

Forest Farming Footnotes

Fall 2016



PCO Verified black cohosh harvest in Grayson County. (*Actaea racemosa*)

Dear Community Members,

Wow! A lot has happened since our last newsletter. It was a great summer and early fall, and our excitement is only growing as we head into the winter months. We think, like us, you will be impressed and inspired by all that is covered in the pages of this newsletter. Forest farmers are showcased, filming initiatives highlighted, public speaking events covered, along with a slew of information on special partner programs and initiatives and meetings of interest. And two pages at the end summarize recent multi-day trainings conducted in three states by the Appalachian Beginning Forest Farmer Coalition. What a success! We know there is more, so don't hesitate to let us know if you have something you'd like to share in the next edition. We'll be sure to promote all the good work across our vibrant and growing forest farming network. Until next time...

John Munsell

Holly Chittum

Priya Jaishanker

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**APPALACHIAN BEGINNING
FOREST FARMER COALITION**
Growing Opportunities Beneath the Canopy

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Get to know some of the forest farmers in the coalition who are doing exciting things!

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We are in the planning stages for our Year 2 multi-day ABFFC training events. Stay tuned for those but in the meantime be sure to come out and join us at these Winter events!

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See what's happening in North Carolina, Virginia, and Ohio with our project partners. Some exciting developments are on the horizon for forest medicinal herbs and resources for landowners.

Forest Farmer Spotlight

Jeremy and Stesha Warren at Eliana's Garden



The Warren family at Eliana's Garden

Jeremy and Stesha Warren both grew up with backgrounds in farming, horticulture, and agricultural education. Their holistic approach to land management involves organic gardening, permaculture, and stewardship of existing native plants on their property. Forest farming came naturally to these two young parents located in the Piedmont of North Carolina. "It was instinct when we found the place that we knew we wanted to become forest farmers," said Jeremy. "We knew we wanted to work with certain plants and that no matter where we landed, we wanted to work with non-timber forest products." Plans are in place to produce lion's mane and oyster mushrooms, manage their extensive pawpaw patch, and construct an educational center where they can teach visitors

about forest botanical habitat and cultivation. The first order of business however, was to plant ramps, ostrich fiddlehead ferns, and ginseng, all long term crops that need years to mature.

With their kids strapped to their backs, Jeremy and Stesha set out with rakes and shovels to clear a patch of mid-story trees and create a ginseng bed in their forest. "We are a young family. We have an almost two-year-old and almost four-year-old. Don't be discouraged if you're a young family and still working outside of the home because it's totally possible," said Stesha. Once the land is prepared, their two children, Isaiah and Aala, reach out with their palms turned up to receive their share of seed to be planted. The family stomps the seed into the ground together and then rake leaves over the plot. After a snack for the kids, the couple prepares a test plot for black cohosh division. They both strongly believe in working with the natural ecology of the land when forest farming and they chose their land based on the climate, topography, and forest type. As tobacco fades from the scene as the piedmont of North Carolina's dominant cash crop, space becomes available for new opportunities based on ages old practices in Appalachia: to steward and farm the diverse native medicinal, edible, and decorative plants of the forest. Families like the Warrens, who believe strongly in restoring and preserving Appalachia's native plant populations, are stepping up and seizing this opportunity.



For Stesha and Jeremy as beginning forest farmers, joining the ABFFC has meant receiving the support they needed grow. "We've already, in just a few short months of being associated with the ABFFC, met people who have helped us solve problems, shared their ideas...it's been a great learning and growing experience," said Jeremy. "Outside of the networking, it's made me, for one, feel less alone in what we're doing, and less isolated in what we're trying to achieve," Stesha added. "There is a huge movement and I'm really glad to see that there is an organization not just to connect people but be able to advocate for us and then help educate those who may just have a general interest."

In addition to cultivating non-timber forest products, Stesha and Jeremy have an interest in value-added production. Paw paw ice cream, tinctures, and salves will be produced down the road once the forest plants have reached maturity. Watch a short video featuring the Warrens and their forest farm by clicking [HERE](#).

