

ANR

NEWSLETTER

Greensville-Emporia Fall 2023

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Virginia Tech • Virginia State University

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Summer Ag Programs

Sara Rutherford

For the most part, summer has been as normal as it could be. Our Master Gardener volunteers staffed their Plant Help Desk at the Richardson Memorial Library the first Saturday of the month. In June, we hosted a USDA information session to inform current and future farmers and ranchers about the services and benefits that come from the Farm Service Agency, the Natural Resource Conservation Service, the Chowan Basin Soil and Water Conservation District, Extension and the Small Farm Outreach Program. Also, a few Greenville farmers are cooperating in entomology and nematology research through our Extension research centers in the region, and finally, the demonstration beds at the YMCA are bursting with color and pollinators due to our helpful preschool gardeners this spring.

Pictured below: Left to right- June USDA program participants; demonstration beds at the Family YMCA of Emporia/Greenville.



What's that weed?

Sara Rutherford



Pictured above (left to right): clump of young foliage, naturalized plants, flower structure with many small blooms

Goldenrod- *Solidago spp.*

Solidago is a genus of herbaceous perennials in the aster family. It displays small, bright yellow flowers in dense clusters on top of tall stems from July through September. It tolerates poor, dry soils, clay, and drought. The plant naturalizes quickly, and propagation is accomplished with wind-driven seeds or by the division of underground rhizomes. Some species produce abundant nectar when moisture is plentiful, or when the weather is warm. The nectar attracts bees, wasps, and butterflies while birds are fond of seeds. It is also deer resistant. This plant is mostly native to North America. They are often found in meadows, prairies, woodlands, thickets, and swamps. For management strategies in the landscape or in pastures, please contact me for recommendations. Or, if you're like me, allow it to grow in a garden or naturalized area to benefit wildlife.

Upcoming Programs

Chowan Basin Soil and Water Conservation District cover crop program sign up. Deadline to apply is August 25, 2023. Call the USDA Service Center at 434-634-2462 for more information.

Peanut Pod Blasting at the Greenville/Emporia Extension office. Dates to be determined based on projected crop maturity. An announcement will be made via text message, email and social media post to growers. Questions? Call or email Sara Rutherford; 434-348-4223 srutherford@vt.edu

September 1- NRCS Agricultural Conservation Easement Program preliminary application deadline; full application package due November 1st.

September 9- Family and Farm Day at the Southern Piedmont Extension Research Center; 2375 Darvills Rd, Blackstone, VA. See cows, chickens, alpacas, sheep, goats, horses, and snakes. Navigate our corn maze, make butter, and see how bees make honey. See what we make from peanuts, soybeans, corn, wheat, sorghum, and cotton. Admission is FREE and food will be available from the local FFA chapter. For more information call 434-818-5545,

October 16- Fall Gardening program at the Greenville/Emporia Extension office from 1:30pm until 3:30pm. Join our discussion about fall lawn and garden care, including fall vegetable gardening. Please register by calling 434-348-4223 or emailing Sara, srutherford@vt.edu, by October 9, 2023.

October 17 (5:30pm) October 20 (10:30am)- Master Gardener Volunteer Training Information Session at the Greenville/Emporia Extension office. Learn more about our horticulture-based volunteer program and how to apply for our upcoming training course in 2024. Please let us know if you'd like to attend at least three business days before the scheduled session by calling 434-348-4223 or emailing Sara, srutherford@vt.edu.

Emergency preparedness: Floods Sara Rutherford

The floods recently in the state of Kentucky were devastating and caught many families, businesses and agriculture operations off-guard. Are you prepared for a natural disaster like the one they experienced? Have you thought about how to protect your home or farming operation from flooding? What would you do with your livestock, pets or others that are reliant upon you?

Not all floods are the same. Some develop slowly, sometimes over a period of days. Flash floods, however, can develop quickly, sometimes in only a few minutes without any visible signs of rain. Do you subscribe to an alert system for severe weather warnings, like flash floods? Utilizing a weather app or Greenville County's CodeRed alert system, which sends notices to a provided phone number about impending inclement weather, is a good way to receive timely alerts.

