



26th Annual

Virginia Biological Farming Conference

Sowing Seeds, Growing Change

January 9th - 11th, 2026 · Hotel Roanoke



FROM THE PRESIDENT'S DESK

Dear Conference Participants, Partners, and Friends,

On behalf of the Virginia Association for Biological Farming, it is my pleasure to welcome you to the 26th annual Conference! We are honored to gather with farmers, researchers, advocates, and community leaders who share a commitment to advancing sustainable, resilient, and inclusive agriculture. Your presence here reflects the strength of our collective effort to support the land and the people who depend on it.

As we come together for learning, collaboration, and innovation, we are proud to reflect on the progress our organization has made over the past year. With the support of our partners and supporters, VABF expanded access to agricultural education and technical assistance, reaching more than 200 producers across the state of Virginia. We celebrate action in concert with our partner organizations like Certified Naturally Grown, the Roanoke Foodshed Network, the Rodale Institute, Common Grain Alliance, American Farmland Trust, TOPP, and Virginia Soil Health Coalition. Engaging in workshops, listening sessions, webinars, and events across the state, VABF was able to work in Northern Virginia, Norfolk, Roanoke, and everywhere in between. We expanded programs focused on soil health and climate-smart practices, strengthened partnerships with local growers, and provided space for true feedback on resource needs from those working in the agricultural space.

This past year also marked meaningful growth for our organization. We increased volunteer engagement through our ambassador program, secured funding in long term grant projects, and held a one-day organic conference that will lead to even more engagement throughout the year. These accomplishments are a direct result of collaboration and a shared belief in the power of agriculture to drive economic opportunity, environmental stewardship, and community well-being.

Looking forward, we are excited to share that we already have things planned for 2026, including a train-the-trainer program, soil health and crop related webinars, another mid-year organic conference, and Virginia specific resources for farmers in the state. This is another step towards engaging more producers in our region, accentuating the importance of relationship building and sharing in this work with the food system.

This conference is an opportunity to build on that momentum. We hope the conversations, workshops, and connections formed here will inspire new ideas and partnerships that are carried forward long after the event concludes. Thank you for joining us and for your continued dedication to agriculture and our shared mission. We wish you a productive, engaging, and inspiring conference.

Sincerely,



Seyra Whitney
President



Join us as a member!
Visit vabf.org for details.
Follow us @vabfarming

Overview Schedule

Friday, January 9, 2026

7:30 AM - 7:00 PM	Registration & Info	North Entry Foyer
7:30 AM - 9:30 AM	Coffee Service	North Entry Foyer
8:00 AM - 5:00 PM	Trade Show Set-up & Silent Auction Item Drop Off	Roanoke Ballroom
9:00 AM - 12:00 PM	Half Day Workshops	Appalachian, Shenandoah A, Shenandoah B, Pocahontas
12:00 PM - 1:00 PM	Lunch Buffet	Regency Overlook Dining Room
1:00 PM - 4:00/5:00 PM	Half Day Workshops	Appalachian, Shenandoah A, Shenandoah B, Pocahontas
1:30 PM - 4:30 PM	Lick Run Farm Tour	Offsite
6:00 PM - 6:30 PM	VABF Business Meeting	Shenandoah B
6:30 PM - 7:30 PM	Farmer Listening Session	Room #474
7:30 PM - 9:00 PM	Farming is Funny Comedy Show	Washington Lecture Hall

Saturday, January 10, 2026

7:00 AM - 6:00 PM	Registration Check-In	North Entry Foyer
6:45 AM - 7:15 AM	Morning Movement with Ann	Lecture Hall Foyer
7:00 AM - 9:00 AM	Breakfast	Roanoke Ballroom
8:00 AM	Welcome & Opening Remarks	Roanoke Ballroom
8:00 AM - 12:00 PM & 1:45 PM - 5:30 PM	Youth Program	Harrison/Tyler & Taylor
8:00 AM - 6:00 PM	Trade Show and Silent Auction	Roanoke Ballroom
8:00 AM - 6:00 PM	Fireside Chats	Mill Mountain
8:30 AM - 10:00 AM	SESSION A	
10:00 AM - 10:30 AM	Session Break	
10:30 AM - 12:00 PM	SESSION B	
12:00 PM - 2:00 PM	Lunch & Keynote	Roanoke Ballroom
12:00 PM - 6:00 PM	Taste of Virginia Market & Expo	Crystal Ballroom
2:00 PM - 3:30 PM	SESSION C	
3:30 PM - 4:00 PM	Session Break	
4:00 PM - 5:30 PM	SESSION D	
6:00 PM - 9:00 PM	Rodale Institute Networking Social	Taubman Museum of Art - Offsite
6:00 PM - 9:00 PM	Networking Fundraiser for VABF	Golden Cactus Brewery - Offsite

Sunday, January 11, 2026

7:00 AM - 4:00 PM	Registration Check-In	North Entry Foyer
6:45 AM - 7:15 AM	Morning Movement with Ann	Lecture Hall Foyer
7:00 AM - 9:00 AM	Breakfast	Roanoke Ballroom & Crystal Court
8:00 AM - 8:15AM	VABF Meet 'n Greet	Crystal Ballroom
8:00 AM - 12:00 PM & 1:45 PM - 3:30 PM	Youth Program	Harrison/Tyler & Taylor
8:00 AM - 4:00 PM	Trade Show and Silent Auction	Roanoke Ballroom
8:00 AM - 3:30 PM	Fireside Chats	Mill Mountain
8:30 AM - 10:00 AM	SESSION E	
10:00 AM - 10:30 AM	Session Break	
10:30 AM - 12:00 PM	SESSION F	
12:00 PM - 2:00 PM	Lunch & Panel Discussion	Roanoke Ballroom
2:00 PM	Silent Auction Bidding Ends	Roanoke Ballroom
2:00 PM - 3:30 PM	SESSION G	
3:00 PM - 4:00 PM	Silent Auction Pick-Up & Payment	North Entry Foyer (Registration Desk)
3:30 PM	Conference Dismissed	

Table of Contents

About VABF & Activities	4
Event Highlights	5-6
Silent Auction	5
Book Signings	5
Friday Schedule & Descriptions	
• Pre-Conference & Evening Activities	7-8
Tradeshow Exhibitors	9
Saturday Schedule & Descriptions	
• Session A: 8:30 AM – 10:00 AM	11-12
• Session B: 10:30 AM – 12:00 PM	13-14
• Session C: 2:00 PM – 3:30 PM	17-18
• Session D: 4:00 PM – 5:30 PM	19-20

Keynote: Bonnetta Adeeb	15
Farm-to-Table Farm Listings	16
Buyer/Grower Expo	21
Sunday Schedule & Descriptions	
• Session E: 8:30 AM – 10:00 AM	23-24
• Session F: 10:30 AM – 12:00 PM	25-26
Luncheon Panel Discussion	27
• Session G: 2:00 PM – 3:30 PM	29-30
Sponsors	34
Map	Rear Cover



Enjoy FREE WIFI with promotional code: **VABF2026**

Youth Program

Room: Harrison/Tyler – Lower Level
Coordinators & Contact Info:
Corey Davis 804-920-2368
Sylvie Gagnon 804-566-9430

Schedule:

Saturday, January 10th

- 8:00 AM – 12:00 PM
- 1:45 PM – 5:30 PM

Sunday, January 11th

- 8:00 AM – 12:00 PM
- 1:45 PM – 3:30 PM

NOTE: Guardians must drop off/pick up youth in person. Youth will join parents/guardians for meals in the Ballroom. Coordinators will bring youth to North Foyer at lunchtime. Each guardian must sign a release form and provide emergency contact information.





The Virginia Association for Biological Farming

GET TO KNOW US

The Virginia Association for Biological Farming (VABF) is dedicated to cultivating a thriving, resilient agricultural community. We connect farmers with each other, with technical assistance, and with resources that foster holistic support, professional growth, and business development. Association members gain access to curated resources, training opportunities with discounts to attend, and a huge network of farmers and business owners.

VABF is hosting three meetings for Members and Non-Members during the 2026 Conference and we hope you'll join us for one or all!



ANNUAL BUSINESS MEETING

Friday · 6:00–6:30Pm · Shenandoah A

The year in review. See how your support has influenced programming and networking in the state.

1

FARMER LISTENING SESSION

Friday · 6:30–7:30Pm · Hospitality Room #474

Join us for a dedicated Farmer Listening Session, a space designed to hear directly from those who know the land, the work, and the challenges best. This conversation is an opportunity to share the real issues facing today's agricultural business owners — from labor and supply pressures to market uncertainty, rising costs, and the day-to-day realities of running a farm. Your insights will help shape future support, resources, and advocacy efforts. Come lend your voice and help guide solutions rooted in real experience. Food is provided.

2

MEET N' GREET FOR NON-MEMBERS

Sunday · 8:00–8:15am · Crystal Ballroom

Want to learn more about becoming a member of VABF? This is the perfect opportunity! Grab your breakfast and join our team for a quick, 15-minute overview of all things related to membership. You'll hear about upcoming activities, special events, resources available to you, and more.

3

"FARMING IS FUNNY" COMEDY SHOW

with *Big Lick Conspiracy*
local improv comedy group
Friday Night! 7:30 PM – 9:00 PM
Washington Lecture Hall



Every farmer deserves a night off and we've got you covered! Our friends at Big Lick Conspiracy are gearing up to deliver a laugh-packed improv show at the "Farming is Funny" Comedy Show. What's the funniest thing you've seen on the farm? With scenes inspired by real farm life, unpredictable audience suggestions, and the troupe's signature playful chaos, they'll turn everyday farm life into comedy gold and laugh-out-loud moments, celebrating the grit, quirks, and heart of agriculture in the most entertaining way possible. Bring the kids and come unwind with a show that celebrates the heart of farming.

