



SFOP Quarterly NEWSLETTER

SPRING 2022

Dear Small-Scale Farmers, Ranchers and Veterans,

Spring is in the air! We hope that some of you had a restful winter and took that time to plan and organize for the spring planting season and that the Ag Tips that the Small Farm Program Assistants shared in the previous newsletter were helpful.

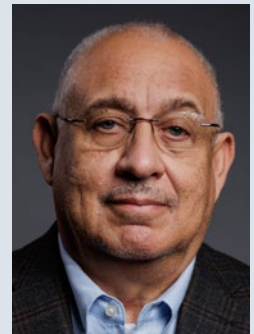
This is our seventh edition of The Small Farm Outreach Program (SFOP) Quarterly Newsletter. We have many free training workshops coming up in this quarter that could contribute to the success of your farming or potential farming operation. Registration is on a first-come, first-serve basis, so do not hesitate to sign up as soon as you see a topic of interest.

Don't forget to look at the enclosed color-coded map to see which Program Assistant works in your area. Your Program Assistant can visit your farm location, provide you with one-on-one technical assistance on the farm, and direct you to needed resources.

SFOP understands the unique challenges and opportunities that exist for small-scale farmers and is here to provide you with outreach, training and technical assistance. Thank you for participating in our educational training workshops, demonstrations, field days and conferences. To learn more about our program, visit our web page at <https://www.ext.vsu.edu/small-farm-outreach-program> for our calendar of events and link to our online Small Farm Resource Center at vasmallfarmers.com.

Continue to stay safe and practice the Center for Disease Control (CDC) safety precaution guidelines.

VCE/VSU-SFOP keeping you informed,
William Crutchfield, SFOP Director



Drip Irrigation

By Grace Summers, State Program Assistant

Drip irrigation is one of the best risk management tools a grower can use when planting a new crop. With more extreme climate changes, farming has become more of a gamble. Growers need a handbag of everyday tools and management options to help them overcome any obstacles. Incorporating drip irrigation into your operating plan is one of the best and easiest risk management tools available.

A well-designed drip irrigation system loses almost no water to runoff, deep percolation, or evaporation. Drip irrigation reduces water contact with crop leaves, stems and fruit because it is not a sprinkler system. It drastically cuts down on disease problems.

Drip irrigation allows a farmer to apply a predetermined amount of water to the root zone of the desired crop.



Lettuce seedlings with drip irrigation

—continued on page 2

Drip Irrigation, *continued*

Since the water for each row is controlled individually, farmers can grow crops with differing needs in the same field or high tunnel.

There are many advantages to drip irrigation. Less water is used, it allows the grower to add fertilizer when needed, diseases and weeds are reduced, growth and production increase and the produce is cleaner. There are also disadvantages. Higher levels of management, the potential to stress plants, limited root zones because plant roots don't spread out looking for water and nutrients, and increased start-up costs. But a well-managed drip irrigation system offers growers far more advantages than disadvantages and greatly lowers their crop loss risk.

Our Program Assistants can help you make a checklist for your farm operation based on the crops you want to grow and help you get an idea of your startup costs and operating costs.



Close up of organic pepper plants and drip irrigation system in a greenhouse

Have you ever wanted to use plastic mulch in your operation, but didn't have the proper equipment? We can help!

By Brent Noell, Regional Program Assistant

You may know this already, but SFOP has assisted many farmers by allowing them to borrow farm equipment that

might be too expensive for them to purchase. We have provided tillers, potato diggers, water tanks, and other farm tools and equipment to assist participants with prepping their land or harvesting their produce.

The implement in this photo is a 3-point hitch attachment that comes with preloaded black plastic, and has the capability to install drip irrigation tape (tape not included).

It is currently housed in Southwest Virginia and is available for pickup or delivery to small farmers in the surrounding areas.

If you are a small-scale, socially disadvantaged farmer in Southwest Virginia who would like more information about the use of this equipment, please contact Brent Noell at (804) 892-0140 or bnoell@vsu.edu.

To find out about any other equipment from our inventory that could assist your farm operation, contact the office at (804) 524-3292 for more details.