Neighbors Join Forces to Forest Farm Under the Forest Grown Program



Left to right: Michelle, Katie Trozzo, Cynthia, and Ann



Black cohosh roots

Interest in forest farming is growing among landowners in VA as new opportunities emerge. Grayson county neighbors, Michelle Pridgen of Windy Hill Farm and Cynthia and Rick Taylor of Moon Shadow Farm both had acres of forested land that they wished to steward. After joining the Blue Ridge Woodland Growers (BRWG), a community group based in Grayson and Carroll counties focused on the development of economic opportunities around the cultivation of non-timber forest products, their interest in forest farming was piqued. Katie Trozzo, BRWG facilitator and Virginia Tech PhD candidate tapped the Appalachian Beginning Forest Farmer Coalition (ABFFC) network and resources to connect Cynthia and Michelle to Eric Burkart from Penn State, one of the ABFFC resource partners and Pennsylvania Certified Organic (PCO). After further conversation, the neighbors decided to jump in with both feet and a collaboration emerged that has really taken shape.

Cynthia and Michelle worked with Eric to become organic certified and Forest Grown Verified with PCO. The Forest Grown Program helps to connect growers with forward-thinking companies like Mountain Rose Herbs who establish a fair market price for forest-grown botanicals that can be marketed to consumers as an ethical and sustainable product.

Ann Rogers, a forest farmer and ABFFC coalition member from the Roanoke area heard about the collaboration between these neighbors and felt immediately drawn to be involved. Though she wasn't in time to verify her own forest farm this year, Ann trekked down on harvest day to help out and learn more about the process.

Joshua Bogart, an independent organic inspector and Forest Grown verifier based in Northern Pennsylvania worked with Michelle and Cynthia to verify their farms this summer. Eric Burkart joined to train a new forest grown verifier, Joe Boccardi, who based out of NC and all benefited from discussion of the dynamics of sustainably stewarding forest botanicals. "Finally, there is a serious effort to source some of the purest, finest grade forest botanicals directly from growers who are acting as stewards of those very plants," Eric Burkart said. "This ensures integrity of the product, as well as highest quality and maximum potency."

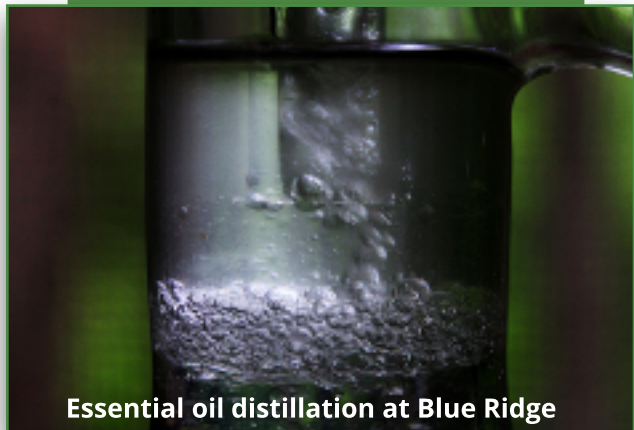
After becoming organic certified and forest grown verified, Michelle, Cynthia, and Rick harvested black cohosh for the first time, sharing in the process the whole way through, from learning and accessing ABFFC resources, to shared work in the process of verification and then harvest. What a wonderful story of a grassroots growers group using the resources and network available through the ABFFC to bring their forest grown botanicals to the marketplace! "I don't think we would have known what to do or where to go as far as marketing [our crop] without the coalition's help and working with partners because that's really what has made this doable is to be able to market with organic certification and forest grown verification to Mountain Rose Herbs at a higher price point". Way to go Cynthia, Rick, and Michelle! We look forward to hearing more as your story grows!



On Location: Filming Value-Added Production

It's been a busy year behind the scenes of the ABFFC. We've been traveling throughout the southeast to film value-added production (VAP) methods, showcase facilities, and tour forest farms and we hope our members find these videos useful. The year started with a trip to Maryland University of Integrative Health where we filmed the process of making a tincture. Asheville, North Carolina was the next stop on the list, where we visited Blue Ridge Food Ventures, a shared-use kitchen and natural products manufacturing facility. A trip to Herbal Ingenuity, a North-Carolina based herb buyer allowed us a glimpse of bulk herbs that come in from around the world to be processed and distributed to their clients. The next stop was Gaia Herbs in Brevard, North Carolina where we filmed a hawthorn leaf and flower harvest and interviewed Bill Chioffi, Vice President of Global Sourcing on the importance of harvest times and post harvest handling. Following that, we filmed white pine essential oil distillation in Madison, NC with Ian Montgomery, owner of Blue Ridge Aromatics, and body scrub production using Ian's essential oils at Blue Ridge Food Ventures with Amanda Vickers, co-owner of Mountains to Sea.

