

About Our Presentations ...

Large-Scale Composting Operation Tour - Royal Oak Farm, LLC owns and operates the largest solid waste composting operation in Virginia, capable of handling over 500 tons per day of clean, non-toxic, non-hazardous biodegradable materials. These materials are professionally recycled into composts, topsoils, and specialty compost-based soil blends. Located in Evington, Virginia in Bedford County, Royal Oak is one of the premier composting operations in the eastern U.S. Composting is the controlled aerobic decomposition of biodegradable materials. Thermophilic temperatures higher than 135 degrees destroy pathogens and weed seeds. The end product of this integrated system is a stable, mature, highly aerobic compost that is extremely beneficial in farming, gardening and landscaping. Careful selection of compost feedstock materials results in a high quality finished product. All the ingredients, according to manager Ken Newman, are organic, and contain no human waste. Composting is done on a 25-acre paved asphalt pad, using top-line processing equipment. The manufacturing process is carefully controlled and the compost is used by contractors, farmers, businesses and homeowners throughout central and western Virginia. **Ken Newman, Royal Oak Farm, LLC., 2855 Orrix Creek Road, Evington, VA 24550 (Directions on pg. 6)**

Seed Saving and Seed Production as a Farm Enterprise - Preservation of seeds is one of the foundations of sustainable food production. Learn about seed saving and seed production for your own farm. Discover how growing on-farm seeds is a viable diversification strategy that can build a farm's financial and environmental sustainability. Hear about seed companies interested in contracting for seed directly with farms — both organic and non-organic — from a recent survey of Home Garden Seed Association members conducted by Southern Exposure Seed Exchange. Also an experienced farmer will talk about his experience successfully seed saving as a farm enterprise. to seed production for some crops, sample contracts, seed prices and lists of interested seed companies will be distributed. **Ira Wallace, Southern Exposure Seed Exchange (VA) and Edmund Frost, Twin Oaks Community (VA).**

Develop a Sustainable Vegetable Garden Plan – This video is a course in garden planning. Cindy Conner shows you how to put together a notebook with a plan unique to your vegetable garden. **Cindy Conner and Luke Conner, Homeplace Earth, Ashland, VA.**

Perennial Vegetable Crops – One of Eric Toensmeier's goals is to introduce the public to a diversity of perennial vegetables. These plants have mostly been neglected as foodplants, because they do not fit well into annual cropping systems. However, many are low-maintenance, virtually trouble-free crops which provide food year after year. Eric is the author of a book entitled: *Perennial Vegetables – From Artichokes to Zuiki Taro, A Gardeners Guide to Over 100 Delicious Easy to Grow Edibles*. In this pre-conference session, Mr. Toensmeier will speak about all kinds of edible plants from air potatoes to water celery, Turkish Rocket to Malabar Gourd. Eric will speak about general cultural information, propagation techniques and preferred climate for these specific crops. Eric Toensmeier currently manages the Tierra de Oportunidades new farmer program of Nuestras Raices in Holyoke, Massachusetts. There he is designing and installing a permaculture landscape in concert with immigrant farmers who are starting farm based enterprises in an urban context. **Eric Toensmeier, Holyoke, Massachusetts**

Holistic Resource Management for Improving the Environment through Sustainable Agriculture - Holistic Resource Management (HRM) is a process of goal setting, decision making and monitoring which integrates social, ecological and economic factors. Biodiversity enhancement is a fundamental principle in HRM and students are taught that biodiversity is the foundation of sustainable profit. In the HRM process, practitioners develop a holistic goal which includes: (1) quality of life values, (2) forms of production to support those values, and (3) landscape planning, which should protect and enhance biodiversity and support ecosystem processes of succession, energy flow, hydrological and nutrient cycling. Ian Mitchell-Innes will present an overview of the HRM model and the amazing results of this management regime at Blanerne Farm and on other ranches in South Africa. **Ian Mitchell-Innes, Blanerne Farm, Kwa Zulu-Natal, South Africa.**

