# Forest Farming Community Newsletter

**December 2012**


*Goldenseal (Hydrastis canadensis) roots*

## HARVESTING RESULTS

Dear Community Members,

Welcome to our first newsletter! We plan to publish three times a year to keep our network up-to-date on eXtension news and forest farming information. A lot has happened since the kickoff meeting in late January and our strides, service, and membership are only increasing.

In this edition, a summary of the eXtension.org 2012 national conference is provided, along with highlights of important member projects and results from our recently completed member survey. We also share information on visitation to our site, cover the importance of social media to our network, and finish with an eXtension.org tricks-of-the-trade.

Thanks to all for helping to grow and support our community. Special thanks to working session participants for volunteering time to develop content. We hope you find the newsletter informative and enjoyable. If you would like more information, please feel free to contact us.

Be well and enjoy the holidays,

John Munsell

(jfmunsel@vt.edu)

Catherine Bukowski

(cjbukows@vt.edu)

## ISSUE HIGHLIGHTS



**Ask an Expert 2.0**          Page 5

A new Ask an Expert system was launched on December 3rd. It aims to be more publicly interactive and easier to use.



**Social Media**          Page 2

Social media is increasingly important for reaching our Community of Interest, as well as keeping everyone engaged in growing the forest farming image.

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# eXtension.org 2012 Conference: Spur On – the Evolution of eXtension

Sarah Workman and Raina Sheridan of the University of Georgia and Catherine Bukowski and John Munsell of Virginia Tech attended Spur On – The Evolution of eXtension in Oklahoma City from October 1-5. The conference energized CoP leaders and encouraged foresight, new collaborations, and multigenerational approaches for managing eXtension.org communities.
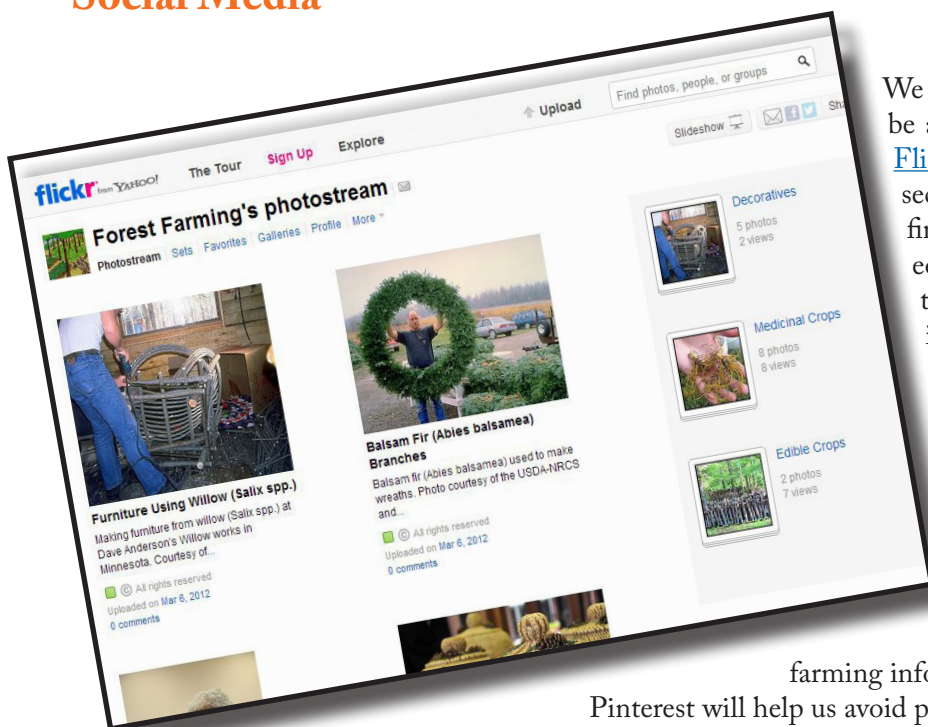


*From left to right: Raina Sheridan, Sarah Workman, John Munsell and Catherine Bukowski*

A major focus was social media due to its increasing role in search engine optimization.  Google reconfigured their algorithms this year to weigh more heavily on a site's mention in social media.  In an effort to lower the amount of low to mediocre content websites that are returned in search results, they will now account for the number of times users of social media link back to a website to share information.  The algorithm assumes that people will be more inclined to share and link back to websites with high quality content.

