestry Coalition invites producers, marketers, packagers, and growers of perennial food products together for a discussion and free training on small berry marketing. Leaders in berry marketing join to talk about a pilot marketing campaign in development to boost sales opportunities for berry specialty crops, including elderberry, black currant, and aronia. Learn how you can make the most out of your berry product marketing.

## **June 6, 12:00 –2:00 PM: The Basics of Biochar (VSU Randolph Farm, Petersburg, VA)**

Learn how biochar—made from hardwood charcoal and rich in microbial life—can rejuvenate poor soils and boost nutrient capacity. This introductory workshop will explore the history, preparation, and practical applications of biochar as a sustainable soil amendment.

## **June 7, 5:00 - 8:00 PM: Roots & Rhythms: a Celebration of Black Farmers & Food Traditions (Roanoke, VA)**

Join on Saturday, June 7, from 5–8:30 PM at Community Art Reach, 3025 Frontier Rd, Roanoke, VA 24012, for Roots and Rhythms, a celebration of Black farmers and food traditions. Enjoy a potluck, film screening of Rhythms of the Land, a Q&A with filmmaker Dr. Gail Myers, and a panel of local Black farmers. This free event honors the legacy, resilience, and community of Black agrarian life. All are welcome—bring a dish and a recipe to share!

### **June 12, 6:00 - 8:00 PM: Farm and Farm Equipment Safety (Highway Rapidan, VA)**

Each year, more than 300 commercial tractor-related deaths occur. Almost half of these are caused by overturns. Many are caused by PTOs not being properly shielded or shut down. Other causes include vehicle collisions, hitting overhead objects such as tree limbs, being crushed during repairs, or being burned during refueling. This workshop will review various practices to help you stay safe on the farm, including how to be knowledgeable about tractors and use them safely and adequately, conduct pre-operational safety checks, and take special precautions necessary for operating equipment on rough terrain and slopes. Use of personal protective equipment will also be reviewed. They will also provide additional resources to help you learn more about farm safety and answer questions about avoiding risk on your farm.

### **June 13, 12:00 - 2:00 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 were a way to create your 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.

### **June 14, 10:00 AM - 12:00 PM: Growing and Harvesting Garlic (Unionville, VA)**

Garlic is one of the easiest and most rewarding crops you can grow—resilient, low-maintenance, and virtually pest-free. Whether you're planting in raised beds or directly in the ground, garlic offers a satisfying growing experience for gardeners of all levels. In this hands-on workshop, you'll learn everything you need to know to grow a thriving garlic crop, including the often-overlooked first harvest: garlic scapes. We'll explore the importance of early planting to maximize root and leaf development before bulb formation begins. Come discover the secrets to growing flavorful, robust garlic from start to finish!

### **June 14, 10:00 AM - 1:00 PM: Butter Bee Farm- Hands-on Compost Workshop (White Hall, MD)**

**Saturday, June 14, 2025, from 10:00 am - 1:00 pm - Experience a Butterbee Farm tour, and Leslie Lewis, of [Living Systems Soil](#), will teach us how to make compost that encourages active microbiology with abundant and diverse aerobic microorganisms. Biologically rich and alive compost can then be used as a soil amendment that promotes ecological health from the ground up, giving plants what they need from the soil. This compost-making system requires no machinery at all so that it can be a great fit for small-scale farmers with small budgets. **FREE****

### **June 16, 1:00 – 3:00 PM: Soil Health Quarterly Meeting (Virtual)**

The next Quarterly Coalition Meeting will be held virtually on June 16th from 1:00 to 3:00 PM. As a reminder, these meetings are open to everyone and provide an excellent opportunity to learn more about soil health and connect virtually with colleagues.