You should develop an emergency plan for your family, pets and livestock. It should be practiced and shared with others. Some things to consider are designating boarding facilities or pasture space for livestock and transportation for those animals in the instances of predictable flooding and severe weather like heavy snow and ice or hurricanes. What will you do when the power is out for days or weeks? Do you have an alternate source of electricity to power a well or other water source for yourself or your livestock?

Having a disaster supply kit for your family and your animals/livestock is very important when an evacuation is imminent. Family and animal medications, vaccination documents, first aid supplies, cash, food and water and identifying documents like personal identification and copies of insurance are all things that should be easily accessible or in a disaster supply kit. Prepare your home for flooding by evaluating if essential home services are susceptible to flooding like the furnace, water heater and electric panel. Installing check valves in sewer traps to prevent flood water from backing up into the drains of your home is also advisable.

If you have to evacuate your home during or prior to a flood, take those disaster supply kits with you, turn off utilities and do not touch electrical equipment if you are wet or in standing water. Avoid walking through moving water. Never drive through floodwaters or on flooded roads; water only two feet deep can float away most vehicles. Be cautious since floodwaters may be contaminated. Do not allow children to play near water, storm drains or ditches. Consider any animal trailers you may be hauling and what their limitations are. Be especially cautious at night when it is harder to recognize flood dangers.

When returning to a flood-impacted area, return only when you have been told by the governing authority it is safe to do so. Air dry items that can be salvaged as quickly as possible to avoid mold and mildew. Clean and disinfect salvagable items that got wet. Discard porous items and other items that can't be salvaged due to contamination or water damage. Service damaged water and sewage systems, like a well or septic system, as soon as possible.

For more information on preparing for floods and other emergencies, visit www.ext.vt.edu. Excerpts retrieved from VCE publication VCE-413NP.

Adaptive Grazing



Johnny R. Rodgers- Amazing Grazing Program; NC State University



For the casual observer, pasture-based agriculture can seem very simple. The plants in our pastures capture sunlight and use water and soil minerals to create plant tissue. Herbivores consume these grasses, legumes and forbs and produce meat, milk, fiber and recreational value (i.e. horses, etc.) for humans. Building profitable enterprises should be simple when most of the raw materials needed are free. Those of us engaged in this industry understand the complexity of grazing systems. The Amazing Grazing program helps shift our focus from only grazing livestock to a broader view of all the elements in pasture ecosystems so we can see the impact of our decisions.

Taking a pasture inventory is a great starting point. It will highlight your current pasture conditions. Plant type and condition can tell you about prior management. Over-grazed and over-rested conditions can be identified and a renovation plan can be developed. Remember, renovation does not always mean establishing new plantings. Adjusting management to allow for an ample rest period between grazings can rejuvenate over-grazed pastures. Great pastures are built from the ground up. In other words, we need to become familiar with the soil on our farm. The Web Soil Survey is a great online resource that can help you become more familiar with your soils. Soil sampling pastures every three years will help manage soil fertility. Using good grazing management will help maintain fertility over time and improve soil health.

The pasture inventory will reveal the most common forages in our pastures. We can use this information to build a grazing plan. Using forage production estimates, we can get a good idea about when our forage will be available and address any excess or shortages. NRCS, Soil & Water and Extension staff can assist with this step. For cool season grasses, like tall fescue, managing the spring flush can be challenging, especially for operators who do not harvest hay. A flexible stocking rate is beneficial but not always practical. Bringing in more grazing livestock during this time can be valuable but difficult to manage. Biosecurity is a concern for many cow-calf producers when bringing in other cattle in this situation. In some cases, not grazing some paddocks in the spring is the best alternative to maintaining the proper rest period for the paddocks being grazed. The over-rested paddocks can be used later in the season with a class of livestock with low nutrient requirements.

