



Greetings Coalition Members

As we settle into late fall and move toward winter, it may seem that all is quiet on the home front. Let us assure you, however, exciting things are happening in our region and beyond. Our networks are expanding as our partners branch out to broaden the pool of resources for forest farmers and press ahead with meaningful on-the-ground progress.

New research projects currently underway are adding to our understanding of native woodland plants in our region and will help us discern how variations in climate, soil, and planting conditions impact species populations and their chemical compounds.

Meanwhile, roots are going in the ground at different hubs across Appalachia in an effort to expand planting stock for forest farmers. We're continuing to organize workshops and educational events, such as a winter webinar series, to promote knowledge and empower interested stewards to plant seeds for tomorrow's demand. And private foundation support continues in our region with exciting news for several coalition partner organizations.

Our commitment to further the stewardship of our natural treasures remains strong and our work to achieve common goals is steady. Increasing market demand and commitments to traceability necessitate continued work on our end to develop the infrastructure and resources needed to meet those demands with the bar raised.

The road may seem daunting at times, especially given today's realities, but one foot continues to follow the other and the scope and depth of the coalition's efforts and impacts continue to reveal themselves. Trust that we'll continue to reach out with events and opportunities.

Many thanks, be well, and have a wonderful holiday season

The ABFFC Team

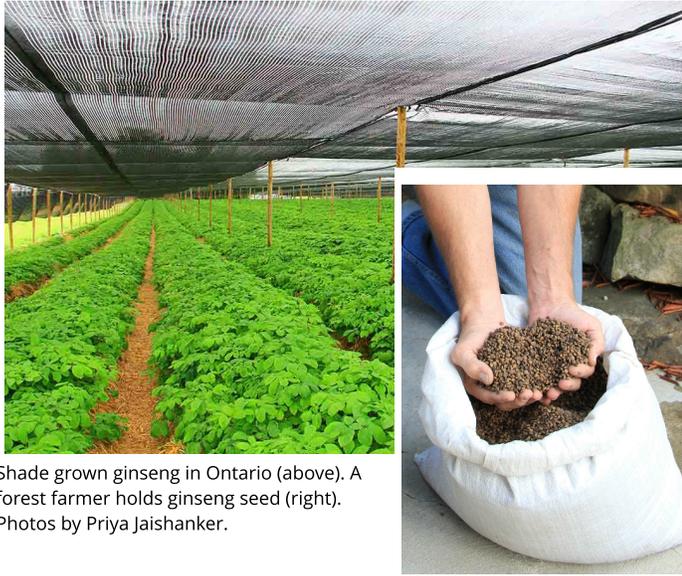
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Seed Sourcing

Tracking growth trends in Appalachia



Shade grown ginseng in Ontario (above). A forest farmer holds ginseng seed (right). Photos by Priya Jaishanker.

A new study led by coalition partner, Eric Burkhardt at Penn State takes a closer look at ginseng forest farming in Pennsylvania. While forest farming of this Appalachian botanical has grown in recent years, questions have been raised about how widespread this activity is and what sources of planting stock are being used. Annual surveying by Penn State researchers over the course of eight years aimed to gather information on the composition of ginseng exports in Pennsylvania. With much of the land in the Eastern US being privately owned, forest farmed ginseng makes up a growing sector of exports. Survey results indicated that three in 10 ginseng root sellers sold a mixture of wild roots and forest farmed roots. One in three of the forest farmers used commercially acquired seed. Commercially grown seed mostly means it comes from artificial

shade grown ginseng farmed using methods that require high inputs of fertilizers and fungicides. Read more about survey results and objectives [here](#).

Tips For Sourcing Ginseng Seed:

- If you have wild ginseng on your property, focus on propagating this stock first and foremost. Try to preserve these locally adapted lineages. Think of it as preserving “heirloom” stock.
- If you purchase commercial seed, keep it separate from your locally adapted stock. Plant it elsewhere on the property where it is not likely to cross with your wild stock.
- If you don't have any ginseng on your land, commercial seed is the best available stock and so the focus should be to find a reputable source who sells quality seed or transplants. Finding a reputable dealer might take a little research but many sellers advertise on social media platforms and repeat customers are a good clue.

