



Newsblast

April 2nd, 2025

Photo by Alexa Accuardi

A Message from VBFRC

Spring into Action!

As the days grow warmer, this month's NewsBlast blossoms with fresh opportunities, engaging events, career-enhancing workshops, and valuable resources crafted to help you flourish in your agricultural journey.

Wishing you a vibrant and rewarding month ahead!

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

You're Invited to Discover Local Food Innovation!

Field Trip to the
Carver Food Enterprise Center
April 28, 2025 | 10:00am - 12:00pm

Discover and engage with local food innovation at the Carver Food Enterprise Center! Tour the facility, gain hands-on kitchen experience, and connect with fellow food advocates.

A shuttle service will be available from Harrisonburg. Don't miss this chance to connect, learn, and engage with the local food community

Join us in Rapidan, VA!

[Register here](#) .

Note: Green underlined text is a link

Announcements

Producers Still Have Time to Respond to the 2024 Census of Horticultural Specialties

USDA's National Agricultural Statistics Service (NASS) is continuing to conduct the 2024 Census of Horticultural Specialties through April 18. This census helps growers shape the future of their industry by informing advocacy, program development, and technological advancements. Participation ensures accurate data collection that supports producers, associations, and policymakers over the next five years. To access past data or complete the survey, visit nass.usda.gov/go/hort. Final results will be released December 16, 2025. Help spread the word and encourage participation today!

Repeal of Virginia's Spotted Lanternfly Quarantine

Effective March 27, 2025, the Virginia Spotted Lanternfly Quarantine has officially been repealed. This action removes all regulatory requirements for intrastate movement of the spotted lanternfly or associated articles within Virginia. However, businesses must still comply with regulations from other states or countries when shipping potentially infested products across borders. Originally established in 2019 to contain the spread in Frederick County and the City of Winchester, the quarantine expanded over time to 12 counties and 10 cities. With spotted lanternfly populations now confirmed in 67 localities across Virginia, the Virginia Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services (VDACS) determined the quarantine is no longer effective. Businesses may still need permits, compliance agreements, or phytosanitary certificates for interstate commerce. For more information contact the VDACS Office of Plant Industry Services at (804) 786-3515.

Now Hiring: Coalition Assistant Coordinator – Virginia Soil Health Coalition

Virginia Tech is seeking an Education and Outreach Specialist to support the Virginia Soil Health Coalition. This role involves coordinating partnerships, managing communications, and leading outreach and education initiatives that promote soil health across the state. Responsibilities include organizing coalition meetings and events, creating content, and engaging farmers, conservation professionals, landowners, and policymakers. Ideal candidates will bring strong communication and project coordination skills, along with a passion for sustainable agriculture and natural resource conservation. The position is based in Virginia with flexible work location options and is currently funded for two years. Continuation of the position thereafter will be contingent upon performance and funding.

James River Buffer Program – Free Riparian Forest Buffers for Farmers

If your farm is located within the James River watershed, you may be eligible for a free riparian forest buffer to improve water quality, enhance wildlife habitat, and support farm biodiversity. The James River Association, Virginia Department of Forestry, and Chesapeake Bay Foundation are partnering with farmers and landowners to design, install, and maintain forest buffers for three years at no cost. The program allows you to select tree species, including income-generating options like sugar maple for syrup production. Learn more and get involved today!

Farm Crew (Seasonal) – Glade Road Growing

Glade Road Growing, a Certified Naturally Grown farm in Blacksburg, is hiring seasonal farm crew members to assist with vegetable production, pasture-raised pork and poultry, and farm stand operations. No agricultural experience is required—just a positive attitude, strong work ethic, and willingness to learn. Candidates must be physically fit, adaptable, reliable, and able to lift 40 lbs. Benefits

include free produce, homemade lunches (M-F), discounted farm meats, and meal discounts at Rising Silo Brewery.

Farm Manager – Allegheny Mountain Institute (Highland County, VA)

Allegheny Mountain Institute (AMI) is hiring a full-time, seasonal Farm Manager to oversee day-to-day farm operations at Allegheny Farm from April to October. This role is ideal for a passionate organic market farmer with experience in agro-ecology, regenerative farming, and community-based food systems. Responsibilities include vegetable production, facilities maintenance, team leadership, and supporting workshops and retreats. Candidates should have strong leadership, organizational, and mentoring skills, along with a deep commitment to sustainable agriculture. Evening and weekend work may be required.

