



Newsblast

October 4, 2024

Photo by Gary Yost

A Message from VBFRC

Hello everyone! As we fall into the early days of October, we hope the season is treating you well. We're excited to share a bountiful collection of workshops, programs, grants, conferences, and more in this month's 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 is sponsored by the Beginning Farmer and Rancher Development Program (BFRDP) of the USDA National Institute of Food and Agriculture (NIFA) Award #2020-49400-32326. This funding is led by VSU's Small Farm Outreach Program.

Partner Highlight

Regenerate Virginia Farm Vitality Planning Grant 2024-2025 cycle is opening to assist Virginia farmers in working towards the long-term vitality of their operations, with a particular focus on planning efforts that support the adoption or expansion of regenerative practices and systems. These grants are intended to provide producers with funds to pursue individualized, substantive business consulting services leading to powerful changes in operations. Grants of up to \$10,000 will be considered.

Check the [website](#) for eligibility requirements and to apply. Applications will be accepted from October 15th through November 15th, 2024.

For more information, contact Amanda Cather at acather@farmland.org.

Note: Green underlined text is a link

Announcements

USDA and the Appalachia Regional Food Business Center Business Builder Grants

Application due November 1st! Small, mid-sized, and diverse food and farm entrepreneurs in Ohio, West Virginia, Kentucky, Tennessee, and several counties in Pennsylvania, Virginia, and Maryland can now apply for Business Builder Grants through November 1st. These grants will support food and farm business development, market access, and processing, aggregation, and distribution infrastructure. This opportunity, made available by the USDA and the Appalachia Regional Food Business Center, is designed to help small and mid-sized businesses thrive and expand their market reach.

Regenerate Virginia Healthy Soils Grant Program

Applications open October 15 and due November 15th! Virginia farmers and groups of producers can apply for grants of up to \$30,000 for individuals and \$50,000 for groups to pilot innovative soil health projects. This program, in collaboration with the Virginia Soil Health Coalition, supports projects that fill gaps and address barriers to adopting soil health-building systems. Eligible expenses include farmer labor, equipment, farm inputs, infrastructure, and more. Projects must be located in Virginia and focus on soil health principles with an educational component.

Chesapeake Bay Innovative Nutrient and Sediment Reduction Grants 2025 Request for Proposals

NFWF is soliciting proposals under the Innovative Nutrient and Sediment Reduction (INSR) Grants program to accelerate the rate and scale of water quality improvements through the voluntary implementation of best management practices that cost-effectively reduce nutrient and sediment pollution to Chesapeake Bay and contribute directly to improved health and function of tributary rivers and streams. Proposals are due November 5th.

Governor's Agriculture and Forestry Industries Development (AFID) Infrastructure Grant Program

The AFID Infrastructure Program offers grants of up to \$50,000 to political subdivisions for community infrastructure development projects that support local food production and sustainable agriculture. The Fall 2024 AFID Infrastructure Grant Round opens on October 1st and runs through November 15th, 2024.

Forest Farming Interest / Experience Survey

The Accelerating Forest Farming in Central Appalachia Team would LOVE to hear from you! The Appalachian Regional Commission recently sponsored a project through its Appalachian Regional Initiatives for Stronger Economies (ARISE) program focused on improving services and infrastructure for forest farmers. This short survey will help organizations learn about your needs and interests. Your responses will be kept confidential and used only for general reporting purposes. Please provide your contact information if project leaders want to contact you for more discussion. The survey should take between 5 and 15 minutes depending on your level of experience.

Series

Fifteen Minutes in the Forest

The award-winning Fifteen Minutes in the Forest video series features a wide-array of topics and are shown every other Friday at 12:15 on [Facebook](#) and [YouTube Premier](#)

- October 4 -The Red Oak Family
- October 18 – Sweetgum – Love it or Hate it?
- November 1 – Simple Tools to Measure Your Forest Part 2
- November 15 – A Forester Can Provide A Clear View of Your Forest – Part 2 – Selling Your Timber

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! October 8. Contact Erin Small for more information (804)-556-5841.