Cathie Bukowski is working on a social media plan of action. Please see the Social Media section below to find out more. All in all, the conference was motivational and extremely informative. A summary will soon be available in the Admin section on our Create site.

# Social Media



We have a Flickr account to store photos that can be accessed by following the directions found in the Flickr Account Information document in the Admin section of our Create eXtension site. You will also find links in the document to two instructional videos that explain how to sign-in and upload photos to our account. It is important that we keep adding photos to this account so we can make content visually appealing as well as provide examples of products. Our Forest Farming CoP dashboard contains a link to the companion Flickr site. Recall pictures are worth a thousand words! Please email Cathie Bukowski: cjbukows@vt.edu with any questions.

We also have a Pinterest account that will better aggregate existing web-based forest farming information and link back to our CoP dashboard. Pinterest will help us avoid placing duplicate or non-original material on our CoP page. Instructions on how to use Pinterest will be circulated once guidelines have been developed and posted in the Admin section of our Forest Farming Create eXtension site. Other social media sites such as blogs and twitter are also in development.

# Member Projects - Our eXtension Heroes!
We extend a special thanks to community members that are including the Forest Farming CoP in their proposals and special projects....

## Medicinal Herb Fact Sheets

Jeanine Davis of North Carolina State University is developing a series of 8 articles for our CoP website. Each article covers the characteristics, cultivation, and marketing of one medicinal species native to Southern Appalachia. Examples include Black Cohosh (*Cimicifuge racemose*), Bloodroot (*Sanguinaria canadensis*), and False Unicorn (*Chamaelirium luteum*). Cathie Bukowski has been working with Jeanine to design article layout, facilitate reviews, and coordinate Copy Edit through the eXtension system. Big thanks to Jeanine and Cathie, and all of our reviewers!

## Shiitake and Ramp Video Production

Ken Mudge of Cornell University, Jim Chamberlain of the USDA Forest Service, and John Munsell of Virginia Tech (all CoP members) were awarded a grant to develop videos documenting the establishment and management of shiitake and ramp forest farming systems. The videos will be posted on our community page and cover steps for establishing, growing, and harvesting these edible products. Demonstrations and video documentation will occur at Cornell's Arnot Teaching and Research Forest and Virginia Tech's Kentland Research Farm. The multi-institutional project is a product of networks and showcases the potential of collaboration. We look forward to the results and encourage others to use CoP connections to develop projects.

## Doing More With Less

George and Penny Frazier of Goods from the Woods have applied for a Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education grant titled *Doing More with Less: Agroforestry Diversification with Value Added Production in Native Pine Forests*. The project will explore the sustainability and profitability of processing by-products from native pine forests, including seed crops, pine cones, essential oils, hydrosol andfocusing on residual biomass from nut harvesting. Penny is planning two webinars for the project, at least one of which will take place in 2013 through our CoP. We also hope to produce a video of Penny's farm as motivation for other small producers and to record the distillation process that Goods from the Woods has perfected.