Northeast Forest Farmers Coalition, Partners in Research

In our last newsletter, we heard from Karam Sheban, Forest Fellow and Yale Forests Research Manager. A grant award of \$250,000 promises an expansion of forest farming through the Northeast including partnerships between Cornell and Penn State Universities, nonprofit and farm partners. Some new research at Penn State with coalition partner Eric Burkhardt, funded by this grant, is set to begin this fall. Fenced forest farming plots are being established in central PA at Shavers Creek Environmental Center and studied in comparison with plots at other sites in the Northeast and in Virginia. These replicated trials will serve to provide for baseline data collection on growth, yields, and quality, for a variety of forest crops---and also as hubs where educational workshops and programs will be held. Look for further information about this research and educational events at this Penn State location in 2022.

Four Years On The Road

Forest Farming Documentation for the ABFFC



I remember the call from John Munsell, a forestry professor at Virginia Tech, as if it was yesterday. The question behind the phone call: Would I be interested in filming forest grown crops throughout Appalachia? It would involve travel. The answer: YES! Of course!

I didn't need to think it over. This job was everything I dreamed of - being outdoors, promoting stewardship of our natural resources, traveling, and making a difference with the work I was doing. My first assignment was to drive to the Catskills to film ginseng cultivation with the legendary Bob Beyfuss. The Catskills were at peak fall color. Bob was a pro

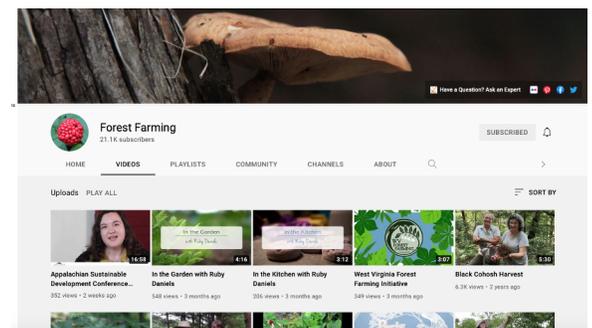
on camera and had a tattoo of a ginseng plant on his arm. I thought, "How did I get here?"

Ginseng was just the beginning. As I navigated my way through acronyms and terms like NTFPs, wild simulated, and eXtension agent, I scoured the internet for forest farmers and more obscure forest crops. "John, I found a guy in Canada who sustainably harvests fiddlehead ferns! How about that?" Always encouraging, John suggested a stop in Maine to talk with eXtension agent, Dave Fuller, a fiddlehead expert. A day later, I had the filming dates set to coincide with the Fiddlehead Fern Festival in Farmville, Maine. The job just couldn't get any better.

Until it did get better. Three years into filming, the ABFFC began. In an effort to provide forest farmers with resources on best handling practices and diversified income opportunities, we began to film value added production. I met with herbalists and entrepreneurs to film the creation of tinctures, essential oils, salves, scrubs, and teas.

Having documented the region's forest botanicals over the years from seed propagation and rhizome division to seed collection and harvest of mature plants through washing and drying to the final formulation of an end product gave me an enormous appreciation for the forest farmers who tend to the lifecycle of these treasured plants. Appalachia's rich biodiversity deserves our continued stewardship, and I'm thankful for the role I've been able to play in promoting the cultivation of the plants that we use on a day-to-day basis. I'm thankful for the chance to shine a light on the amazing people who lovingly collect the seed, gather the roots, and continue to farm the forest with a passion for the plants themselves.

Years later, when I look at our [forest farming channel on YouTube](#) and I see how some of our videos have tens of thousands of views, I'm in awe of the waves that the ABFFC has made and have sincere gratitude for our team's vision both now and at the very beginning.





Forest Farming *at the Catawba Sustainability Center*



CSC manager, Adam Taylor unpacks a shipment of Goldenseal roots that will be planted on the farm's forested land. Photo by Priya Jaishanker.

Nestled in Virginia's Catawba Valley is a 377-acre farm that serves as a model for the future of farming. The Catawba Sustainability Center (CSC), part of Virginia Tech's division of Outreach and International Affairs, uses a "whole farm" approach - a method that makes use of both fields and forests, that adopts creative "outside-the-box" thinking and integrates techniques like agroforestry to create resiliency and diversity.

