



Bloodroot blossom (*Sanguinaria canadensis*)

### IN THIS ISSUE

Dear Community Members,

Big changes are underway in our forest farming community given the USDA's recent award of almost \$660,000 to a forest farming alliance of non-governmental organizations, universities, and government agencies. The support is part of the Beginning Farmer and Rancher Development Program, which was launched in 2008 to invest in next generation farmers and ranchers. The alliance includes many members of the forest farming community and will deliver an array of services to beginning forest farmers, connect key actors across the domestic medicinal forest plant supply chain, and bring the farming of plant populations to the forefront in Appalachia and beyond. This newsletter provides a brief overview of project activities and upcoming opportunities for this and other community member projects and initiatives. Also, Holly Chittum has taken over Forest Farming Footnotes responsibilities from Catherine Bukowski, who is working diligently to complete her graduate program. We all owe Cathie a great deal of thanks for her excellent work in the past. Kudos! It is good to be back at it and communicating. Hope you enjoy this issue!

John Munsell                  Holly Chittum                  Priya Jaishanker

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#### **Become a Coalition Member 3**

Membership brings valuable benefits including integrative online education and resources, hands-on workshops and training, a farmer to farmer mentor program, opportunities for connecting with industry representatives, reduced price seed programs, and much more.

#### **Regional Projects 4-6**

See what's happening in North Carolina, Pennsylvania, and Virginia with our project partners. Some exciting developments are happening in the realm of forest medicinal herbs.



## Who We Are



Southern Regional  
Extension Forestry



BLUE RIDGE WOODLAND GROWERS



PENNSYLVANIA



NC STATE UNIVERSITY



The Appalachian Beginning Forest Farmer Coalition formed from a network of people who share a common goal of increasing support for the cultivation of woodland medicinal plants. This project draws from the expertise and experience among a diverse pool of partners and was recently awarded funding for three years from the USDA's National Institute of Food and Agriculture. Below is an overview of those involved:

**Appalachian Sustainable Development**, a non-profit based in Abingdon, VA, provides communities with the tools they need to combat food insecurity, job loss, and poverty through sustainable approaches to agriculture and forestry.

**Blue Ridge Woodland Growers** is a community group, in Virginia's Grayson and Carroll Counties and surrounding areas, focused on producing and marketing non-timber forest products (e.g., woodland medicinals, fruits, nuts, berries).

**United Plant Savers**, a non-profit in existence for more than 20 years, has a unique network of botanical sanctuaries with the goal of conserving native medicinal plants and their habitats while promoting renewable supplies for future generations.

**Rural Action** is a non-profit with ample experience in agroforestry and non-timber forest products education and technical support. They provide site evaluation and planning assistance, along with consultations, planting stock, and general support for medicinal forest herb cultivation and other sustainable development projects.

**Penn State, NC State, Virginia Tech, and the US Forest Service's Southern Research Station** lend collective expertise and technical advice while providing integral administrative support and educational resources.

**Pennsylvania Department of Conservation and Natural Resources, Southern Regional Extension Forestry, and the USDA National Agroforestry Center** are assisting with farmer and service provider education along with various parallel focus points like land access.

**USDA's National Institute of Food and Agriculture** funded this coalition through the Beginning Farmer and Rancher Development Program.



# Become a Coalition Member Today!

Anyone, anywhere can join  
*valuable services for those working in the region...*  
*a great way to stay connected and informed for those near and far...*

## Program Offerings

### ***Training and Support***

Hands-on workshops on all operational aspects: choosing and preparing a site, management planning, organic production and certification, forest grown verification, best handling and processing practices, value added production techniques, forest farming business planning and record keeping. Unique opportunities to see value-added facilities and productive forest farms.

### ***Technical assistance***

Forest farmer to forest farmer mentor program. Access to university extension and other agency personnel for FAQs and assistance with site and habitat management planning.

### ***Connecting Growers to Buyers***

Forest farmer and industry stakeholder meetings will offer opportunities for growers to connect with buyers, organic certifiers, and representatives from verification and other labeling programs.

### ***Valuable Resources***

Houses a large library of online and video resources for forest farmers on diverse topics from industry basics to cultivation to value-added production and beyond.

The coalition will also help link members to free and reduced rate seed distribution programs and house an equipment share forum to assist growers in accessing tools for harvest and processing.

Bi-annual Appalachian Forest Farmer Chronicle.