Virginia Forest Landowner Education Program Fall Forestry & 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 11 – Rockingham County – registration extended until Monday October 7 at noon.
- October 24 – Bedford County
- October 25 - Dinwiddie County

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! October 15. Contact Erin Small for more information (804)-556-5841.

Virginia State University, Small Farm Outreach Program Cohort Series - “Unveiling the Mystery of Palynology”

Join us for a year-long (September 25, 2024 - October 29, 2025:) cohort series designed to help producers, land stewards, agricultural stakeholders, and researchers understand the role of pollinators, pollinator plants, and palynology in various agricultural systems. This series will explore their relationship with soil health, food safety, grazing, herd management, climate mitigation, and community revitalization. The series includes 12 meetings, with a focus on topics such as soil health, native plants, apiary production, and urban agriculture. For more information, contact Tabitha Bugg at 804.892.2997 or tbugg@vsu.edu.

4 the Soil Highlights



Episode 24 - 19: Reconnecting through Stories and Agroforestry Part I

Tune in for an engaging discussion that bridges agriculture, environmental stewardship, and storytelling. In this episode of *4 The Soil: A Conversation*, Dr. Wayne Teel from James Madison University shares his insights on how agroforestry practices and storytelling intersect. Learn how reconnecting through stories can promote sustainable land use and foster community connections. Dr. Teel explores the benefits of agroforestry and how it ties into both ecological and human well-being.

Episode 24 - 20: The Promise and Potential of Biochar with Dr. Wayne Teel Part II

In this episode of *4 The Soil: A Conversation*, Dr. Wayne Teel from James Madison University returns to discuss the promise and potential of biochar in sustainable agriculture. Learn how biochar can improve soil health, sequester carbon, and contribute to climate resilience. Dr. Teel shares insights on the latest research and real-world applications of biochar, highlighting its role in creating a more sustainable agricultural system.

4 the Soil Blog

Check out the latest 4 the Soil blog!

October

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 8, 5:30 PM to 8:30 PM:Virginia Tech Sheep Extension FAMACHA Training Workshop (Blacksburg, VA)

Join us at the Etgen Large Animal Learning Center at Virginia Tech for a hands-on *FAMACHA Training Workshop*. This workshop is designed for individuals interested in becoming FAMACHA certified. Topics covered will include parasites in small ruminants and the FAMACHA system for managing parasite control in livestock.

October 10, 10:00 AM - 11:50 AM: Drought Designation Opportunities (Afton, VA)

Join us for an informative session on *Drought Designation Opportunities*. As of July 10th, fifteen counties in Virginia have received USDA Drought Disaster Designation, with more likely to be added. This designation comes with federal programs and tax benefits for farmers in these counties and the surrounding areas. Learn about critical business decisions and opportunities for agriculture producers to take advantage of federal government assistance programs in response to drought conditions.

October 12, 8:30 am - 1:30 pm: Hair Sheep Field Day (Petersburg, VA)

Join us at VSU for *Hair Sheep Field Day*. Hair sheep are a fantastic option for small and sustainable farms, particularly in the mid-Atlantic region. These resilient animals excel in pasture-based systems, resist parasites and heat stress, and require no shearing, making them ideal for farmers.

October 12, 1pm - 5pm: Fall Farm to Table (Culpeper, VA)

Join us at Farmer D's Farm in Culpeper, Virginia, for a unique Fall Farm to Table experience from 1:00 PM to 5:00 PM. Enjoy fresh, beyond organic, seasonal produce curated by holistic chefs, Chef Katharine Laboy and Chef Stephanie Miller. This health and wellness culinary event will feature expert advice on what to eat and how to prepare meals for maximum nutritional benefit. Limited seating is available, so be sure to register today! The event will include cooking demos, a farm tour, and delicious food.

October 12th, 10am - 4pm : Mid-Atlantic Grain Fair (Washington, D.C.)

