



# SFOP Quarterly NEWSLETTER

WINTER | '25-26

## Message from the Director



**William  
Crutchfield**  
Director,  
Small Farm  
Outreach Program

@VSU\_AG



### Dear Small Farmers,

As winter settles in and the fields fall quiet under frost, the season can bring more than cold weather. Slower days, financial pressures, and long stretches of isolation can weigh heavily – but they don't have to overwhelm you. With a few intentional practices, winter can become a time of restoration, reflection, and renewed strength.

### Don't forget to stay connected

Reach out to fellow farmers, neighbors, and friends. A simple phone call, a shared cup of coffee, or a quick online conversation can lift your spirits and remind you that you are part of a strong community.

### Keep a Steady Routine

Daily structure helps support emotional well-being. Whether you're tending to livestock, repairing equipment, or mapping out next season's crops, a routine provides grounding and purpose.

### Manage Financial Stress Proactively

Review your budget, explore available assistance programs, or consult a financial advisor. Seeking guidance is not a sign of weakness – it's a proactive step toward stability.

### Seek Sunlight and Movement

Try to get outside during daylight hours or consider a light therapy lamp on darker days. Even small amounts of physical activity – a brisk walk, barn chores, or stretching – can boost your mood and energy.

### Talk to Someone You Trust

If you're feeling overwhelmed, speak with a friend, family member, pastor, or counselor. National resources such as Farm Aid's Farmer Resource Network and AgriSafe are also available year-round.

### Look Forward with Hope

Winter is the perfect time to learn, plan, and prepare. Consider registering for one of the many workshops offered by the Small Farm Outreach Program (SFOP). Investing in your knowledge and vision now can spark hope for brighter seasons ahead.

### Remember that you are not alone

Farming is more than work – it is devotion, heritage, and heart. While winter can test your resilience, it also offers a chance to rest and refocus. Stay connected, stay active, and remember: your well-being matters deeply.

*Stay warm, stay encouraged, and know that SFOP is here to support you – always.*

## Growing Knowledge, Growing Community: Dr. Candice Artis Revives Agriculture at Franklin High School



Dr. Candice Artis, founder of Candid Consulting, LLC, is a lifelong educator who has returned to her roots in a significant way. Now working students and staff at Franklin City Public Schools, she is weaving together her family's agricultural legacy with her passion for hands-on learning.

Raised in Southampton County, Dr. Artis grew up watching her mother sow and nurture plants, her father cultivate landscapes for his small business, and her grandparents tend a family farm. Those early lessons in patience, curiosity, and stewardship planted the seeds for the work she now champions in the classroom.

A two-time alumna of Virginia State University, Dr. Artis credits visiting Randolph Farm as a pivotal experience during her master's program. This experience opened her eyes to the vast opportunities in agricultural research. "The ways that you can combine ag science... a lot of people are just not exposed to how you can blend the nutrition aspect in too," she reflects. That moment continues to drive her mission to expand what students believe agriculture can be.

When she joined Franklin City Public Schools in July 2024 as the Science Curriculum Specialist, Dr. Artis encountered an underused hydroponics tower, a quiet greenhouse, and a high tunnel waiting for purpose. Through community alignment and creative vision, the high tunnel quickly became the centerpiece of an interdisciplinary learning initiative. She is engaging in ROTC, Culinary Arts, and other school programs to bring agriculture into everyday teaching across the building.

At the heart of the project is a simple but powerful goal: improving student mastery through real-time, hands-on learning. Complex biological concepts such as cellular respiration become far more accessible when students can see and model them through living systems. Dr. Artis also hopes that the herbs, flowers, and produce grown on-site will inspire teachers, spark student curiosity, and strengthen community pride around healthy eating and self-reliance.

Cilantro, basil, and sage are already thriving in the high tunnel, preparing for their move into the greenhouse during its grand reopening this spring. As these plants take root, so too will new opportunities for students, staff, and the wider Franklin community through the Franklin High School Greenhouse Project—a vibrant model of growth, learning, local impact.

This work is supported by VSU SFOP as part of the National Urban Agriculture grant initiative.

Dr. Candice Artis can be contacted via email:  
[cartis@fcpsva.org](mailto:cartis@fcpsva.org)

## Distressed Borrowers Assistance Network (DBAN)

James L Maclin (Jimmy) Agribusiness Grant Coordinator

The Distressed Borrowers Assistance Network is a federal initiative launched by the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) in September 2024, supported by \$30 million in funding over three years through the Inflation Reduction Act of 2022. The program is designed to provide direct support to farmers and ranchers experiencing financial distress.

### PURPOSE

To offer personalized, one-on-one guidance and technical assistance to producers navigating significant financial challenges and helping them regain stability, strengthen their operations. Also, DBAN allows for better access the full range of USDA and Farm Service Agency (FSA) programs and resources available to them.