Adam Taylor, the manager at the Catawba Sustainability Center said, "Our farm is rooted in sustainability. Everything we're doing is protecting water, building soils...we're not as focused on the bottom line like a lot of commodity farms are." Keeping a steadfast focus on regenerative practices in agriculture is just one attribute that sets this farm apart. The farm also functions as an educational laboratory, conducting workshops and engaging community members out in the field. "I believe the center is beginning to be the leader in the region for small farm landholders. We are showing that a diversified model is working and that it can be profitable," said Adam. "We're going to be the resource for this region in how to incorporate agroforestry, how to use non-timber forest products....we're doing all these things here and we're getting noticed more."

One of several agroforestry techniques adopted on the farm is forest farming. Much of Appalachia's forests are home to endemic medicinal plants, like Goldenseal. As market demand continues to grow, the need to intentionally farm the forest becomes greater. Adam Taylor and his colleague, Katie Trozzo, Food Systems and Network Outreach Specialist with the CSC's Herb Network, work together to bring stakeholders together who are interested in forest farming and provide them with the resources they need to begin an operation. Education and access to root stock are two factors that can determine success. The team has planted thousands of Goldenseal rhizomes on the center's forested land in preparation for future workshops and to provide planting stock down the road. "A new, emerging program here is the Herb Network. We're partnering with the ABFFC as well as different organizations within the coalition, especially Appalachian Sustainable Development," said Katie. "We'll be collaborating with them to help growers in our region with the processing and sales of medicinal herbs."

As the forest farming network grows, more people are paying attention to the movement. Read this [story from the Roanoke Times](#) featuring the Catawba Sustainability Center.



Katie Trozzo plants a goldenseal rhizome in the woodlands at the Catawba Sustainability Center.

Edwards Mother Earth Foundation Funds Coalition Partners to Expand Agroforestry in Appalachia

The Edwards Mother Earth Foundation (EMEF) was established in Washington State in 1997 to help create a sustainable planet. Bob and Jane Edwards were the initial donors and inspired a love of earth and all its possibilities among generations of the extended family. The foundation's philanthropic mission is to enhance the sustainable and diverse quality of life by addressing disruptions caused by global climate change.

One EMEF goal is to catalyze agroforestry adoption in the United States to help mitigate or reverse climate change by supporting bold multiyear, multi-partner strategies. Four projects were recently selected for Foundation funding to increase the footprint of agroforestry nationally. We are pleased to announce that two projects with ABFFC ties were chosen. One initiative is led by ABFFC project director John Munsell at Virginia Tech and a second by Katie Commender at ABFFC core-partner Appalachian Sustainable Development. Together the awards total over \$1.3 million.

Munsell will lead a project that increases agroforestry adoption by rapidly providing technical support and cost-share to the next wave of Appalachian agroforestry producers. The goal is to achieve a 'tipping point' by providing substantial support for implementation of agroforestry practices, including forest farming. Virginia Tech colleague John Fike, a forage specialist with years of agroforestry experience and an active silvopasture program, is also involved. He and Munsell will provide support for and work closely with ABFFC partners Appalachian Sustainable Development and Rural Action to provide on-the-ground technical and financial assistance for forest farm and silvopasture establishment.

Commender will oversee a multi-region project with diverse partners from New England across Appalachia to the Midwest who will focus on increasing technical service provider training on agroforestry practices such as forest farming, silvopasture, and alley cropping. Munsell and Virginia Tech also are involved, and by virtue the ABFFC will play a role.

The multi-year partnership between these ABFFC organizations was an important part of the application process because it demonstrated the value and strength of consistent, effective, and lasting partnerships. The initial time frame for project work is two years, with potential for continuation. Please be on the lookout for future announcements about support from one or both projects that may benefit you and your operation. The ABFFC and its partners are grateful this opportunity and thank EMEF for the support needed to continue the good work and make meaningful contributions to addressing some of our most pressing environmental problems.



Edwards Mother Earth Foundation

News from the Yew

Hear from Coalition Partner, The Yew Mountain Center

New Agritourism Initiative will celebrate *Mountain Medicine* in West Virginia

The Yew Mountain Center, a 500-acre nature preserve in Pocahontas County, West Virginia, is one of the founding partners of the West Virginia Forest Farming Initiative, the program leading efforts to grow the non-timber forest product economy and preserve native plant populations in the Mountain State.

