

Forest Farming Footnotes



Black cohosh (*Actaea racemosa*)
Photo credit: Eric Burkhart

Summer 2018

Hello forest farming friends!

We are delighted to share yet another issue of *Forest Farming Footnotes*. Amazing to think the newsletter started almost 6 years ago! If you have not done so, you should visit the archive (click [here](#) and scroll to the middle of the webpage) and take in all that the coalition represents and has accomplished. It really is quite amazing to think about this network and its role in supporting our collective forest farming goals, and we look forward to additional progress and growth as the future unfolds. We're excited to move forward together with our forest farming community! In that spirit, we have highlighted a few inspiring things in this issue of *Forest Farming Footnotes*. Take a look as you can, and enjoy. Lastly if you haven't already, we hope that you will consider following the link below and taking the ABFFC member survey. It is a short survey that is designed to help us learn what is most important to our members as we continue to grow.

Best wishes and enjoy the rest of your summer!

Until next time,

John, Holly

TAKE THE MEMBER SURVEY!

John Munsell

Holly Chittum



APPALACHIAN BEGINNING
FOREST FARMER COALITION

IN THIS ISSUE

New: Forest Farmer Mentors! 2

Organic Growers School kicks off mentorship program for forest farmers- also don't miss out on their upcoming silvopasture training event!

Featured Article 3

We have results from the black cohosh trials!

2018 ABFFC Events Recap 4-6

Take a look at the trainings that were offered by the ABFFC Partners in 2018

Partner Updates and Events 7-9

Great learning opportunities are coming up. Mark your calendars!

New Ramp Study at NC State! 10

Organic Growers School kicks off Forest Farmer Mentor Program

The Organic Growers School is partnering with the Appalachian Beginning Forest Farmer Coalition to pilot a Forest Farming Mentorship program.

The purpose of the Forest Farming Mentorship program is to support beginning farmers by pairing them with experienced regional farmers who can help them develop skills in the areas of production, marketing, business management, and connect them to the regional farming community. By serving as mentors, regional farmers will be able to pass on the skills and knowledge that they possess to new farmers and help to build collaboration and community among the farming community.

OGS is piloting two mentorships this year. They will begin July 2018 and last 3-5 months. Farm Mentors and mentees will commit to 10-15 hours of a mix of on-site forest/farm visits, phone, and email time specific to the needs and skills of the participating parties.

This year's mentors are Craig Mauney and Michael Akers. Craig is a Specialized Extension Agent for WNC, in addition to being the proprietor of Shady Hollow Farm in Zirconia, NC. His farm has been certified organic for nineteen years and he currently produces shitake mushrooms, pawpaw fruit, yellow root, goldenseal, bloodroot, ramps, sassafras and black cohosh. Michael is head wildcrafter at Red Moon Herb and focuses on mushrooms and wildcrafting medicinal herbs. Originally hailing from the Czech Republic, he has extensive experience in forest management, planning, cultivation, processing, and packaging, with a focus on sustainability of forests and forest plants, promotion of woodland products and value added production. His farm is in Weaverville.



Michael Akers



Craig Mauney

Upcoming OGS Event!

OGS is hosting a Forest Farming Field Day with Organic Growers School's CRAFT program in partnership with the ABFFC. **Silvopasture- Animals in the Woods** on September 23rd at **Glorious Forest Farm in Mars Hill, NC** [You can learn more and register here.](#) (Also, view on [facebook here.](#))

Featured Article:

Results are in for the Black Cohosh Trials!

Black Cohosh as a forest farming crop: Lessons learned and looking ahead

By: Eric Burkhart (epb6@psu.edu)

July 2018

Black cohosh (*Actaea racemosa*) is a native Appalachian forest plant with a long history of medicinal use and trade. Today, it is most commonly used for treatment of menopausal symptoms and ranks high on the list of popular trade items in domestic and international herbal markets. Most of the black cohosh root/rhizome traded and consumed originates from wild collection in Appalachia, especially from states like Kentucky and Tennessee. Concerns about the sustainability of wild collection, adulteration and quality, and consistent availability have continued to stimulate interest in the adoption



Cynthia Taylor harvesting Black Cohosh for the trial

of black cohosh as a new crop in parts of the United States and Europe for at least the past 20 years. However, adoption until now has been limited owing to a variety of factors including an inability for producers to compete with the low prices paid for wild product, especially when compared with farming production costs, and a general lack of information about the profitability of black cohosh cultivation and enterprise.