## Agroforestry Academy

The Mid-American Agroforestry Working Group (MAAWG), of which CoP members Mike Gold of the University of Missouri, Diomy Zamora of the University of Minnesota and Jesse Randall of Iowa State University are involved, was recently awarded a SARE Professional Development Program grant to host an agroforestry academy. MAAWG is based out of the Leopold Center at Iowa State University and incorporates experts from our community in the training and curriculum.
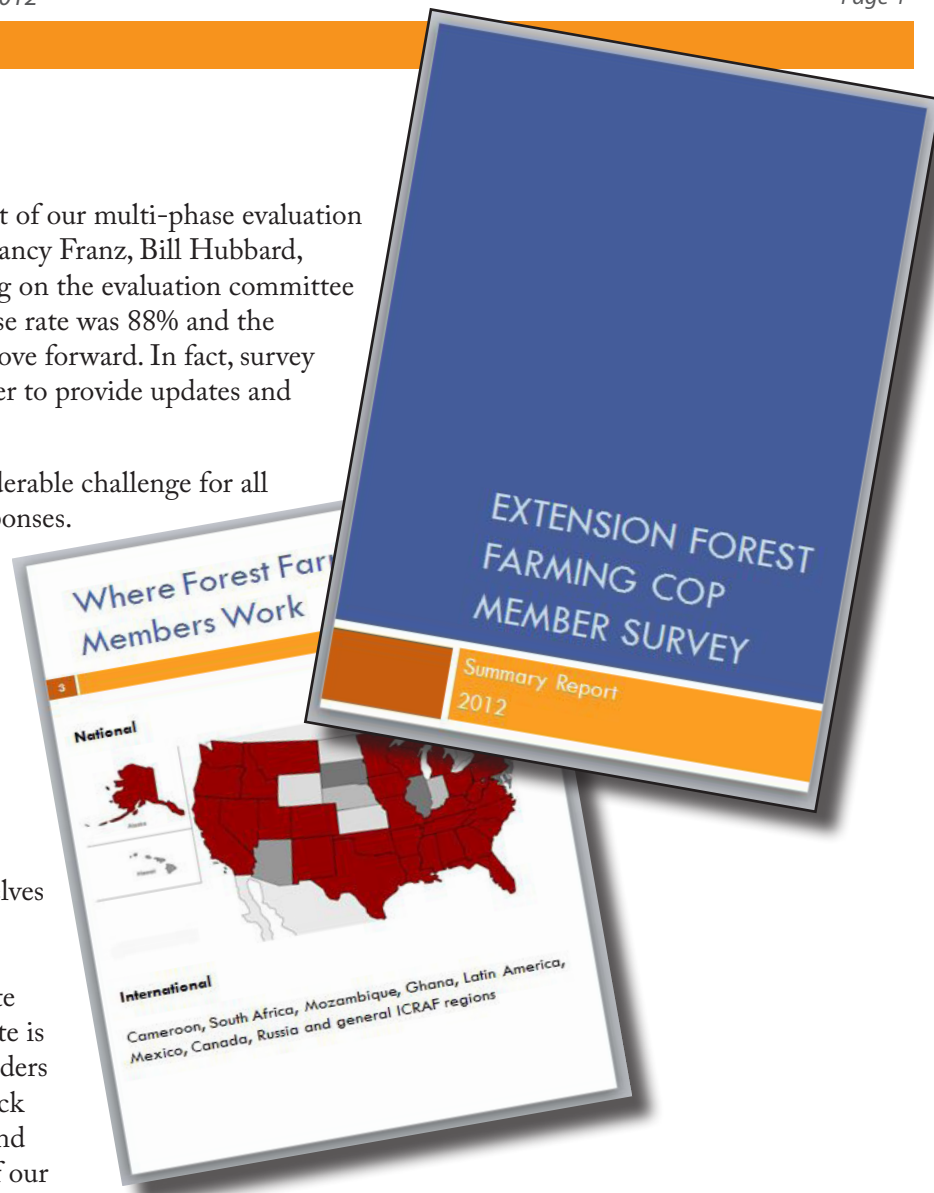
# Member Survey Summary

We recently completed a member survey as a part of our multi-phase evaluation plan. Thank you for your input! And thanks to Nancy Franz, Bill Hubbard, Diomy Zamora, and Jim Chamberlain for serving on the evaluation committee that helped design the questionnaire. The response rate was 88% and the information provided will be very useful as we move forward. In fact, survey responses prompted the creation of this newsletter to provide updates and increase communication.
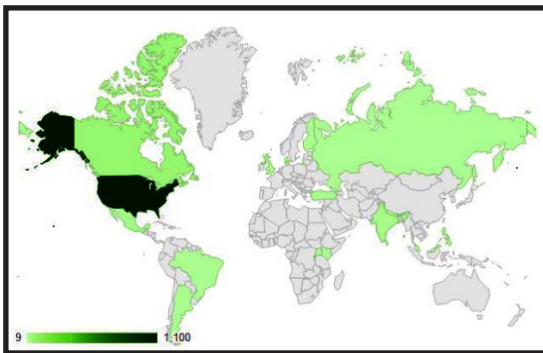
Finding time to work on CoP content is a considerable challenge for all community members and was evident in the responses. It is important to feel comfortable contributing as we are able and to avoid feeling as though we are not a part of the community just because other responsibilities have pulled us away. The network is more than just content development! Many of you noted as much by stating that a prominent benefit has simply been developing relationships with others working in the field of forest farming.

