



# SFOP Quarterly NEWSLETTER

SUMMER 2022

## Dear Small-Scale Farmers, Ranchers and Veterans,

I am excited to introduce the new assistant director of the Small Farm Outreach Program, Mr. Herbert Brown Jr. As a former Brunswick County executive director, he is passionate about educating producers and implementing programs to help sustain farming operations in Virginia.

Despite the Brunswick County native growing up in rural America, he never thought of agriculture as a career choice until he discovered his passion for agriculture at Virginia State University. Each summer during college, he interned with the USDA Farm Service Agency (FSA). After graduating in 2009 with a degree in Agriculture Business and Economics, he began his professional career in an FSA county office. The relationships he developed with farmers while in the field enables him to understand their needs firsthand. Herbert's from-the-ground-up approach will be a big asset to the VSU Small Farm Outreach Program.

To ensure agriculture remains strong for current and next-generation socially-disadvantaged small farms in the Commonwealth, Herbert will connect the dots between our Land Grant Universities, USDA, state agencies

and other agricultural organizations, and will focus on innovation and profitability, which are critical. His skills will enable SFOP to make data-driven decisions and targeted outreach campaigns to provide real-life solutions for farmers, ranchers, landowners, small communities and veterans who need assistance.

In his spare time, Herbert assists his dad with their family farm.

Please join me in welcoming Herbert Brown, Jr., assistant director, to the SFOP family VCE/VSU-SFOP.

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



**“This is a dream come true. It feels good to be back at VSU to make a difference and have an impact on the future of Virginia Agriculture”**

**–Herbert Brown, Jr.**

## Meet Our Advisory Board Members



Clif Slade

**Clif Slade** is a Virginia native who began farming as a child alongside his father. He is a proud graduate of Virginia State University, where he acquired both a bachelor's and a master's degree in Agricultural Education. After 28 years of service, he retired from Virginia Cooperative Extension at Virginia Tech, where he worked as a county extension agent, district director and commercial vegetable specialist for Southeast Virginia. He is also a retired Lt. Colonel from the US Army National Guard.

In 2010, Clif was appointed by the USDA to serve on the Virginia State FSA committee. Most recently, he worked as a vegetable and produce specialist with the Small Farm Outreach Program at VSU. Clif's work has been featured in Farm Bureau News Magazine,

Virginia Association for Biological Farming (VABF) publications and numerous local newspapers.

In 2013, he established the "43,560 Project," demonstrating a farmer's ability to gross \$1 per square foot by planting high-value crops. He shares this concept nationwide at agricultural workshops. In 2014, he served on the board of directors for VABF. In 2015, he was appointed by Governor McAuliffe to the Virginia Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services Board.

Clif operates Slade Farms, which raises organic seeds and plants, and has recently been licensed to grow organic industrial hemp. He and his wife, Arnetta, are the parents of three daughters and one son, and proud grandparents of several grandchildren (Zhane, Darrell, Tyler, Zhamare, Mia, Kennedy and Seth).

Clif has a deep love and respect for farming and takes great joy in teaching others to be productive and profitable stewards of the land.

Agriculture is an important part of **Herbert Brown Sr.**'s life. He grew up farming tobacco with his father when the plant was the primary cash crop for rural Southside Virginia. To feed their large family, the Browns also raised a big garden each year. Now, he operates the family farm,

Browntown Farms, in Warfield, Virginia. He currently focuses on high-tunnel production of seasonal produce. Strawberries are one of his favorite crops because they are the primary ingredient in his farm's small-batch fruit jams.

Herbert learned a lot over the years from SFOP workshops, conferences, field days and bus trips. He enjoys serving on the VSU SFOP Advisory Board, helping carry out its mission, and encouraging new and beginning farmers to use VSU SFOP as a resource when starting farming operations.

"The program assistants are amazing to work with and have a wealth of knowledge that can help you on your farming journey," says Brown.



Herbert Brown, Sr.

## Our New Drone



SFOP Drone Pilot Leonel Castillo prepares the new SFOP precision agricultural drone for flight. The purchase of this Drone was made possible by DCR.



## Virginia State University College of Agriculture Field Day

This free event will showcase the many ways VSU's agricultural researchers, Extension specialists and professors support Virginia's agriculture and forestry industries, the commonwealth's number one private economic driver, with an annual economic impact of more than \$91 billion.

Hop on and off trolleys as they circle throughout Randolph Farm's 416 acres and learn from the commonwealth's leading experts about the latest techniques, trends, research and success stories impacting small-scale, limited-resource farmers and ranchers.

