



Newsblast

July 9, 2024

Photo from Unsplash

A Message from VBFRC

Hello everyone! We hope you are staying cool in the heat of the summer. 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

The Fauquier Education Farm is offering two workshops this July!

July 16, 6:00-8:00 pm: Growing Cut Flowers for the Market

In this workshop, you will tour the Education Farm's cut flowers while discussing some varieties and growing techniques that can help you enter this lucrative market. Ashley Butler from Butler Farm will be on hand to share her experience as a budding flower farmer since she went through our Beginning Farmer Program a few years ago. (See their [flyer](#) for more information)

July 25, 6-8:00 pm: Tomato vs. Tomato

Join the Fauquier Education Farm for an in-person workshop on tomato varieties and growing techniques. This workshop will cover important topics such as determinate vs. indeterminate, heirloom vs. hybrid, suckering, blossom end rot, and the Florida weave. Learn what these terms mean and see practical demonstrations to help you improve your tomato growing skills. (See their [flyer](#) for more information)

Note: Green underlined text is a link

Announcements

Virginia SARE State Program Assistant Position

Virginia Tech's School of Plant and Environmental Sciences (SPES) seeks a full-time Virginia SARE State Program Assistant. This role supports educational programming for the Virginia SARE professional development program and the Small Farm Outreach Program in the Shenandoah Valley. Responsibilities include building capacity for Extension and USDA professionals and providing research-based programs to small and socially disadvantaged farmers. This 12-month position offers benefits, with a salary based on education and experience. For more information, contact SPES at Virginia Tech.

Cows for Sale in Frederick County

Beef Cattle farmers in Frederick County are selling downsizing our herd due to wanting to retire from farming. They have approximately 25 to 30 younger cows from 2 to 6 years old, mainly Angus with Hereford mixed in. They are calm with good dispositions. The farmers prefer to find them a home versus taking them to the stock sale and are willing to work out a payment plan if they are going to good home. Please email Nancy Jenkins at njenkins2418@outlook.com for more information.

Livestock Working Group Survey

Join the Alliance to Advance Climate-Smart Agriculture, a pilot project led by Virginia Tech and supported by USDA's Partnerships for Climate-Smart Commodities. The Livestock Working Group is distributing \$4M in cost-share funding to support climate-smart practices on Animal Feeding Operations. Producers are invited to complete a survey to help tailor the program and inform future cost-share initiatives. The survey is open through July 15, 2024, and takes about 15 minutes to complete. For more information, contact Jillian Hammond at jillianbh@vt.edu. Access the survey at [this link](#).

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

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! July 9, August 14, September 17, October 8. Contact Erin Small for more information (804)-556-5841.

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! July 18, August 13, September 19, October 15. Contact Erin Small for more information (804)-556-5841.

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.

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

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

Ask An Agroforestry Winter Series

Appalachian Sustainable Development's multi-part "Ask An Agroforester" webinar series provides a deep dive into detailed information about specific Agroforestry topics. This series is brought to you by ASD's Agroforestry team and our partners, who work to help farmers adopt agroforestry practices that support both conservation and specialty crop production. The ASD Agroforestry team also operates an Herb Hub in Duffield, VA, that provides training, processing facilities, on-farm technical assistance, and marketing support for herb growers.

Agroforestry Farm Tour Series

The Appalachian Sustainable Development program offers an annual series of Agroforestry Farm Tours. These tours provide an opportunity to visit active farms, learn about diverse farming practices, and foster community among those interested in sustainable agriculture. Registration details will be available on the ASD website.

- May 31 - Appalachian Cove Forest Farm, Duffield, VA (9:30 a.m. - 12:00 p.m.)
- June 27 - Shade Tree Valley, Broadway, VA (10:00 a.m. - 12:00 p.m.)
- July 17 - Laurel Fork Sapsuckers, Hightown, VA (1:00 p.m. - 3:00 p.m.)
- September 18 - Willow Run, Harrisonburg, VA (10:00 a.m. - 12:00 p.m.)

4 the Soil Highlights



Episode 24-13: Artful, Healthy Grains and Bread with Nicolas Melas of Mill Song Bakery Pt. I

Nicolas "Nico" Melas of Mill Song Bakery is a thought leader within Virginia's regional food systems and a catalyst with the expanding Common Grain Alliance. Nico and his family, along with a growing network of farmers, millers, bakers, and food businesses in Virginia and the greater Mid-Atlantic Region, are working through artful farming, milling, and baking to seed and feed a strong, resilient, diverse localized food grain economy. Jeff Ishee and Eric Bendfeldt talk with Nico about his journey in farming and baking and how healthy grains and bread benefit soil health, water quality, food security, and community nutrition.