The journey was most insightful and we hope that these educational videos on value-added production can give our members a clear idea of how they can create their own value-added products from non-timber forest products to add to their portfolio and income! The ABFFC website has been updated to include all value-added production videos we have created thus far, which can be found on the Resources page and is accessible with free registration for membership. Be on the lookout for more of these instructional features down the road!



Essential oil distillation at Blue Ridge



Hawthorn leaf and flower harvest with Gaia



Filming at Blue Ridge Food Ventures

Upcoming ABFFC Trainings and Featured Events

As our forest farming community continues to grow and we have been working to create more opportunities for learning and engagement for our coalition members! This keeps us all connected and curious for more information. In addition to our second year of program events, we will be partnering with other organizations to offer ABFFC trainings and programs at the following conferences. Our list of collaborative events is growing so be sure to check the ABFFC website calendar often!

- **CASA Future Harvest Conference** in Hyattsville, MD in January 12-14.
<https://www.futureharvestcasa.org/conference/2017-conference>
 - Farming the Forest: January 12 pre-conference workshop.
- **PASA Farming for the Future Conference** in State College, PA in February: <http://conference.pasafarming.org>
 - Thu a.m., Forest Farming Native Medicinals
 - Fri 8:30am Native Appalachian Forest Medicinal Plants
 - Sat 8:30am Forest Farming Approaches & Cropping Options
- **Organic Growers School Annual Spring Conference** in Asheville, NC in March:
<http://organicgrowersschool.org/annual-spring-conference/>
 - March 10 Beginning Forest Farming full-day workshop



The Future of Ginseng and Forest Botanicals symposium, spearheaded by United Plant Savers and in collaboration with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS), is a forum for presenting current research and documenting critical new information about the conservation, cultivation, and commerce of American ginseng (*Panax quinquefolius*) and other Appalachian forest botanicals. The symposium will include a track for growers coordinated in collaboration with the Appalachian Beginning Forest Farmer Coalition. This 3-day symposium will provide a forum to bring together a diverse array of stakeholders involved in the management and regulation of forest botanicals in Appalachia, including federal and state agencies, tribal representatives, academics, landowners, collectors, and the herbal products industry. Our collective aim is to increase awareness of forest-grown medicinal plants through education and relationship building, and support conservation efforts through stewardship of existing plant populations and forest farming of these native botanicals. The 2017 symposium will also seek to create markets and build capacity for this unique forest farming coalition and address policy-related issues. There will also be an Herbalists tract in collaboration with the American Herbalists Guild. Click [HERE](#) for more information on the symposium.



Regional Projects and Events

United Plant Savers



Spreading the Word on the Forest Grown Program

Susan Leopold, Executive Director of United Plant Savers just spent some time in Eugene, OR at the Free Herbalism Project event hosted by Mountain Rose Herbs, where she spoke about the PCO Forest Grown program. A program designed to ensure sustainability and quality of native Appalachian medicinal forest herbs. Mountain Rose Herbs has piloted a product line of forest botanicals carrying this label and some of our coalition members have verified under the program and successfully accessed the marketplace with their forest grown botanicals.



Susan also presented the Forest Grown Program as a case study in a two hour workshop at the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) World Conservation Congress in Hawaii in September 2016 along with Traffic and the Fair Wild Program. UpS is a voting member of the IUCN and active member of the Medicinal Plant Specialist Groups working on Global Conservation of endangered plants. The IUCN oversees the red list and has been a leader in global conservation and illegal trade of endangered species among many pressing environmental issues. Find out more about the IUCN here: <https://www.iucn.org>

Featured Article

"Forest-Grown Ginseng Verification Programme Addresses Illegal Trade", featured in this month's TRAFFIC Bulletin. The TRAFFIC Bulletin is a publication of TRAFFIC, the wildlife trade monitoring network, which is the leading non-governmental organization working globally on trade in wild animals and plants in the context of both biodiversity conservation and sustainable development.