At the same time, we should also challenge ourselves to work through our CoP. Warren G. Bennis, an American pioneer of contemporary leadership studies, said "leadership is the capacity to translate vision into reality." Visitation to our eXtension site is increasing (see next section for details) and as leaders in the field of forest farming we can use this uptick to make our collective vision a reality.  You can find a summary of the survey in the Admin section of our Create site (http://create.extension.org/node/94007)

# CoP Developments



## Membership and Content

Since going live in February, we have more than doubled our membership (17 to over 40). We still have a ways to go in terms of content, but have over 60 separate projects that are published, being reviewed, or in draft stages. There are three funded projects totaling 130k that aim to provide additional deliverables to the CoP. Maybe there are more? If so, let us know. We are also enhancing our social-media presence (see page 2 for more detail).

## Visitation

We are using Google Analytics to monitor traffic to our eXtension.org main page. Since March, 1,453 unique visitors from around the world have viewed 14,574 pages on our site. Approximately 75% of them are new visitors and 25% are returning. Our bounce rate is low (~ 35%), which means most visitors do not immediately leave or "bounce" to another site. They stay to view our information and look through an average of 9 pages (all of eXtension averages around 3). Most traffic is from the US and Canada, but also from other countries such as Mexico, United Kingdom, India, Sri Lanka, Philippines, Argentina, Brazil and Denmark (see map).

# Tricks-of-the-Trade

## Community Listserves

Two community mailing lists have been created to make reaching fellow CoP members easier:

1. allforestfarmingmembers (allforestfarmingmembers@lists.extension.org) will send an email to every CoP member

2. forestfarmingleaders (forestfarmingleaders@lists.extension.org) will send emails only to CoP leaders.

- How do I find these on the site? Go to: http://www.extension.org/people. Select the tab for *Communities* and select *Forest Farming*. Scroll to the bottom to find *Community Mailing Lists*.

- How do I use these email lists? Go to: http://www.extension.org/people. Select the tab for *My Profile*. Make sure to send the email from your listed email under *Personal Info*.

***Please update your member information under *My Interests* in your *Profile*. This will help other members contact you or ask you to review articles based on your interests.***

## Ask an Expert 2.0

Ask an Expert 2.0 was launched on December 3rd. The eXtension team has rebuilt the app from the inside out to be more of a public engagement site rather than an internal process. Submitted questions (and answers from experts) will be publicly viewable so the public will have the opportunity to post comments. This change is meant to encourage more interaction with experts and the public as well as between public viewers.

One major change is that answers by experts will also be added through the public page. We will still sign-in with our eXtension IDs so that an expert answer will be flagged appropriately on the public side. Authors handling rates of questions, how many questions they have answered and their areas of expertise will be publicly viewable. Questions will now have titles and tags to help organize them better in an effort to get questions answered quicker. Check out the new Ask an Expert at https://ask.extension.org. For an overview of best practices when answering Ask an Expert questions assigned to you, check the Suggested Guidelines for Responding to Questions Submitted through Ask an Expert (http://create.extension.org/node/2434).

For more information on how to use the new Ask an Expert 2.0 refer to the orientation webinar from November 28, 2012: http://youtu.be/1JnJXXa4TqI

We can increase our presence online by adding an Ask an Expert widget to as many community member websites as possible. eXtension.org has a site that takes care of the coding for you to produce the Ask an Expert widget to copy and paste into your site. Visit: http://create.extension.org/node/84882

Once the widget is on your site, the public will be able to ask questions that will be directed back to eXtension.org. Please add a widget to your page as soon as possible and help drive traffic to our CoP's website.



*This is an example of what the Ask an Expert widget can look like on your site.*