Adopt an Established Market Garden Near Charlottesville!

A rare opportunity awaits an experienced grower/entrepreneur to take over an established ¼-acre market garden—without land or major infrastructure costs! This unique arrangement allows the tenant farmer to grow and sell rent-free, retaining most of the net profits, with the goal of ensuring the garden’s long-term sustainability. Key Features: Organic/regenerative practices required, including no/low-till methods, Fenced plot with irrigation in place, Well-established beds ready for cultivation, Ideal for a dedicated farmer looking to expand or establish their own market garden operation. If interested, please contact John Murphy at resolutionfarms@gmail.com.

Wholesale Market Producer Survey: Now Open (Online)

Black, Hispanic, and Tribal farmers and ranchers are invited to share their wholesale needs and experiences by participating in this important survey. Conducted by researchers from Virginia Tech and the Illinois Institute of Technology, this project aims to understand the distinct technical assistance needs of producers when accessing and scaling into wholesale markets. For more information or assistance, please contact Pratyoosh Kashyap at pratyoosh@vt.edu or Weslyne Ashton at washton@iit.edu.

We Want Your Feedback on the Virginia Quality Assured (VQA) Program!

Your input is vital to strengthening the Virginia Quality Assured (VQA) Program. Whether you currently sell through the program or not, your feedback will help shape its future and ensure it meets the needs of Virginia’s beef producers.

Series

April 1, 2025, 9:00AM – 2:30PM: Beginning Farm Finance and Conservation Seminar (Danville, VA)

Hosted by the Virginia Secretary of Agriculture and Forestry, this free seminar at the Institute for Advanced Learning and Research will help beginning farmers explore financing options and cost-share conservation programs. Presentations will feature experts from Farm Credit of the Virginias, First Bank & Trust, the Bank of Charlotte County, USDA-FSA, USDA-NRCS, Virginia Cooperative Extension, and Soil & Water Conservation Districts. Free lunch is provided for all attendees

2025 Orchard Meetings: In-Season Updates for Tree Fruit Growers

Join Virginia Cooperative Extension for the 2025 Orchard Meeting Series, featuring timely, in-person updates on tree fruit IPM, pest management, horticulture, and production practices. Meetings are held at orchards across Virginia with expert speakers, hands-on insights, and lunch provided. Free to attend, but RSVP is required from the hosting agent.

- Tuesday, April 1, 2025 – Carter Mountain Orchard (Charlottesville, VA)
- Tuesday, April 8, 2025 – FT Valley Farm & Mont Medi (Sperryville, VA)
- Tuesday, April 15, 2025 – Alson H. Smith, Jr. AREC (Winchester, VA)
- Tuesday, April 22, 2025 – Dickie Brothers Orchard (Roseland, VA)
- Tuesday, April 29, 2025 – Whitacre Family Farms (Cross Junction, VA)

April 3, 6:30PM – 8:00PM: Mid-Atlantic Farmer Forum: Updates, Insights & Conversations on Farm Policy and Funding (Virtual)

Join the American Farmland Trust and the Virginia Soil Health Coalition for a virtual, informal farmer forum to share updates on federal farm policy and funding. The forum will feature speakers from the farming community and federal partners, providing insights into current policy changes and funding opportunities. Farmers and agricultural professionals are encouraged to participate, share experiences, and ask questions.

Virtual Listening Sessions on Agrivoltaics in the Tobacco Commission Region (Online)

Join researchers and stakeholders for two virtual listening sessions exploring agrivoltaics—solar energy generation paired with agricultural production—in the Tobacco Commission region. These sessions aim to gather input, discuss opportunities, and address questions from community members and producers interested in this emerging area of innovation.

- **Friday, April 11, 2025 – 10:00–11:30 AM**
- **Wednesday, April 16, 2025 – 10:00–11:30 AM**

Backyard Poultry Zoom Series: Now Open for Registration (Online)

Join us for this engaging Zoom series on backyard poultry care and management. Each session is free and will be held from 9:00 AM – 3:00 PM ET.