Come see the Virginia Soil Health Coalition at the Mid-Atlantic Grain Fair with the Common Grain Alliance! The Grain Fair is a free, family-friendly event that celebrates the Mid-Atlantic region's vibrant history of local grain growing, milling, and baking. There will be a classroom with grain cooking demonstrations and tastings, live milling demonstrations at Peirce Mill, and a farmers' market with regional grain fare. The event will feature music, arts, and crafts, along with fun, hands-on activities—see more details below!

October 13, 9am - 11am: Mushroom Cultivation Workshop (Norfolk, VA)

Join us for an exciting *Mushroom Cultivation* workshop with Jason Hess of Tidewater Mushroom Company LLC. Learn about the life cycle, nutrition, and health benefits of gourmet mushrooms, including their role in cancer prevention and brain health. Participants will tour the urban indoor mushroom farm, gain insight into day-to-day operations, and learn about the lab, equipment, and growing mediums used in mushroom cultivation. Each attendee will also inoculate their own grow bag to take home!

October 15, 9am - 11am: Small Farm Orientation (Zoom Event)

Join VSU for a *Small Farm Orientation* via Zoom. This two-hour course is designed for new farmers with zero to five years of experience in operating a farm. Ben Dukes and Derrick Gooden, regional program assistants for the VSU Small Farm Outreach Program, along with Dr. Nartea, extension specialist for VSU Integrated Marketing Program, will guide participants through the steps to developing a productive and profitable farm. Participants will receive a *Small Farm Orientation Manual* to help kickstart their farming journey.

October 16, 1pm - 4pm: Beekeeping 101 (Petersburg, VA)

Join us at VSU Randolph Farm for *Beekeeping 101*. This beginner's class is perfect for anyone interested in starting their journey into beekeeping. Participants will learn the basics of beekeeping, including essential equipment, bee biology, hive management, and seasonal care.

October 17, 7pm - 8pm: Small Ruminant Webinar Series – Considerations for Breeding (Zoom Event)

Join us for the *Small Ruminant Webinar Series: Considerations for Breeding*. This webinar is perfect for small and beginning farmers interested in sheep and goat production. Participants will gain valuable

insights from speakers across the United States on how to make their livestock enterprise successful and profitable. The webinar series is held on the 3rd Thursday of each month from June through December 2024. Registered attendees will receive a Zoom link to participate in this informative series.

October 18, 9:00am - 4:30pm: How Does Intentional Application of Regenerative Principles Impact Livestock Epigenetics? (Catawba, VA)

Join us at the Virginia Tech Catawba Sustainability Center for a one-day grazing school event with Dr. Allen Williams from Understanding Ag LLC. This event will explore how soil health, adaptive stewardship, and ecosystem processes impact livestock epigenetics. The day will include both classroom and field sessions to provide a comprehensive understanding of these regenerative principles in action. Lunch will be provided. Register soon to secure your spot and visit the website for more information.

October 19, 9:15 AM - 3:30 PM: Woodland Options for Landowners Field Trip (Raphine, VA)

Join us, Virginia Forest Landowner Education Program, at McCormick Farm in Raphine, Virginia, for a hands-on Woodland Options for Landowners Field Trip. This field trip is the capstone event for the annual Online Woodland Options for Landowners class but is open to all. Participants will learn about tree identification, using forestry equipment to measure trees, and explore examples of sustainable forestry and wildlife management practices.

October 19, 9am- 12pm: Small Engine Maintenance and Off Season Storage (Petersburg, VA)

Join us at the VSU Ag Engineering Building in Petersburg, Virginia, for a *Small Engine Maintenance and Off Season Storage* workshop. Learn best practices to save time and money by properly maintaining and storing small engines during the off season. This workshop will cover basic maintenance, simple repairs, and correct storage methods for when equipment is not in use. The session will include both a lecture and a Q&A segment, offering practical advice for all participants.