As a complement to this work, the Yew Mountain Center, in partnership with Future Generations University, is in the beginning stages of planning a new agritourism initiative that will be piloted in three West Virginia counties. The *Mountain Medicine Trail* is being designed to raise public awareness of the importance of the state's native medicinal forest botanicals and their historical, cultural, and ecological significance. Through this project, the Yew Mountain Center hopes to educate the public about the uses and sustainability concerns for Appalachian medicinal botanicals, support the small producers and related businesses who are supplying the region with locally sourced forest botanicals, and raise revenue from tourism in the region.



Participants learn about native plants at the Yew Mountain Center, a destination on the soon to be created Mountain Medicine Trail." Photo by Marlyn McClendon.

The trail will consist of a network of partner destination sites to attract visitors to rural communities throughout Pocahontas, Randolph, and Tucker Counties. Destinations on the trail will include retail locations for locally sourced forest botanical products, locations for workshops on some aspect of non-timber forest products, sites for information displays, and sites offering interpretive walks with demonstration plantings. Building on the work of the West Virginia Forest Farming Initiative, this project will also offer training and technical assistance to existing and prospective entrepreneurs in the non-timber forest products industry.

The Yew Mountain Center has also recently welcomed a new Forest Farming Initiative Coordinator to their team. Julia Flint joined the Yew

Mountain Center in October 2021 and will be developing the Mountain Medicine Trail, as well as coordinating statewide forest farming efforts with the West Virginia Forest Farming Initiative.

Those interested in learning more about the Mountain Medicine Trail can email Julia at julia.yewmountain@gmail.com.



Appalachian Sustainable Development Is Calling for Your Input

Appalachian Sustainable Development (ASD) is reaching out to you to get feedback on the [Appalachian Harvest Herb Hub \(AHHH\)](#) via an anonymous survey being collected by a third party consultant, [New Venture Advisors](#). We estimate the survey will take **approximately 15 minutes** and it will be accessible until **November 29th**.

You can [access the survey here](#). The survey will not collect any personal information, IP addresses, or any other identifying information and it is designed so you can skip ANY questions you are not comfortable answering.

In 2017, Appalachian Sustainable Development (ASD) founded the Appalachian Harvest Herb Hub (AHHH), a social enterprise that aims to create a thriving herbal economy in Central Appalachia, while conserving at-risk plants through profitable cultivation. The AHHH seeks to build a network of forest farmers and medicinal herb farmers, who can sustainably cultivate and harvest at-risk and in-demand botanicals to meet growing demands. New Venture Advisors has recently been brought on board to support ASD through this process of conducting interviews and surveys to gather input from stakeholders to understand how the herb hub can better serve the community. This survey is anonymous and the results will be analyzed by New Venture Advisors as part of their evaluation process.

The herb hub currently includes the following services to their clients:

- aggregation and marketing
- access to minimal processing equipment (washing, drying, garbling, cutting)
- seed to sale farmer and forager training
- cost share (certifications, rootstock, seedlings, seeds, etc)
- crop planning
- on-farm technical assistance

Additional services could include:

- additional locations
- fee for service processing and/or grading
- cut and sift capability
- grinding and powdering
- testing (microbial, moisture, identity verification, etc)
- nursery production and sales of planting stock (seed and/or root stock) to growers
- other services as identified/needed from the herb farming community

The goal of this survey is to gather input from key stakeholders like you in order to best meet the needs of our community. **We want to hear from YOU!** This survey is for farmers and foragers/wild harvesters currently selling to or potentially interested in selling into a herb hub located in Duffield, Virginia. We are also interested in finding out if additional locations are necessary, so please provide feedback if this is the case for your business. Please note that the intended audience includes a mix of suppliers who wild forage and cultivate products, several of which do both. There are questions to address this broad range, so when necessary please select N/A when the question is not applicable.

Thank you in advance for your time and participation. Please forward the survey link to others who may be interested. If you have any questions, please contact: Nikki@newventureadvisors.net.



Let's Stay Connected!

Forest Farming Fridays ~Virtual Forest Farming Day~



Who Are Forest Farmers?
Forestland owners are incredibly interested in forest farming. Though always high on the list of landowner interests, non-timber forest product and forest farming assistance are limited and associated forest management services are still scarce.