Leafy Greens Working Group - As sicknesses, hospitalizations and deaths from contaminated food periodically dominate the headlines, there is mounting pressure to reform our nation's food safety system, which hasn't been significantly modified since the 1930s. Based on powers already given to the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) to regulate farms under the Bioterrorism Act of 2002, Congress is in the process of creating legislation that blurs the distinctions between market farms (largely exempt) and facilities (regulated) that could subject farmers to FDA registration, documentation, traceability and annual user fees. Such one-size-fits-all legislation would have a damaging effect especially on smaller scale and local producers. Further, a consortium of large scale handlers that put together a Leafy Greens Marketing Agreement (LGMA) in California that severely impacts growers' practices is in the process of trying to create a National LGMA via USDA's Agricultural Marketing Service. NOFA Policy Coordinator, Steve Gilman, will present an overview of these and other governmental food safety initiatives and discuss the options available for farmers. **Steve Gilman, Policy Coordinator, Northeast Organic Farming Association (NOFA), Stillwater, New York**

Why Pastured Poultry? – Many farmers throughout the South have established small-scale poultry operations as profitable new enterprises. Michael Walters will speak about the different marketing channels for pastured poultry. He will compare the advantages and disadvantages of various species including turkeys, chickens and quail; the importance of genetic selection in raising pastured poultry; the costs and financial returns of poultry production in free range, confined free range and poultry tractor systems; and about on-farm processing/inspection in relation to marketing. Walters brings many years of experience with several species of poultry to this exciting breakout session. **Mike and Teresa Walters, Walters Poultry, Stillwell, Oklahoma**

Edible Forest Gardens - Edible forest gardening is the art and science of putting plants together in woodlandlike patterns that forge mutually beneficial relationships, creating a garden ecosystem that is more than the sum of its parts. You can grow fruits, nuts, vegetables, herbs, mushrooms, other useful plants, and animals in a way that mimics natural ecosystems. You can create a beautiful, diverse, high-yield garden. If designed with care and deep understanding of ecosystem function, you can also design a garden that is largely self-maintaining. In many of the world's temperate-climate regions, your garden would soon start reverting to forest if you were to stop managing it. We humans work hard to hold back succession—mowing, weeding, plowing, and spraying. If the successional process were the wind, we would be constantly motoring against it. Why not put up a sail and glide along with the land's natural tendency to grow trees? By mimicking the structure and function of forest ecosystems we can gain a number of benefits. Eric Toensmeier is co-author of *Edible Forest Gardens* with Dave Jacke. This book has made an important new contribution to the worldwide permaculture movement. Eric is a graduate and former faculty member of the Institute for Social Ecology in Plainview, Vermont. **Eric Toensmeier, Holyoke, Massachusetts**

High Tunnel Raspberry Production Without Pesticides – Shirley Kline has owned and operated Happy Valley Berry Farm near Bridgeton, New Jersey since 1997. When she started with field grown raspberries her harvest season lasted from June to Halloween. Today with two of six acres under plastic, the season for picking berries extends from early April to Thanksgiving. “Because of the tunnels” said Shirley Kline, “we have a better quality berry which has a longer shelf life and brings a better price.” Unheated greenhouses called high tunnels have extended her harvest season by four months. Mrs. Kline will talk about raspberry varieties, cultural practices, management of soil fertility, harvest, post harvest handling and marketing of raspberries at local farm markets and roadside stands. Shirley Kline was formerly an Extension Agent with Cornell Cooperative Extension and an international consultant in Honduras, El Salvador, Nicaragua, Guatemala, Bolivia, Haiti, Moldova and Mexico.

Shirley Kline, Happy Valley Berry Farm, Bridgeton, New Jersey

Thinking Like an Island - In 1984 Ableman traveled to mainland China where he observed the remnants of a traditional agriculture system that sustained people and the land for thousands of years. This experience inspired him to travel around the world documenting other cultures culminating in the internationally acclaimed publication of *From the Good Earth: A Celebration of Growing Food Around the World* (Abrams, 1993). Called "hopeful and inspiring" by the LA Times and "a compelling photographic essay" by the *NY Times*, *From The Good Earth* was one of the first books to visually document the dramatic changes taking place in food and agriculture worldwide. The book has become a timeless classic that challenges us to participate; in the marketplace, in our kitchens, and in our own backyards. Ableman's second book, *On Good Land: The Autobiography of an Urban Farm* (Chronicle Books, 1998), is the emblematic story of his fight to preserve a piece of what was once some of the richest farmland in the world, and a paean to the sweet obsession of growing food. *The Philadelphia Inquirer* stated, "that if Henry David Thoreau had been a farmer, he would have written a book very much like Michael Ableman's *On Good Land*". Booklist called it "inspiring and utterly absorbing" and Kirkus Reviews said that "among a sprawl of books incessantly issued and hyped, this small, wise volume quietly calls us to read and be renewed". The book, graced with Ableman's lush photographs, argues articulately for farmland preservation and provides a blueprint for a farm that thrives in cooperation with its surrounding community. An award-winning film about Ableman's work, *Beyond Organic*, narrated by Meryl Streep aired nationally on PBS in 2001. Ableman has received numerous awards including the 2001 "Sustie" Award for his work in sustainable agriculture, *Eating Well* magazine's 1995 Food Hero Award, and the 1997 Environmental Leadership Award from the governor of the state of California. He also wrote *Fields of Plenty; A Farmer's Journey in Search of Real Food and the People Who Grow It..* **Michael Ableman, Foxglove Farm, Salt Spring Island, British Columbia**