### NETWORK

University of Arkansas, Alcorn State University and Virginia State University's Small Farm Outreach Program

DBAN operates through a national network of trained farm advocates in partnership with organizations such as Farm Aid, the Rural Advancement Foundation International (RAFI), the University of Arkansas, and Alcorn State University. Together, these partners ensure producers receive trusted, knowledgeable, and culturally competent support.

### MORE INFORMATION

USDA encourages all producers to connect with their local FSA office to fully understand the programs, services, and assistance options available to them.

For further information, contact  
 James "Jimmy" Macklin at:  
[jmacklin@vsu.edu](mailto:jmacklin@vsu.edu) / 804-731-6595



## Annual VSU Conference Uplifts Resources & Connections

by Danielle Freeman-Jefferson



Participants enjoy one of the farm excursions.

The Small Farm Outreach Program, in collaboration with Minority Landowner Magazine—celebrated its 20th anniversary with a convening of hundreds of small and urban farmers for the 2025 annual conference. The gathering served as an important touchpoint for families, entrepreneurs, beginning growers, and experienced farmers to learn, network, and strengthen community connections.

Conference highlights included the opportunity for participants to visit several local farming operations, including City Wetlands and Tidewater Mushrooms. These tours offered hands-on exposure to production strategies, conservation practices, and the diverse models that sustain Virginia's agricultural landscape.

Conference sessions were led by experts in the field including Tennie Group, Marian Dalke, and other technical specialists. These educational and engaging sessions covered a wide range of topics such as legacy land stewardship, heirs' property, marketing farm products, and developing value-added goods. Participants also engaged in networking as they exchanged resources and lived experiences throughout the conference.

After a full year of bus tours, classes, and trainings centered on whole-farm planning, the inaugural cohort of the Beginning Farmers and Ranchers Program celebrated their graduation! This program supports new producers to build confidence, capacity, and community.

- The **Star Award** was presented to **Mr. Eddie Allen** for his dedication as a CDL driver and technician for the Small Farm Outreach Program.

- **Sharon Creekmore Moseley**, a third-generation farmer, and her husband **Dion Moseley** were named *SFOP Farmers of the Year*. The honor recognizes their return to agriculture after retirement and their commitment to hands-on, traditional farming methods passed down through Sharon's family.

- **Cornell "Brick" Goldman** was also named *SFOP Farmer of the Year*. In his acceptance remarks, he underscored the importance of farmer-to-farmer mentorship, reflecting on his decision to lease land to younger farmers so they can learn, grow, and build revenue through agriculture.

- **Michael Carter, Sr.** was honored as *SFOP Program Assistant of the Year* for his outstanding technical assistance and his attentive support of producers across multiple Virginia counties.

A posthumous award was presented to **Leonard Elam**, honoring his lifetime of service and unwavering commitment to supporting small farmers in Virginia. His son accepted the award on his behalf, offering a touching tribute to his legacy.

The conference closed with a renewed sense of community and purpose. From farm tours to powerful stories of legacy and innovation, participants left energized and equipped with new tools, stronger networks, and a shared commitment to sustaining Virginia's agricultural future. As the Small Farm Outreach Program and its partners look ahead, the conference stands as a reminder of what's possible when farmers gather to learn, collaborate, and uplift one another. The stories, strategies, and relationships built this year lay the groundwork for even greater impact in seasons to come.



Inaugural cohort of the Beginning Farmer and Rancher Program celebrate their year together.

## Celebrating Indigenous Culinary Traditions

By Bryce Burrell, President, Native@VT

The second annual *Culinary Traditions Collaboration* brought together Virginia Tech and Virginia State University for an immersive exploration of Indigenous foods and agricultural knowledge. This year's workshop was led by Native Cook Joanie Beverley, an enrolled citizen of the Monacan Indian Nation and Agricultural Technician with the Upper Mattaponi Indian Tribe's Food Sovereignty Program, where she supports community wellness through food security initiatives that now serve 60 families weekly.

Through interactive discussion, Beverley introduced participants to the history, flavors, and cultural significance of Indigenous foods from a Monacan perspective. She highlighted the importance of traditional Eastern Woodland ingredients such as acorns, sunflowers, yaupon, and muscadine grapes and demonstrated how they can be adapted through contemporary culinary approaches. The workshop emphasized the ongoing relevance of Indigenous ingredients and foodways to regional and national cuisines in Virginia Indian perspective.

Attendees sampled dishes prepared with traditional ingredients, including Indigenous Zuppa Toscana, Roasted Pumpkin Soup, Sunflower Cookies with Muscadine Grape Jam, Smoked Venison with Acorn Gravy, Acorn Bites, and Bear Mountain Tea (Blackberry, Mountain Mint, Yaupon, and Maple). The tasting experience was supported by Bryce Burrell (Choctaw), PhD student in Agricultural Leadership and Community Education at Virginia Tech; Amyrose Foll (Abenaki/Penobscot), owner and manager of Virginia Free Farm; and Rachel Lawmaster, VSU's Sustainable & Urban Agriculture Youth Program Coordinator.