SILENT AUCTION

BENEFITTING VABF - ROANOKE BALLROOM

Bid on
an array of fun
items donated
by farmers and
local business
owners!



BIDDING HOURS

SATURDAY
7:00AM - 5:30PM
SUNDAY
7:00AM - 2:00PM

INSTRUCTIONS

- Add your name, bid amount, and contact info to the list at each table.
- Check your texts & email for winning notifications.
- Pick up your prize at the Registration Desk between 3:00-4:00PM Sunday.

FIRESIDE CHATS

Mill Mountain

Designed as an informal and collaborative discussion space for attendees to discuss emerging issues.
Descriptions provided on listed pages.

Saturday

5:30-6:15PM Compost Regulations
with representatives of the
Department of Environmental
Quality (DEQ) (Page 19)

Sunday

10:00-10:45AM Protecting and Decommodifying
Farmland in SW Virginia
with Southwest Virginia Agrarian
Commons (Page 23)

11:00-12:00PM Feasibility of Shared Freezer
Space for Meat Producers
with Adam Taylor and
Mo McGonagle (Page 25)

Book Signings



Signings will be held at the
Stone Soup Book Nook in
the North Entry Foyer.

Saturday

10:10-10:30 AM Nate Miller
Jane Hawley Stevens

3:40-4:00 PM Nicky Schauder
Trevor Piersol

5:40-6:00 PM Franco Fubini
Pam Dawling

Sunday

10:10-10:30 AM Pam Dawling

12:10-12:30 PM Jeff Poppen
Christopher Parker



GOOD BEER STARTS WITH GREAT FARMERS.

6:00-9:00PM January 10, 2026

Raise a glass to good beer and good soil! Every dollar spent at Golden Cactus Brewing on the night of January 10th supports the Virginia Biological Farming Association (VABF). VABF connects growers with training, resources, and each other, building a resilient farming network that keeps Virginia delicious - from the ground to your glass! Swing by to grab a bite, sip a drink, & make new friends.

Better soil, Better beer, Better cheers.



TASTE OF VIRGINIA EXPO & MARKET

at the Virginia Biological Farming Conference

SATURDAY, JANUARY 10TH, 2026
12:00 PM - 6:00 PM
CRYSTAL BALLROOM

Free Event · Open to the Public

Pre-Conference

Friday, January 9, 2026

SESSION AM: 8:30 AM – 12:00 PM			
Season Extension for Vegetables	Pam Dawling	<i>Shenandoah B</i>	
SESSION AM: 9:00 AM – 12:00 PM			
Contour Lines in Agroforestry Design	Thomas Leonard	<i>Shenandoah A</i>	
Medicinal Herb Cultivation: Horticulture of Herbs	Jane Hawley Stevens	<i>Pocahontas</i>	
High Tunnel Tomatoes: Pivotal Lessons from Seed to Sale	Garrett Waters	<i>Appalachian</i>	
LUNCH BUFFET: 12:00 PM – 1:00 PM		<i>Regency Dining Room</i>	
SESSION PM: 1:00 PM – 4:00 PM			
Getting Started With Hiring Farm Staff	Sally Walker	<i>Shenandoah A</i>	
Flower Farming for Beginners	Liza Dobson & Gwynn Hamilton	<i>Pocahontas</i>	
SESSION PM: 1:30 PM – 4:30 PM			
Garden Variety Harvest Farm Tour	Cam Terry & Chloe Johnson	<i>Lick Run Farm – Offsite</i>	
SESSION PM: 1:00 PM – 5:00 PM			
Ethical Seed Farming: A Hands-On Intensive	Ira Wallace Seed School	<i>Shenandoah B</i>	
EVENING ACTIVITIES			
6:00 PM – 6:30 PM	VABF Business Meeting	Seyra Whitney	<i>Shenandoah B</i>
6:30 PM – 7:30 PM	Farmer Listening Session	Seyra Whitney	<i>Staff Hospitality Room</i>
7:30 PM – 9:00 PM	Farming is Funny Comedy Show	Brent Wills & BLC	<i>Washington Lecture Hall</i>

Pre-Conference Session Descriptions

SEASON EXTENSION FOR VEGETABLES

Out-of-season crops can generate premium returns, making strategic planning essential for growers seeking efficiency and sustainability. This workshop examines how careful scheduling, crop selection, and protective measures enable year-round production while balancing energy and economic considerations. Participants will explore techniques for extending the season in both warm and cold climates. In hot weather, strategies include promoting seed germination, maintaining crop health through cooling and irrigation, and managing pests effectively. In cooler seasons, methods focus on advancing spring crops, prolonging fall harvests, and cultivating cold-hardy varieties throughout winter. The session highlights three levels of cold-hardiness and demonstrates how protective structures such as hoop houses support resilience. Additionally, participants will learn which vegetables are best suited for storage and practical preservation methods to ensure availability beyond the traditional growing season.

CONTOUR LINES IN AGROFORESTRY DESIGN

Contour Lines Corp offers free trees and technical assistance to farmers committed to soil conservation and regenerative land management. This hands-on workshop is designed to train landowners in how to efficiently and effectively transition land to agroforestry systems. In this field-based session, participants will learn how to: mark contour lines on the landscape; excavate berms and swales that maximize weed control and conserve soil; efficiently plant bareroot seedlings; integrate nitrogen-fixing support species; mulch trees and establish cover crops. This workshop is ideal for landowners, farmers, and community members interested in applying for the Contour Lines Tree Planting Grant. You'll leave with the skills to begin implementation—and a clear understanding of what our programs require and how they work.

MEDICINAL HERB CULTIVATION: HORTICULTURE OF HERBS

7 Herb sales continue to rise with more awareness of their unlimited healing potential. With this increased demand for herbs, more growers are needed. Four Elements produces over 80 species of medicinal herbs

totaling over 2000 pounds of dried herbs on under five acres on their 130-acre farm. Join Jane and learn to cultivate potent plants of beauty, texture, and scent, or simply learn the horticulture of herbs for fun and increased well-being in your garden. Certified organic since 1989, Jane will cover organic methods and offer information from her book, *The Celestial Garden, Growing Herbs, Vegetables and Flowers According to the Moon and the Zodiac*.

HIGH TUNNEL TOMATOES: PIVOTAL LESSONS FROM SEED TO SALE

This presentation will provide a practical, start-to-finish guide to producing high-yield high tunnel tomatoes. Drawing on five years of experience as a tomato tunnel lead between Glade Road Growing and Washington State University Organic Farm, the presenter will cover every stage of the process, from selecting the best cultivars to grafting basics to bed preparation and fertility management using foliar and fertigation techniques. Attendees will also explore strategies for pest and disease management, highly efficient trellising systems, and developing standard operating procedures (SOPs) to streamline task management. The talk will conclude with a look at average yields, storage and sales techniques, and annual sales data, offering a complete economic and production picture of a profitable high tunnel tomato operation.

GETTING STARTED WITH HIRING FARM STAFF: A PLAYBOOK TO HELP THEM HELP YOU

Building a tuned-in staff allows you the mental and physical energy to move towards your dream farm picture. Hiring is also a committed, long-game endeavor with lots of moving parts. The presenter will deep-dive into a nuts-and-bolts approach to hiring, onboarding, coaching new hires for quality outcomes, delivering feedback, setting expectations (especially of yourself), retaining farm workers year after year, and staff time management. Attendees will walk away with an understanding of what all you can learn from your staff, along with an action plan for a more economically sustainable (and staffed) farm.

FLOWER FARMING FOR BEGINNERS: THINGS TO CONSIDER BEFORE STARTING YOUR OWN OPERATION!

Thinking about starting a small flower farm? Let us help you prepare and plan for what's ahead! With over 30 years of farming experience together, Liza and Gwynn will share their wins, losses, suggestions, and considerations to help set you up for success. From the minutia of seeds to the enormity of sales, let's work through the parts of starting and maintaining a profitable flower enterprise. Topics will span infrastructure, crop selection, labor, timelines, schedules, materials, market outlets, and more. This is the workshop every flower farmer wishes they'd had before they got started!

GARDEN VARIETY HARVEST FARM TOUR (1626 10TH ST NW) (PARKING LIMITED, CARPOOLING ENCOURAGED)

Join farmers Cam Terry and Chloe Johnson with the Garden Variety Harvests team for a tour of Lick Run Farm, two miles from Hotel Roanoke in NW Roanoke City. Owned by a community land trust, Lick Run Farm is a 3.5 acre property cultivating a diverse array of vegetables and flowers for direct sales in local farmers markets and restaurants. They run farm education programs for nearby youth and a sliding-scale "veggie club" for neighbors of the farm. The farm tour will include a hands-on irrigation workshop by Berry Hill Drip focused on how to leverage alternative products and approaches with intensive vegetable production.

ETHICAL SEED FARMING: A HANDS-ON INTENSIVE

Seed saving is a crucial component of the agricultural cycle often left out of beginner farmer training. This half-day seed intensive hosted by the Ira Wallace Seed School will focus on hands-on seed saving and processing techniques, as well as discussions around critical topics in the seed world. Presenters will offer live demonstrations of seed processing techniques, including threshing, winnowing, screening, fermentation, drying, storage, and germination; discussions on the plant life cycle, flower and seed production, and the history of human intervention in co-creating food crops; discussions around critical topics in the seed world, including community and cooperative-based seed work, the history of consolidation of seed businesses, and seeds as tools of empowerment; and self-reflective storytelling on seeds and food.

Instructors: Chris Keeve, Veronica Limeberry, Tomia MacQueen, and AmyRose Foll.

