

# ANR Newsletter

## Greensville-Emporia Fall 2024

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Virginia Tech • Virginia State University

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## Summer Extension Programs

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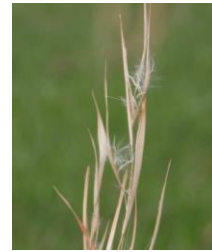
In June, we partnered with VSU's Small Farm Outreach Program to bring an introduction to permaculture program to Emporia. Patrick Johnson, of Nanih Farm and Garden, Inc. was our enthusiastic and knowledgeable speaker. In July, we moved our mid-season row crop field day inside; learning about current issues and crop management practices from Extension specialists Dr. Michael Flessner, Dr. Carrie Ortel and Extension agent Mr. Mike Parrish. In August, gardeners got a jump start on planning and planting their fall garden and preparing for next season during the essential fall lawn and garden care program at Richardson Memorial Library.

Pictured below (left to right): Patrick Johnson/Permaculture speaker, Dr. Carrie Ortel & participants/indoor field day, giveaways at the fall lawn and garden care program



## What's that weed?

Sara Rutherford- Extension agent



Pictured above (left to right): young broomsedge plant, seeds on flower stalk, dormant broomsedge on roadside

**Broomsedge bluestem- *Andropogon virginicus***  
Broomsedge is a native perennial grass that has recently had 'bluestem' added to its common name to indicate its relation to big bluestem, *Andropogon gerardii*. Broomsedge is native to Virginia and is often considered a weed in the lawn or garden. It's relative, big bluestem, is a perennial native grass often promoted for its use in livestock pasture, especially for grazing by cattle. Both species are found on roadsides, recently logged timberland, pastures and right-of-ways. You will notice its height increase in late summer into August as its flower stems begin to elongate and flower before going dormant in late fall. If you suspect you have this native grass and want identification confirmation, please call the Greensville/Emporia Extension office. For more information on this and other weeds, visit <https://weedid.cals.vt.edu>.

## Upcoming Programs

September 14- Family and Farm day at the Southern Piedmont Extension Center, 2375 Darvills Road, Blackstone, VA. 9:00 am to 2:00 pm. FREE. Have fun while learning about Virginia agriculture through activities like seed art, pine cone bird feeders, a corn maze, making butter, etc. See cows, goats, chickens, horses and snakes. Food available on site for purchase. For more information call 434-818-5545 or visit their Facebook page; search for VTSPAREC.

September 17- Essentials of sheep and goat management from 5:30pm-7:30pm at the Greensville/Emporia Extension office. 4-H livestock club families are encouraged to attend! Join us to learn the steps to success when managing a small ruminant herd. Dr. Dahlia O'Brien, small ruminant specialist at VSU, will speak on the selection and care of sheep and goats, and Tammy Holler, nutrient management specialist, will speak on pasture management and improving your grass varieties for better grazing. To register, visit: <https://www.ext.vsu.edu/calendar>. For more information, contact Marilyn Estes at 804-481-0485 or [mestes@vsu.edu](mailto:mestes@vsu.edu).

September 19- Forage & Livestock Field Day at the Southern Piedmont Extension Center, 2375 Darvills Road, Blackstone, VA. Two tours available; register for one or both. Dinner provided. Tour 1- 3:00pm-4:45pm: Applied forage research. Dinner at 5:00pm for both tours. Tour 2- 6:00pm-8:00pm: Livestock and grazing systems. Register by September 12<sup>th</sup> using this link: <https://bit.ly/foragelivestockfieldday>

November 4-6- VA Household Water Quality Program's Well Water Testing Clinic through the Greensville/Emporia Extension office. Choose one of three information sessions to learn about the process and pick up your water sample kit. Sample kits must be returned the morning of Nov. 6<sup>th</sup> between 7:30am and 9:30am. Cost: \$70.00 per kit. Municipal water consumed in households can also be tested. Call 434-348-4223 or email [srutherford@vt.edu](mailto:srutherford@vt.edu) for more information. Registration will open September 23, 2024.

## Timing is everything with turf

Virginia Cooperative Extension ([ext.vt.edu](http://ext.vt.edu))

Fall is the OPTIMAL time to aggressively fertilize cool-season turfgrasses (bluegrasses, fescues, and ryegrasses). Cooling temperatures and shorter days provide ideal conditions to maximize root growth and food storage in cool-season turfgrasses. For warm-season grasses (bermudagrass, zoysiagrass, centipedegrass, and St. Augustinegrass), fall is a time to prepare the turf for winter dormancy. Raise the cutting heights, ensure that pH and nutrient levels are appropriate as indicated by soil tests, and the grass enters dormancy as healthy as possible.