Beyond the culinary experience, participants learned about the ecological knowledge, cultural teachings, and preservation practices that sustain Indigenous food systems. The program also highlighted two agricultural sites dedicated to this work: Virginia Tech's Indigenous Community Garden (ICG) and VSU's Youth Demonstration and Heritage Heirloom Gardens, both of which preserve heirloom seeds, teach ancestral growing practices, and serve as community learning spaces.

The Culinary Traditions Collaboration reflects the shared commitment of VSU and Virginia Tech to uplift Indigenous culture, food sovereignty, and traditional ecological knowledge through education and partnership. As we continue to learn from Indigenous food systems, events like this honor the leadership of Tribal members in Virginia and across the country and support the continuity of their foodways.

For more information on visiting the Indigenous agricultural sites, please contact Virginia Tech's Department of Agriculture and Life Sciences or Virginia State University's College of Agriculture/Small Farm Outreach Program.



Native Cook Joanie Beverley Quote:

**"Reconnecting to traditional foods means returning to the knowledge, stories, and values that have carried our people for generations. It's a chance to learn, heal, and keep our cultural teachings alive by remembering that food is more than something we eat; it's a relationship and a way of caring for our community. Through my cooking, I want people to leave feeling inspired to explore their own connections to culture and land."**



## **Growing Knowledge: NUag Team Explores Urban Farms in Minnesota**

By Brianna Stevenson

Recently, the NUag team visited Minnesota for a “Soil Health and Water Management for Healthy Plants” workshop. While there, they learned about soil assessment techniques and irrigation systems. The visit included a guided tour of several community farms and an overview of their history and significance.

Urban Farm & Garden Alliance (UFGA) is a community organization that manages several garden sites in the Rondo and Frogtown neighborhoods of St. Paul, Minnesota. Founded in 2014 with a vision to cultivate food, peace, justice, and unity, UFGA continues to strengthen community ties through shared growing spaces. One of its sites, the Victoria Rondo Community Garden, sits in the heart of the Old Historic Rondo neighborhood across from a funeral home. The garden provides a place of reflection and remembrance while honoring community heroes such as Melvin Giles, an avid gardener, nurturer, and healer.

California Street Farm, founded in 2012, is an urban farm located in Northeast Minneapolis that produces fresh, local vegetables for the surrounding neighborhood. Elyssa, the farm manager, is committed to creating a space of belonging and learning while growing nutritious, accessible food. Soil stewardship is central to the farm’s philosophy. They follow organic growing practices, and all work is done by hand to support pollinators and limit soil disturbance—eschewing chemical pesticides and fertilizers entirely. California Street Farm operates as a for-profit business offering a CSA, market, farmstand, and a full slate of community dinners and events.

Frogtown Farm was established in 2013 as a community-led initiative stewarding 13 acres in the Frogtown neighborhood. Now a nonprofit organization, the farm partners with the city and local agencies to serve as a greenspace, recreation area, and demonstration site for sustainable agriculture.

## A Century of Transformation – Life on Virginia Farms

by Wayne Browning

Virginia is shaped by its remarkable geographic diversity, from the flat, fertile lowlands of the Coastal Plain to the rolling hills of the Piedmont and the rugged ridges of the Appalachian Mountains—has always been rooted in agriculture. For generations, farm life followed a rhythm as steady as sunrise, tied deeply to the land, the weather, and the seasons. Though the work was difficult, farming was more than labor; it was a way of life defined by care, connection, and community. It bound families together and formed the backbone of rural society.

In the 1920s, a typical Virginia farm was a family-run operation powered almost entirely by human and animal strength. Children often missed school for the harvest. Women tended gardens, preserved food, and managed household production. Entire communities functioned around planting, cultivating, and harvesting cycles. Life was intensely physical: families rose before dawn to milk cows by hand, plow fields with mules, and weed crops row by row. Electricity was rare outside towns, so evenings were spent by kerosene lamplight mending tools, shelling beans, or preparing for the next day. Social life revolved around churches, Sunday dinners, barn raisings, market days, and seasonal traditions like walnut and chestnut gathering.

Fast forward a century, and the transformation across Virginia is nothing short of dramatic. Farming remains the Commonwealth's largest private industry, yet the number of farms has dropped by nearly 80%, falling from about 197,000 in 1935 to just under 39,000 in 2022. The daily reality of farming has been reshaped: tractors have replaced mules, GPS guides planting, sensors monitor soil and crops, and many producers now hold off-farm jobs while managing operations through smartphones and digital platforms. These sweeping changes reflect broader forces—mechanization, economic pressures, scientific advances, shifting markets, and demographic changes associated with aging populations and evolving social priorities. And while these trends are statewide, they have unfolded differently across Virginia's distinct physiographic provinces, each shaped by its unique geology, climate, soil, and topography.