Presenter Bios



Evaluations





MEET THE 2026 TRADESHOW EXHIBITORS

Tradeshow Hours

Saturday 8:00AM – 6:00PM & Sunday 8:00AM – 4:00PM

- All-Farm Organics
- Seven Springs Farm Supply
- Book Publishing Company
- Rimol Greenhouse Systems
- VSU Small Farm Outreach Program
- Weston A. Price Foundation
- Appalachian Sustainable Development
- Virginia Tech-OMALS Program
- Shepherd University's Agricultural Innovation Center at Tabler Farm
- Colonial SWCD
- BCS America
- Virginia Soil Health Coalition
- Quality Certification Services
- HERD Ventures
- National Center for Appropriate Technology
- Common Wealth Seed Growers
- Shenandoah Permaculture Institute
- VDACS
- Virginia Agroecology Services
- Organic Mechanics Soil Company
- American Farmland Trust
- Foodshed Capital
- Virginia Tech Center for Food Systems and Community Transformation
- Virginia Tech Beginning Farmer and Rancher Coalition
- Transition to Organic Partnership Program/ PCO
- AgrAbility Virginia
- Dircraft Living Soil
- Stone Soup Books
- VAFAIRS/VA Farm Bureau
- Renewal by Andersen
- Orisha
- Good Agriculture
- Virginia Cooperative Extension
- Intertribal Agriculture Council
- Certified Naturally Grown
- VSU College of Agriculture, Cooperative Extension
- SWVA BioChar
- Floyd EcoVillage
- Carilion Clinic
- Roanoke Foodshed Network
- AgLaunch
- Central Virginia Agrarian Commons
- Ujamaa Cooperative Farming Alliance
- Johnny's Selected Seeds
- Four Elements Organic Herbals
- Southern Exposure
- Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation



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Session A: 8:30 AM - 10:00 AM

Saturday, January 10, 2026

Track	Title	Presenters	Room
Seed Saving	On-Farm Plant Breeding and Variety Trials Research	Edmund Frost	Shenandoah B
Community	Addressing Food System Resilience in Virginia Together: A Listening Session	Lia Kelinsky-Jones & Kim Niewolny	Lecture Hall
Marketing & Business	Setting up a Successful Equipment Share	Logan Twardy	Pocahontas
Farm Systems	Landscaping with Edible Native Plants	Nate Miller	Buck Mountain
Animals	The Care and Keeping of Poultry: Chickens, Ducks Geese and Turkeys	Tomia MacQueen	Monroe
Policy & Business	Farm Law for Farmers	Gray Montrose	Wilson
Agroforestry	Agroforestry for Your Small Farm	Stesha Warren	Appalachian
Farm Systems	A Progressive View of the Traditional Practice of Gardening by the Moon	Jane Hawley Stevens	Shenandoah A

Session A Descriptions

ON-FARM PLANT BREEDING AND VARIETY TRIALS RESEARCH

This session is an introduction to the how's and why's of plant breeding and variety trials research for farmers. Edmund Frost's work with cucumbers, squash, melons, tomatoes, peppers and more will serve as examples, with the goal of helping participants identify and workshop potential projects that are both needed and doable on their farms. More farmers doing this work in our region has the potential to significantly improve the seed options and outcomes available to us all and is an important part of creating and sustaining healthy seed systems.

ADDRESSING FOOD SYSTEM RESILIENCE IN VIRGINIA TOGETHER: A LISTENING SESSION

A resilient food system is essential to the health, economic vitality, and sustainability of communities across Virginia. As environmental and social disruptions grow, resilience requires coordinated, statewide efforts. This session, part of a seed project led by Virginia Tech, Virginia Cooperative Extension, and Virginia State University, will engage farmers, growers, and food system stakeholders in defining resilience, exploring its practical applications, and identifying opportunities to strengthen it. The program begins with an overview of key elements of food system resilience, followed by a discussion of current strengths and future opportunities for building resilience across Virginia. A central goal is to foster a statewide community of individuals and organizations committed to advancing resilience across Virginia's food system.

SETTING UP A SUCCESSFUL EQUIPMENT SHARE

This session will explore various models of equipment sharing, highlighting different levels of organization and investment. Participants will examine common challenges that hinder success and learn practical strategies to avoid them. The presenter will provide sample budgets and agreements, offering guidance on key considerations and planning steps necessary to establish a strong foundation. Emphasis will be placed on how thoughtful preparation enables growth, including expanding membership and acquiring additional equipment to strengthen the model over time.

LANDSCAPING WITH EDIBLE NATIVE PLANTS

This workshop highlights the use of native edible plants to support biodiversity and strengthen food security by incorporating species adapted to the climate and habitats of the Southeastern United States. Many of these plants are unfamiliar to the general public, yet they offer significant ecological and nutritional benefits. Drawing on the EONS design framework—Edible, Ornamental, and Native Plants with Sustainable Methods—Tweardy will demonstrate how to create landscapes that are visually appealing, seasonally dynamic, and compliant with neighborhood and HOA standards. Participants will explore practical strategies for integrating native edibles into residential and community spaces, from trees such as Butternut to groundcovers like Parridgeberry, while learning how thoughtful design can balance aesthetics, functionality, and sustainability.

THE CARE AND KEEPING OF POULTRY: CHICKENS, DUCKS, GEESE AND TURKEYS

Learn everything you need to know to raise happy chickens, ducks, geese and turkeys, and make money in the process. This workshop will cover care and keeping, safety and breeding, and basic pest and disease management. Also, learn how to incorporate them into your farm or garden in a way that allows them freedom and fun and reduces work for you.

FARM LAW FOR FARMERS

Gray Montrose, herself an urban farmer, will provide an overview of basic legal concepts for small and urban farmers. Topics will include a primer on local ordinances, the Virginia Right to Farm Act (RTFA) and important RTFA case law, cottage food and farm stand laws, and resources for folks with legal needs.

AGROFORESTRY FOR YOUR SMALL FARM

Agroforestry is not a set of new practices, it has been around for centuries in various forms and cultures. Today we are seeing these practices reemerge in the forms of alley cropping, forest farming, silvopasture, riparian buffers and windbreaks. These approaches are gaining in popularity across small- and large-scale producers. The purpose of this class is to introduce agroforestry concepts that can be incorporated into the everyday homestead or small-scale farm for crop and wildlife diversity, multi-revenues of income, soil and water protection, and a host of other benefits. Participants will gain a high-level understanding of how to take these concepts and apply them to their land through presentation of design considerations, conversations and situational case study for hands-on application.

A PROGRESSIVE VIEW OF THE TRADITIONAL PRACTICE OF GARDENING BY THE MOON

This workshop explores an ancient agricultural system that integrates lunar cycles and elemental influences into organic farming. While often overlooked in today's mechanized world, these methods have guided successful cultivation for centuries. Drawing on more than 35 years of practice, the presenter will demonstrate how aligning farming activities with Moon phases and the elemental rhythms of Fire, Earth, Air, and Water can enhance efficiency and harmony in organic herb production. Participants will learn how shifting dry and moist influences—observable in tides—inform planting and harvesting schedules. The session will explain how lunar phases affect the water table, how elemental shifts every three days create wet and dry cycles, and how the relationship between people, plants, and planets reveals a synthesis uniting all life.

Presenter Bios



Evaluations



Session B: 10:30 AM – 12:00 PM

Saturday, January 10, 2026

Track	Title	Presenters	Room
Community	The Labor Issue, Community Building, and Making Farming Fun Again	Jeff Poppen	Shenandoah B
Marketing & Business	Collaborative Marketing & Distribution: Edible Goose Creek's Community Supported Adventures	Nancy Maurelli, Anna Wills, & Ruth Reyer	Lecture Hall
Farm Systems	Mechanize to Maximize: Scaling Your Flower Farm and Preserving Your Body	Chelsea Belle Graves	Pocahontas
Crop Specifics	Optimizing a Regenerative Microgreens Operation: Low-Input, High-Profit Growing Systems	Nicky & David Schauder	Buck Mountain
Soil Health	Exploring Soil Biota: Who is in Your Soil? What are They Doing? How can They be Managed?	Ashley Jernigan	Monroe
Animals	Cover Crop Grazing Project	Taylor Adam & Daniel Austin	Wilson
Farm Systems	From Bare Ground to a Thriving Habitat, a Practical Roadmap for a Regenerative Homestead	Joseph Martinez	Appalachian
Seed Saving	Genetic Diversity Preservation of Culturally Significant Seeds	Amyrose Foll	Shenandoah A

Session B Descriptions

THE LABOR ISSUE, COMMUNITY BUILDING, AND MAKING FARMING FUN AGAIN

Small farmers have a hard time making ends meet if they spend a lot on labor. Opening the farm up for gatherings, camping, hiking, swimming and learning opportunities can build a farm community willing to help with labor in exchange for something besides money. Presenters will discuss various options such as internships, bartering, collaborations, gleaning, hobos and other forms of non-monetary compensation practiced by parsimonious farmers in the past and present.

COLLABORATIVE MARKETING & DISTRIBUTION: EDIBLE GOOSE CREEK'S COMMUNITY SUPPORTED ADVENTURES

Interested in more direct-to-customer sales? Burned out on the work of attending farmers markets? Feel timid about "going it alone" with a CSA/subscription program? It might be time to consider collaborating with your fellow farmers to extend your reach and develop loyal customers. Edible Goose Creek producers discuss the nine-year evolution of their collaborative marketing and distribution methods. Learn from their adventures in developing a network that makes it easier for small scale growers/producers/artisans to reach their market with less stress and work. They will cover how we handle administrative details; communications; customer relations and retention; website; a customized CSA selection process; money management; and leave plenty of time for your questions, too.