See first-hand how VSU's research, teaching and public programming is enhancing the resiliency of Virginia's food systems and addressing food safety and insecurity, especially among those who have limited social and economic resources.

Learn how you, your family, your business and your community can benefit from the food and agri-science programs at VSU.

### Explore:

Blueberries, Raspberries,  
& Blackberries

Pond Aquaculture

Hydroponic and Aquaponic  
Grow Systems

High Tunnel Production

Livestock Grazing Demonstration

Sheep & Goat Production

And More!

Subscribe to weekly VSU College of Agriculture event emails to know when registration opens and to learn about additional Cooperative Extension workshops, field days, conferences, bus tours and more at VSU: [www.ext.vsu.edu/subscribe](http://www.ext.vsu.edu/subscribe).

## Graze 300 Pasture Management Training for Professionals

Join other technical service providers and extension agents and specialists for a short-course this fall on pasture and forage management. Improve your technical skills and expertise so that you can better serve farmers as they develop and manage their grazing systems.

This course is designed to improve understanding of pasture management and design through four 2-hour virtual modules that must be completed by all workshop participants. Each presentation will be available for viewing in Canvas. Each module concludes with a 1-hour live Zoom meeting for an opportunity to interact with participants and instructors. This will begin July 1 with each module needing to be completed in 30 days.

In late October-early November, VSU Small Outreach Program will sponsor a field demonstration where each participant will practice what they have learned. Lunch will be provided.

Space is limited. Register for FREE by using this registration form: <https://tinyurl.com/mumsvhw7>. For further information, please contact Tim Sexton at (804) 524-1028, or [tsexton@vsu.edu](mailto:tsexton@vsu.edu).



**Virginia Cooperative Extension**  
Virginia Tech • Virginia State University

## Summer Ag Tips From Our Small Farm Program Assistants

### Tis the season for Ticks!

Ticks are everywhere—in both rural and urban areas. Sometimes, a tick can be as tiny as a poppy seed. According to the CDC, ticks find their hosts by detecting animals' breath and body odors, or by sensing body heat, moisture, and vibrations. Although ticks cannot fly or jump, they pick a place to wait for a host, resting on the tips of grasses and shrubs.

More than a dozen tick-borne diseases are known. Lyme disease is the most common and spreads by deer and blacklegged ticks. Lone Star ticks also pose a problem for humans and animals in Virginia. They live in dense grass and animal resting areas. They can transmit Rocky Mountain Spotted Fever, can cause red-meat allergy in some people, and can cause Southern Tick-Associated Rash Illness (STARI). Like Lyme disease, STARI often produces a bullseye rash and may be accompanied by fatigue, headache, fever, and muscle pains. STARI has not been linked to arthritis, neurologic disease, or chronic symptoms. Oral antibiotics resolve the illness.

Be proactive: treat clothes with tick

repellent; wear socks and long pants to discourage ticks from attaching; wear light-colored clothing; check humans everywhere daily, especially bends of knees, elbows and armpits, in and behind ears, at the waist, and in hair; conduct daily tick checks on your pets and livestock (if feasible).

If you find a tick, the CDC recommends the following steps: remove it as quickly as possible (VCE recommends using fine-tipped tweezers); save the



An Asian longhorned tick

ticks in rubbing alcohol in a jar or a bag; and contact your state agriculture department or local agricultural extension office about ticks on livestock or for tick identification.

Ticks can also affect livestock. Be on the lookout for the Asian longhorned tick which causes major economic loss by spreading disease in cattle. It was identified in Virginia in 2018. Kevin Lahmers, a Veterinary Pathologist at Virginia Tech, says the Asian longhorned tick is difficult to address "because it doesn't have to find a mate to reproduce, it can spread faster." A single female produces 1,000 to 2,000 eggs at one time, according to the USDA Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS).

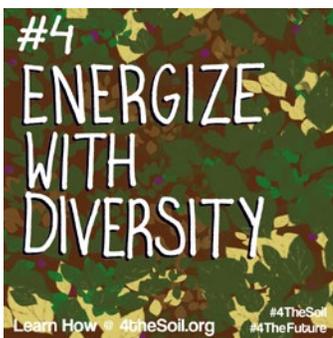
For further information, visit:

- [https://www.pubs.ext.vt.edu/content/dam/pubs\\_ext\\_vt\\_edu/ENTO/ento-382/ENTO-382.pdf](https://www.pubs.ext.vt.edu/content/dam/pubs_ext_vt_edu/ENTO/ento-382/ENTO-382.pdf)
- <https://www.cdc.gov/ticks/index.html>
- <https://www.agweb.com/news/livestock/beef/asian-longhorned-tick-marches-17-states>

## We Can All Be “4 The Soil”

“It takes a village, it takes diversity,” said Karen Washington, a farmer of Rise and Root Farm, activist, and James Beard Leadership Award winner. “It’s not one voice, one race, one color, it’s the [multitudes] of all of us coming together to make sure that this planet and its elements are here for everybody.”