A 3-foot plastic mulch layer

Spring Ag Tips From Our Small Farm Program Assistants

Planting

- Start seeds indoors 30 days before transplanting them outdoors, and never transplant before your last average frost date.
- As we go into the spring planting season, remember that planning and research help to manage your enterprise and benefit you financially.
- When your plants start to grow this spring, you must be able to control your source of water. Consider setting up an irrigation system.
- Planting your Irish seed potatoes under black plastic in late March through mid-April can warm the soil temperature up to 8 degrees, which will give them a great early start. Remove the plastic when daytime soil temperatures at the tuber zone get above 70 degrees.
- Identify your source for sweet potato slips now and plan to plant them any time between mid-May and the end of June.
- Start your seeds in a high-quality potting mix. Do not fertilize until the plant has four true leaves. Heat-sterilize your potting mix if making it from raw ingredients such as compost or manure, which may contain soil-borne disease, pests, bacteria, or viruses.
- Visit www.pubs.ext.vt.edu/content/dam/pubs_ext_vt_edu/426/426-331/SPES-170.pdf to determine the last frost date for your area.

Poultry/Livestock

- Have your chick brooder already set up, redundant heat lamps tested, and chick probiotics and electrolytes already on hand before you bring home your chicks. Be sure to use the larger flake pine shaving and never the fine pine shaving. Chicks will eat the smaller shavings, which can affect their digestive system.

- Take the time to research the livestock manure you use. Do not use livestock manure on your crops unless you know that the livestock feed was not sprayed with the herbicide Grazon. It does not break down in the digestive or urinary tract and can remain active in the manure for several years.
- Have you surveyed your pastures? Do any areas need to be renovated? If you graze animals, you are a “grass farmer.” Forages harvested by animals are the cheapest that you will ever harvest. Spring pasture management helps ensure a better quality summer pasture as well. When making your grazing method choice, remember that in a continuously grazed pasture, only about one third of the annual forage production is consumed, whereas in a rotated pasture on a 5-7 day rotation, about two thirds of the annual production will be consumed. In other words, on average, you can double the carrying capacity of a continuously grazed pasture by converting it to a rotational system. For more information see the following Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS) publication: www.nrcs.usda.gov/Internet/FSE_DOCUMENTS/stelprdb1097378.pdf

- The time of year for parasite burden is unfortunately here, so why not be proactive in developing a parasite management plan! Sheep and goat producers should avoid blindly and routinely treating for parasite infection and instead consider the true needs of their flocks/herds. Farmers have the opportunity to attend a valuable workshop on April 28, to gain hands-on opportunities to understand the importance and implementation of fecal egg counting using the McMaster egg counting procedure. Dr. Dahlia O'Brien, Sheep and Goat Specialist from VSU College of Agriculture and Virginia Cooperative Extension will provide instruction and Program Assistant Mandy Fletcher will assist small ruminant farmers with fecal analysis. All necessary workshop supplies will be provided but BYOF (bring your own fecal samples). To register go to www.ext.vsu.edu calendar of events. Check out further information at www.wormx.info/fecal-egg-counting.

General Farming Info

- Use a rain gauge to track the accumulative rainfall each week. Most fruits and vegetables need the equivalent of one inch of rain per week. Supplement shortfalls with drip irrigation or sprinklers.
- Small Farmer Health Checklist: Farming can be demanding and stressful! According to the American Farm Bureau Federation, “A healthy farm or ranch is nothing without a healthy you.” Learn more and receive support from a Rural Resilience Training program at <https://farmcredit.com/rural-resilience> that assists farmers to understand the sources of stress, identify effective communication strategies, reduce stigma related to mental health, and learn the warning signs of stress and suicide.





Boots to Roots

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★★★Down on the Farm★★★

May 24, 2022 · 8 am – 1 pm · FREE!

Free Nutrient Management Services Offered to Small Farm Cooperators

Through a partnership with the Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation, Virginia Tech's Small Farms Nutrient Management Program team is dedicated to working with individuals to educate, improve water quality, develop nutrient management plans and provide technical support. Let the Small Farms Nutrient Management Program help you best manage nutrients being applied to each crop grown on your farm.

What is a nutrient management plan? Nutrient management plans are guides for applying organic or inorganic fertilizers to maximize yield while preventing the movement of nutrients into ground and surface waters. Small Farms Nutrient Management Program plans are written to fit your farm and meet your soil and yield goals.