Before diving into how these changes played out in each region, it is helpful to first explore some of the statewide and national forces behind this century of transformation.

The Great Depression of the 1930s strained every part of Virginia, and the devastation was compounded in eastern counties by the boll weevil's arrival in the 1920s. The late 1930s through mid-1940s were dominated by World War II, which briefly boosted demand and improved prices for agricultural goods. However, the war drew enormous numbers of rural residents into urban-based military installations, defense industries, and factories, accelerating outmigration and draining labor from farms.

Following World War II, the changes became profound. Mechanization and consolidation redefined farming. The shift from horses and mules to tractors is one of the clearest examples: fewer than 10,000 tractors were in use statewide in 1940, but by 1960 that number exceeded 100,000. Mechanical harvesters for tobacco and combines for grains drastically reduced labor demands. The Rural Electrification Administration, established by President Franklin D. Roosevelt in 1935, brought power to rural communities throughout the 1940s; by 1953, over 90% of U.S. farms had electricity. This revolutionized daily life—ushering in refrigerators, washing machines, electric stoves, milking machines, and access to radio news and weather. Truly transformative when one considers life today without electricity.

Subsequent decades brought chemical fertilizers, pesticides, hybrid seeds, and an expanding suite of technologies. A Virginia farmer in 2025 can monitor fields with drones, use GPS-guided equipment to plant and harvest, sell directly to consumers online, and optimize inputs with satellites, soil sensors, and artificial intelligence. High tunnels and greenhouses are increasingly common, extending seasons and diversifying market offerings.

The flip side of mechanization was consolidation. As farms grew larger, small operations increasingly sold to developers or shifted into non-agricultural work. Market pressures intensified with the rise of large commercial operations and a food industry dominated by corporations producing processed and ultra-processed foods. Meanwhile, the fresh, whole foods long produced by small farmers became confined to the outer edges of supermarkets.

Now that the broader landscape has been established, we turn to how these changes shaped Virginia's central physiographic provinces.

### Coastal Plain (Tidewater)

The Coastal Plain stretches from the Fall Line eastward to the Chesapeake Bay and Atlantic Ocean. With elevations generally below 300 feet, the region is nearly flat, gently sloping toward the sea. Geologically, it formed after the breakup of Pangea 200 million years ago. Beneath its surface lie ancient igneous, metamorphic, and sedimentary rocks dipping seaward and eventually giving way to more than a mile of unconsolidated sediments—sands, silts, clays, gravels, and shells—deposited through erosion, transport, and fluctuating sea levels.

Over the last century, the Coastal Plain has undergone one of the most significant agricultural transitions in the United States. In 1925, a typical Southside farmer was a tenant working 15 acres of tobacco with a mule and a large household labor force. Peanuts, cotton, corn, and vegetables destined for northern markets dominated the region. By 2025, many Coastal Plain growers would have farmed more than 1,000 acres, producing soybeans, corn, wheat, and cotton. Thousands of small farms have been replaced by a few hundred larger, highly efficient operations averaging 400–800 acres. The number of farms has dropped from more than 60,000 in 1935 to fewer than 12,000 today. The region is also now a major poultry producer, especially on the Eastern Shore.

### Piedmont

Today's Piedmont is a peaceful, rolling landscape that conceals its dramatic geological history—once home to a mountain range rivaling the Himalayas. Only its deeply eroded roots remain beneath the hills.

Over the past century, Piedmont agriculture transitioned from small tobacco-grain-livestock farms to a diverse landscape dominated by beef cattle, hay, horses, vineyards, horticultural enterprises, and a thriving wine and tourism industry. The same red-clay soils that once grew bright-leaf tobacco now support renowned Cabernet Franc and Viognier grapes, as well as bluegrass pastures for high-value Thoroughbred horses. Cropland has given way to pasture and vines; farms are fewer, larger, and more capital-intensive; and producers increasingly sell to upscale urban markets. A Piedmont farmer from 1925 would scarcely recognize today's agricultural scene – except for the familiar red-clay hills.

### Blue Ridge and Valley & Ridge

Central and western Virginia are defined by folded and faulted mountains, where older rocks were thrust over younger ones during ancient tectonic collisions. Karst valleys sit between ridges of more resistant rock that form the state's highest peaks, including Mount Rogers at 5,729 feet. The Valley & Ridge contains both Virginia's wettest valley (Powell) and driest (Shenandoah), illustrating its environmental diversity.

A century ago, this region consisted of thousands of small, diversified farms raising dairy cattle, livestock, grains, and apples. Today, agriculture is more specialized: poultry (broilers and turkeys), beef cattle, hare sheep, grapes, Christmas trees, and emerging solar and wind operations. Agrotourism, Airbnbs, and recreational agriculture now add income to many rural communities.