A common mistake made by many new grazers is becoming obsessed with a high level of forage utilization. They want to take all plants grazed down to the target heights so the post-grazing appearance and forage regrowth will be uniform. However, animal performance may (not always) suffer because the livestock were not able to achieve the proper dry matter intake. Meeting the needs of our livestock should be the goal of all grazers. Of course, nutrient requirements vary greatly between livestock classes. For example, pasture finished beef should be grazed in a manner that allows them to choose the forages at a high level of intake. A strategy could be to use them as "first grazers" followed by dry ewes (or cows) to increase forage utilization. With this technique, we use our forage and meet the livestock's needs as well. To a large degree, grazing management is essentially time management. We need to evaluate when our livestock has access to a paddock, how long they will remain and when they will return for the next grazing event. Grazing practices must fit the individual operation. Setting up a system that requires daily moves for someone with an off-farm job may not work very well. Make sure the grazing practices fit your context to avoid "grazing burnout".

Grazing management is both art and science. Many in the academic community are still debating the value of improved grazing management. I concede it is often difficult to demonstrate the value of improved grazing practices on research stations. The daily observations and adjustments (adaptive grazing) needed for success complicate the research model. It is my opinion science leads to innovations and other times innovation is later validated by science. There is still much to learn about managing soil, plants, animals and people in our stewardship of these resources. A multi-disciplined approach with scientists, farmers and industry advocates will move us forward on our journey.

If you have questions about the topic above, please contact me by phone or email; Sara Rutherford, srutherford@vt.edu or 434-348-4223.

Programs & Reminders

Virginia State University's College of Agriculture offers many educational programs, online webinars, workshops and field days. To find out more, 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.

2024 Master Gardener Volunteer Training Program

Sara Rutherford

Our next Master Gardener training course will start in January of 2024. It will continue through early April culminating in a celebration of completion. We will also take a field trip to Lewis Ginter Botanical Garden in Richmond. This training will be held in a hybrid format; meaning there will be online course instruction and in-person instruction occurring on a regular basis. This is a fee-based course. The fee covers all materials and supplies for the 15-week course. Our training offers volunteers the chance to learn a lot about sustainable gardening that benefits them and those in their community. Virginia Cooperative Extension master gardeners are trained volunteer educators, committed to at least 20 hours of horticultural and environmental volunteer service each year following their training and internship period. Our volunteers are continually learning, participating in at least 8 hours of continuing education a year through activities, workshops and educational events.

Please join us on October 17th at 5:30pm or October 20th at 10:30am at the Greenville/Emporia Extension office for an information session to learn more about our Master Gardener training course. This training course is open to Greenville, Emporia and Sussex residents.



Fall Gardening Starts in August

VEGETABLES TO PLANT IN		AUGUST			
ZONE 6A	ZONE 6B	ZONE 7A	ZONE 7B	ZONE 8A	
DIRECT SOW	Beets Chard, Swiss Collards, Kale Kohlrabi Lettuce, Baby Salad Mustard Radish Rutabega Spinach Spinach Turnips	Beets Chard, Swiss Collards, Kale Kohlrabi Lettuce, Baby Salad Mustard Radish Rutabega Spinach Turnips	Beets Carrots Chard, Swiss Collards, Kale Kohlrabi Lettuce, Baby Salad Mustard Radish Rutabaga Southern Pea Squash, Summer Turnips	Beets Carrots Chard, Swiss Collards, Kale Kohlrabi Lettuce, Baby Salad Mustard Radish Rutabaga Southern Pea Squash, Summer Turnips	Beans, bush Beets Carrots Collards, Kale Cucumbers Eggplant Lettuce, Baby Salad Mustard Okra Peppers Southern Pea Squash, Summer Turnips
TRANSPLANT	Broccoli* Cabbage* Chinese cabbage** Cauliflower* Leeks* Lettuce, head*	Broccoli* Cabbage* Chinese cabbage** Cauliflower* Leeks* Lettuce, head*	Broccoli* Brussel Sprouts* Cabbage* Chinese cabbage** Cauliflower* Leeks* Lettuce, head*	Broccoli* Brussel Sprouts* Cabbage* Chinese cabbage** Cauliflower* Leeks* Lettuce, head*	Check our publication for exact planting dates! *Transplant Do not harvest asparagus in first year For a full list & more info see our publication "Virginia's Home Garden Vegetable Planting Guide"

More info: pubs.ext.vt.edu

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