- Thursday, April 17, 2025: Humane Handling and Biosecurity
- Thursday, May 8, 2025: Going to the Market: Regulations & More

Center for Food Systems and Community Transformation Spring 2025 Fellows Speaker Series (Online)

Join the *Center for Food Systems and Community Transformation* for the Spring 2025 Fellows Speaker Series, featuring experts discussing key topics in food systems, sustainability, and community resilience. Each session will provide insights from research, practice, and lived experiences in food and agricultural systems. If you are an individual with a disability and desire accommodation, please contact Lia Kelinsky-Jones at kellyjones@vt.edu or (540) 231-1534 during regular business hours at least 10 days prior to the event. Upcoming Sessions:

- April 23, 2pm – 3pm ET
Indigenous Climate-Food-Health Nexus: Insights from Community-Engaged Research in the Global North and South. Register: tinyurl.com/CFSTAPRSERIES2025
- May 29, 3pm – 4pm ET
Revisiting UVA's BIPOC Procurement Initiative: Successes, Challenges, and Opportunities to Wholesale Acquisition Register: tinyurl.com/CFSTMAYSERIES2025

4 the Soil Highlights



Episode S5 - E5: Hands-On Community Agriculture Work with Nicole Shuman (Podcast Part 1)

In this episode of *4 The Soil: A Conversation*, Nicole Shuman, a community agriculturalist with Henrico County Public Schools, shares how hands-on education connects students with soil health and sustainable agriculture. Nicole discusses her journey into agricultural education and her current work at Cornerstone Farm at Fairfield Middle School, where students engage in experiential learning through real-life activities like the Soil Your Undies experiment. Tune in as she joins Mary, Jeff, and Eric to explore how community agriculture programs build student awareness, promote stewardship, and bring learning to life outdoors.

Episode S5 - E6: Education First and Foremost with Nicole Shuman (Podcast Part 2)

In Part 2 of *4 The Soil: A Conversation* with Nicole Shuman, she emphasizes education as the foundation of her work at Cornerstone Farm, located at Fairfield Middle School in Henrico County, VA. As a community agriculturalist and educator, Nicole shares how the farm operates as both a learning environment and a food production site, helping students and the school community understand where food comes from and how to grow it sustainably. This episode dives into service learning, environmental stewardship, and the role of school farms in supporting nutrition and community connection. Tune in to hear how Cornerstone Farm cultivates hands-on learning and empowers youth through agriculture.

4 the Soil Blog

Check out the latest 4 the Soil blog!

April

April 1, 9:00am – 2:30pm: Beginning Farm Finance and Conservation Seminar (Danville, VA)

Join the VA Secretary of Agriculture and Forestry for a free seminar designed for beginning farmers to explore farm financing options and cost-share conservation opportunities. This event provides valuable resources and networking opportunities, with free lunch provided by sponsors.

April 2, 10:00AM: Handling Medical Emergencies on the Farm (South Hill, VA)

Join the Lake Gaston 911 Task Force for a 2-hour on-farm medical workshop focused on emergency preparedness. This session will cover CPR, AED use, and basic First Aid skills tailored for farming environments. Participants will learn how to respond effectively to medical emergencies until professional help arrives, with opportunities for hands-on practice.

April 2, 11:15AM – 12:15PM: From Phenol to PFAS – Managing Municipal Water’s Industrial Terroir (Blacksburg, VA)

Join Christy Spackman for an engaging discussion on how terroir—typically applied to food—relates to municipal water production and the impact of science and technology on sensory experiences. This talk explores how industrial processes have shaped the taste of tap water from the 20th century to today. The talk is on April 2, from 11:15am-12:15pm in the Newman Library, Rm. 207A. For disability accommodation, contact Anna Zeide (zeide@vt.edu) at least 10 business days prior to the event.

April 3, 9:00AM – 11:30AM: Precision Agriculture for Farmers (Ettrick, VA)

This workshop is tailored for new and beginning farmers interested in adopting precision agriculture techniques. Participants will learn how precision practices can enhance yield consistency and profitability without additional input. The session will also cover the environmental benefits of these practices and provide guidance on implementation strategies.