### **June 17 - June 29, 9:00 AM - 1:00 PM: Roots 2 Relics Forestry Camp (Petersburg, VA)**

Attend the Roots 2 Relics Forestry Camp, a three-day, hands-on camp for curious minds aged 10-14! From June 17th to 19th, 2025, participants will embark on a journey of discovery from 9 AM to 1 PM daily. This unique camp thematically incorporates the expertise of forestry state park workers, VSU Cooperative Extension urban forestry specialists, and archaeologists. Through interactive projects, rotating learning stations, and guided activities, campers will

explore forest ecosystems, learn about the vital role of trees in urban environments, and uncover the fascinating history hidden beneath our feet. Prepare for a summer experience filled with learning, exploration, and fun!

**June 17, 2:00 – 3:00 PM: Risk Management on the Farm (Virtual)**

Farming is inherently risky, but preparation can make all the difference. Join the Virginia Beginning Farmer and Rancher Coalition for a free webinar on Risk Management on the Farm, with Curt Porterfield, Assistant Director of Facilities and Safety at Virginia Tech's College of Agriculture and Life Sciences, to explore essential risk management strategies for your farm. The session will cover the types of agricultural risks, how to assess and prioritize them, and how to create a plan to protect your livelihood and long-term sustainability. Participants will also receive valuable resources for continued learning. For more information, contact Katie Trozzo at [ketrozzo@vt.edu](mailto:ketrozzo@vt.edu) or (540) 232-2233. If you require accommodations to participate, please reach out by June 7.

**June 17, 6:00 PM - 8:00 PM: Small Farm Orientation (Virtual Workshop)**

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 the VSU Integrated Marketing Program, will guide attendees through the process of developing a productive and profitable farm. Participants will receive a Small Farm Orientation manual.

**June 18, 9:00 AM - 12:00 PM: Basic Soil Fertility for Farmers (Ettrick, VA)**

Learn how to manage the soil fertility of different soils based on their specific characteristics. We will discuss the 18 nutrients necessary for all plant growth. Learn why some nutrients move past the root zone while others do not. We will demonstrate how availability affects the uptake of applied nutrients. Discover how a healthy soil fosters healthy plants. Join us to gain insights into the future of sustainable farming!

**June 21, 1:00 - 5:00 PM: Common Grain Alliance & Virginia Association of Biological Farming Field Day (Louisa, VA)**

The Living Energy Farm (LEF), the Common Grain Alliance, and the Virginia Association of Biological Farming are co-hosting a field day focused on small-scale organic grain harvesting and sustainable energy solutions. Attendees will have the opportunity to watch a live demonstration of this prototype, see LEF's grain cleaning and milling setup, and discuss small-scale grain equipment solutions with fellow farmers and millers. The event will also feature a tour of LEF's energy facilities, highlighting their innovative approach to making renewable energy accessible and affordable.

**June 27, 10:00 AM - 12:00 PM: Crop Insurance (Petersburg, VA)**

The crop insurance program is a critical component of the U.S. agriculture safety net. Learn how the federal crop insurance program can provide financial assistance to farmers when they need it most. In this event, you will learn: a) What is crop insurance? b) How is crop insurance different than other forms of insurance? c) Who shoulders the risk in crop insurance? d) How and why does the government encourage crop insurance participation? e) What steps do crop insurers take to ensure taxpayer dollars are efficiently used? f) What is the Standard Reinsurance Agreement (SRA)? g) Who are Approved Insurance Providers? h) What is National Crop Insurance Services?



# July

## **July 2, 2:00 - 4:00 PM: Guerrilla Marketing Techniques (River Road, Petersburg, VA)**

Using Guerrilla Marketing Techniques to Grow Your Small Farm Sales. Guerrilla marketing is a set of marketing tactics that uses unconventional methods to achieve big marketing success. Guerrilla marketing's key characteristics are unconventional and Creative, moving beyond traditional advertising methods to aim for memorable and attention-grabbing campaigns. Surprise and Delight often involve unexpected events or interactions to capture attention. Targeted Niche Audiences: This marketing technique focuses on a specific demographic or interest. Long-time farmer and consultant Patrick Johnson will discuss how to make these strategies work for you.