MECHANIZE TO MAXIMIZE: SCALING YOUR FLOWER FARM AND PRESERVING YOUR BODY

Efficient, scalable systems are essential for the long-term success of cut flower operations. This session will explore practical applications of mechanization tailored to the unique workflows of flower farming—from bed prep and transplanting to harvest and post-harvest handling. Learn how to evaluate and integrate tools and equipment that reduce physical strain, improve labor efficiency, and support farm scalability. The presentation is ideal for growers seeking data-informed strategies to optimize production while minimizing wear on the body.

OPTIMIZING A REGENERATIVE MICROGREENS OPERATION: LOW-INPUT, HIGH-PROFIT GROWING SYSTEMS

Looking to grow a thriving microgreens business that's profitable and sustainable? In this behind-the-scenes session, Dave and Nicky share how they are transitioning to a closed-loop, soil-based microgreens

operation that supplies local chefs and markets, without relying on costly inputs like Promix or aquaponics. Attendees will get a detailed look at product streams currently tested, learn how they grow nutrient-dense greens using regenerative practices, calculate profit per tray, and adapt their packaging models for different markets. This session is ideal for small farmers, homesteaders, or market gardeners looking to diversify income with low-overhead, fast-turnaround crops. With real-world numbers, workflows, and lessons learned, you'll leave with practical tools to grow microgreens profitably while keeping your operation earth-friendly and financially resilient.

EXPLORING SOIL BIOTA: WHO IS IN YOUR SOIL? WHAT ARE THEY DOING? HOW CAN THEY BE MANAGED?

In this session participants will dive into the field of soil ecology, the study of the relationships between living organisms and their physical environment (abiotic and biotic) within the soil. Soil biota will be described by their taxonomy, size classifications, feeding behaviors and more. The different methods used for measuring different groups of biota will be discussed, with live demonstrations of methods including modified Berlese funnels (microarthropods), Baermann funnels (nematodes), and floatation techniques (weevils, beetles, etc.). Methods for how to easily measure the feeding activity of soil biota will also be covered. The ecosystem services and biological processes that are driven by these different organisms will be discussed. The session will then cover how soil biota can be managed to enhance soil health and promote the ecosystem services they provide.

COVER CROP GRAZING PROJECT

Many areas in Virginia grow row crops, which may or may not be followed by cover crops after harvest. During harvest season, producers are often too busy with cash crop collection to prioritize early cover crop planting. This gap creates a prime opportunity for livestock producers to lead in early cover crop establishment and boosting access to high-quality, affordable forage. This session will provide livestock producers with practical tips and tricks on how to economically and successfully sublease cropland for the purpose of expanding their total grazable acres. In addition, presenters will review some challenges that livestock producers can face when grazing cover crops and provide some helpful resources to help overcome these potential obstacles. Content discussed will stem from research and the Cover Crop Grazing Project managed by American Farmland Trust along with research conducted by others across the US.

FROM BARE GROUND TO A THRIVING HABITAT, A PRACTICAL ROADMAP FOR A REGENERATIVE HOMESTEAD

This colorful presentation describes the transformation of a 10-acre unimproved pasture into a biologically abundant and ecologically diverse homestead in Rockbridge County, Virginia. Joseph Martinez's mission has been to demonstrate that agriculture and native wildlife can coexist in harmony. Topics addressed include restoring soil microbiology; choosing resilient trees and perennial plants; maintaining wild areas; linking native habitats with agriculture; encouraging local insect predators and prey, etc. The presentation will be followed by a time for discussion and questions.

GENETIC DIVERSITY PRESERVATION OF CULTURALLY SIGNIFICANT SEEDS

When you begin your journey by starting to save the seeds from plants you've grown and plant them again in subsequent years you become part of a cultural ritual 10,000 years old. That ritual gave us the bounty through which each and every one of our world's unique culinary traditions were born and developed all the food we eat from their wild ancestors. When we look to the past, none of us, from any heritage, or walk of life has to go back many generations to find a farmer in the family, and a connection to these seeds. By saving seeds, you are living your farming ancestor's legacy of strength and resilience, and protecting that sense of place which grows out of our shared traditions.

Presenter Bios



Evaluations





Keynote: Bonnetta Adeeb

Saturday, January 10

12:45 PM · Roanoke Ballroom



“The Unlikely Story of How a Small Community and Youth-Based Non-Profit took on the Goliath of Seed Insecurity and Became the Ujamaa Cooperative Farming Alliance”

This keynote presentation covers a journey of discovery from youth enrolled in a STEM program based in Southern Maryland, to the development of a Ujamaa Cooperative Farming Alliance (UCFA) and Ujamaa Seeds. The link between contemporary foodways, agricultural traditions and attitudes are being stitched together. Culturally meaningful seed crops, and indigenous knowledge once thought lost, are being excavated from a bitter past. Using heirloom seeds, UCFA endeavors to recover these heirloom seeds, oral histories, and agricultural technologies that help build the economy of the United States. By growing and saving heirloom seeds, we are conserving the biodiversity of both the people and plants. We will discuss crops of Africa, and some ancestral knowledge which holds promise for our future within the landrace crops. Our aim is to make these lessons available to future generations.



Bonnetta Adeeb is the founder and President of STEAM ONWARD, Inc., a non-profit dedicated to expanding opportunities for minority and underserved youth in STEM fields. A retired educator with 37 years of experience, she has devoted her career to empowering young people through hands-on learning, community engagement, and environmental stewardship. Ms. Adeeb also co-founded the Ujamaa Cooperative Farming Alliance and Ujamaa Seeds, initiatives that strengthen food sovereignty by increasing access to culturally meaningful, regionally adapted seeds. As a Commissioner with the Cooperative Gardens Commission, she helps distribute free heirloom seeds to more than 300 seed hubs nationwide, supporting families, schools, churches, and community gardens. Under her leadership, STEAM ONWARD's youth have created community demonstration gardens, restoration projects, and an orchard in Waldorf, Maryland. They also launched Nature's Knights, a Chesapeake Bay regional initiative promoting environmental justice, food sustainability, and water quality. Ms. Adeeb recently served as Principal Investigator for a Northeast SARE Research for Novel Approaches grant, advancing UCFA's mission to bring culturally meaningful crops to market while addressing food justice and climate adaptation across the region. Above all, she is a passionate educator and community leader who has dedicated her life to the empowerment and advancement of others.



FARM TO TABLE

One of the most anticipated highlights of the VABF Conference is the chance to enjoy delicious farm-to-table meals crafted from the freshest ingredients sourced directly from local farmers. Each dish celebrates the bounty of Virginia's fields, orchards, and pastures, offering attendees a true taste of the region's rich agricultural heritage. From vibrant seasonal produce to sustainably raised meats and fresh cheeses, every bite reflects the conference's commitment to supporting local growers and building resilient food systems. Gather with fellow participants to share meals that nourish both body and community—because at VABF, eating local is more than a meal, it's a movement.

THANK YOU TO OUR 2026 FARMERS

- 1Tribe Farm
- Belmont Peanuts
- Central PA Produce Co Op
- Deep Roots Milling
- Farmer D
- Farmer Foodshare
- Franklin Sustainable
- Full Circle Bloom Farm
- Garden Variety Harvests
- Happy Dirt
- Hungry Hill
- Joyce Farms
- Kilmers Orchard
- Kirby Farms
- Lady Moon Farm
- Lucky Moon Gardens
- Mountain View
- Mt. Crawford Creamery
- Old Tavern
- Pequea Valley
- River Valley Farm
- Saunders Orchard
- Schofield Farm
- Seaman's Orchard
- Shalom Farms
- South Mountain Creamery
- Sugar Tree
- Timeless Seeds
- Van Dessel Farms
- Whiffletree Farm
- Willie Mae Farms



Session C: 2:00 PM - 3:30 PM

Saturday, January 10, 2026

Track	Title	Presenters	Room
Farm Systems	Never Stop Harvesting: Multi-Season Crop Plans for Diverse & Profitable Yields	Nicky & David Schauder	Shenandoah B
Marketing & Business	The Never Ending Journey to Becoming a Better Manager	Panel	Lecture Hall
Marketing & Business	Seen and HERD: Story-First Marketing for Farmers and Foodmakers	Daniel James	Pocahontas
Farm Systems	Growing Perennial Fruit in the Mid-Atlantic	Trevor Piersol	Buck Mountain
Marketing & Business	Is Organic Certification Right for You?	Meredith Morgan & Wren Frueh	Monroe
Agroforestry	Silvopasture Outside the Box	Emilie Twardy	Wilson
Farm Systems	Does That Stuff Really Work? Field Evaluations of OMRI-Approved Insecticides	Tom Kuhar	Appalachian
Community	Farmers Markets and Farmers Working Together for Farmer Viability	Panel	Shenandoah A

Session C Descriptions

NEVER STOP HARVESTING: MULTI-SEASON CROP PLANS FOR DIVERSE & PROFITABLE YIELDS

What if you could turn a small garden into a powerhouse of year-round production? Inspired by *Miraculous Abundance* and John Jeavons' Grow Biointensive method, this session explores crop rotation strategies across spring, summer, and fall to maximize yield in limited space. Dave Schauder of Permaculture Gardens will share proven techniques from their 3-acre Bethany Farm, where intensive growing sustains both family and community. Participants will learn how to time crop transitions to minimize downtime, select varieties suited to Virginia's climate, and build soil fertility while harvesting high-output crops. Whether working with raised beds or larger plots, attendees will gain a practical rotation formula to enhance productivity, biodiversity, and soil health throughout the growing season.