April 3, 6:30PM – 8:00PM: Mid-Atlantic Farmer Forum – Updates, Insights & Conversations on Farm Policy and Funding (Virtual)

American Farmland Trust and the Virginia Soil Health Coalition are hosting a virtual informal farmer forum to explore the evolving federal farm program and funding landscape. The forum will include updates from farmers and federal partners, covering recent policy changes, available resources, and funding opportunities. This is a chance for agricultural professionals to share experiences, ask questions, and build community.

April 3 – May 8, Thursdays 7:00 – 9:00PM: Introduction to Getting Your Hands Dirty – Beginning Farmer Course (Warrenton, VA)

Join the Northern Piedmont Beginning Farmer Program (NPBFP) for a 6-week classroom lecture course covering the basics of vegetable and flower crop production. This course is ideal for home gardeners and aspiring commercial farmers, with topics including soil science, crop selection, pest and weed control, and farm infrastructure. A Saturday hands-on lab will take place on May 3, 1:00 – 3:00PM at the Fauquier Education Farm. For more information, contact Jim Hankins at fauquieredfarm@gmail.com

April 4–6, 9:00AM – 3:00PM: 6th Annual Virginia Urban Agriculture Summit (Richmond, VA)

The Virginia Urban Agriculture Summit brings together 100+ urban farmers, gardeners, food advocates, policymakers, and government leaders for three days of networking and learning about one of agriculture’s fastest-growing sectors. Taking place at the Delta Hotel, 555 E Canal St., Richmond, VA, this

summit provides a platform to explore the future of urban farming, food systems, and policy development. For more information, contact Dr. Leonard Githinji at lgithinji@vsu.edu

April 8, 11:00AM: Ag Tech and Other Keys to Economic and Physical/Mental Wellness (Suffolk, VA)

Join Virginia Cooperative Extension in Suffolk, VA, for an interactive workshop exploring the intersection of ag technology and farmer wellness. This session will highlight holistic wellness strategies for farmers while introducing the Agroclimate Viewer and Planner App—a free tool that helps forecast weather, determine soil pH, and support decision-making. The workshop focuses on how digital tools can enhance economic outcomes and promote both physical and mental well-being

April 8th-10th, Lexington, Environment Virginia Symposium

The 35th Annual Environment Virginia Symposium is the Commonwealth's premier environmental conference which brings together environmental professionals throughout Virginia from all sectors: government, non-profits, academia, and industry. Their joint efforts create better results for our environment, for our state and region.

April 9, 9:00AM – 12:30PM: Technology, Economy, and Wellness Workshop for Farmers and Extension Agents (Suffolk, VA)

Virginia Tech's Digital Ag Technologies Lab and Virginia State University's Small Farm Outreach Program invite farmers and extension agents to a hands-on workshop at the Tidewater AREC, 6321 Holland Road, Suffolk, VA. Topics include ag tech tools like the Agroclimate Viewer, economic and financial empowerment strategies, holistic wellness for farmers, and precision weed management. Presenters include Abhilash Chandel, Kurt Spragin, Kesha Cobb, Tabitha Bugg, Shourish Chakravarty, and Vijay Singh.

April 9, 10:00AM – 3:00PM: Agribusiness Producer Meeting (Rockingham, VA)

Join Virginia Cooperative Extension and the VT Agricultural & Applied Economics Department for an interactive producer meeting at the SVEC Building, 180 Oakwood Dr., Rockingham, VA. This session will cover key topics like conservation easements, carbon credits, farm financial record keeping, enterprise budgets, and more. The program is designed to help farmers and landowners strengthen their agribusiness practices. Entry is \$5 at the door or through your local extension office. Contact Jeremy Daubert at 540-564-3080 for more details or to RSVP at least five days in advance.

April 9, 2025, 1:00PM – 2:00PM: Attitudes About Solar Development on Virginia Farmland (Webinar)

Join the VA Solar Survey team for a webinar exploring public perceptions, challenges, and opportunities related to solar energy development on Virginia farmland. This session will share new insights and data gathered across the state, offering an important conversation for those engaged in renewable energy, agriculture, and land use planning in the Mid-Atlantic.