This program offers soil testing, so you can be sure that applied nutrients are available to the plants being grown and avoid the cost of excessive nutrient application. Other services include soil and manure sampling, pre-sidedress nitrate testing, equipment calibration, nutrient management plans



and water quality agreement programs, as well as manure, fertilizer and lime recommendations.

All of these services are free to small-scale farmers. Learn more: www.dcr.virginia.gov/soil-and-water/document/SmallFarm-NM.pdf

SFOP Workshops: April–June 2022*

Date	Workshop	Time	Location	Program Assistant	Limit
4/2/22	Agribusiness Production & Financial Management Program	9 am–5 pm	The Institute for Advanced Learning & Research, 150 Slayton Ave., Danville, VA, 24540	Grace Summers	20
4/5/22	Managing and Selling Your Timber	10 am–12 pm	Randolph Farm Pavilion, 4415 River Road, Petersburg, VA 23803	Vernon Heath	50
4/6/22	Managing and Selling Your Timber	10 am–12 pm	Carver Center, 9432 N James Madison Hwy, Rapidan, VA 22733	Vernon Heath	50
4/7/22	Berry and Ginger Production	10 am–12 pm	Carver Center, 9432 N James Madison Hwy, Rapidan, VA 22733	Leonel Castillo	
4/7/22	Recordkeeping for Greater Profits	6–8 pm	Virtual	Michael Carter Jr.	
4/8/22	For Beginning Small-Scale Farmers: What Markets are the Best Fit?	12–1 pm	Virtual	Mandy Fletcher	
4/13/22	Organic Gardening 101	10 am–12 pm	Surry, Virginia	Michael Carter Sr.	
4/13/22	Farmers Market Preparedness Series–Session 1	6–7 pm	Virtual	Michael Carter Sr.	
4/19/22	How to Make Goat's Milk Soap	10 am–12 pm	Toano, Virginia	Tracy Porter	35
4/19/22	USDA Informational Session	1–2:30 pm	Virtual	Michael Carter Jr.	
4/20/22	Hispanic Vegetable Hoop House Tour	10 am–12 pm	Lawrenceville, Virginia	Leonel Castillo	
4/20/22	How to Grow Mushrooms on Logs	5–7 pm	West Point Farmer's Market, 1000 Chelsea Rd West Point, King William, 23181	Tracy Porter	25
4/20/22	Farmers Market Preparedness Series–Session 2	6–7 pm	Virtual	Michael Carter Jr.	
4/21/22	Whole Farm Planning	10 am–1 pm	Randolph Farm Pavilion, 4415 River Road, Petersburg, VA 23803	Derrick Cladd	25
4/27/22	Hive Inspection and Expansion	9 am–1 pm	Randolph Farm Pavilion, 4415 River Road, Petersburg, VA 23803	Tracy Porter	30
4/27/22	Farmers Market Preparedness Series–Session 3	6–7 pm	Virtual	Michael Carter Jr.	
4/28/22	Producing and Marketing Produce for Maximum Profits	10 am–12 pm	Cullen, Virginia	Leonard Elam	20
4/28/22	Small Ruminant Production: Hands-On Fecal Egg Counts	1:30–5 pm	Glade Spring, Virginia	Mandy Fletcher	25
4/30/22	Farming with Two-Wheel Tractors	10 am–12 pm	Carver Center, 9432 N James Madison Hwy, Rapidan, VA 22733	Roland Terrell	
5/3/22	Farm Tour	1–4 pm	Lunenburg, Virginia	Marilyn Estes	20

For more information and to register, visit www.ext.vsu.edu/calendar.