THE NEVER-ENDING JOURNEY TO BECOMING A BETTER MANAGER

Like all businesses, running a successful farm is about people. The panelists in this session will reflect on their combined 62 years' experience managing employees on their diversified vegetable and flower farms. Hear how their strategies for setting expectations, delegating responsibility, evaluating performance, and giving praise have evolved over time. The journey to become a better manager requires self-work: learning to manage emotions, being accountable, building confidence, and accepting people for who they are, including yourself. This discussion is sure to be packed with candid stories of management stumbles, personal growth, and field-tested strategies for effective communication with farm employees.

SEEN AND HERD: STORY-FIRST MARKETING FOR FARMERS AND FOODMAKERS

You want to build trust with customers, grow without burning out, and tell your story in a way that actually works. Your farm, food business, or nonprofit already has a story. That's the good news. But if people aren't seeing it, connecting with it, or remembering it, then that story isn't doing its job. This workshop will help you start shaping a brand story that reflects your values and builds connection. We'll cover story archetypes, the four photos every business should have, and how to organize and reuse content without spinning your wheels. You'll get ideas for what to say, where to share it, and how to use social media as a trailhead instead of a time trap. You'll leave with a clearer direction, a few key tools, and a structure you can keep building on. This is a practical, story-first approach to showing people why your work matters.

GROWING PERENNIAL FRUIT IN THE MID-ATLANTIC

An overview of strategies and techniques for growing perennial fruits and berries using organic practices, with a focus on the crops that have been most successful at Wild Rose Orchard in Mount Sidney, Virginia.

IS ORGANIC CERTIFICATION RIGHT FOR YOU?

Certifications can open doors for farms and businesses, but navigating the process can feel overwhelming. This session will break down what USDA organic certification entails, provide an overview of the process, explore what "regenerative" certification can mean in today's marketplace, and discuss key considerations for those seeking an organic or regenerative certification. Whether you're curious about requirements, benefits, or practical steps, this talk will provide clarity and resources to help you make informed decisions.

SILVOPASTURE OUTSIDE THE BOX

You've probably heard about Silvopasture by now, so let's look at some innovative examples from folks who are modeling natural system to create really interesting and productive landscapes. There will be a brief introduction to silvopasture and discussion of available funding for installation followed by case study examples from folks in the field who are pushing the envelope with their forward-thinking practices.

DOES THAT STUFF REALLY WORK? FIELD EVALUATIONS OF OMRI-APPROVED INSECTICIDES

A wide range of home remedies and commercial products are touted as effective solutions for insect pest problems on vegetable crops. The presenter will provide a review of several of these products including field efficacy data from experiments conducted in Virginia. The last 30 minutes will be opened up for discussion and sharing of information.

FARMERS MARKETS AND FARMERS WORKING TOGETHER FOR FARMER VIABILITY

This panel session will explore the relationship between farmers and farmers markets. Farmers Markets can serve as a launching pad for farm businesses, access to new farm business customers, a steady sales opportunity for farm products, and/or an integral part of a diversified farm production model. In the session, three pairs of farmers market managers and farmer vendors will explore how farmers and farmers markets can work together to support their separate and overlapping goals.

Presenter Bios



Evaluations



Session D: 4:00 PM - 5:30 PM

Saturday, January 10, 2026

Track	Title	Presenters	Room
Farm Systems	Crop Planning for Sustainable Vegetable Production	Pam Dawling	<i>Shenandoah B</i>
Community	Organic Options: Practical Paths to Market Expansion	Panel	<i>Lecture Hall</i>
Soil Health	Converting Organic Waste into Biochar and Compost	Jack Wall & Jeff Wade	<i>Pocahontas</i>
Crop Specifics	Beekeeping Basics & Beyond	Eric Fuchs-Stengel	<i>Buck Mountain</i>
Farm Systems	Grow Vegetables Without Plastic: Practical Tractor Techniques for 1-10 Acres	Jason Pall	<i>Monroe</i>
Marketing & Business	Getting the Guts to Raise Your Prices	Sally Walker	<i>Wilson</i>
Marketing & Business	Strategic Diversification: How to Create an Array of Products from a Short Crop List	Kat Johnson	<i>Appalachian</i>
Marketing & Business	Preserving Flavor & Artistry: A Case Study in Venetian Radicchio and Knowledge Transfer	Franco Fubini & Will Dorman	<i>Shenandoah A</i>
Fireside Chat 5:30-6:15PM	Compost Regulations	Department of Environmental Quality	<i>Mill Mountain</i>

Session D Descriptions

CROP PLANNING FOR SUSTAINABLE VEGETABLE PRODUCTION

A step-by-step approach to closing the planning circle, so that you can produce crops when you want them and in the right quantities, so you can sell them where and when you need to and support yourself with a rewarding livelihood while replenishing the soil. Never repeat the same mistake two years running!

This workshop will provide planning tools for diversified vegetable production while considering income, markets, crops, scheduling and mapping. You'll also learn various fine-tuning tricks to fit more in and improve your plans each year.

ORGANIC OPTIONS: PRACTICAL PATHS TO MARKET EXPANSION

This panel brings together growers and buyers across different production approaches to have an honest, practical conversation about where small farms can expand their markets. We'll explore opportunities in direct-to-consumer sales, restaurants, retail, wholesale, and institutional purchasing, with a focus on building stable pricing, reliable volume, and long-term buyer relationships. For farms that are certified organic, in transition, or considering the option, we'll offer a clear look at how organic certification can factor into market access and pricing, what changes on the farm, what support exists, and where certification can open doors. The emphasis is on informed choice. Farmers who are transitioning will gain valuable next steps. Farmers who are certified will learn strategies to deepen market capacity. Farmers who are curious will walk away with a grounded understanding of whether organic market participation aligns with their goals and bottom line. Buyers will share real data and purchasing insight, what they need, what works, and how to build strong, value-aligned partnerships across all scales.

CONVERTING ORGANIC WASTE INTO BIOCHAR AND COMPOST

Biological farming requires quality compost as a soil amendment. Our communities throw away large amounts of wood, food and other organic materials that could be made into quality compost. The benefits are reduced waste in landfills, reduced greenhouse gas emissions, improved soil and sequestering carbon in the soil.

19 Learn about how this circular economy can be created in your community.

BEEKEEPING BASICS & BEEYOND

Honeybees can be a great addition to your farm and life but are challenging to raise successfully. These special insects can increase annual crop yield, inspire your farm team, and provide you with energizing honey. In this session we will cover the fundamentals of beekeeping including hive placement, varroa and pest management, as well as honey production and winter survival. We will learn about the best management practices and common mistakes to avoid for new beekeepers.

GROW VEGETABLES WITHOUT PLASTIC: PRACTICAL TRACTOR TECHNIQUES FOR 1–10 ACRES

Want to ditch plastic mulch but still keep weeds under control? This session is for beginner and mid-scale organic farmers growing 1–10 acres of vegetables. We'll share practical, farm-tested tractor cultivation methods that eliminate the need for plastic while keeping your system productive and manageable. Learn how to prepare beds, control weeds, and plan labor and timing for a clean, efficient growing system—from planting to harvest. We'll walk through the specific tools we use on our own organic farm, along with strategies that work for both intensive and extensive production styles. You'll leave with clear, actionable steps to create a weed-free system that's simple, cost-effective, and easy on your body.

GETTING THE GUTS TO RAISE YOUR PRICES

You grow one of the most nutritious products in Virginia. Are you being paid a fair price for it, one that enables you to farm for years to come? Here we'll tackle the hard mental work of getting your prices up to support a thriving income for you. We'll go into why your prices likely need to be much higher than you think to support you and your operation and key strategies (besides just profit & loss calculations) to raise your prices with confidence. We'll address relationship building with a clientele that trusts you and techniques on how your prices and products can serve customers from all walks of life.

STRATEGIC DIVERSIFICATION: HOW TO CREATE AN ARRAY OF PRODUCTS FROM A SHORT CROP LIST

In this interactive session, Kat the Farmer will take participants beyond the usual advice to 'diversify' and explore strategic diversification within a niche. The key? Creating an array of products from a short crop list! Kat will demonstrate how she's turned her most valuable crop—salad greens--into profitable value-added products, while reducing waste and increasing average order size. Kat will use examples from her own operation and inspire you to rethink your harvests to add profit and loyalty to your market offerings.

PRESERVING FLAVOR & ARTISTRY: A CASE STUDY IN VENETIAN RADICCHIO AND KNOWLEDGE TRANSFER

Franco Fubini in conversation with Will Dorman will explore one of Natoora's most ambitious preservation projects: bringing traditional Venetian radicchio to the farms and tables of the Northeast US. Franco will share how two decades of building a flavor-first supply chain led to this living example of preservation through education – from connecting Vermont grower Amanda with master growers in Veneto, to adapting time-honored forcing techniques for new climates. Attendees will taste radicchio while learning its varietal diversity, cultural history, and the patience it demands to grow well. The session will weigh local vs. imported through full life-cycle analysis, showing how knowledge transfer and chef-driven demand can create markets that allow small-scale, high-flavor crops to thrive. Beyond radicchio, this is a blueprint for aligning sourcing with flavor to protect biodiversity, sustain traditions, and transform farming economics.

FIRESIDE CHAT 5:30 – 6:15 PM

COMPOST REGULATIONS

Come for an informal meeting with representatives of the Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) on the recent public comment and proposed change in composting regulations that may affect your business. Current regulations will be discussed for those interested in making compost at commercial scale.