Beginning in 2016, ABFFC project technical advisor Dr. Eric Burkhart (with Penn State University) began to investigate the profitability of black cohosh production on forestlands with Virginia land-owners Cynthia and Rick Taylor and Michelle Pridgen. These landowners were identified by project partners Katie Trozzo at Blue Ridge Woodland Growers (BRWG) and Appalachian Sustainable Development (ASD, partners Emily Lachniet and Katie Commender) because they already had large populations of black cohosh on their property which they could immediately begin to manage and farm. They also voiced a willingness to “get dirty” (digging roots for hours on end is not easy!) and assist in collecting data that could be used to build real-world “enterprise budgets” for cohosh production.

Dr. Burkhart had previously developed and published enterprise budgets for several Appalachian medicinal forest crops. He drew upon his previous experience to guide ABFFC partners in the collection of data that could be used to refine budgets and models that had been developed but not thoroughly “tested” in the real-world. In 2016, Katie Trozzo worked with ABFFC landowner partners to collect these data, while in 2017 Emily Lachniet and Katie Commender took the lead on coordinating data collection. In both years, data and “lessons learned” were passed along to Dr. Burkhart for analysis and sharing. Now the results are in for these early trials! Check out the full article including results and recommendations from these “cropping trials” at this **LINK!**

ABFFC Members Learn About the Business end of Forest Farming



On the weekend of March 23 -25, 2018 Rural Action and the Appalachian Beginning Forest Farmers Coalition hosted “Growing, Managing, and Planning Your Forest Farming Business,” at Camp Oty’Okwa in the beautiful Hocking Hills Region of southeast Ohio. This three-day intensive workshop was well attended, with over 45 forest farming entrepreneurs and participants from throughout the Appalachian region and beyond.

The goal of this event was to have experienced business owners and forest farmers practitioners share their experiences, perspectives, and lessons learned with those who are in the beginning-stages of their forest farming pursuits. The weekend opened with a screening of inspirational film, “The Sanctity of Sanctuary”, a documentary about the life and work of Ohio herbalist, medicine maker, and forest farmer Paul Strauss. The film was followed by a Q&A session with Paul, as well as a fair amount of social revelry that went on into the late night hours! Saturdays agenda was full of knowledgeable speakers delivering top-notch information, including Margaret Bloomquist (NC State University Extension), Janell Baran (Blue Owl Hollow), Maureen Burns (The Herbal Sage Tea Co.), Steve Kruger (Virginia Tech), John Wood (Homecoming Farm), and Lonnie Galt-Theis (Equinox Botanicals). Topics covered included, NTFP business planning, good agricultural and collection practices for botanical producers, developing farm budgeting tools and efficiency metrics/indicators, forest and land management planning, Forest Grown Verification and sustainable brand development, as well as root propagation and planting demonstrations.



Lonnie Galt-Theis at the Equinox Botanicals Table

We would like to thank the participants and speakers who came and shared their stories and experiences over the weekend, as well as the Appalachian Beginning Forest Farmer Coalition staff who helped plan and put on a great event.



John Wood (Homecoming Farm)

To learn more about forest farming or similar upcoming events in your area, check out <https://www.appalachianforestfarmers.org/>



Appalachian Sustainable Development works with ABFFC to connect growers to the market

Appalachian Sustainable Development's work with forest farmers continues to grow. Through the Appalachian Harvest Herb Hub, they are working with the region's growers of forest botanicals to bring high quality, sustainably grown herbs to premier herb companies and apothecaries. This year, they are expanding capacity with a larger herb dryer and processing equipment to meet the demand for field and forest grown herbs.



Panel of herb buyers, Forest Farmer Grower-Industry Expo

With the goals of fostering conversation between growers and buyers of herbs and providing education, ASD and the ABFFC offered a Forest Farmer Grower-Industry Expo and Training on May 19 and a Field Day on May 20. The events brought together over 80 forest farmers from all over the US, herb company representatives, and experts in the fields of cultivating, processing and marketing forest botanicals for two days of networking, learning, and sharing. The events were a huge success!

The first morning included a buyer's panel with **Gaia Herbs**, **WishGarden Herbs**, and **Herbal Ingenuity**, followed by a grower's panel with **Michelle Pridgen**, **Ryan Huish**, **Chip Carroll**, and **Bob Beyfuss**. A keynote address by **Michael McGuffin**, president of the **American Herbal Products Association**, finished the morning. The mid-day expo gave participants a chance to showcase their products, which included ginseng, goldenseal, solomon's seal and other planting stock, herbal products from small to large manufacturers, and the latest research and technical assistance support in forest farming. There was a lot of positive energy and connections made during the expo, and it was exciting to see all of the networking taking place.