### Appalachian Plateau & Appalachian Structural Front

The Appalachian Plateau contains Virginia's most rugged terrain, with narrow hollows between steep ridges. Flat agricultural land is scarce and confined to broader plateaus. Beneath this dissected topography lie gently dipping rock layers, except along the Appalachian Structural Front—also called the Cumberland Front—where folding and faulting dominate.

This region's landscape has changed more than any other due to the extraction of coal, natural gas, and timber. Once dotted with small, subsistence-based mountain farms, much of the land has been reshaped by surface mining. Many former farms have reverted to forest or been incorporated into reclaimed mine lands. Today, beef cattle remain dominant, though hare sheep and goats are on the rise. Agrovoltaics—solar arrays designed to allow grazing or nut-and-fruit tree production beneath them—represent a new and promising trend.

### Conclusion

Over the past century, Virginia's agricultural landscape has transformed in extraordinary ways. Small family farms continue to face significant challenges, and their future depends on economic resilience, environmental stewardship, community support, creative diversification, and strategies that honor the unique strengths of Virginia's natural landscapes. The Virginia State University Small Farm Outreach Program (SFOP) stands ready to support producers as they navigate these ongoing changes. Whatever the future brings, SFOP will be here to help you grow, adapt, and thrive.



## Celebrating the Leadership & Legacy of Dr. S. Janine Parker Woods

(excerpt from email sent to the College of Agriculture by Jewel Bronaugh, PhD/Interim Dean and well wishes from colleagues at the farewell celebration held in early December 2025)



The College of Agriculture proudly celebrates the remarkable leadership of Dr. S. Janine Parker Woods, Associate Dean and Associate Extension Administrator, as she transitions from Virginia State University to become the Executive Director of County Cooperative Extension for the University of California, Agriculture and Natural Resources (UC ANR). In this prestigious new role, Dr. Woods will guide Cooperative Extension efforts across the entire state of California.

During her five-year tenure at VSU, Dr. Woods transformed Cooperative Extension through her vision, courage, and unwavering commitment. Under her leadership, the Extension team expanded from nine to more than thirty professionals, strengthening the university's capacity and statewide impact. She led a strategic restructuring that improved efficiency and collaboration, and launched innovative, high-impact programs such as AgFest, the Trojan Farmers Market, the first Extension public/private partnership in Controlled Environment Agriculture and Aquaculture, the AgriCulinary Academy, the Community Health & Nutrition Hub, AgriTourism Fall Fest, and the expansion of the AgDiscovery youth program.

Through her national leadership roles, Secretary of the Association of Extension Administrators, Chair of the National Urban Extension Leaders, and Board Member of the Extension Foundation, Dr. Woods elevated VSU's visibility and strengthened partnerships across the land-grant system.

At her farewell celebration, colleagues shared heartfelt reflections that captured her profound influence. Chef Reese described Dr. Woods as "our salt"—the force that brings out the best in everyone. Dr. Nartea spoke of her lesson of "grace and space," while Nadine Jackson celebrated her warmth and authenticity. Dr. Cobb reflected on the life-changing opportunities Dr. Woods helped open for her and her family. Others—including Erica Shambley, Dr. Donaldson, Nicole Swinson, Josh Maclin, Janiyah, Kristoff Minus, and more—expressed gratitude for her boldness, creativity, and deep investment in people. They spoke of the late-night brainstorming sessions, the courage she inspired, and the way she pushed colleagues to rise to their full potential.

As VSU prepares for this transition, the College is pleased to announce that Mr. Chris Mullins will serve as Interim Associate Dean for Extension/Extension Administrator, effective December 5, 2025. With 26 years of dedicated service across the College of Agriculture, Cooperative Extension, and Randolph Farm, Mr. Mullins brings extensive leadership experience in Extension programming, stakeholder and partnership engagement, fiscal management, and broad agricultural expertise. His deep relationships across industries, universities—including our Virginia Tech partners—and the College of Agriculture position him well to guide Extension during this period of transition.

The College of Agriculture extends its profound appreciation to Dr. Woods for her innovation, service, and unwavering commitment to VSU's land-grant mission. Her legacy of impact, collaboration, and inspiration will continue to guide us for years to come. We celebrate her achievements and wish her every success as she begins this extraordinary new chapter in California.

*The College will launch a national search for the permanent Associate Dean for Extension/Extension Administrator in early 2026. We appreciate your patience and support as we work to secure an exceptional leader for this vital role.*