Episode 24 - 14: A Farmer's Approach to Artisanal Baking with Nicolas Melas of Mill Song Bakery Pt. II

To know where our food comes from, we are encouraged to know the farmer who grew our food. Nicolas "Nico" Melas of Mill Song Bakery approaches his craft as a farmer-miller-baker in the tradition of the artisans he apprenticed to in France. Nico emphasizes that you should know your local baker to fully understand and appreciate the quality of wheat and other grains. Nico reflects on how the growing, sourcing, processing, milling, fermenting, and mixing of grain and flour all play a role in the artisanal baking process. For Nico, flavor and health go together; and bread needs to smell and taste like freshly milled grain.

4 the Soil Blog

Check out the latest 4 the Soil blog!

July

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 16, 6–8:00 p.m., Growing Cut Flowers for the Market, Fauquier Education Farm (Warrenton, VA)

Join the Fauquier Education Farm for a workshop on growing cut flowers for the market. Cut flowers can be an excellent crop for new farmers and serious gardeners as they don't require a lot of special equipment and can be very marketable. In this workshop, we'll tour the Education Farm's cut flowers while discussing some varieties and growing techniques that can help you enter this lucrative market. Ashley Butler from Butler Farm will be on hand to share her experience as a budding flower farmer since she went through our Beginning Farmer Program a few years ago.

July 23-24: Opportunities in Agriculture for a Thriving Chesapeake Bay Watershed Beyond 2025 (Stevensville, MD)

Join leading agricultural scientists and experts from the Chesapeake Bay Watershed to discuss advances in nutrient management and soil health, economic incentives for conservation practice adoption, nutrient flows across the supply chain, local food markets, and agricultural land preservation. Through interactive discussions, scientists will share their recommendations based on decades of research to sustain thriving agriculture and a healthy Chesapeake Bay. Recommendations will be shared with the Chesapeake Bay Beyond 2025 Steering Committee to inform post-2025 efforts.

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, 6–8:00 pm: Tomato vs. Tomato, Fauquier Education Farm (Warrenton, VA)

Join the Fauquier Education Farm for an in-person workshop on tomato varieties and growing techniques. This workshop will cover important topics such as determinate vs. indeterminate, heirloom vs. hybrid, suckering, blossom end rot, and the Florida weave. Learn what these terms mean and see practical demonstrations to help you improve your tomato growing skills.

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 damage 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 19, 7:30 am–4:30 pm: Cotton, Inc. Tour, VSU Randolph Farm Pavilion (Petersburg, VA)

Join the Small Farm Outreach Program for a tour of Cotton, Inc.'s international headquarters in Cary, NC. Learn about their research and innovations in fiber processing and textile manufacturing. Space is limited to 50 participants. For more information, contact VSU Randolph Farm Pavilion.

August 20, 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.

August 21, 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.

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.

August 28, 9:00–1:00 pm: What is Heirs Property (Petersburg, 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.

August 29, 7:30 a.m.–12:00 pm: VSU College of Agriculture Field Day (Ettrick, VA)

Join us for "A Taste of Randolph Farm" at the VSU College of Agriculture Field Day. Discover diverse and innovative programs in food, agriculture, natural resources, family, youth, nutrition, and community engagement. Meet faculty, researchers, students, Extension specialists, and community members, including small farmers and industry partners. Enjoy hands-on activities and taste Randolph Farm's produce and meats prepared by culinary experts. Registration opens soon at:

<https://www.ext.vsu.edu/events>

August 30, 6:00–8:00 pm: Farm and Farm Equipment Safety (Warrenton, VA)

Join us for a workshop on farm and farm equipment safety. Learn about practices to remain safe on the farm, conduct pre-operational safety checks, operate equipment on rough terrain, and use personal protection equipment. Additional resources will be available. For more information, contact VCE Fauquier Office.

Fall

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

Join the Virginia Department of Forestry and Virginia Cooperative Extension for a Landowner Retreat in Southeast Virginia. This retreat will provide information on hardwood and pine forest management, legacy planning, management planning, and more. It combines classroom instruction, field trips, and hands-on activities to teach concepts of sustainable woodland and wildlife management. For more information, contact the Virginia Department of Forestry or Virginia Cooperative Extension.

September 20-21: Beginning Woodland Owner Retreat (Providence Forage, 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.

November 3, 2:00 –6:00 pm: 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.

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, 202

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.