Washington joined us for two episodes of the **4 the Soil: A Conversation** podcast. We talked about food justice, diversity in agriculture, and listening to nature. Each idea was rooted in the knowledge that, as Washington said, “Good soil means good health.”



When we are “4 the Soil,” we follow and support four core principles of soil health management. One of the principles is energizing with diversity. We can cultivate spaces for different people, plants, animals, ideas, and innovations to thrive. Diversity helps build health from the soil up.

Maximizing diversity in the soil enhances and interconnects with the other three core principles: 1. Keep Soil Covered; 2. Minimize Soil Disturbance; and 3. Maximize Living Roots. For instance, growing plants keeps the soil covered and maximizes living roots. Now, take it further by energizing the soil with diversity by integrating livestock or growing cover crops between crop seasons. Diverse plant roots utilize different water levels, leading to less runoff. In addition, the soil can become more resilient to pests and harmful bacteria by building up different nutrients and improving soil structure. With a healthier soil structure, we can use growing techniques that minimize soil disturbance and encourage nutrients to remain in place.

According to the Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education program, soils with biological diversity, good structure, and continuous plant cover “will be healthier for

people as well as the plants growing in them.” Building health from the soil up impacts the earth, individual wellness, and community resilience.

“Getting your fingers into that soil and taking that soil and smelling it and putting it through your fingers—I had to do that,” Washington said with a laugh. “I had to do that so I could find my connection and sense of belonging to the soil.”

“Intergenerational conversations are also key to building soil health. Washington explains, “We’re starting to see... youths and their elders are sitting down and cross-pollinating, so to speak, the language and the knowledge that they have.”

Join the movement! 4 The Soil is a campaign by the Virginia Soil Health Coalition and Virginia Tech to raise awareness of soil as an agricultural and natural resource. By caring for the soil, we can build healthier communities, stronger economies, and a more resilient landscape. Find our podcast, blog and resources, and take the pledge “4 the Soil” at [www.4thesoil.org](http://www.4thesoil.org). Connect with us on Facebook and Instagram @4thesoilva.



Summer on Randolph Farm, at VSU

## SFOP Workshops: July–September 2022\*

Date	Workshop	Time	Location	Program Assistant	Limit
July–Oct.	Graze 300 Pasture Management Training	Self-Guided	Virtual	Tim Sexton	Limited
7/6/22	How to Dig, Cure and Store White Potatoes	5–7 pm	VSU Randolph Farm, 4415 River Road, Petersburg, VA 23803	Tracy Porter	45
7/8/22	How to Plant and Grow Sweet Potatoes	5–7 pm	VSU Randolph Farm, 4415 River Road, Petersburg, VA 23803	Tracy Porter	45
7/18/22	Southside Sustainable Ag Tour	9 am–4 pm	Wedgewood Golf Center, 2131 Mountain Rd. Halifax, VA, 24558	Clifford Somerville	
7/18/22	How to Sell Your Products to the State and Get Paid	11:30 am–1 pm	Virtual	Tracy Porter	
7/20/22	Pond Management	8:30–11 am	Wythe County, Virginia	Brent Noell	20
7/26/22	Hispanic Urban Garden	10 am–12 pm	Chesterfield, Virginia	Leonel Castillo	10
8/8/22	Small Farm Orientation	9–11 am	Virtual	Vernon Heath	15
8/10/22	Recordkeeping on Your Computer or Smart Phone	6–8 pm	Carver Center, 9432 N James Madison Hwy, Rapidan, VA 22733	Michael Carter Sr	20
8/12/22	Spray Drone Demonstration	9 am–12 pm	Wedgewood Golf Center, 2131 Mountain Rd. Halifax, VA, 24558	Leonel Castillo	10
8/12/22	Small Ruminant Guardian Animals: Choosing a Good Protector	12–1 pm	Virtual	Mandy Fletcher	
8/23/22	Weed Control Using Goats	10 am–12 pm	Surry, Virginia	Tracy Porter	30
8/24/22	Irrigating Fall Crops in a High Tunnel	10 am–2 pm	Waverly, Virginia	Derrick Cladd	40
8/24/22	VDACS Agriculture and Forestry Development	6–7:30 pm	Virtual	Michael Carter Jr	
8/26/22	Selling your story	6–7:30 pm	Unionville, Virginia	Michael Carter Jr	30
8/29/22	Starting a Hydroponic Growing System	1–4 pm	Lake Country Advanced Learning Center, 118 E. Danville St, South Hill, VA 23970	Marilyn Estes	20
9/6/22	Grants to Fund Trees & Orchards	10 am–12 pm	Kinsale, Virginia	Tracy Porter	30
9/7/22	Planting Garlic in the Fall	10 am–12 pm	Unionville, Virginia	Roland Terrell	20
9/8/22	Small Ruminants: Using Fecal Egg Counts on Your Small Farm	6–8:30 pm	Coalfield Ag Center, 449 Agricultural Dr, Clintwood, VA 24228	Mandy Fletcher	
9/12/22	Small Farm Orientation	9–11 am	Virtual	Vernon Heath	15
9/14/22	Value Added Hemp Production on a Small Farm	3–5 pm	West Point, Virginia	Tracy Porter	30
9/22/22	GAP for Beginners	6–7:30 pm	Unionville, Virginia	Michael Carter Jr	30
9/22/22	Farm Equipment Safety	6–8 pm	Unionville, Virginia	Michael Carter Sr	20
9/24/22	Small Engine Maintenance and Repair	10 am–1 pm	Middleburg Agricultural Research Center, 5527 Sullivans Mill Rd, Middleburg, VA 20117	Michael Carter Sr	20