Presenter Bios



Evaluations



BUYER/GROWER EXPO

Join the Virginia Association for Biological Farming (VABF), the Rodale Institute, and the Roanoke Foodshed Network (RFN) for a Buyer/Grower Expo, part of the 2026 VABF Conference. This event connects farmers, food producers, distributors, restaurants, institutions, and retailers who are passionate about sourcing and supplying local, sustainable food. *This event is supported by NTL TOPP, Farm Credit of the Virginia's, and Certified Naturally Grown.*

10–JAN. 2026

Event Schedule

4:00–5:30 PM

Buyer/Grower Panel Discussion

The Hotel Roanoke, 110 Shenandoah Ave NW, Roanoke

6:00–8:00 PM

Buyer/Grower Social

Taubman Museum of Art, 110 Salem Ave SE, Roanoke

8:00–9:00 PM

Gallery Walk

Taubman Museum of Art

REGISTER TO ATTEND!



<https://tinyurl.com/6mfvf6ut>

WHO SHOULD PARTICIPATE:

FARMERS

AGGREGATORS

RESTAURANTS

INSTITUTIONS

FOOD PRODUCERS

DISTRIBUTORS

CATERERS

RETAILERS



T The Organic Buyer-Seller Mixer is supported through the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA), National Transition to Organic Partnership Program (NTL TOPP). TOPP is a program of the USDA Organic Transition Initiative and is administered by the USDA Agricultural Marketing Service (AMS) National Organic Program (NOP).



The Weston A. Price Foundation disseminates the research of nutrition pioneer Dr. Weston Price, whose studies of isolated nonindustrialized peoples established the parameters of human health and determined the optimum characteristics of human diets.

**Marketing Help and Advice
for Farmers and Food Producers**
Including Raw Milk and
Small Farm Support for WAPF Members
Visit www.westonaprice.org/farmhelp

Virginia Black Farmer Directory



A collaborative project to centralize black farmer unity and resources, this directory serves as a tool for connecting black farmers with consumers, wholesalers, markets, and farmers.

We strive to capture farmer stories and portray farmers the way they would like, and to give voice to those that have been systematically oppressed in their relationship with the land.



First Bank & Trust Company

Starting and growing your farm business takes financial planning and support. We are Ag industry specialists who anticipate and prepare for the cyclical nature of farming. We connect sectors of the agricultural industry, farming professionals, and their families to the financial resources they need.

With over 40 years of service, our Ag Division stands ready to help you with your operation. From agricultural loans to Ag banking, we have financial solutions fit for every agricultural industry.



AGRICULTURAL LOANS

We offer a range of agricultural loans designed to empower farmers and the agribusiness industry.



SOLUTIONS BY AG INDUSTRY

Explore our comprehensive financial offerings designed to enhance and strengthen your business.



AG BANKING FOR FARMERS

With our specialized Ag banking solutions, you can trust us to provide financial services you can count on for your farming operation.

<https://www.firstbank.com/agriculture/>

SHOP. EAT. LOVE. LOCAL
Friendly City Food Co-op Harrisonburg VA

Session E: 8:30 AM - 10:00 AM

Sunday, January 11, 2026

Track	Title	Presenters	Room
Crop Specifics	Alliums Year-Round	Pam Dawling	<i>Shenandoah B</i>
Community	From Farm to Pantry: Sustainable Food Systems and Community Engagement	Panel	<i>Lecture Hall</i>
Marketing & Business	CSA Design and Administration	Michelle McKenzie	<i>Pocahontas</i>
Farm Systems	Tunnel Troubles for Flower Farmers	Chelsea Belle Graves	<i>Buck Mountain</i>
Soil Health	Advanced Techniques for Managing Soil Fertility for Organic Vegetable Production	Alex Hessler	<i>Monroe</i>
Farm Systems	Organic Processing and Handling: On-Farm, In-Store, and Everything In-Between	Wren Frueh & Maggie Saska	<i>Wilson</i>
Community	No Farmer, No Farm: A Maintenance Guide to Self-Preservation	Ann Mooney	<i>Appalachian</i>
Agroforestry	Planning Woodlot Management	AmyRose Foll	<i>Shenandoah A</i>
Fireside Chat 10:00-10:45AM	Protecting and Decommodifying Farmland in SW Virginia	Southwest Virginia Agrarian Commons	<i>Mill Mountain</i>

Session E Descriptions

ALLIUMS YEAR-ROUND

You can grow onions or some of their relatives in every month of the year in the mid-Atlantic. As well as bulb onions and garlic, this workshop includes leeks, perennial alliums, scallions, garlic scapes, elephant garlic, shallots, pickling onions, and many unusual alliums. This workshop covers planting, caring for the crops, harvesting, storage (when possible) and saving seed stock for replanting.

FROM FARM TO PANTRY: SUSTAINABLE FOOD SYSTEMS AND COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

This is a presentation exploring the critical connection between sustainable agriculture and community food security that will highlight the importance of collaborative efforts between farmers, food banks, and community organizations in building resilient food systems. Attendees will gain an understanding of sustainable agriculture practices supporting local food security, effective models for food banks and pantries, community engagement and education initiatives, and innovative solutions for reducing food waste and increasing access to nutritious food.

CSA DESIGN AND ADMINISTRATION

Over her 11 years at Bellair Farm, Michelle has managed four styles of CSA: 100% free choice market style, 100% farmer's choice, and two hybrid-choice models. The Farm's CSA also operates a Pick-Your-Own Field, which is a part of the CSA share. CSA can be a great way to farm, but we need to remember that we are in charge of the design of the CSA and how we design it will have just as big an impact on the season as growing conditions. In this presentation, Michelle will outline multiple CSA designs and point out opportunities for customization to make your CSA model fit your farm. Topics covered will be: basic CSA structure/design, CSA administration (sales, billing, pickup logistics), CSA communication (newsletters, marketing), ways to make your CSA stand out, and crop planning and field management for CSA harvest.

TUNNEL TROUBLES FOR FLOWER FARMERS

Considering adding high tunnels to your flower production? Join Chelsea as she guides you through selecting the right tunnel for your farm. Discover her crop management techniques and seasonal strategies to maximize profitability throughout the year. Chelsea will also cover essential tunnel and soil care practices to ensure the longevity of your infrastructure, helping you get the most out of your investment.

ADVANCED TECHNIQUES FOR MANAGING SOIL FERTILITY FOR ORGANIC VEGETABLE PRODUCTION

This session will cover advanced soil fertility management strategies for organic vegetable production in fields and high tunnels. The focus will be on techniques used and challenges encountered at Riverstone Organic Farm, a 15-acre diversified organic farm with 1.5 acres of high tunnels. Multiple approaches to soil and plant tissue testing and interpretation provide a basis for addressing nutrient deficiencies in the short and long-term. Liming, cover crops, compost, bulk raw chicken litter and appropriate tillage bring the soil into optimum condition. Pre-plant applications of a variety of organic amendments provide crops with needed nutrients for the growing season. Fertigation and foliar feeding with nutrients and biostimulants generates extended harvests and plant vigor.

ORGANIC PROCESSING AND HANDLING: ON-FARM, IN-STORE, AND EVERYTHING IN-BETWEEN

Organic processing (and handling) can encompass a wide range of activities from production of on-farm value added products, resale of organic goods from other operations and more. There is a shortage of certified Organic processing across Virginia and the Mid-Atlantic, which limits what organic markets are available to small and mid-size farmers and producers. This session will discuss the details of a processing/handling certification, when it's needed, highlights and bottle necks in becoming a certified organic processor/handler.

NO FARMER, NO FARM: A MAINTENANCE GUIDE TO SELF-PRESERVATION

Octogenarians are Agrarians! This workshop offers a practical primer on ergonomics, injury prevention, functional anatomy, and strategies for recovery and fortification. Designed for those facing the physical demands of agricultural and everyday work, the session emphasizes how to maintain strength, mobility, and resilience while balancing personal well-being with external responsibilities. Participants will explore methods to address unique physical needs before they become overwhelming, drawing on both scientific research and personal observation. The presenter will highlight how science often advances ahead of mainstream medical practice and provide clear, evidence-based approaches to support long-term health. Attendees will leave with tools to sustain productivity, protect their bodies, and cultivate habits that promote endurance and the opportunity to outlive your mortgage!

PLANNING WOODLOT MANAGEMENT

As a woodlot owner, you may have thought from time to time about the future of your woodland and what you might do to improve its condition and value. Most woodland owners use their property for recreation, a place to hunt and view wildlife, or as a family legacy to pass on to the next generation. Forests change on their own every day in small and cumulative ways. Eventually, you become aware of these changes. A basic understanding of forest processes depends on a working knowledge of ecology. This helps us understand how forests change and how management decisions affect forest values.

FIRESIDE CHAT 10:00 – 10:45 AM

PROTECTING AND DECOMMODIFYING FARMLAND IN SOUTHWEST VIRGINIA

Board members of the Southwest Virginia Agrarian Commons will host a discussion about land access issues in our region. How can farmers afford to retire and ensure their land stays in regenerative production? How does a community-owned farm work? What roles can land trusts play in keeping farmland acres protected from development pressure? Why de-commodify land for community farms and our commonwealth?

Are you a landowner who wants to see your land returned to Indigenous communities? SWVA AC is currently conducting a land study on these topics, and we'd like to connect with you as the research continues.