Diversification for Sustainability at Elmwood Stock Farm – John Bell and Ann Bell are brother and sister who inherited a large family farm which had been used for generations for production of Black Angus cattle and burley tobacco in central Kentucky. About fifteen years ago the Bell family saw that they needed to diversify to help the farm survive. They will talk about how they have added wholesale and retail marketing of vegetables, pastured poultry and compost to increase farm income. Each year the acreage that is certified organic has increased. They will talk about how they grow potatoes, cole crops, lettuce and herbs organically and about the development of their large-scale on-farm composting operation. Elmwood Stock Farm raises and sells certified organic beef, lamb, eggs, chickens and turkeys. Their retail marketing involves sales at two farmers markets, to restaurants and even home delivery. Elmwood Stock Farm is now a very diversified operation on 750 acres of land. This includes 475 acres of certified organic land with 400 acres in pasture and 75 acres in vegetable rotation. John and Ann will explain how they developed markets for new farm products while maintaining their established tobacco and beef cattle business.

Transitioning the Berea College Farm into the 21st Century: Challenges of Student Labor, Enterprise Selection and Mixed Organic/Conventional Production - Berea College in Berea, Kentucky is one of a small number of liberal arts colleges in the United States offering an academic program in agriculture and natural resources. Agriculture majors at Berea College can gain unique practical experience working on the College's educational farm, which includes beef cattle, hogs, sheep, goats, field crops, and a horticultural operation that produces certified organic vegetables, fruits, herbs, as well as a variety of annual and perennial ornamentals for retail sale. The work experience gained from the College Farm complements classroom learning and provides a real advantage to students through skill development and management training. Derek Law is the Farm Manager at the Berea College Farm. Janet Meyer manages the Berea College Farm greenhouses. They will talk about the directions they are taking so their students will continue to receive practical, hands-on training in sustainable agriculture. Although it is a private

school, Berea College has maintained affordable tuition fees and financial assistance programs that allow many students from the Appalachian region to attend. Several members of the Virginia Association for Biological Farming have either graduated from this school or sent their children to Berea College. **Derek Law and Janet Meyer, Department of Agriculture and Natural Resources, Berea College, Berea, Kentucky**

Food Safety in Fruit and Vegetable Production – In 2008 *Salmonella* Saintpaul infected over 1065 persons in 42 states, District of Columbia and Canada. Commodities most likely involved in the spread of this food borne illness were raw tomatoes, jalapeno and serrano peppers, cilantro and onions. In the past 20 years several other food borne disease outbreaks have caused devastating losses to vegetable growers and distributors. Pathogens identified with outbreaks of food borne illness are bacterial, viral, parasitic and chemical agents. The organic vegetable industry is certainly vulnerable to these pathogens. Some of these pathogens have animal reservoirs and some of these pathogens have human reservoirs. Dr. Wesley Kline of Rutgers University will discuss how farmers can assess their farms in terms of post-harvest quality. Dr. Kline's *Food Safety Manual* is widely used by vegetable growers in the Northeast. He will help fruit and vegetable growers understand the severity of this threat and take steps for prevention on their farms. **Dr. Wesley Kline, Cooperative Extension, Rutgers University, Cumberland County, New Jersey**