April 10, 2025, 5:00PM – 7:00PM: Tomato Grafting Workshop (Petersburg, VA)

Join Virginia State University at Randolph Farm for a hands-on Tomato Grafting Workshop led by Dan Gagnon of Broadfork Farm. Learn how tomato plant grafting can improve yields and manage soil diseases in both field and high tunnel systems. The session will include a presentation featuring grafting techniques used at Broadfork Farm, along with practical experience using the tools and materials required for grafting and healing tomato plants.

April 10, 2025, 6:00PM – 8:00PM: Shenandoah Valley Young Farmers Coalition Farm Tour (Harrisonburg, VA)

Join fellow young farmers for a farm tour and networking event at The Farm at Willow Run. This gathering brings together producers from across the Shenandoah Valley to share experiences, explore innovative farming practices, and build connections within the agricultural community. Hosted in partnership with the Young Farmers Coalition, this bimonthly series aims to support and inspire the next generation of farmers.

April 12, 12:00PM – 5:00PM: Reclaiming Our Roots – Amplifying Indigenous Women’s Voices (Roanoke, VA)

Hosted at the Historic Fishburn Mansion, this free public event centers Indigenous women’s voices and food traditions in Virginia. Through presentations, first-foods cooking demonstrations, and a seed exchange, participants will explore the sacredness of food, heritage, and cultural knowledge. Attendees will learn about the foodways of the Monacan people, sample culturally significant dishes, and engage in hands-on food activities. To register, visit tinyurl.com/nativefoodways. For questions, contact the Roanoke Foodshed Network and LEAP.

April 15, 2025, 9:00AM – 11:00AM: Small Farm Orientation Workshop for New Farmers (Virtual)

This free two-hour virtual workshop is designed for beginning farmers with 0–5 years of experience. Hosted by the VSU Small Farm Outreach Program, the session will guide participants through the steps to develop a productive and profitable farm business. Presenters include Ben Dukes and Derrick Gooden, regional program assistants, and Dr. Nartea, extension specialist with VSU’s Integrated Marketing Program. Attendees will receive a Small Farm Orientation manual as part of the course.

April 15, 2025, 5:30PM – 9:00PM: Planting Seeds for Your Farm’s Financial Future (Independence, VA)

Join Dr. Alex White from the Virginia Tech School of Animal Science for an evening workshop focused on strengthening your farm’s financial future. Topics include whether to expand your operation, how to minimize taxes, retirement planning, improving your family’s quality of life, and making informed decisions about the future of your farm. This session will offer practical advice and insight to help farmers plan with confidence.

April 16, 2025, 9:00AM – 11:30AM: Irrigation and Soil Moisture Management Workshop (Ettrick, VA)

Boost your farm’s productivity by learning practical irrigation strategies at this in-person workshop in Ettrick, VA. The session will cover when irrigation is beneficial, how to avoid overwatering, and ways to monitor soil moisture effectively. Participants will gain tools and insights to reduce stress on crops, conserve water, and avoid waste-related issues—ultimately improving yields and farm efficiency.

April 17, 2025, 6:30PM – 8:00PM: Diversifying Streams of Income on the Farm (Virtual)

Join Michael Carter Jr. of Carter Farms and Africulture for a dynamic online session on how farmers can boost revenue beyond traditional practices. This webinar explores unconventional farm products, the power of soft skills, and how to maintain income through slower winter months. Learn creative strategies to diversify your farm’s income and expand its potential year-round.

April 21, 2025, 3:00PM – 4:00PM: Farm Aid Overview (Virtual)

Learn how Farm Aid supports family farmers across the country in this informative virtual session. Since 1985, Farm Aid has worked to defend and bolster family farm-centered agriculture through fair farm policy advocacy, grassroots organizing, and direct support services. This session will cover how Farm Aid connects farmers with essential resources, from accessing new markets and adopting sustainable practices to navigating natural disasters and financial crises.

April 22, 2025, 8:30AM – 4:00PM: 16th Annual Virginia Conference on Agricultural Trade (Richmond, VA)

Join agricultural leaders and policymakers at the Richmond Marriott for the 16th Annual Virginia Conference on Agricultural Trade. This high-profile event features expert panels and speakers discussing current challenges and opportunities in global agricultural and forestry exports. Co-hosted by the Virginia Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services, Virginia Farm Bureau Federation, The Port of Virginia, and Virginia Tech's Department of Agricultural and Applied Economics.