SFOP Workshops: April–June 2022*

Date	Workshop	Time	Location	Program Assistant	Limit
5/4/22	For Beginning Small-Scale Farmers: What Markets are the Best Fit?	12–1 pm	Virtual	Tracy Porter	
5/9/22	Small Farm Orientation	9–11 am	Virtual	Vernon Heath	15
5/11/22	Growing Garlic: Beginning to Harvest	10 am–12 pm	Unionville, Virginia	Roland Terrell	
5/11/22	Growing and Harvesting Garlic Scapes	10 am–12 pm	Surry, Virginia	Tracy Porter	35
5/12/22	Agricultural Marketing Bus Tour	7 am–6:40 pm	Meet at VSU Randolph Farm Pavilion, 4415 River Road, Petersburg, VA 23803	Derrick Cladd	20
5/12/22	Berry and Ginger Production	10 am–12 pm	Wedgewood Golf Center, 2131 Mountain Rd. Halifax, VA, 24558	Leonel Castillo	
5/14/22	Agribusiness Production & Financial Management Program	9 am–5 pm	VCE Prince Edward Office, 100 Dominion Drive Farmville, VA 23901	Leonard Elam	20
5/21/22	Small Engine Repair	9 am–12 pm	Catawba, Virginia	Brent Noell	10
5/23/22	Sustainable Forestry Management	10 am–12 pm	Wedgewood Golf Center, 2131 Mountain Road, Halifax, VA	Clifford Somerville	20
5/24/22	Boots to Roots 2: Down on the Farm	8 am–1 pm	Randolph Farm Pavilion, 4415 River Road, Petersburg, VA 23803	James (Tony) Edwards	100
5/24/22	USDA Non-insured Crop Disaster Program for Farmers	6:30–8 pm	Abingdon, Virginia	Mandy Fletcher	30
5/26/22	Mapping and Crop Spraying with Drones for Precision Agriculture	10 am–1 pm	Carver Center, 9432 N James Madison Hwy, Rapidan, VA 22733	Leonel Castillo	
5/28/22	Hispanic Market Tour	9 am–1 pm	South Hill Farmer's Market, 105 W. Danville St. South Hill, VA, 23970	Leonel Castillo	30
6/4/22	Basic Beekeeping	9 am–12 pm	Salem, Virginia	Brent Noell	12
6/7/22	Silvo Pasture Demonstration	10 am–12 pm	Burkeville, Virginia	Leonard Elam	12
6/13/22	Small Farm Orientation	9–11 am	Virtual	Vernon Heath	15
6/15/22	Elephant Garlic Trials	10 am–12 pm	Surry, Virginia	Tracy Porter	35
6/18/22	Agribusiness Production & Financial Management Program	9 am–5 pm	West Point High School, 2700 Mattaponi Ave, West Point, VA 23181	Tracy Porter	20
6/18/22	Improving Rotational Pastures and Pasture Walk	10 am–12 pm	Abingdon, Virginia	Mandy Fletcher	20
6/21	Southside Sustainable Agriculture Tour	9:30 am–4 pm	137 Vincent Store Rd, Charlotte Court House, VA 23923	Clifford Somerville	20
6/28/22	Small Diversified Farm Tour	9–11:30 am	King William, Virginia	Tracy Porter	40
6/29/22	Increasing Yields by Improving Soil Health	1–3 pm	VCE Office, 105 Oak Street, Emporia, Greenville, 23847	Marilyn Estes	