Beekeeping - From start to finish, in all phases of operation, the Whetzel's Golden Angels Apiary use the most environmentally safe procedures possible and methods that do not harm the bees nor honey purity. They do not filter honey; bees are air-blown from the honeycombs at harvest time rather than chemically removed; wax moth damage is controlled utilizing a large freezer unit, rather than moth crystals, sulfur or other chemical means. Parasitic mite control, a major issue in bee management, is handled by vinegar vaporization, smaller foundation cell sizing, essential oil treatments. We specialize in raw honey, to which no heat has been applied; thus all the natural enzymes, bioflavonoids naturally occurring in wild honey remain intact. We also carry beeswax, propolis, comb honey, locally gathered bee pollen. We are widely available at practically all health food stores in Virginia. We are truly a unique beekeeping operation, and have taken special care in every way possible to assure that you receive the highest quality honey possible. **Dennis and Neva Whetzel, Golden Angels Apiary, Singers Glen in Rockingham County, Virginia**

Selected Topics in Tomato Production – During summer, 2009 the fungus *Phytophthora cactorum* caused devastating losses in tomato crops throughout Virginia. Tomato growers suffer yield losses every year due to fungal, bacterial and viral diseases. In this session, Dr. Wesley Kline will discuss the identification and prevention of diseases in tomatoes. Chris Mullins will speak about several topics in production of tomatoes including cultural practices, heirloom varieties, tomato grafting and protected culture. **Chris Mullins, Virginia State University, Petersburg, VA and Dr. Wesley Kline, Rutgers University, Cumberland County, New Jersey**

Getting Started in Commercial Production of Organically-Grown Vegetables Born in Indiana, farmer and contractor John Wilson has been active in organic farming and sustainable practices for nearly thirty years. In the late 1970's and early 80's John took intensive classes in building energy efficient structures, solar energy, organic farming methods and composting. He moved to Virginia Beach in 1979. John started his own composting business, New Earth Compost when he moved to a five acre farm in Virginia Beach in 1995. New Earth Farm produces vegetables, fruits and pasture-raised eggs using organic methods. His produce is sold locally at Virginia Garden, the Va. Beach Farmer's Market, the Five Points Farmers Market, The Heritage Store and Terra Nova. John is a long time member of the Virginia Association for Biological Farming. In 2006 he and his wife, Kathleen Fogarty, launched a CSA (Community Supported Agriculture) program, which is headed into its fifth year. John will speak about development of cropping systems that match available markets. He will discuss the cultural practices he uses to maintain good yields of produce while also controlling costs.

John Wilson, New Earth Farm, Virginia Beach, Virginia

Enhancing Biological Control by Natural Enemies - This session will focus on how "good bugs" can be used to control "bad bugs." Topics will include the identification, biology and natural history of common natural enemies, and habitat management practices to encourage natural enemy populations. The session will conclude with group discussion on best practices. **Dr. Karen Kester, Department of Biology, Virginia Commonwealth University, Richmond, VA**

Holistic Resource Management of Grazing Lands – An Overview – Kwa Zulu-Natal in South Africa contains a great deal of land that is suitable for grazing animals. Virginia also contains a great deal of land that is suitable for grazing animals. Optimum utilization of these pasture resources through Holistic Resource Management can certainly be accomplished in both of these locations. **Holistic Management Grazing Planning** is about getting animals to the right place at the right time for the right reasons. You will focus your attention on three of the six basic land management tools, grazing, rest and animal impact. Ian Mitchell-Innes has a great reputation as a grazier, land manager, and dynamic Certified Educator in Holistic Management. This is your opportunity to learn skills that will increase your understanding of how planned grazing, land planning and biological monitoring can improve the health of your land, your animals and your profits. Ian is coming all the way from South Africa to share with you his vast knowledge and experience, as well as his renowned humor and presence. **Ian Mitchell-Innes, Blanerne Farm, Kwa Zulu-Natal, South Africa**

Commercial Production and Utilization of Compost – Through composting the power of millions of micro-organisms is harnessed to convert organic wastes to humus which is commonly known as black gold. Humus or finished compost, used as a soil amendment, brings huge benefits to growing crops. The managers of Royal Oak farm LLC in Bedford County will speak about the composting process from the perspective of a large scale composting operation. They currently produce compost on a 25-acre asphalt pad. They use many kinds of organic wastes in their composting process. Craig Coker will speak about the biological processes of composting and about specific uses for finished compost. Finished compost from Royal Oak Farms LLC is currently being used to grow strawberries in compost socks. A compost sock is a fiber mesh tube about 120 feet long and 12 inches in diameter filled with compost. This organic strawberry research project was funded by the Specialty Agriculture Research Grant Program operated by the Virginia Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services. Virginia Cooperative Extension personnel have established these research plots at Scott's Berry Farm in Bedford County and at Virginia State University's Randolph Farm. Andy Hankins will give a brief report about this project. **Ken Newman and Craig Coker, Royal Oak Farm LLC, Evington, VA and Andy Hankins, Virginia State University, Petersburg, VA**