## SFOP Workshops: January-March 2026

Date	Workshop	Time	Location	PA	Limit
1/7/26	How to Correctly Sample Soil and How to Apply the Resulting Data	9:00am-12:00pm	Bon Air Library, 9103 Rattlesnake Rd., North Chesterfield, VA 23235	Gibson	30
1/7/26	A Placement Guide for Crops, Orchards, and High-Tunnels	12:00pm-1:00pm	online	Browning	none
1/8/25	VSU SFOP Lunch and Learn- Where You Can Sell Your Farm Products	12:00pm-1:00pm	online	Carter	none
1/10/26	5 Pillar Meats Tour	10:00am-12:00pm	250 Dominion Dr., Farmville, VA 23901	Holler	10
1/13/26	Introduction to Rabbit Farming	9:00am-11:00am	Royal Roots Farm, 37 Bollingbrook St., Petersburg, VA 23803	Bugg	none
1/14/26	Aerial Imagery for Small Farms	9:00am-12:00pm	Southside Community College, 118 East Danville, St., South Hill, VA 23226	Sexton	30
1/14/26	Soil Sampling for Farmers	10:00am-12:30pm	Lake Country Advanced Learning Center, 118 E Danville St., South Hill, VA 23970	Estes	20
1/15/26	Biosecurity and Common Health Concerns for Small Ruminant Producers	6:00pm-7:00pm	online	Fletcher	none
1/17/26	Nutrient Management	10:00am-12:00pm	Wilson's Farm, 2778 Cut Bank Rd., Warfield, VA 23889	Holler	10
1/17/26	Grant Writing For Small - Scale Farmersmers	6:00pm-8:00pm	online	Carter	none
1/20/26	Small Farm Orientation	9:00am-11:00am	online	Dukes	none
1/20/26	Vegetable Production Update	8:30am-1:00pm	Midway Baptist Church, 2595 Midway Rd., Phenix, VA 23959	Hobbs	none
1/20/26	Forage Improvements for Small Ruminants	6:00pm-7:30pm	online	Fletcher	none
1/21/26	Urban Tree Selection for Aesthetics and Longevity	3:00pm-5:00pm	Randolph Pavilion, 4415 River Rd., Ettick, VA 23803	Gibson	none
1/24/26	"Harvesting Hope" A Mental Health Initiative for Farmers	9:00am-11:00am	Randolph Pavilion, 4415 River Rd., Ettick, VA 23803	Peralta	30
1/26/26	How to Find and Apply for Grants for Your Small Farm	1:00pm-3:00pm	online	Dukes	none
1/26/26	Seed Keeping and Seed Breeding	6:30pm-8:00pm	online	Dalke	none
1/27/26	Grazing Management and Herd Health Small Farmers	9:00am-12:00pm	Doodle "Doo" Farms, 416 Princess Ann Rd., Virginia Beach, VA 23457	Sexton	30
1/28/26	Herd Health and Forage Improvement for Animal Production	9:00am-12:00pm	Advanced Learning in Danville, 150 Slayton Ave, Danville, Va 24540	Sexton	30
1/29/26	Ready, Set, Vend! Preparing for the Biggest DarNN Farmers Market	10:00am-11:30am	online	Bugg	none
2/3/26	Aerial Imagery for Small Farms	9:00am-12:00pm	Evans Farm, 3100 Arthur Dr., Suffolk, VA 23438	Sexton	30
2/3/26	Grant writing for farmers	5:30pm-7:00pm	Shenandoah Valley Small Business Development Center, 220 University Blvd., Harrisonburg, VA 22801	Dalke	25
2/4/26	Herd Health and Forage Improvement	10:00am-12:00am	9432 N James Madison Hwy., Rapidan, VA 22733	Terrell	20
2/4/26	The Phenology of Southwestern Virginia Farms And Landscapes	12:00pm-1:00pm	online	Browning	none