April 22, 2025, 10:00AM – 12:30PM: Obtaining Loans for Farmers Workshop (South Hill, VA)

Beginning farmers seeking financing for land or equipment are invited to this in-person workshop hosted by Colonial Farm Credit. With over 100 years of experience supporting farm operations, representatives Dwight Dean and Sara Meadows will guide attendees through the loan application process and share expert insights on securing funding to launch or grow a farm business.

April 23, 2025, 11:00AM – 2:00PM: Agribusiness Workshop (Martinsville, VA)

Join the Tennie Agriculture Group at the New College Institute for a hands-on workshop tailored to the financial needs of farmers, ranchers, and urban growers. This session will cover tax compliance, understanding Schedule F, selecting the right business entity, and building financial literacy. Designed to support sustainability, scalability, and profitability, this workshop is especially valuable for farmers, veterans, and agribusiness professionals.

April 23, 2:00 – 3:00PM ET: Indigenous-Led Research on Climate, Food Systems, and Health (Online – Zoom)

Join CFSCT April Fellows Series and Dr. Eranga Galappaththi for a discussion on three international collaborative projects engaging Indigenous communities in Sri Lanka and the Canadian Arctic to address climate change, food systems, and health challenges. This talk highlights the importance of community-driven research and explores how local experiences can inform broader policy frameworks. Offered online via Zoom (registration required).

April 24, 2025, 10:00AM – 12:00PM: Introduction to Strawberry Production (Petersburg, VA)

Learn how to grow strawberries as a profitable commercial crop in this in-person workshop at VSU Randolph Farm. Strawberries offer an excellent opportunity to diversify farm income and attract customers. The session will cover key topics including variety selection, field preparation, and crop production techniques to help you get started or enhance your strawberry enterprise.

April 24, 2025, 1:00PM – 3:00PM: Perennial Garden Planning Workshop (Natural Bridge, VA)

Join Virginia Gold at their farm in Natural Bridge to explore the transition from annual to perennial fruit and flower production. This hands-on session will cover the benefits, challenges, and planning strategies needed to successfully integrate perennials into your farm operation. Learn how Virginia Gold is transforming two acres of annual cut flowers into a diverse, agritourism-friendly mix of perennials and small fruits as part of a Pick-Your-Own experience. This workshop is ideal for growers interested in long-term sustainability and market diversification.

April 25, 2025, 6:30AM – 4:00PM: Bus Trip to 2nd Annual ENCFC Agricultural Expo (Departs from Petersburg, VA)

Join Virginia State University for a group trip to the 2nd Annual ENCFC Agricultural Expo in Wilson, NC. Departing from Randolph Farm in Petersburg at 6:30AM, this one-day expo will highlight sustainable farming practices with a focus on soil health, year-round production, animal care, value-added crops,

and farmer resources. The event includes hands-on sessions and expert-led discussions aimed at boosting farm resilience and productivity. Space is limited to 55 participants.

April 28, 2025, 8:30AM – 3:00PM: Beginning Beekeeping Workshop (Petersburg, VA)

Interested in starting your beekeeping journey? Join Virginia State University at Randolph Farm for a full day Beginning Beekeeping Workshop with Virginia State Apiarist Keith Tignor. This hands-on class will cover bee biology, hive management, equipment essentials, and best practices for keeping a healthy and productive colony. The afternoon session will include live demonstrations in the apiary, hive construction, and beekeeping tool usage.

April 28, 2025, 10:00AM – 12:00PM: Field Trip to the Carver Food Enterprise Center (Rapidan, VA)

Farmers and food advocates from the Shenandoah Valley are invited to tour the Carver Food Enterprise Center in Culpeper, VA. This event includes a guided facility tour, a presentation on the center's development, and a hands-on opportunity to use the commercial kitchen to create a product to take home. Transportation from Harrisonburg is available upon request.

April 29, 9:00AM - 3:00PM: Grow More Training for Outreach Professionals (Staunton, VA)

The Virginia Soil Health Coalition invites outreach professionals to a full day Grow More Training at the Frontier Culture Museum in Staunton, VA. Developed by the National Wildlife Federation, this training focuses on effective messaging strategies to better engage "middle adopters" in conservation efforts. The program draws on nine years of research and practice to support meaningful outreach and behavioral change. Space is very limited so register ASAP to reserve your spot.