October 20, 9am – 11am: Mushroom Cultivation (Norfolk, VA)

Join us for a hands-on *Mushroom Cultivation* workshop with Jason Hess of Tidewater Mushroom Company LLC. Learn about common gourmet mushroom varieties, their health benefits, and day-to-day operations of an urban indoor mushroom farm. The workshop will cover the mushroom life cycle, nutrition facts, and superfood statistics. Participants will also receive a grow bag, which they will inoculate following a farm tour with Q&A, as well as an explanation of the lab, equipment, and growing mediums.

October 24, 10am – 3pm: Agritourism Fall Fest (Petersburg, VA)

Join us for the *Agritourism Fall Fest* at VSU Randolph Farm in Petersburg, VA! Hosted by the VSU College of Agriculture, this event is designed for both producers and the general public. Enjoy a day filled with learning, fun, and fall festivities, while exploring the expanding world of agritourism. Whether you're a producer or simply curious about agritourism, this event offers something for everyone.

October 24-25, 5pm: Silvopasture 201: Design Intensive (Catawba, VA)

Join us at the Virginia Tech Catawba Sustainability Center for advanced silvopasture training that goes beyond the basics. This design-intensive course will share the latest research, technical resources, and real-life silvopasture examples. Learn from experienced farmers and natural resource professionals and engage in hands-on design activities to put your learning into practice. This training will help you better support landowners with silvopasture technical assistance. An introductory online silvopasture course, or participation in last year's Silvopasture Fundamentals training, is a required prerequisite. Lunch is provided both days. More information is available in the attached flyer and on our website. Register soon to secure your space.

October 26, 8am - 3pm: 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.

November

November 3, 2pm –6pm: Annual WNC Medicinal Herb Growers Grower Buyer Event (Mills River, NC)

Join the WNC Medicinal Herb Growers for their 8th Annual Grower & Buyer Social at the Mountain Horticultural Crops Research & Extension Center in Mills River, NC. Network with regional growers, attend buyer presentations, and get sourcing updates. Share samples of herbs and planting stock in this engaging event. Register today for \$12. For more information, contact margaret_bloomquist@ncsu.edu.

November 4, 9:30am – 11:30am: Balanced Living with Diabetes Program (Petersburg, VA)

Join us for the *Balanced Living with Diabetes* program, starting Monday, November 4th, at the VSU Wilder Building Demo Kitchen. This 6-week program is designed to help individuals with Type 2 diabetes take control of their health through better food choices, increased activity, and effective blood sugar management.

November 13-15: Mid-Atlantic Farmers Market Conference (Richmond, VA)

Join us at the Doubletree by Hilton in Richmond, Virginia, for the 2024 Mid-Atlantic Farmers Market Conference! This 3-day event will bring together farmers, market managers, agriculture policymakers, and community partners to explore the latest in farms, food access, small business, healthy communities, and farmers markets. This year’s conference offers targeted workshops and opportunities with three tracks for New Market Managers, Experienced Market Managers, and Vendors.

Winter

January 10-12: 25th Annual Virginia Biological Farming Conference! (Roanoke, VA)

We are excited to announce new sponsorship opportunities for the Virginia Biological Farming Conference, including the Taste of Virginia Expo & Market Sponsor, Tote Bag Sponsor, and our Demonstration Add-On. Sponsors will enjoy enhanced benefits and recognition through our extensive promotional channels. Held January 10-12, 2025, at The Hotel Roanoke and Conference Center. Proposals for both Pre-Conference Workshops and Conference Sessions are due by August 29, 2024.

February 22, 2025: Landowner Woods & Wildlife Conferences (Blacksburg & Culpeper, VA)

Join fellow landowners, natural resource professionals, and outdoor enthusiasts for the 2025 *Landowner Woods & Wildlife Conferences* on February 22nd. These day-long tours will explore sustainable forestry and wildlife management practices across private, public, and industry-owned lands.

Locations:

- Squires Student Center, Virginia Tech, Southwest Virginia - Blacksburg
- Daniel Technology Center, Germanna Community College, Northern Virginia - Culpeper

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