## SFOP Workshops: January-March 2026

Date	Workshop	Time	Location	PA	Limit
2/5/26	VSU SFOP Beginning Farmers Lunch and Learn -How Do You Price Your Farm Products	12:00pm-1:00pm	online	Carter	
2/6/26	High Tunnel Soil Preparation for Spring Planting	10:00am-12:00am	Hi-Tec Hi-Tunnel	Holler	15
2/7/26	High Tunnel Soil Preparation for Spring Planting	10:00am-12:00pm	Wilson's Farm, 2778 Cut Bank Rd., Warfield, VA 23889	Holler	10
2/7/26	Growers Protections under the Perishable Agricultural Commodities Act (PACA) Part I	11:00am-12:30pm	online	Peralta	none
2/7/26	Producers Training - Submitting a P.A.C.A Claim Part II	1:00pm-2:00pm	online	Peralta	none
2/10/26	Pruning your Grapes for Improved Production	1:00pm-3:00pm	Brownstown Farm, 255 Brownstown Rd., Warfield, VA 23889	Estes	20
2/11/26	Irrigation and Soil Moisture Workshop	9:00am-12:00pm	Advanced Learning in Danville, 150 Slayton Ave, Danville, Va 24540	Sexton	none
2/11/26	Agriculture, Floriculture & Greenhouse Systems Student Tour	10:00am-1:00pm	Randolph Pavilion, 4415 River Rd., Ettick, VA 23803	Bugg	none
2/11/26	Fruit Tree Pruning	3:00pm-5:00pm	15267 James Madison Pwy., King George, VA 22485	Carter	30
2/11/26	Basic organic urban gardening and composting	5:00pm-7:00pm	Randolph Pavilion, 4415 River Rd., Ettick, VA 23803	Gibson	none
2/17/26	Small Farm Orientation	9:00am-11:00am	Jordan-Newby Anchor Branch Library, 1425 Norchester Ave., Norfolk, VA 23504	Dukes	none
2/17/26	Agriculture Business Structure Planning Workshop	6:00pm-8:00pm	Campbell County VCE Office, 163 Kabler Ln., Rustburg, VA 24588	Hobbs	50
2/18/26	Farm Tax Preparation	9:30am-12:30pm	Lake Country Advanced Learning Center, 118 E Danville St., South Hill, VA 23970	Estes	20
2/18/26	Pine Bark Beetle	1:00pm-4:00pm	Southampton Extension Office, 21300 Plank Rd., Courtland, VA 23837	Banks	15
2/18/26	How to Plant A Tree The Right Way	3:00pm-5:00pm	Randolph Pavilion, 4415 River Rd., Ettick, VA 23803	Gibson	none
2/19/26	Aerial Imagery	9:00am-12:00pm	Randolph Pavilion, 4415 River Rd., Ettick, VA 23803	Sexton	none
2/19/26	Hands-On Rabbit Processing Demonstration	10:30am-12:30pm	Royal Roots Farm, 37 Bollingbrook St., Petersburg, VA 23803	Bugg	20
2/19/26	Shenandoah Valley Small Farm Celebration	5:30pm-7:30pm	Massanutten Regional Library, 174 S Main St., Harrisonburg, VA 22801	Dalke	40
2/23/26	Chowan Basin Board Meeting	6:00pm-8:00pm	Southampton Extension Office, 21300 Plank Rd., Courtland, VA 23837	Bugg	10
2/24/26	Fruit Tree Pruning for the Beginner	1:00pm-3:00pm	5185 Poor Mountain Rd., Salem, VA 24153	Noell	20
2/26/26	Piedmont SWCD Board Meeting	10:30am-12:30pm	100 Dominion Blvd, Prince Edward Agriculture, Farmville, VA 23901	Bugg	10
2/26/26	Preparing Your High Tunnel for Production	1:00pm-3:00pm	Favor Tree Farms, LLC, 4030 Erin Ct., King George, VA 22485	Carter	none
3/3/26	Observe, Engage, and Share	11:00am-12:00pm	online	Dukes	none

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Date	Workshop	Time	Location	PA	Limit
3/4/26	Basic Soil Fertility for Farmers	9:00am-1:00pm	Carver Research Center, 9432 N James Madison Hwy., Rapidan, VA 22733	Terrell	20
3/4/26	Spring Climatology of Southwestern Virginia Farms and Landscapes	12:00pm-1:00pm	online	Browning	none
3/4/26	Forest Management & Forest Stand Plans	1:00pm-4:00pm	Creekmore Farm, 3464 West Neck Rd., Virginia Beach, VA 23456	Dukes	20
3/5/26	Quickbook (Introduction)	9:00am-1:00pm	3114 Wayne Memorial Dr., Goldsboro, NC 27534	Cladd	25
3/5/26	VSU SFOP Lunch and Learn -What is the Time To Begin Selling at the Farmers Market	12:00pm-1:00pm	online	Carter	none
3/7/26	Incubating and Caring for Newly Hatched Chicks	10:00am-12:00pm	Wilson's Farm, 2778 Cut Bank Rd., Warfield, VA 23889	Holler	15
3/7/26	Springtime Nutritional Management in Small Ruminants	12:00pm-2:30pm	Southwest VA Agricultural Research & Extension Center, 12326 VPI Farm Rd., Glade Spring, VA 24340	Fletcher	none
3/9/26	Virginia Blueberry Symposium	9:30am-2:00pm	Keezletown Rurian Club, 1212 Indian Trail Rd, Keezletown, VA 22832	Dalke	50
3/10/26	Precision Agricultural Practices for Small Farmers	9:00am-12:00pm	Advanced Learning in Danville, 150 Slayton Ave, Danville, Va 24540	Sexton	30
3/11/26	Understanding Your Soils Using Web Soil Survey	10:00am-12:30pm	Lake Country Advanced Learning Center, 118 E Danville St., South Hill, Va 23970	Estes	10
3/11/26	High Tunnel Berry Production	10:00am-3:00pm	Virginia Cooperative Extension, 105 Oak St., Emporia, VA 23847	Banks	15
3/11/26	Soil Testing for the Beginning Farmer	3:00pm-5:00pm	Carver Research Center, 9432 N James Madison Hwy., Rapidan, VA 22733	Terrell	none
3/12/26	High Tunnels: Beginning and Extending the Growing Season	6:00pm-7:00pm	online	Browning	none
3/16/26	Pollinator Bees	10:00am-3:00pm	Southampton Extension Office, 21300 Plank Rd., Courtland, VA 23837	Banks	15
3/17/26	Small Farm Orientation	9:00am-11:00am	online	Dukes	none
3/18/26	Planning and Benefits of Silvopasture in Livestock Production	1:00pm-4:00pm	Randolph Pavilion, 4415 River Rd., Ettick, VA 23803	Gibson	none
3/18/26	Conservation Biology: Wetlands and Riparian Corridors of Farms and Landscapes	5:00pm-6:00pm	High Knob Destination Center, 1147 Laurel Ave. SW, Norton, VA 24273	Browning	50
3/19/26	Whole Farm Planning	9:00am-1:00pm	Randolph Pavilion, 4415 River Rd., Ettick, VA 23803	Cladd	25
3/25/26	Precision Agricultural Practices for Small Farmers	9:00am-1:00pm	Carver Research Center, 9432 N James Madison Hwy., Rapidan, VA 22733	Terrell	20
3/26/26	SFOP and USDA Information Update	3:00pm-8:00pm	Buena Vista Farmers Market, Magnolia Square, Buena Vista, VA 24416	Hobbs	none
3/27/26	Native Plant Walk	10:00-2:00pm	31447 Smiths Ferry Rd., Franklin, VA 23851	Banks	15
3/27/26	Pollinator Dye Plants in Waterwise High Tunnels	12:00pm-2:00pm	Truth Village Farm, 212 Spring Branch Rd., Waverly, VA 23899	Bugg	30