April 29, 2025, 5:30PM – 9:00PM: Planting Seeds for Your Farm's Financial Future (Dublin, VA)

Join Dr. Alex White from Virginia Tech's School of Animal Science for a practical workshop on improving the financial outlook of your farm operation. Topics include whether to expand your operation, minimizing taxes, retirement planning, improving family quality of life, and making difficult long-term decisions. This session offers valuable insight for any producer looking to strengthen their farm's financial future.

April 30, 2025, 9:00AM – 12:30PM: Whole Farm Planning Workshop (Petersburg, VA)

This interactive workshop at VSU Randolph Farm is designed to help beginning farmers improve profitability and sustainability through Whole Farm Planning. Participants will learn how to set clear long- and short-term goals to enhance their quality of life, both on the farm and in the community. Ideal for those in the early stages of building a resilient and purpose-driven farm operation.

April 30, 2025, 6:00PM – 8:00PM: Gardening 101 Workshop (Woodford, VA)

Kickstart your vegetable garden with confidence! This beginner-friendly Gardening 101 workshop will guide you through soil testing, garden planning, planting techniques, and natural pest management. Learn how to grow easy, family-friendly crops like lettuce, tomatoes, squash, and herbs. Perfect for new gardeners looking to grow healthy food at home.

May

May 5 - 6, 1:00 PM – 5:00 PM: Produce Safety Alliance Grower Training (Online)

Virginia fruit and vegetable farms can now access the highly discounted Produce Safety Alliance Grower Training, fulfilling the Food Safety Modernization Act Produce Safety Rule training requirement. Thanks to VDACS funding, the registration fee is currently only \$50 for Virginia farms, and participants will receive a lifetime certificate.

May 7–9: Virginia Forestry Summit (Hotel Roanoke, Roanoke, VA)

Join forestry professionals, landowners, and natural resource experts for the *Virginia Forestry Summit*, a premier event featuring discussions on forestry management, conservation, and industry trends. This three-day gathering offers educational sessions, networking opportunities, and a special Urban Forestry Tour exploring the green spaces of Roanoke and Salem.

May 9, 12:30pm – 4:30pm: Urban Forestry Tour (Roanoke, VA)

Experience an in-depth tour of Roanoke’s urban forestry efforts, including Lunch and a guided tour at the historic Fishburn Mansion, featuring insights on Missouri Gravel Beds, tree propagation, and community gardens. A visit to Virginia Western Community College, Bee Campus USA, with a guided tour of their arboretum. A stop at Sherwood Memorial Park in Salem to learn about Virginia’s Big Tree Program, see the Champion Atlas cedar, and discuss efforts to protect urban ash trees from the emerald ash borer. Registration opens in March. Contact Jennifer Gagnon, jgagnon@vt.edu, 540-231-6391 for more information.

May 29, 2025, 2:00PM – 3:00PM ET: Supporting BIPOC Farmers Through Institutional Procurement (Virtual)

Join the University of Virginia and UVA’s Sustainable Food Collaborative for a virtual discussion on how they’re increasing local procurement from BIPOC farmers. Hear from Michael Carter Jr. (Carter Farms & Africulture), Allie Berry (Aramark/UVA Dining), and Tom McDougall (4P Foods) as they share how UVA’s BIPOC Procurement Program connects minority producers with institutional buyers, supports chef-producer relationships, and educates culinary teams on sourcing and using fresh, local foods.

May 30–31: Southwest Virginia Beginning Woodland Owner Retreat (Southwest Virginia 4-H Educational Center, Abingdon, VA)

Join the Virginia Department of Forestry and Virginia Cooperative Extension for the *Beginning Woodland Owner Retreat*, designed for landowners new to forest management. This retreat provides valuable insights into both hardwood and pine forest management while offering opportunities to connect with natural resource professionals and fellow landowners. Participants will gain hands-on experience with tree identification, forestry equipment, and more, as well as receive essential information on estate planning, management planning, and certification. Agenda and registration will be available in March. Stay tuned for more details!

Summer

July 21–23, 2025: Beef Cattle University (The Inn at Virginia Tech & VT German Club, Blacksburg, VA)

We are thrilled 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.

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