Presenter Bios



Evaluations



Session F: 10:30 AM - 12:00 PM

Sunday, January 11, 2026

Track	Title	Presenters	Room
Farm Systems	Integrating Biodynamic Principles in a Small Market Garden	Jeff Poppen	Shenandoah B
Community	Passing the Plow: Land Transition and Access	Panel	Lecture Hall
Animals	Integrating Pastured Poultry and Vegetable Production	Nathan Ratchen & Michelle McKenzie	Pocahontas
Agroforestry	Starting a Syntropic Agroforestry System	Steven Wilder	Buck Mountain
Marketing & Business	From Coop to Clicks: How to Make Your Farm Internet Famous	Handsome Hen Farm	Monroe
Marketing & Business	Expanding your Farm's Distribution Network: Promises, Pitfalls, and Possibilities	Corey Davis	Wilson
Crop Specifics	Winter Peas: New Possibilities on the Horizon	Jason Myers-Benner	Appalachian
Soil Health	Meet the Microorganisms	Krisi Olivero	Shenandoah A
Fireside Chat 11:00-12:00PM	Feasibility of Shared Freezer Space for Meat Producers	Adam Taylor & Mo McGonagle	Mill Mountain

Session F Descriptions

INTEGRATING BIODYNAMIC PRINCIPLES IN A SMALL MARKET GARDEN

A well-designed garden can be inviting, interesting and enchanting, along with efficiently producing crops. We'll discuss cover crops, composting, companion planting, crop rotation, tillage options, mulching, and using biodynamic preparations. Besides practical information about drainage, remineralization and weed control, participants will delve into cosmic rhythms, biochemistry and homeopathy to help understand how to grow food of the highest quality.

PASSING THE PLOW: LAND ACCESS & FINANCING FOR THE NEXT GENERATION

How do you move from wanting farmland to owning it? While retiring farmers may seek to pass land on to the next generation, rising costs and development pressures make access challenging. This session highlights both the obstacles and the support available to help you evaluate options and achieve your goals. Grace Summers and Gabi Salazar of American Farmland Trust will share resources such as free one-on-one support, distressed borrower assistance, and microgrant opportunities. Darrell Tennie, CEO of The Tennie Group, will discuss business and finance strategies to guide land access decisions. Allie King, Loan Officer with Farm Credit of the Virginias, will outline coaching and educational resources, along with what to expect when pursuing a loan. Emily Tybur of FoodShed Capital will present equitable operational loan opportunities. Together, presenters will provide practical tools to help you take the next step in your land access and farm business journey.

INTEGRATING PASTURED POULTRY AND VEGETABLE PRODUCTION

Nathan Ratchen & Michelle McKenzie will discuss the nuts and bolts of managing large scale laying flocks, the role of cover and forage crops in the health of your poultry, and the benefits of stacking poultry systems with vegetable production. There will be an overview of food safety guidelines, and the practical lived experience of the do's and don'ts of poultry, followed by an overview of the financials of poultry at Bellair. This session is appropriate for every type of producer, whether a seasoned vegetable farm interested in poultry, an existing multi-enterprise farm, or 1st year farmer getting started raising birds. Come learn from Bellair Farm's decade of successes and mistakes in combining these two enterprises.

STARTING A SYNTROPIC AGROFORESTRY SYSTEM

25 Explore how to develop a syntropic agroforestry system from design considerations to site work, to plant

selection and planting, to management. Money, effort, and time saving strategies will be provided based on Steven Wilder's decade-long experience developing a highly functioning syntropic system. Attendees will learn syntropic farming basics and understand the importance of starting strong when going syntropic.

FROM COOP TO CLICKS: HOW TO MAKE YOUR FARM INTERNET FAMOUS

What started last year as a simple way to sell more of our farm fresh pasture-raised eggs online has turned into what we lovingly refer to as "the chicken empire." As a small farm in a small town, we had accumulated a handful of local followers (plus family and friends) who bought our eggs. But we wanted to grow our business and have consistent customers. So how did we expand our social media following to currently almost 30K, and experience so much demand for our all-natural eggs that we sell out weekly and consistently have a wait list? Also, our social media posts generate respectable income for our farm. How did we do all of this in a little over a year by selling only eggs and by making funny videos of our chickens? More importantly, how can you do it, too? Come find out!

EXPANDING YOUR FARM'S DISTRIBUTION NETWORK: PROMISES, PITFALLS, AND POSSIBILITIES

This session will address the need to expand sales opportunities for local products while examining the challenges that often hinder market access. To ground the discussion, findings from a pre-event survey of farmers and retailers will highlight key barriers and opportunities. The workshop will also showcase success stories from organizations that have developed effective models for increasing distribution. With a regional focus, attention will be given to initiatives in Virginia, including 4P Food and the Eastern Food Hub Collaborative, alongside exploration of additional creative strategies. Participants will gain insights into practical approaches and collaborative solutions that can strengthen local food systems and improve market reach for producers.

WINTER PEAS: NEW POSSIBILITIES ON THE HORIZON

You may know winter peas as a fall-planted winter cover crop, but new breeding work is bringing the possibility of expanding the kinds and purposes of winter-hardy peas to include snap, snow, shelling, improved cover crop, and dry pea (grain) types. Learn about the current results of our SARE grant to study and develop some grain-type winter peas we have bred on our farm as companion plants to wheat. You'll see why overwintered peas are worth developing and will get a sense of what's coming up over the next few years as a result of the breeding efforts of the few of us nationally who are working with winter peas. Come learn simple ways you could get involved and help out!

MEET THE MICROORGANISMS

Join Alter Eco Farms as we dive deep into the microscope to learn about all of the microorganisms that live beyond our vision, in the soil. We will discuss common categories of soil microorganisms, learning about their identification and function. We will learn about how microorganisms naturally create nutrient cycling for plants and the many other benefits the baby microbes provide. We will look at several samples under the microscope (projected on the big screen so that everyone can see) and compare different samples from the area to draw some conclusions about the state of soil in the south. Once we've gotten attached to our cute and very helpful microscopic friends, we will talk about what exactly happened to all the microbes and how we can work to get them back and restore the nutrient balance of our soils.

FIRESIDE CHAT 11:00 AM – 12:00 PM

FEASIBILITY OF SHARED FREEZER SPACE FOR MEAT PRODUCERS

Lack of freezer space can limit a producer's capacity to direct market meat products. The Roanoke Foodshed Network is exploring what shared freezer space for multiple meat producers would look like. What space requirements do farmers need? Is a centralized large location or multiple small locations work better for producers? What liability or insurance concerns are there? We want to hear feedback from farmers on what would work for them.

Presenter Bios



Evaluations



Cultivating Change Through Policy & Community Power

A Panel Discussion

Moderator: Gray Montrose

Sunday, January 11

12:45 PM · Roanoke Ballroom



**Panelists
Biographies**



Farmers are facing complex challenges — from market pressures to climate impacts — and many are seeking clearer pathways to influence the policies that shape their work. This empowering panel brings together growers, advocates, and community leaders to break down the top issues affecting farmers today and explore what meaningful change can look like at the local, county, and state levels.

Participants will learn practical ways to stay engaged in policy advocacy, even with limited time and capacity. Panelists will share strategies for building relationships with decision-makers, tracking key policy developments, and taking collective action that strengthens organic farming communities. Attendees will gain a clearer understanding of how to advocate effectively for change, collaborate with their elected representatives, and take concrete next steps to support a more resilient and sustainable agricultural future.

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Session G: 2:00 PM - 3:30 PM

Sunday, January 11, 2026

Track	Title	Presenters	Room
Crop Specifics	Mushrooms as a Regenerative Farm Enterprise	Christopher Parker	Shenandoah B
Farm Systems	The Economic Viability of Adding Perennial Fruit to a Small Market Garden	Heather Coiner & Stasia Greenewalt	Lecture Hall
Seed Saving	Seed Saving and Plant Breeding (On Any Scale)	Ben Casteel	Pocahontas
Farm Systems	The Organic Research Hub: Delivering Science-Based Practical Information to Organic and Biological Producers	Mark Schonbeck	Buck Mountain
Marketing & Business	Effective Strategies for Farm Diversification	Immanuel Jarvis	Monroe
Farm Systems	An Ecological Toolkit for Supporting Biodiversity and Resilience On Your Farm	Steven Haring	Wilson
Farm Systems	Organic Integrated Pest Management (IPM)	Tomia MacQueen	Appalachian
Agroforestry	Diversify Your Farm with Alley Cropping	Stesha Warren	Shenandoah A

Session G Descriptions

MUSHROOMS AS A REGENERATIVE FARM ENTERPRISE

Mushrooms offer a unique way to add value to your farm — turning waste into wealth while restoring ecosystems and feeding your community. This workshop focuses on the business model of mushroom farming, not the cultivation techniques. We'll break down startup costs, product opportunities, and profit margins to help you build a realistic plan. If you're seeking a crop that supports soil, people, and your farm's future, fungi may be the answer.

THE ECONOMIC VIABILITY OF ADDING PERENNIAL FRUIT TO A SMALL MARKET GARDEN

Adding perennial fruit plantings is one way a small market vegetable garden can diversify economically and biologically. But most fruit-growing guidance is aimed at large conventional growers. We wanted to know which fruit crops and varieties are best suited to a small (< 1 acre) low- or no-spray planting, and how their economics work out when added to an existing market vegetable operation. We surveyed 10 market farms with fruit plantings in the Mid-Atlantic and have used the information to prepare enterprise budgets for the most popular crops. This project was generously funded by the American Farmland Trust and carried out in collaboration with SG Farm Services and Plant to Profit.

SEED SAVING & PLANT BREEDING (ON ANY SCALE)

Seed saving is an important aspect of biological farming and has become even more so as we adapt to a changing climate. Plant breeding, although often deemed out of reach for many growers, is only a step beyond seed saving. This session will describe the importance of saving seeds and how we can simplify plant breeding to make it accessible to any grower on any scale. Topics will include selection, cross-pollination, isolation techniques, and propagation that will assist in maintaining lines and breeding new varieties adapted to your growing conditions. Participants will walk away with a guide to backyard breeding because now more than ever we need YOU to save seed and breed!