**To become a member go to:**  
**[www.appalachianforestfarmers.org](http://www.appalachianforestfarmers.org)**

## Connect with us on...



# Regional Projects

## North Carolina Alternative Crops and Organics

The NC Alternative Crops and Organics Program is a research and extension group of the North Carolina State University Dept. of Horticultural Science, located in Mills River, NC. From this beautiful location, they help farmers by conducting research and educational programs on organic agriculture, medicinal herbs, heirloom tomatoes, truffles, hops, and

other specialty crops. They maintain a woodland botanical demonstration forest adjacent to the facility and their grower base has been serviced through research and outreach efforts for 25 years in Western North Carolina and the Southeast. Current services provided include production and marketing assistance with new and specialty crops, medicinal herb matchmaking of growers and buyers, and house the Western North Carolina Medicinal Herb Growers Club and Woodland Stewards volunteer group. NC Alternative Crops and Organics leads guided tours of woodland areas, hands-on workshops for growing, harvest, and post-harvest handling of herb and root crops.



Some of their projects:

[Farm Prosperity Project](#) — Helpful decision making tools, production information, surveys, and presentations pertaining to choosing new crops and farmland protection.

[NC Organic](#) — An organic agriculture internet resource for North Carolina farmers.

[NC Specialty Crops](#)— A resource for farmers, entrepreneurs and consumers within the specialty crops market.

[Medicinal Herbs for Commerce](#) — Information on growing and selling medicinal herbs in North Carolina. Includes step-by-step "So you want to grow medicinal herbs" process for you to read through and decide if herbs are right for your situation.

[WNC Forest Producers Marketing Project](#) — Information for local forest products producers (timber and non-timber) and resources for them. Including videos of local businesses and two directories.

[WNC Natural Products Project](#) — Resources from many local organizations supporting the WNC industry.

[Bloodroot Project](#) — Information on growing bloodroot at home project for artisans in Cherokee, NC led by researchers in Horticulture Science.





# Regional Projects



Pennsylvania Certified Organic is a non-profit organization that educates and certifies organic growers and handlers, mostly in the Mid-Atlantic region. PCO is accredited by the USDA under the National Organic Program. For more information regarding the PCO Forest Grown Verification Program or to apply for verification, contact Marissa Pyle at [marissa@paorganic.org](mailto:marissa@paorganic.org) or call (814)422-0251.

## FOREST GROWN VERIFICATION PROGRAM

### *Why should I join this program as a producer?*

#### **Potential Benefits to Producers:**

1- Forest-grown products help to provide consumer confidence, demand and generate premium pricing within the US and international herbal marketplace.

Many of today's herbal practitioners and household consumers are concerned about where their herbs are coming from, and related issues of adulteration, quality control and sustainable sourcing. PCO forest-grown labeling tells your customers that your product is what it is supposed to be, and that by purchasing your product they are making a choice to support ecologically sensitive farming practices and plant conservation initiatives.

2- Forest-grown verification provides documentation of your forest 'crop' in the event of theft, land development, crop insurance and legal matters.

There is perhaps more pressure than ever facing many native medicinal forest plants, and stewards of these plants. American ginseng, for example, continues to be the target of thieves and many growers are finding that their 'crop' is not recognized in the court of law when thieves are caught stealing from them. Crop documentation is one tool for landowners and law enforcement in the effort to protect one's investment.

3- Forest-grown verification may provide exemptions from existing regulations aimed at protecting the species in the wild.

PCO and developers of the program are working with academia, non-governmental organizations, and state and federal government to assure that the Forest-grown program complies with all existing state and federal regulations for each product included within the program. As part of the continued development of this verification program, PCO is exploring ways in which enrolled producers can be exempted from unnecessary restrictions pertaining to their 'forest crops.' (e.g., harvest season and stage). This by necessity involves a state-by-state discussion with regulators and it is expected that as this program grows, many states will provide for exemptions for verified producers.

### *Why should I purchase product through this program?*

#### **Potential Benefits to Consumers:**

1- Feel good about the source.

All forest-grown products are third-party verified 'sustainably grown' and 'legally acquired.' While there are many different interpretations of 'sustainable,' PCO inspectors verify that whether wild-collected or forest-farmed, all products comply with the existing best science, and regulations governing wild population management and forest-based cultivation. PCO inspectors also ensure compliance with regard to any use of inputs when it comes to crop, pest and forest management.

2- Identity and quality are assured.