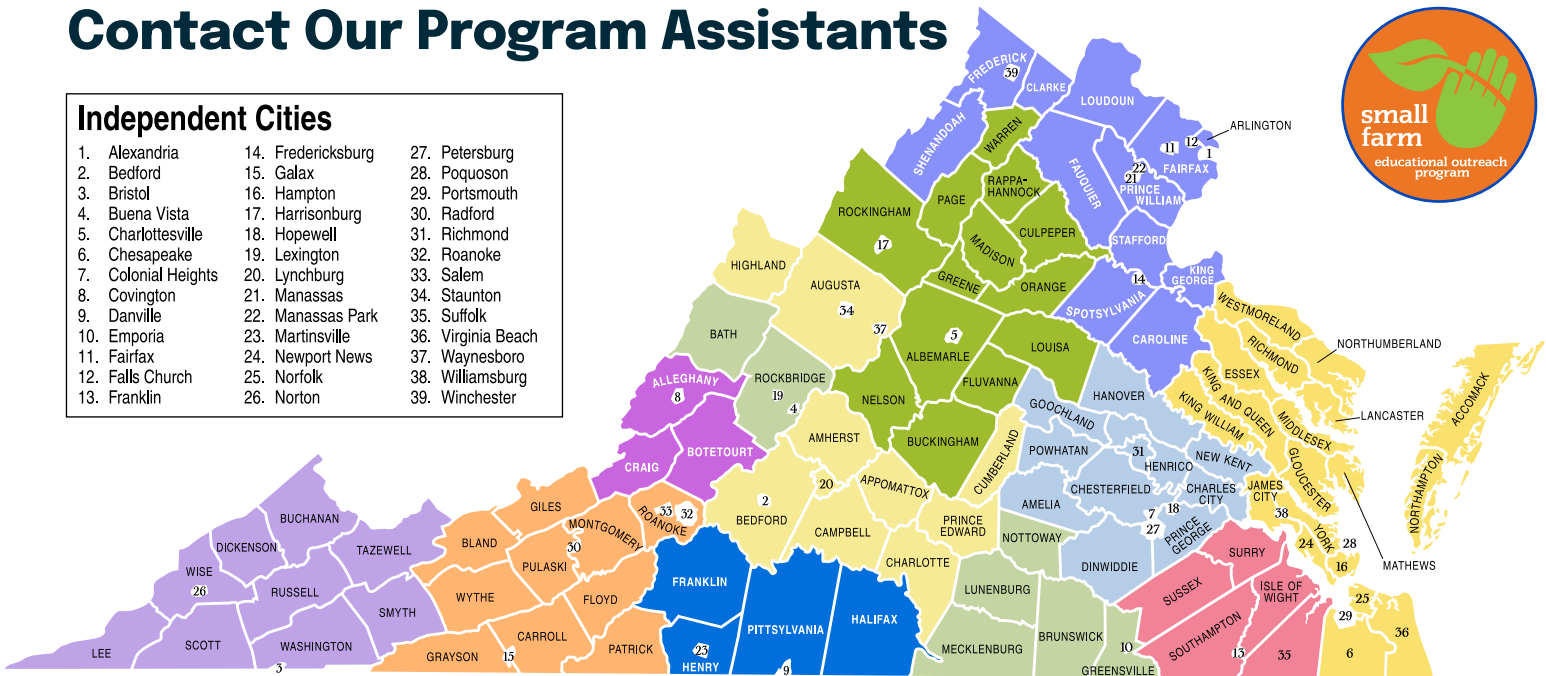
For more information and to register, visit www.ext.vsu.edu/calendar.

Contact Our Program Assistants



Independent Cities

- | | | |
|---------------------|--------------------|--------------------|
| 1. Alexandria | 14. Fredericksburg | 27. Petersburg |
| 2. Bedford | 15. Galax | 28. Poquoson |
| 3. Bristol | 16. Hampton | 29. Portsmouth |
| 4. Buena Vista | 17. Harrisonburg | 30. Radford |
| 5. Charlottesville | 18. Hopewell | 31. Richmond |
| 6. Chesapeake | 19. Lexington | 32. Roanoke |
| 7. Colonial Heights | 20. Lynchburg | 33. Salem |
| 8. Covington | 21. Manassas | 34. Staunton |
| 9. Danville | 22. Manassas Park | 35. Suffolk |
| 10. Emporia | 23. Martinsville | 36. Virginia Beach |
| 11. Fairfax | 24. Newport News | 37. Waynesboro |
| 12. Falls Church | 25. Norfolk | 38. Williamsburg |
| 13. Franklin | 26. Norton | 39. Winchester |



Regional Program Assistants*

- | | |
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| | Roland Terrell (804) 892-4612 rterrell@vsu.edu |

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- | | |
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<i>Military Veteran, AgrAbility</i> |
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<i>Nutrient Management</i> |
| Leonel Castillo (804) 731-0230 lcastillo@vsu.edu
<i>Hispanic Outreach</i> | Grace Summers (804) 712-0093 gsummers@vsu.edu
<i>NRCS, SFOP High Tech Tunnel</i> |
| Derrick Cladd (804) 892-4489 dcladd@vsu.edu
<i>Beginning Farmers</i> | Wanda Johnson (804) 894-4858 wjohnson@vsu.edu
<i>Community Gardens, Food Services</i> |

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



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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 contact the Small Farm Outreach Program office at smallfarm@vsu.edu or call (804) 524-3292/TDD (800) 828-1120 during business hours of 8 am. and 5 p.m. to discuss accommodations five days prior to the event.





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