Local Food Hubs – Participants in this session will learn about the new Food Hub concept which has been incredibly successful first in Charlottesville and now in the Richmond area. The mission of the Food Hub in Charlottesville is to strengthen and secure the future of a healthy regional food supply by providing small local farmers with concrete services that support and advance their economic vitality and promote stewardship of the land. The food hub in Charlottesville is a local food wholesale distribution hub with an outfitted warehouse located in Ivy, Virginia that moves local products to grocery stores, schools, senior facilities and restaurants. They work with City of Charlottesville schools, Albemarle County schools, and area private schools to provide children with much needed fresh fruit and vegetables for their snack programs along with educational materials promoting healthful eating. Participants will also learn about the new food hub developed by Molly Harris with Fall Line Farms in Goochland County. Their first year of operation has also been very successful. Fall Line Farms is a farm-to-family co-op program designed to connect family owned and operated farms serving the Richmond, VA area with customers in search of local food year round. Fall Line Farms represents more than 25 local farms and businesses serving the falls of the James region.

Spencer Neale, Virginia Farm Bureau, Richmond, Virginia and Alan Moore and Nathan Vrooman, Local Food Hub, Charlottesville, Virginia and Molly Harris, Fall Line Farms, Goochland County, VA

Government Support Programs – The United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) and the Virginia Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services (VDACS) operate many assistance programs for commercial farmers. All Virginia landowners should become familiar with the EQIP program operated by Natural Resources and Conservation Service of USDA. The Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) is a voluntary program providing assistance to farmers and ranchers who face threats to soil, water, air, and related natural resources on their land. Through EQIP, the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) provides assistance to agricultural producers in a manner that will promote agricultural production and environmental quality as compatible goals, optimize environmental benefits, and help farmers and ranchers meet Federal, State, Tribal, and local environmental requirements. These efforts have concentrated on improving water quality, conserving both ground and surface water, reducing soil erosion from cropland and forestland, and improving rangeland. EQIP also was used to improve riparian and aquatic areas, improve air quality, and address wildlife issues. The increased funding for EQIP in the 2002 Farm Bill greatly expands program availability for optimizing environmental benefits.

Many small-scale family farmers should also find out about the financial assistance programs available from the Virginia Farm Service Agency. This USDA agency offers loans to vegetable farmers who might like to develop refrigerated storage facilities. They also offer farm ownership loans, operating loans and emergency loans at very low interest rates.

Do you know that VDACS will pay 75% of the costs associated with organic certification? Many Virginia farmers have received invaluable marketing assistance from this agency. The Virginia Association for Biological Farming received an \$18, 600 grant from VDACS in 2009 and 2010 to conduct research in organic production of winter squash in Virginia. The participating farmers in this program are all members of VABF.

Ron Wood – Natural Resource Conservation Service

Kent Lewis – Virginia Dept. of Agriculture and Consumer Services

Tammy Goodyear – Virginia Farm Service Agency

Kristen Hughes Evans – Chesapeake Bay Foundation

Specialty Mushroom Production: Complement the seasonal offerings of your farm with specialty gourmet and medicinal mushrooms. Several mushroom species can be readily grown outdoors on logs or agricultural byproducts. Indoor cultivation is slightly more intensive but allows for an extended growing season. Discussion will focus on matching species with suitable growing substrates and on indoor and outdoor cultivation methods for shiitake, oyster, lion's mane and several other commonly cultivated species. Mark Jones is the CEO (Chief Ecological Organism) at Sharondale Farm in Cismont, VA. A student of permaculture, he strives to optimize the relationships between people, fungi, and useful plants. Mark grows mushrooms, sells mushroom spawn, tools and books, offers cultivation workshops and is growing a useful plants nursery. More information can be found at www.sharondalefarm.com or by calling 434-296-3301 or emailing mark@sharondalefarm.com **Mark Jones, Sharondale Farm, Keswick, VA**