PCO verified Forest-grown products provide assurances that the product you bought was produced and harvested with quality assurance in mind. Each product has been raised using the best modern and traditional practices in its native forest environment, the identity has been botanically verified, and the harvest is approached using the best science on the chemistry and biology of each species.

3- Contribute to conservation.

By purchasing Forest-grown products, you can feel good about supporting sustainable production of the plant or mushroom, while providing economic incentive for forest landowners to conserve their forests from development, loss, or degradation. Landowners in this program are committed to conservation thru cultivation---the idea that plants can be conserved by pursuing intentional husbandry using the natural forest as the 'farm.'

4- Support forest landowners pursuing sustainable economic livelihood.

Rural landowners often have little economic incentive other than to log, sell off or lease their forestlands when faced with economic hardship or need. Your purchase of Forest-grown products helps to provide other economic alternatives to forest landowners who need to derive income in order to pay for taxes and other carrying costs associated with forestland ownership.

# Regional Projects



Appalachian Sustainable Development is teaming up with neighboring Virginia Highlands Community College to increase the availability of locally sourced planting stock to the region's forest farmers.

Southwest Virginia and Northeast Tennessee have an abundance of forested mountains that can be used to grow medicinal herbs such as goldenseal, ginseng, ramps, and more. Forest farmers looking to cultivate these



The hardwood forests of southern Appalachia are perfect for growing medicinal woodland herbs.

valuable plants on their properties must either propagate their own planting stock or mail-order seed, rootlets and plants from outside of the region. ASD is working with local growers to collect seed and plants for propagation by the community college to support growers in the area. Students in the horticulture program at Virginia Highlands Community College, along with interested local growers, will

gain valuable experience in propagation of these valuable native plants, with attention given to cataloging locations of seed and plant sources and educating on legal and ethical considerations of native forest plant propagation. Plants grown will be made available to participants of the Appalachian Beginning Forest Farmer program and through plant exchanges.



Goldenseal rhizomes

Funding for this effort is provided by the USDA through the Appalachian Beginning Forest Farmer Coalition and through the Sacharuna Foundation. For more information, contact Emily Lachniet at [elachniet@asdevelop.org](mailto:elachniet@asdevelop.org).





## ABFFC 2016 EVENTS

*Save the Date!*

**April 9:** Cultivating Opportunities for Conservation from 9:00 am to 1:00 pm at the United Plant Savers Goldenseal Sanctuary in Rutland, OH. Register at [www.unitedplantsavers.org](http://www.unitedplantsavers.org)

**May 14:** Birds and Herbs Forest Walk from 9:00 am to 12:00 pm at the United Plant Savers Goldenseal Sanctuary in Rutland, OH. Register at [www.unitedplantsavers.org](http://www.unitedplantsavers.org)

**June 4:** Growing Appalachian Forest Botanicals for Market at the Pine Mountain Settlement School/Drapper Building, Pine Mountain, KY. 1:00 pm to 6:30 pm

**June 8:** Growing Appalachian Forest Botanicals for Market at the Robinson Center for Appalachian Resource Sustainability in Quicksand, KY. 6:00 pm to 9:00 pm

**June 25:** Growing Appalachian Forest Botanicals for Market at the United Plant Savers Goldenseal Sanctuary with Mountain Rose Herbs, Rutland OH. 9:00 am to 5:30 pm Register at [www.unitedplantsavers.org](http://www.unitedplantsavers.org)

**August 5 - 7:** Blue Ridge Woodland Growers two-day training in Floyd, VA **SOLD OUT!**

**August 26 - 28 :** Appalachian Sustainable Development two-day training at the Cherokee Cove Campground in Johnson County, TN **SOLD OUT!**

**September 24 - 25:** Rural Action two-day training at the UPS Goldenseal Sanctuary in Rutland, OH **SOLD OUT!**

More information on these events at: [Appalachianforestfarmers.org](http://Appalachianforestfarmers.org)



## WESTERN NC MEDICINAL HERB CLUB EVENTS

Contact: [Meghan\\_baker@NCSSU.edu](mailto:Meghan_baker@NCSSU.edu)

**April 14:** Early Spring Botanicals Walk at UNCA Botanical Garden

**May 3:** Late Spring Walk (and Planting) at Woodland Botanicals Demo Forest of MHCREC. Additional option to sign-up for Woodland Demo Stewards crew

**July:** Dryer Considerations - Potential hands on building and energy use presentation

**September:** Harvest and Post-harvest Handling

**Winter:** Herb Clubs Unite! Winter event and seed swap with Forsyth County Herb Club

# Forest Farmer Spotlight

## *Jon and Dana Beegle at StoneRoot Farm*



Dana Beegle

Dana and Jon Beegle own and run Beegle Landscaping and Lawn Care, Bootleg BBQ, and StoneRoot Farm in Floyd, VA – where they produce shiitake mushrooms, wild-simulated ramps, goldenseal, and pasture-fed beef. Their farm recently received Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS) funding to establish 11 acres of silvopasture and a riparian buffer, which they will plant throughout 2016-2017.