Fall and winter months are ideal periods to address soil pH limitations in particular. Conduct a soil test at least every 3 years to insure the pH and nutrient levels are appropriate. Your local Virginia Cooperative Extension office can help with materials and guidance in proper sampling methods and the test can be run through the Virginia Tech soil testing lab for \$10.00 per sample. Numerous private labs also offer soil testing services.

Fertilizers are blended in a wide array of ratios of the various nutrients but those blended primarily for lawn use are typically very high in N and relatively low in phosphate and potash (e.g. 30-3-10). To maximize water quality protection, apply only what is needed by the lawn, and the only way to truly do this is to understand the turfgrass' needs and/or utilize the information from a soil test. Very often additional phosphate and potash are not required, so applying a Nitrogen only fertilizer (e.g. 46-0-0) is certainly appropriate.

Consider where fertilizer ends up after you apply it. Turfgrasses are an excellent filter of chemicals, nutrients, and water, but only if products are applied to the turf. Avoid fertilizer applications if weather forecasts call for heavy rainfall, but at the same time, consider that a ¼ inch rainfall event is probably an ideal way to move fertilizer into the soil. And, always take a few moments to sweep or blow any fertilizer that ends up on the street, sidewalk, or patio back into the turf canopy. Any granular material on a hardscape is often only minutes away from entering our lakes and streams during the next rainfall event.

The Greensville/Emporia Virginia Cooperative Extension office is ready to assist you with valuable information that will help you keep the lawn green and the water clean! Contact us today with questions about soil testing, lawn care and fertilization.

For more information on weeds in the lawn, search for our [Lost in the weeds YouTube](#) video series. Doctors Goatley and Askew discuss the best seasonal strategies for combating weeds and other pests in your lawn.

# Seed saving for savvy gardeners

## Virginia Cooperative Extension Publication 426-316 (SPES-392P)

There are certain considerations to be kept in mind when saving seed. Seeds from hybrid varieties will not produce plants that are the same as the parent plants; therefore, only open-pollinated varieties should be used for home seed production. Some seed dealers have responded to the increasing interest in seed saving by clearly marking open-pollinated varieties in their catalogs. Another consideration in saving seed is the possibility of carrying seed-borne diseases into the next year's crop. Many commercially grown seeds are grown in dry areas unsuitable to fungal, viral, and bacterial diseases that may be present in your region. Take care to control diseases that can be carried in seed. Another weather-related factor is the speed of drying of seeds, which can be adversely affected by frequent rains and/or humidity. Finally, if you've ever saved squash seed during a season in which you had more than one type of squash planted, you have probably seen the weird results that may be obtained from cross-pollination! Saving seeds from cross-pollinated crops is not generally recommended for the novice because of problems with selection, requirements for hand pollination and isolation, biennial habits, and genetic variability. Failure to let the seed mature adequately on the plant also leads to non-viable seed. Common, self-pollinated, annual plants from which seed may be saved include lettuce, beans, peas, herbs, and tomatoes.

Beans and peas: Allow seed pods to turn brown on the plant. Harvest pods, dry for one to two weeks, shell, then store in a cool (below 50° F), dry environment in a paper bag.

Lettuce seed: Cut off seed stalks when fluffy in appearance, just before all the seeds are completely dried. Seeds will fall off the stalk and be lost if allowed to mature on the plant. Dry the harvested seed stalk further; shake seeds off; then store in a cool, dry environment in an envelope or small glass jar.

Herb seeds: Herbs vary in the way their seeds are produced. In general, allow herb seeds to stay on the plants until they are almost completely dry. Some seed heads, such as dill, will shatter and drop their seeds as soon as they are dry. Watch the early ripening seeds; if they tend to fall off, harvest the other seed heads before they get to that point, leaving several inches of stem attached. Hang several stems upside down, covered with a paper bag to catch falling seed, in a warm, dry place until the drying is complete. Remove seeds from the seed heads, and store in envelopes or small glass jars. Some herb seeds (dill, celery, anise, cumin, coriander, and others) are used for flavoring and are ready to use once dry.

Tomato seeds: Pick fruit from desirable plants when ripe. Cut fruit and squeeze out pulp into a container. Add a little water, then let ferment two to four days at room temperature, stirring occasionally. When seeds settle out, pour off pulp and spread seeds thinly to dry thoroughly. Store in an envelope or glass jar in a cool, dry place.