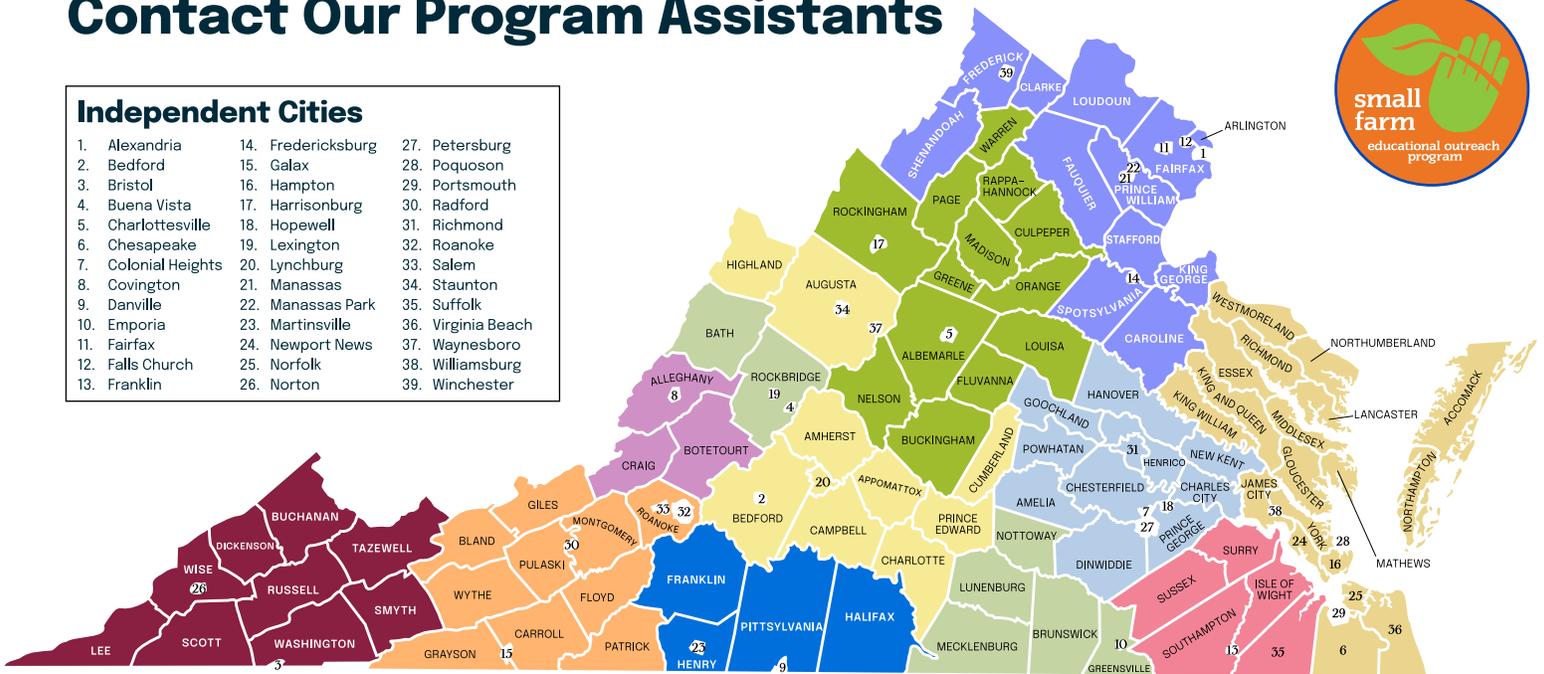
For more information and to register, visit [www.ext.vsu.edu/calendar](http://www.ext.vsu.edu/calendar).