# Spring TIM'S ↑ TIPS

AG TIPS TO HELP YOU THRIVE



By Tim Sexton,  
SFOP Grants Specialist, Drone Pilot  
and Retired Soil Scientist

## Farmers and Gardeners! Welcome to a new year!

It may turn out to be a cold winter, but Spring is just around the corner. Hunting season is over, the kids are back in school, and we've had our vacations. Now it's time to begin thinking about the upcoming production season.

Spring is a perfect time to prepare for the busy summer production. It is the perfect time to conduct a thorough inspection of your farm—including machinery, outbuildings, livestock facilities, etc.—to ensure that everything is in good working order. It is much better to take care of repairs that are needed before things get busy later on. Paint any buildings that need attention; doing so will keep out moisture and UV rays, as well as prevent mildew and rot. Check your irrigation system and pumps to make sure there are no issues. Be sure to make repairs, if necessary.

Before things green up, take a look at your fields. Look for anything that needs attention. Issues are much easier to see early.

Here are some other items that may be on your punch list:

- Clean out any livestock shelters and barns before calving or lambing. Make sure your livestock is up to date on vaccinations by your veterinarian.
- Begin to feed magnesium to your animals to prevent Grass Tetany.
- Use temporary fencing to allow your animals to graze your winter cover crops! They will love you!
- Consider grazing your livestock on sacrifice areas until your forage is at least 8 inches tall.
- Re-seed winter feeding areas where damage occurred.
- Begin checking your animals for flies! They all have a negative impact on animals.
- Spot spray your winter weeds on warmer days.

If you didn't take them earlier, take soil samples now before the laboratories get busy. Knowing your soil test results and applying nutrients according to the recommendations is critical. Remember, healthy soil means healthy plants.

Prepare and file your TAXES early! When you have more time, there is less chance of making an error or overlooking something important.

If you haven't done so earlier, talk to your seed and fertilizer point person and reserve your materials now. You will have much better luck getting the variety of seeds needed for your crops now rather than later when they have been sold and you have to settle for something with less potential.

Think of developing a drought contingency plan. We know there is always a chance we won't get rain when we need it.

Also, consider soil conservation practices—grass waterways, field borders, filter strips, conservation tillage, and others—to help prevent runoff and erosion, and allow more rainwater to soak into the soil.

Stay flexible in your scheduling. We all know how unpredictable the weather can be in the spring.

Try not to rut up the fields. Doing so increases erosion and makes it harder to work the fields or make repairs.

Keep your tractor busy. Add compost to your garden and pick up tree limbs.

Don't forget to prune your fruit trees. Doing so early helps prevent disease, insects, and broken limbs later.

If it is messy outside, think about building some birdhouses. Having birds around can greatly help out with insect issues.





## Contact Our Program Assistants

### Regional Program Assistants\*

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*Heard Health and Forage Improvement*

Small Farm Outreach Program Office hours: Monday-Thursday, 8 am-5 pm, Friday, 8 am-noon. 95% of SFOP is out in the field.

\*If you have any difficulty figuring out which region is yours, please call 804-524-3292 for clarification.



Virginia Tech • Virginia State University



**JAMES RIVER**  
EQUIPMENT



Virginia Department of Conservation & Recreation

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If you are a person with a disability and desire any assistive devices, services or other accommodations to participate in this activity, please call 804-524-3292 / TDD 800-828-1120 during business hours of 8 am and 5 pm to discuss accommodations five days prior to the event.

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