Margaret Bloomquist, Plant Propagation



Appalachian Sustainable Development works with ABFFC to connect growers to the market



Field Day participants tour the Appalachian Harvest Herb Hub

In the afternoon, participants got to choose between a beginning overview of forest farming, offered by Dr. Jeanine Davis, NC State University, or an advanced session on black and blue cohosh cultivation, offered by Dr. Eric Burkhart, Penn State University. Margaret Bloomquist, NC State University, showed attendees how to propagate a variety of forest botanicals through root division, and those participating got to take home a potted start. Joe Hollis, **Mountain Gardens**, showcased a technique for making a ginseng extraction, and Ryan Milt, **Asheville Wild Foods**, offered tastes of a variety of wild-foraged foods. The day finished up with an informative session on handling and value-added production by Jeanine and Margaret, and a group discussion on the importance of

forest farming for plant conservation led by **Blackberry Botanicals** owners, Neal and Beth Laferriere.

Attendees of the day two Field Day were divided into split classrooms. They spent part of their time touring the Appalachian Harvest (AH) herb hub with grower Michelle Pridgen and ASD staff, learning about the economics of forest farming from Dr. Burkhart, and various certifications offerings from Tess Wiegand, manager of the **Pennsylvania Certified Organic Forest Grown Verification** program. The rest of the day was spent visiting the forest farm of Ryan Huish, a professor of botany at UVA - Wise. The rain held off long enough for participants to hike through the forests of Ryan's farm, looking at a diversity of plant species. He and his family shared their ideas for expanding plant populations in the forest under-story and their experiences managing and harvesting plants for sale through the Appalachian Harvest herb hub.

The ASD and ABFFC teams are so grateful to all the people that took the time to be a part of this event, many travelling from far away to take part in the event and contribute to the conversation about the value of forest farming. Educational events like this are an important part of building up a regional, herbal economy and they were honored to play a part. ASD and ABFFC would like to thank the event's generous sponsors: Gaia Herbs, **Mountain Rose Herbs**, **United Plant Savers**, and Pennsylvania Certified Organic.

Written by Emily Lachniet, ASD Agroforestry Program Manager.

News and Resources from United Plant Savers



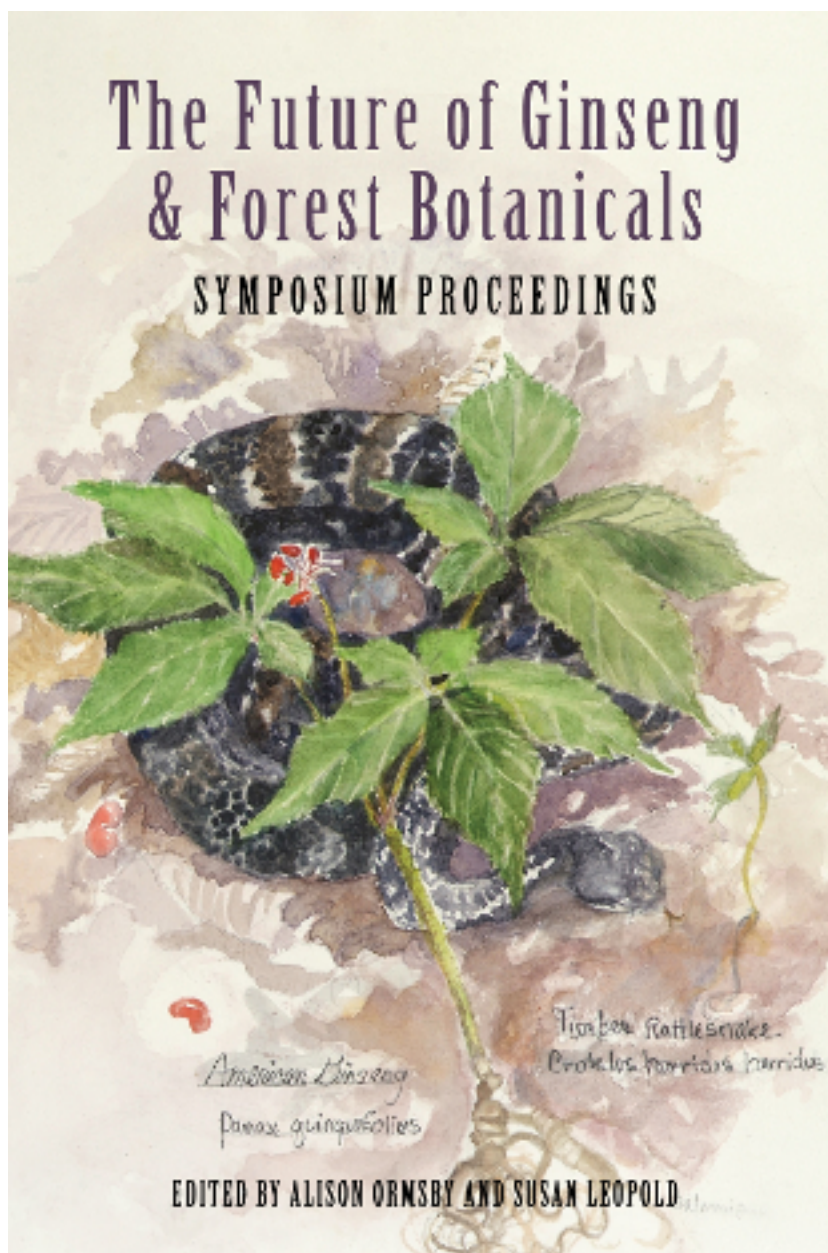
United Plant Savers has several great resources on their website for members of the ABFFC community. The Current 2018 Journal of Medicinal Plant Conservation is available for free **download**, as well as the Proceedings from the Future of Ginseng and Forest Botanicals Symposium that took place in Morgantown, WV last July. UpS now has hardcopies of the proceedings for sale as well, email office@unitedplantsavers.org if you are interested in purchasing a copy for \$10.