## **July 9, 10:00 - 11:30 AM: New Innovative Approach to Hydroponics (Kenbridge, VA)**

Attention all Veteran farmers!! Are you interested in learning more about growing using hydroponics?? Join the Full Circle Bloom Farm for a tour of their facility to learn more about hydroponics and the latest methods for success, including aeroponics (growing plants in air). The farm strives to furnish the local communities with fresh, nutritious produce. Join us with founder and Veteran Andrew Richardson to learn more about this alternative method of growing produce.

## **July 21–23: Beef Cattle University (The Inn at Virginia Tech & VT German Club, Blacksburg, VA)**

This is to announce Beef Cattle University 2025, a premier event bringing together beef producers, industry leaders, and experts for three days of education, networking, and innovation. This all-inclusive experience will feature engaging educational sessions on herd health, marketing, nutrition, business management, reproduction, and meat science. Attendees will have the opportunity to explore the latest advancements in beef industry technology through a vibrant trade show, connect with fellow producers during entertainment and networking opportunities, and gain valuable insights to empower and inspire their work in the beef industry.

## **July 24, 4:00 - 7:30 PM: Cut Flower Field Day- July 2024 (Charlotte, VA)**

Join the 2025 Cut Flower Discussion Group Field Day on July 24 from 4:00 to 7:30 PM at 2129 Hill Cross Road, Charlotte Court House, VA. The field day will start at Archlynn Farms for a field walk, vendor fair, and high tunnel tour, then head to South Forty Farm for a cut flower variety trial, guest speaker, and supper. This event is a great opportunity to connect with other growers, learn from specialists, and explore on-farm innovations in cut flower production. \$10 registration fee includes supper. Register by July 18 by contacting Erin Small at (434) 392-0300 or [erins96@vt.edu](mailto:erins96@vt.edu). Please dress for the weather and walking conditions, and notify us of any food allergies when registering.

# August

## **August 1, 8:00 - 9:00 AM: Controlled Environmental Ag & Precision Agriculture Workshop and Tour (Danville, VA)**

The term controlled environment agriculture (CEA) encompasses various innovative farming practices, such as greenhouse cultivation and vertical farming, which harness controlled environments to optimize crop growth. During this tour, you will visit the IALR (Institute for Advanced Learning and Research) to discuss CEA, exploring its role in supporting and supplementing traditional farming, enhancing crop quality, and ensuring year-round production. Gain a comprehensive understanding of why CEA is vital for addressing modern agricultural challenges, including climate change, resource scarcity, and food security. The venue will be at 150 Slayton Ave, Danville, VA 24540.

## **August 1, 2:45 – 3:45 PM: Harvest Field Day, Eden Green Farm (Cleburne, Texas)**

Watch and partake as a generational success story unfolds: Eden Green Farms hosts a Celebratory Farm Harvest Field Day culminating with a fellowship meal where all participants: family, friends, and community can enjoy the fruit of their labor. This event will honor the land, legacy, and love of Mr. Luther "Deacon" Brown. Learn about conservation, heir's property/estate planning, value-added products, post-harvest processing, and cooperative farming practices. Please RSVP. Address and additional information will be provided via email five days before the event.

## **August 1, 5:00 - 6:00 PM: Game Night SFOP-Jeopardy and Farmer Feud (Petersburg, VA)**

Get ready for a time of fun and fellowship as we competitively share and gain knowledge of Ag, SFOP, Government programs designed to help producers, and much more over a round of Jeopardy and Farmer Feud! Participants will receive a Prep Guide of topics, participation awards, and prizes for winners. Jeopardy participants and Farmer Feud teams will be selected on a combined basis, with priority given to first-come, first-served applicants and a lottery system used for additional selection. There will be a quarterly Jeopardy event, with a championship event scheduled for future months (2025). The venue will be at VSU Randolph Farm, 4415 River Rd, Petersburg, United States. For more information, contact Tabitha Bugg at 804-892-2997 or [tbugg@vsu.edu](mailto:tbugg@vsu.edu).

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