THE ORGANIC RESEARCH HUB:

DELIVERING SCIENCE-BASED PRACTICAL INFORMATION TO ORGANIC AND BIOLOGICAL PRODUCERS

The Organic Farming Research Foundation (OFRF) has developed a searchable database of research outcomes that address priority challenges encountered by organic farmers and ranchers. Our Organic Research Hub (<https://hub.ofrf.org/>) covers organic management of soil health and fertility, crops, livestock, weeds, pests, diseases, and other challenges. The Hub is a living document that grows as new science emerges. This session will open with a 30-minute presentation on the nuts and bolts of this new tool, how to use it, and how it relates to other information resources in the organic sector. During the remaining hour, we will utilize the Hub to address topics and queries from session participants. Bring your most burning questions and greatest production challenges and get real, practical assistance today!

EFFECTIVE STRATEGIES FOR FARM DIVERSIFICATION

Immanuel will deliver a dynamic 90-minute session sharing his journey of farm diversification. Drawing from his success transforming a four-acre estate in Durham, NC, into a thriving agritourism hub since 2017, he will outline strategies for sustainable growth through value added products, agritourism, educational offerings, becoming a subject matter expert, leveraging social media, and more. He will offer examples of how Jireh Family Farm has expanded by using farm-to-table dinners, summer camps, and herbal classes, emphasizes community engagement to boost revenue. Attendees learn actionable diversification techniques rooted in Jarvis's experience, empowering small farms to thrive through innovation and community-focused initiatives.

AN ECOLOGICAL TOOLKIT FOR SUPPORTING BIODIVERSITY AND RESILIENCE ON YOUR FARM

This session will highlight some of the ecological principles that link biodiversity to resilience and address how they apply in an agricultural context. We will focus on the diversity-stability hypothesis, diversity indices, symbiotic relationships (especially competition and mutualism), ecosystem services, resource cycling, disturbance, and plant population dynamics. Then, we will use a multi-scale framework to understand how certain management practices can build "useful biodiversity" on your farm landscape, including practices like intercropping, cover crops, integrated pest management, microbial inoculants, and landscape diversification. We will conclude with an interactive session where participants can evaluate and discuss the biodiversity-enhancing practices from their own operations.

ORGANIC INTEGRATED PEST MANAGEMENT (IPM)

This workshop will cover many of the methods available to protect your produce from common pests and critters without the use of harmful synthetic chemicals. We'll cover companion planting, crop rotation, intercropping, natural and OMRI listed products as well as livestock integration and more.

DIVERSIFY YOUR FARM WITH ALLEY CROPPING

Alley cropping is the planting of rows of trees and/or shrubs to create alleys within which agricultural or horticultural crops are produced. Trees may include hardwood or softwood timber, fruit and nut trees, or other specialty crop trees and shrubs. It is a lesser known agroforestry practice gaining in popularity with potential for diversifying land use, expanding income potential, building soil health plus many other benefits. Join agroforestry technical trainer, Stesha Warren, to learn about the principles, design considerations, benefits, and potential challenges associated with alley cropping.

Presenter Bios



Evaluations



RESILIENCY
FOOD ACCESS
SOIL HEALTH
SUSTAINABILITY
FOODWAYS



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The Small Farm Outreach Program (SFOP), a part of Cooperative Extension at Virginia State University, educates veteran farmers and ranchers to own, operate and sustain farms and ranches independently with agricultural training programs that improve farm management skills and quality of life.

SFOP provides outreach and learning opportunities to small farmers for production management, financial and risk management, marketing, USDA assistance programs and more. These opportunities are designed to improve farm profitability and promote sustainability. Currently, SFOP provides educational programming in 74 Virginia counties, which have the highest concentrations of veteran farmers in the state.



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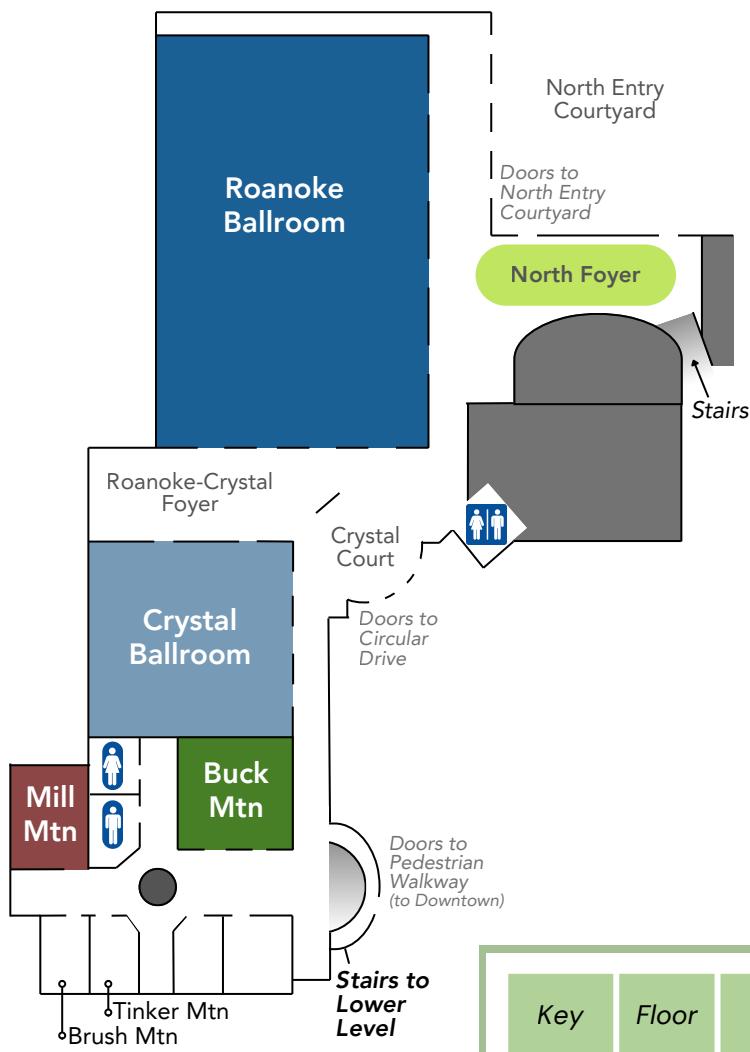


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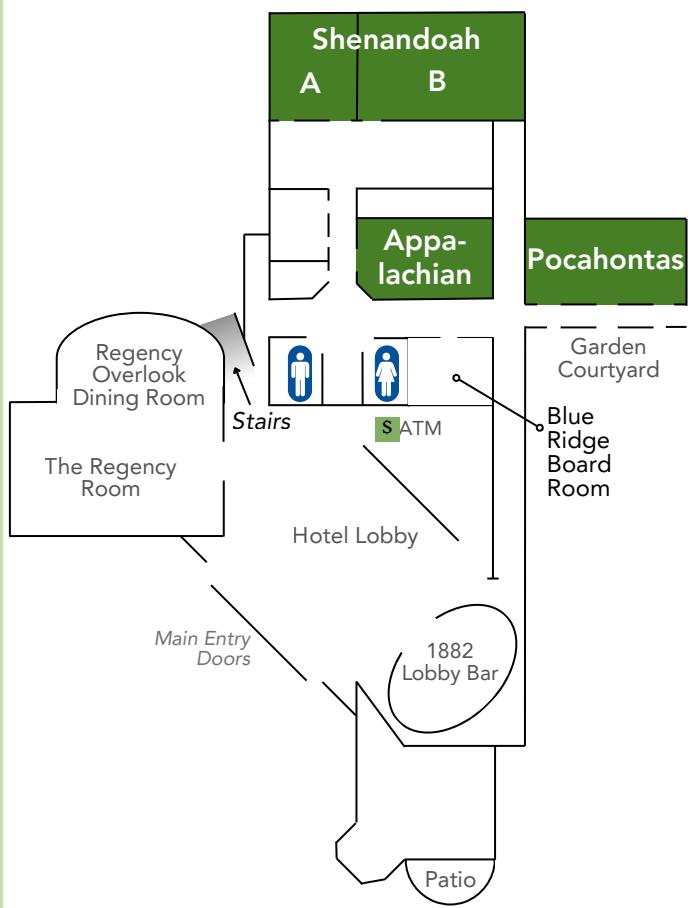


Conference Map

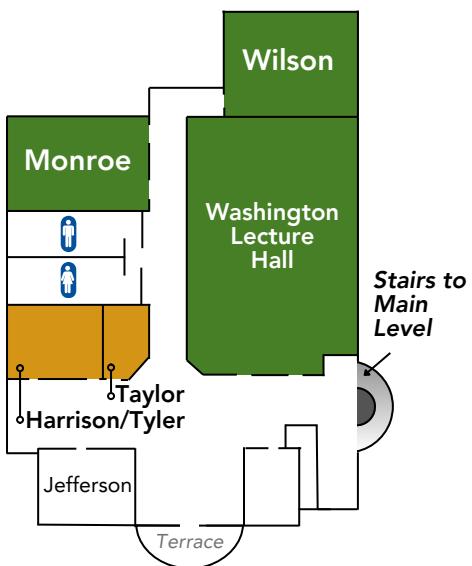
Main Level



Upper Level



Lower Level



Key	Floor	Room Name(s)	Highlights
Green	Upper	Shenandoah A and B, Appalachian & Pocahontas	Sessions
Light Green	Main	North Foyer	Registration, Information, Map & Book Sales with Author Signings
Blue	Main	Roanoke Ballroom	Meals with Keynotes, Tradeshow & Silent Auction
Light Blue	Main	Crystal Ballroom	Taste of Virginia (Saturday)
Dark Green	Main	Buck Mountain	Sessions
Maroon	Main	Mill Mountain	Fireside Chats
Dark Green	Lower	Wilson, Monroe & Washington Lecture Hall	Sessions
Orange	Lower	Harrison/Tyler & Taylor	Youth Program