However, markets for forest farmed products are evolving and forest farming education and networking has increased. Improving management services for interested landowners, and empowering good stewards has never been more important.

The ABFC is connecting forest farmers and stewards to experts, resources and training to help increase awareness and broaden the forest farming horizon throughout Appalachia and beyond.



Anytime ~ Every Friday! | Forest Farming FB Group
appalachianforestfarmers.org

Forest Farming Fridays

Join us for Forest Farming Fridays where we'll dig deep into topics ranging from our own experiences as forest farmers to market place demands, new networking opportunities and more. This virtual event takes place every Friday on our **Forest Farming FB Group**. This is an ongoing conversation open to engagement from those within our community. Newcomers are of course welcome, so spread the word!

We'll propose a new theme every Friday. Be ready for the occasional guest speaker or featured video, and come prepared to share your own challenges and victories that we all experience as farmers within the forest.

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Forest Farming Opportunities at the Organic Growers School

The Organic Growers School is excited to offer Forest Farming Mentorships in partnership with the [ABFFC](#). Connect with an established forest farmer in Western NC who can guide you as you explore woodland botanicals, mushrooms, and agroforestry. Applications are accepted on a rolling basis.

The Organic Growers School Spring Conference registration will be open December 5th! This year's in person event will take place March 18th, 19th and 20th in Mars Hill, NC and will include workshops on Forest Farming, such as, Growing and Marketing Woodland Botanicals, Restoring Forest Memory, Cooperative Organizing for Community Scale Agroforestry, Growing Appalachian Roots: Exploring organic farming of American ginseng, and Ethical Foraging for Mushrooms.

[Registration opens December 15th. Register early and receive an early bird discount!](#)

Workshop details:

Dr Jeanine Davis - Growing and Marketing Woodland Botanicals

There is a growing demand for native woodland medicinal herbs such as goldenseal, black cohosh, and ramps. Opportunities range from running a nursery selling planting stock to forest farmers, to providing raw material to herbalists/manufacturers, to creating value-added products. We'll cover how to grow and sell.

Rodney & Heather Webb Salamander Spring Gardens - Restoring Forest Memory

'Ecological Memory' is a term used to describe how ecosystems respond to disturbances and the impacts on resiliency. How do we as human beings integrate ourselves into forest ecosystem restoration to be a positive force for resiliency? This overview will look at a Southern Appalachian homestead working to embrace an abundant fungal component, i.e., mushroom cultivation, for forest and human health.

Zev Friedman - Cooperate WNC - Cooperative organizing for community scale agroforestry

Deep dive and discussion around regionally appropriate, climate resilient agroforestry techniques including silvopasture, living fences, pollard/coppice forestry, and riparian restoration systems, and cooperative economic and social strategies to implement these practices at community scale. Zev will highlight examples including Cooperate WNC and other regional and global projects.

Iris Gao - Growing Appalachian Roots: Exploring organic farming of American ginseng

American ginseng is a valuable medicinal herb and a hidden treasure of Appalachia. Besides benefiting the environment and the quality of the consumer's product, organic farming of American ginseng has the potential to increase both the potency and unit value of the crop. We will explore the most recent developing aspects of organic farming practices as we explore this unique native herb.

Stesha Warren - Eliana's Garden - Ethical foraging for mushrooms

This session will give participants a foundation in foraging wild mushrooms safely and ethically. We will cover how to key a mushroom to identification, safety, legalities, sustainability & function of fungi, the most common choice species and more. This class will leave participants inspired to explore the the fun world of fungi!

Meredith Leigh, Sharon Dubuc & Mari Stuart - Carbon Farming and Agroforestry Pre-Conference:

https://docs.google.com/document/d/15Mms3Ft53_XTq8iDm-SasxogubOab0xjBDF1mwcu4qE/edit?usp=sharing

Justin Holt - Nutty Bud Collective- Staple Tree Crops for Regenerative Culture in Appalachia

Tree crops are a critical element of regenerative agriculture and culture. This class will look at these nutritional and ecological powerhouses, with a special focus on our native nut trees. We'll also look at co-operative, community-based ways of working with these crops that can extend their ecology-restoring potential into the social realm.