# 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\*

- **Michael Carter Sr** (804) 481-1163 | [mcarter@vsu.edu](mailto:mcarter@vsu.edu)
- **Derrick Cladd** (804) 892-4489 | [dcladd@vsu.edu](mailto:dcladd@vsu.edu)
- **Leonard Elam** (804) 894-3095 | [lelam@vsu.edu](mailto:lelam@vsu.edu)
- **Marilyn Estes** (804) 481-0485 | [mestes@vsu.edu](mailto:mestes@vsu.edu)
- **Mandy Fletcher** (804) 892-0108 | [afletcher@vsu.edu](mailto:afletcher@vsu.edu)

- **Brent Noell** (804) 892-0140 | [bnuell@vsu.edu](mailto:bnuell@vsu.edu)
- **Tracy Porter** (804) 481-2566 | [tporter@vsu.edu](mailto:tporter@vsu.edu)
- **Stacy Somers-Taylor** (804) 689-0410 | [ssomers-taylor@vsu.edu](mailto:ssomers-taylor@vsu.edu)  
*Drone Pilot*
- **Cliff Somerville** (804) 892-4581 | [csomerville@vsu.edu](mailto:csomerville@vsu.edu)
- **Grace Summers** (804) 712-0093 | [gsummers@vsu.edu](mailto:gsummers@vsu.edu)
- **Roland Terrell** (804) 892-4612 | [rterrell@vsu.edu](mailto:rterrell@vsu.edu)

## State Program Assistants

**Frederick Custis** | (804) 894-0218 | [fcustis@vsu.edu](mailto:fcustis@vsu.edu)  
*Agriculture Management Coordinator*

**Michael Carter Jr** | (804) 691-0490 | [micarter@vsu.edu](mailto:micarter@vsu.edu)  
*Small Farm Resource Center Coordinator*

**Leonel Castillo** | (804) 731-0230 | [lcastillo@vsu.edu](mailto:lcastillo@vsu.edu)  
*Hispanic Outreach, Drone Pilot*

**Derrick Cladd** | (804) 892-4489 | [dcladd@vsu.edu](mailto:dcladd@vsu.edu)  
*Beginning Farmers*

**James Edwards** | (804) 720-2588 | [jtedwards@vsu.edu](mailto:jtedwards@vsu.edu)  
*Military Veteran, AgrAbility*

**Vernon Heath** | (804) 892-4518 | [vheath@vsu.edu](mailto:vheath@vsu.edu)  
*Beginning Farmer Orientation Contact*

**Tammy Holler** | (804) 229-2730 | [tholler@vsu.edu](mailto:tholler@vsu.edu)  
*Nutrient Management*

**Grace Summers** | (804) 712-0093 | [gsummers@vsu.edu](mailto:gsummers@vsu.edu)  
*NRCS, SFOP High Tech Tunnel*

**Wanda Johnson** | (804) 894-4858 | [wjohnson@vsu.edu](mailto:wjohnson@vsu.edu)  
*Community Gardens, Food Services*

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



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](mailto: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.

Virginia Cooperative Extension is a partnership of Virginia Tech, Virginia State University, the U.S. Department of Agriculture and local governments. Its programs and employment are open to all, regardless of age, color, disability, gender, gender identity, gender expression, national origin, political affiliation, race, religion, sexual orientation, genetic information, military status, or any other basis protected by law.





P.O. Box 9081  
Virginia State University, VA 23806

NONPROFIT ORG  
U.S. POSTAGE  
PAID  
PETERSBURG, VA  
PERMIT NO. 46



**Where Virginia's small and beginning farmers  
and ranchers access comprehensive resources to help make  
their farm businesses profitable and sustainable.**

**[vasmallfarmers.com](http://vasmallfarmers.com)**

**Education & Training Resources  
Diverse Models Of Farm Production & Operation  
Ag-Related News & Events  
Federal, State & Local Agency Contacts  
Agro-Equipment Rental Programs  
Expert Advice Online Or By Phone  
...And More**

The Virginia Small Farm Resource Center is developed and supported by Virginia State University's Small Farm Outreach Program.