

Pre-Conference Workshop Summaries

Friday, January 11, 2019

Produce Safety Alliance Grower Training and Certification

Laura Strawn and Amber Vallotton, Virginia Cooperative Extension (8:00 AM – 5:00 PM)

The PSA Grower Training Course is one way to satisfy the FSMA Produce Safety Rule requirement outlined in 112.22(c) that requires “At least one supervisor or responsible party for your farm must have successfully completed food safety training at least equivalent to that received under standardized curriculum recognized as adequate by the Food and Drug Administration. In addition to learning about produce safety best practices, key parts of the FSMA Produce Safety Rule requirements are outlined within each module. There will be time for questions and discussion, so participants should come prepared to share their experiences and produce safety questions. The course will provide a foundation of Good Agricultural Practices (GAPs) and co-management information, FSMA Produce Safety Rule requirements, and details on how to develop a farm food safety plan.

Growing Gourmet and Medicinal Mushrooms

Mark Jones, Sharondale Mushroom Farm (9:00 AM – 12:00 PM)

In this introduction for gardeners and homesteaders, learn to grow several different types of mushrooms using low-tech, low-cost methods in your garden or woodlot. We will explore the biology and ecology of fungi in agriculture, using mushrooms for personal and planetary health, and methods for cultivating shiitake, oyster, lion’s mane, reishi, and other mushrooms in wood, straw, and compost. Take home knowledge and a sample of mushroom culture.

Greenhouse Growing and Management and Urban Farm Tour

Kayla Runion, Tricycle (9:00 AM – 12:00 PM)

In this workshop, you will learn the role and components of propagation media and supplemental fertility in the greenhouse, how to create soil media for successful plant propagation, and the advantages and disadvantages to common container formats. You will observe and practice how to properly mix soil propagation media, how to sow seeds, and care for newly developed seedlings. Information from this workshop translates to any style greenhouse. Tricycle’s sustainable farming practices are highlighted throughout the tour, including: compost, vermicompost, seed starting, sustainable growing of food and herbs, insects, water systems, local food systems, honey bees, and more. You will experience how and why food is grown within the urban setting of Richmond, VA. Tours are tailored to interest and educational goals and include discussions about food access, equitable food distribution, sustainability, farm ecology, and more.

Unraveling the Mysteries of Biodynamics

Jeff Poppen, Barefoot Farmer (9:00 AM – 12:00 PM)

Join Jeff Poppen, The Barefoot Farmer, a biodynamic farmer for over 40 years! In this workshop each biodynamic preparation will be discussed, and then demonstrated how to make each one. Free samples will be given to each attendee to take home after the hands-on demonstrations.

Slow Poultry Seminar

Jim Adkins, Sustainable Poultry Networks (9:00 AM – 3:00 PM)

Have you ever tasted the chickens that your grandma used to cook? Those birds that used to run around the barnyard chasing bugs and eating worms? Unfortunately, we no longer see those slow growing, great tasting birds on our kitchen tables. 99% of all the poultry consumed in our country is fast growing poultry that is not genetically sustainable and grown in confinement. But the old heirloom breeds of pastured poultry, that can naturally reproduce, are on their way back to the to our plates! Farmers, growers and food citizens are excited to get these heritage breeds of poultry back on their farms and in their diets. Come and hear the latest truth of what is happening in the poultry industry; learn of the opportunities and desires of people everywhere who want to see grandma’s chickens back in the kitchen!

Year Round Hoophouse Vegetables

Pam Dawling, Twin Oaks Community (1:00 PM – 5:00 PM)

“Which factors should you consider when planning how to keep your hoophouse filled with productive food crops all year? We consider suitable crops for various times of year: cold-hardy winter greens for cooking and salads; turnips, radishes and scallions; early warm weather crops such as tomatoes, peppers, squash, cucumbers; high summer crops such as edamame, cowpeas, melons, sweet potatoes. We also look at less common ideas: bare-root transplants for planting outdoors in spring, seeds, flowers, and cover crops for soil improvement.

The workshop includes ideas on how to maximize use of the space, including transplanting indoors from outdoors in the fall, seasonal transitions, packing more in with succession planting, interplanting and follow-on cropping.

Planning is an important part of success: deciding which crops to grow, deciding how much to harvest and how much to plant, crop rotation, mapping and scheduling. We also look at the challenges of low temperatures, nitrate accumulation, snow, soil-borne diseases, and the challenges of summer: high temperatures, bugs, salt build-up. Year-round use includes attention to caring for the soil: maintaining organic matter, and pest management including solarization.

Brew Herbal Meads and Beers

Jereme Zimmerman, Brew Beer Like a Yeti and Make Mead Like a Viking (1:00 PM – 5:00 PM)

Learn to brew simple ales and meads flavored with herbs, fruits and other botanicals. We will discuss how to make mead (honey wine) using traditional wild fermentation techniques and the use of commercial yeasts. Then we will discuss similar processes for making herbal ales using simple equipment you may already have in your kitchen. Take part in the resurrection of homestead and farmhouse brewing!