"Shiitake production is definitely the biggest part of our forest farming effort.," Dana Beegle said. "We currently have over 400 logs that are actively producing mushrooms. The logs range in age from 1-4 years old. We will be inoculating 200 additional white oak logs this spring. We harvest twice a day once the season gets going, and sell through a local farm aggregator who includes our mushrooms in her CSA shares and sells to local restaurants as well.

Last year we began exploring ways to use the #2 and #3 grade mushrooms in value-added products and hope to develop those markets more this year. Because we now have a certified "commissary" on the farm, we will be able to produce all of our value-added products on-site. We really see it as an opportunity to develop products from the farm that we hadn't considered before - dried shiitake ramp soup mixes maybe, salad dressings, spreads, who knows? And once the silvopasture is planted and operational, we will hopefully have pasture-raised meats to throw into the mix as well.

Other than our shiitake operation, our forest farming efforts are a bit modest so far. Two years ago we planted 1200 ramps in various spots throughout our woods - mostly in shaded ravines and even in a few seasonal drainage ditches. All of the plantings are doing fantastic! As for future forest farming efforts...our ultimate goal is to spend the coming years getting our woods healthy and "productive." We have a lot to do in the next 2 years to fulfill the commitments of the NRCS grant. Once all of those practices are in place, we hope to devote more attention to our woods. We'd like get a better sense of what we already have on the property...which doesn't appear to be much as the woods were long-grazed by the previous landowners, but perhaps there are a few hidden gems. In addition, we will continue to learn - through the various workshops and emerging networks that John Munsell and others are developing - about which native forest species offer the most market and earning potential and choose those varieties to use to restore the understory diversity on the property. Hopefully our property will be an example of how a landowner can repair an ecologically damaged woodland in Appalachia in a cost-effective way, and in the long-run develop it into an income-generating part of the farm (beyond the traditional timber-only approach)."

Dana is a current Masters candidate in agroforestry at Virginia Tech. Her research interests include landowner application of agroforestry, the influence of permaculture and other polyculture systems on agroforestry application, how landowners are networking and sharing agroforestry-related information, and tree selection for Mid-Atlantic silvopasture. Dana received her BS in Forestry in 1994 and worked in horticulture, environmental education, and sustainable farming before returning to pursue her Masters in 2013. She was motivated to return to school by an interest in applying agroforestry practices on her family farm.



# Project Developments - What's in the Pipeline



Filming has started for an educational series on value added production of medicinal forest plants for the Appalachian Beginning Forest Farmer Coalition's online classroom. Our first filming location was Maryland University of Integrative Health, where project Co-director Holly Chittum teamed up with Nicole Rubin, manager at MUIH's herbal dispensary, for a look at their business model and a demonstration of tincture making with plant root material. Filming demonstrations in North Carolina are coming up in May.



Tincture press



Nicole Rubin and Holly Chittum pose with ground ashwagandha root and ashwagandha root tincture at MUIH.



The Appalachian Beginning Forest Farmer Coalition website is up and running! Go to [AppalachianForestFarmers.org](http://AppalachianForestFarmers.org) to learn more about the project and partners. Become a coalition member to view a large and growing number of online resources for forest farmers across Appalachia! Keep checking

back and watch the website continue to grow as the experts at FOURDESIGN, a faculty led, student-run digital and print design agency at Virginia Tech, continue to roll out new and exciting resources. This dynamic website serves as a platform to broadcast events, house educational resources, share partner information, and will soon provide a platform for organizing coalition services and member-lead initiatives like seed swaps and equipment sharing. Members will be able to connect with other forest farmers, access the newsletter and media archive, find additional resources, get questions answered by experts, and register for regional face-to-face and online events!