Each fall and spring UpS hosts a 6-week opportunity to dive into medicinal plant conservation. United Plant Savers **Medicinal Plant Conservation Certificate Program**, dates are for fall 2018 (Sept 4th-October 12th), and Spring 2019 (April 29th - June 7th). They also have a deep ecology artist fellowship program, to learn more and apply for the fellowship program, sgo to the UpS website.

SAVE the DATE!

UpS will be celebrating 25th years of grassroots plant conservation in 2019, three exciting events to know about are the International Herb Symposium in Boston July 7-9th, Planting the Future at Herb Pharm in Oregon June 15th, and the Center for Medicinal Plant Conservation Grand Opening Sept 13th-15th.

Visit UpS at the Goldenseal Sanctuary in Rutland, Ohio, they are now on Airbnb and you can book the yurt or a barn room and stay the night. Better yet create your own botanical sanctuary and join our network!



Maple Workshop at Laurel Fork Sapsuckers Sugar Camp

August 24-25, 2018 • Monterey, VA



Tim Wilmot, a retired maple specialist from the University of Vermont who now works as a researcher for Dominion and Grimm Inc. will offer classroom and field instruction about a new sap collection method that is designed to improve production for small-scale maple producers.

- Presentation about the principles and best practices of using 3/16" tubing
- Increase sap production without the use of vacuum pumps
- New research on tapping guidelines
 - Visit to the woods where a 3/16" tubing system is in place
 - Hands on instruction in tubing installation will be available



**Friday night Meet and Greet
at Laurel Point Bed & Breakfast
4 - 7 pm • light refreshments**
Get to know your fellow maple producers

This workshop is free for everyone to attend!
Saturday, 9 am to 4pm

**Workshop Saturday at Highland High School cafeteria
on Myers-Moon Road 9am until 12:00 • 8:30 register and coffee**

**Travel 10 miles west on route 250
to Laurel Fork Sapsuckers Sugar Camp for BBQ lunch, \$15.00**

**Continue afternoon session 1pm until 4 in the woods hands on
demonstrations and discussion.**

Finish the evening with an Old Fashioned Square Dance • 7 pm at the Fair Grounds

Sponsored by USDA ACER Access Program and Dominion and Grimm Inc.
For more information and to register please contact Missy Moyers-Jarrells
540-290-1676 or laurelforksapsuckers@yahoo.com

NC State Works to Find Sustainable Harvest Methods for Ramps

One of our most precious spring ephemerals, ramps (*Allium tricoccum*) emerge from the forest floor in late March to mid-April.

If you enjoy foods in the allium family, ramps will dazzle your taste buds. Highly sought by chefs and foodies, ramps represent a culinary mainstay of the traditional Appalachian diet. The demand for ramps has led to over-harvesting and a reduction in formerly abundant native populations (UPS).

Ramps harvesting was banned in The Great Smoky Mountains National Park in North Carolina and Tennessee in 2004 in response to unsustainable harvesting practices. After a five year study indicated a population decline, park scientists reported that, “the only way to prevent damage to a ramp patch was to harvest less than 10 percent once every 10 years” (New York Times 2011). The Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians traditionally harvest ramps by trimming only the tips of the leaves and leaving the bulb intact in the ground. The Cherokee advocate for this harvest method as it does not kill the plant (NYT 2011).

To encourage sustainable harvest methods in southern Appalachia and to safeguard our native ramps populations, we designed a small study to compare various methods of leaf and bulb harvest. 42'x10' mature stand of ramps was separated into 8 sub-plots. Our treatments included 2 replications each of the following harvest methods: 50% total leaf area removed, 100% of total leaf area removed (cut below the connection point of both leaves to the stem), 100% of total leaf area removed (cut above bulb and 1" above the white stem), and no leaf or bulb removed.

We look forward to monitoring the study over the years for seed production, recovery rates, and more.



Gwen Casebeer and Margaret Bloomquist, NCSU Dept. Horticultural Sciences, NC Alternative Crops and Organics Program



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