Saving purchased seed: Properly stored seed remains viable for different lengths of time depending on the type of seed. Be aware that seed companies may store seeds up to the number of years of their viability prior to selling them. To ensure maximum viability of purchased seed after its package has been opened, remaining seed should be sealed in air tight containers and stored in a cool, dark location. Glass jars with rubber seals, such as baby food jars or canning jars, or tightly sealed plastic bags stored inside jars are good choices. Be sure to label all stored seed with the species name and original package date. For all kinds of saved seeds, be sure to mark the storage containers clearly with permanent (preferably waterproof) ink, indicating the variety and date saved. Seeds will remain viable for some time if properly stored. To test for germination, sprout seeds between moist paper towels; if germination is low, either discard the seed or plant enough extra to give the desired number of plants. Excellent books are now available for more details.

"In general, to store seeds after they are dry, package them in paper envelopes and label them. Some sources recommend saving the seeds in plastic bags but personally, I do not recommend this method. Any moisture that is trapped inside the bag when you close it can foster mold or even induce germination. I have found paper works better because it breathes. In addition to labeling the seeds with the variety name, you may include the harvest date, sow date, or days to harvest if you know them. If you keep a garden journal, which I highly recommend, you will know things like that from your notes. As you are wrapping up your summer garden, try saving a few seeds. You will save money, preserve favorite heirloom varieties, and enjoy the satisfaction of growing plants entirely on your own!" (<https://extension.psu.edu>)



## Programs & Reminders

Virginia State University's College of Agriculture offers many educational programs, online webinars, workshops and field days. For upcoming programs and events, visit: <https://ext.vsu.edu/calendar>

There is a \$50.00 fee for all returned checks.

If you are a person with a disability and desire any assistive devices, services or other accommodations to participate in Extension activities, please contact the Greenville-Emporia Extension office, (434) 348-4223, during the business hours of 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. Monday through Friday to discuss accommodations at least 5 business days prior to the event. \*TDD number is (800) 828-1120.



The health of your soil is important! Routine soil sampling (every 3 years) is encouraged for lawns, ornamental and vegetable gardens, and more frequently for crops and pasture. Soil sample boxes and forms can be picked up at the Greenville/Emporia Extension office, Monday through Friday, from 8:00 a.m. until 5:00 p.m.

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## Advice from Dr. David Jordan

### Virginia-Carolinas Peanut News

Dr. David Jordan, Extension Peanut Specialist with NC State University, is respected for his Extension research and professional advice given to peanut farmers in North Carolina, South Carolina and Virginia. Below is an excerpt from an article published in the Fall 2024 Virginia-Carolinas Peanut News about the realities of harvesting peanuts.

“One of the most important things we can do, to give us the greatest flexibility in when we dig pods and invert vines, is to have plants that are healthy.” In regard to pod maturity, Dr. Jordan says “we talk about this all the time and encourage you to use the pod blasting approach to decide when to dig pods and invert vines. This is an important tool in your decision-making process. It can help you dig when peanuts are at optimum maturity, and it can help you get the order of fields in place from the most mature to the least mature. We gain about 1% in yield on the early side of optimum maturity for each day peanuts stay in the ground. Once we get to optimum maturity, yield plateaus for a couple of weeks before we see rapid decrease in yield”.

In regard to hurricanes or major tropical weather, Dr. Jordan said “we surveyed farmers a few years ago and asked whether or not you would dig before or after a storm. ‘I’ve seen it work out best both ways’- that was the gist of the survey results. I often say, if you can tell me whether or not there is going to be a second storm, I can give you a better answer, but in real time we are doing the best we can no matter which way we go”.

When it comes to setting up equipment for harvest, Dr. Jordan says “setting up the digger and inverter to match the field, vines and weather is important. We all know that. I think we get in a rush sometimes and accept ‘good enough’. While there might be an incentive to increase your ground speed by a half-a-mile per hour, we have less pod loss during digging and inverting at slower ground speeds”.

Finally, when it comes to freeze damage for peanuts harvested late in the growing season, Dr. Jordan says he’s changing his “recommendation on the time between digging and a frost/freeze from 72 hours to 96 hours with good drying conditions”. You may have heard him mention this at the VA Peanut Production meeting this past February as he was considering lengthening his recommendation.

Greenville’s peanut pod blasting clinics, to determine optimum peanut pod maturity, will be held from 8:00am until 11:00am September 12<sup>th</sup> and September 16<sup>th</sup> at the Greenville/Emporia Extension office.