# Looking Back at 2015

## 2015 International Ginseng Expo



The [North Carolina Natural Products Association](#) hosted another successful International American Ginseng Expo in early December. Speakers included experts from afar: Scott Persons, Bob Beyfuss, Phyllis Light, Erik Burkhart, and Chip Carroll, and near: Marc Williams, Joe Hollis, Melissa Fryar, Gary Kauffman,

Jeannie Dunn, Sam Lunsford, Jennifer Rhode-Ward, Hyonho Baek, Ed Fletcher and Joe-Ann McCoy, all speaking on a variety of topics related to growing, conserving, making products with and selling ginseng. Attendees including herbalists, diggers, experienced and new growers, researchers, students, and businesses in the ginseng industry came together to network, learn and celebrate the tradition of ginseng and other forest botanicals. The NCNPA would like to thank Red Moon Herbs, the NC Biotech Center, and other sponsors for their support. Sign up for the [NCNPA newsletter](#) to stay tuned for upcoming events and programs.



Eric Burkhart, Chip Carroll, Wallace Souther - *Creating a Botanical Sanctuary*  
2015 International Ginseng Expo



NC Ginseng

## Forest Botanicals: Working Together to Build a New Supply Chain

A unique meeting among representatives of the herbal supply chain was kicked off last November at Front Royal, VA followed by a gathering in Abingdon, VA. Mountain Rose Herbs along with PCO, Penn State, United Plant Savers, and Virginia Tech helped to make this meeting a reality in order to better equip forest farmers to supply medicinal forest herbs to a domestic market while providing them with opportunities to be engaged with organic certification and forest grown verification. "We're really excited that Mountain Rose could be on the forefront of producing retail packages of forest-grown ginseng, connecting with the grower who's producing it - it really expands the experience for us. I think that the verification project is really going to offer growers a new market in the United States of American herbalists who don't have access to this herb to use in their medicine. and I believe that we'll be able to bring it to market and create a buzz about it and create a new market for American grown ginseng. It's a flagship plant of ours that should be available and we're really proud to partner with Eric and PCO and to be able to work with the growers and to collaborate on this really exciting moment in herbal history," said Jennifer Gerrity, Operations Manager at Mountain Rose Herbs.



Susan Leopold, Eric Burkhart, Jeanine Davis, Leslie Zuck, Jennifer Gerrity, Joshua Bogart, Jacob Lauch, Tiffany Brown in Front Royal, Va.



Value-added products and herbal literature



# APPALACHIAN BEGINNING FOREST FARMER PROGRAM

## Growing Opportunities Beneath the Canopy



The USDA's National Institute of Food and Agriculture has recently awarded more than \$650,000 to a consortium of universities, governmental, and non-governmental organizations extending from Georgia to Pennsylvania to promote and expand cultivation and conservation of forest grown medicinal plants and to prepare Appalachian forest farmers to supply verified and organic forest grown material to nutraceutical and herbal product industries. The Appalachian Beginning Forest Farmer Program will improve agroforestry production opportunities and farming capabilities among forest farmers in the region through tailored hands-on training, online support, and access to a network of trained service providers.

### Program Offerings

#### Training and Support

Hands-on workshops on all aspects of operations: choosing and preparing a site, management planning, organic production and certification, forest grown verification, best handling and processing practices, value added production techniques, forest farming business planning and record keeping

Technical assistance

Forest farmer to forest farmer mentorship program

#### Connecting Growers to Buyers

Forest farmer and industry representative stakeholder meetings

#### Valuable Resources

Coalition clearinghouse website

Free and reduced rate seed distribution and equipment share forums

Bi-annual Appalachian Forest Farmer Chronicle

### Join Us for These Upcoming Workshops

June 4: Growing Appalachian Forest Botanicals for Market - Pine Mountain Settlement School, Pine Mountain, KY 1pm-6:30

June 8: Growing Appalachian Forest Botanicals for Market - Robinson Center for Appalachian Resource Sustainability, Quicksand, KY 6pm-9

June 25: Growing Appalachian Forest Botanicals for Market - United Plant Savers Goldenseal Sanctuary in Rutland, OH 9am-5:30

August 5 - 7: Blue Ridge Woodland Growers two-day training - Floyd Event Center in Floyd, VA

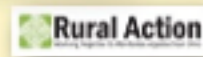
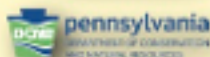
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Direct Inquires to: [hollykc@vt.edu](mailto:hollykc@vt.edu)



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