TRAFFIC is a strategic alliance of WWF and IUCN. The TRAFFIC Bulletin publishes information and original papers on the subject of trade in wild animals and plants, and strives to be a source of accurate and objective information. Learn more about TRAFFIC here: <http://www.traffic.org/>

Access the article here: https://www.unitedplantsavers.org/images/pdf/traffic_pub_bulletin_28_1-article.pdf

Upcoming Event and Internship Opportunity

Susan Leopold will be speaking about the ABFFC in her talk titled "Medicinal Plant Conservation: Sanctuaries, Outreach and Forest Farming" at the 8th Annual Agroforestry Symposium at the University of Missouri on January 26. Find out more about the event here:

<http://www.centerforagroforestry.org/events/symposia.php>

United Plant Savers offers a Medicinal Plant Conservation Certificate Program each Spring and the Fall at the Goldenseal Botanical Sanctuary. Each session runs for 6-weeks and is limited to 6 participants, for more information and how to apply look here:

<http://www.goldensealsanctuary.org/internships/program-information>

Regional Projects and Events

North Carolina Alternative Crops and Organics

Current Events

In addition to the introductory events with the ABFF Coalition, Jeanine Davis and the NC Alternative Crops and Organics program have held many events, workshops, and presentations in western North Carolina (WNC) and in other states. Some highlights include woodland botanical presentations and propagation demonstrations at the Mother Earth News Fair in Asheville, Heritage Harvest Festival in Monticello, and a goldenseal plant rescue for replanting at beginning forest farmers' land.

The WNC Medicinal Herb Club and Woodland Stewards

The WNC Medicinal Herb Club and Woodland Stewards have had a wonderful field season and look forward to the season of roots and dormancy! They've enjoyed events on available resources in our region, great field trips, and many hands on activities from path and bed preparation to post-harvest handling with their growers and club members. This is a unique educational offering in western North Carolina that remains free to participate, and provides networking opportunities amongst growers, as well as NC Cooperative Extension personnel. Please join them through the seasons: upcoming events include voucher preparation workshops, mixed forest/field operations, and more! Contact Meghan_Baker@ncsu.edu to be added to the email list – include "WNC Herb Club" in the subject line.

UNCA Ginseng Research

NC Alternative Crops and Organics is happy to be collaborating with UNC Asheville faculty Jonathan Horton, David Clarke, and Jen Ward. Their project is to find specific genetic markers for ginseng with the long term goal to develop cultivars ideal for wild simulated production. The researchers and their students are also looking at ginsenoside (medicinal compounds in ginseng) production within the leaves and shoots. All efforts strive to conserve wild populations of ginseng while supporting forest farming cultivation efforts. A 2015 grant from the North Carolina Biotechnology Center supports this research that began in 2008.

Herb Connection

Herb Connection: With root harvest season in full swing, we receive all sorts of inquiries for buying and selling our forest botanicals. Navigating responses often includes education about lawful and sustainable harvesting, creation of new grower/harvester and buyer relations, and gives a sense of the highlights and trends of the particular season in Western North Carolina and beyond. Much of this happens casually or privately, but check out the public listings here, which is populated regularly:

<http://ncalternativecropsandorganics.blogspot.com/p/herb-connection-for-buying-and-selling.html>



Partner Updates

Rural Action

Ginseng Planting Stock Sale

Rural Action Sustainable Forestry is closing out its annual ginseng planting stock sale this November, with 80 pounds of stratified ginseng seed distributed to over 70 unique buyers. This is one of a number of planting stock sales Rural Action coordinates each year, along with ramp seeds, bulbs, and goldenseal rootlets, each made available during the year according to availability. To be kept in the loop regarding Rural Action planting stock sales, you can secure a spot on their regular planting stock notification list by contacting karam@ruralaction.org.

Appalachian Stewards, Not Outlaws

Rural Action debuted their education module, “Appalachian Stewards, Not Outlaws” at Morrison Elementary School in Athens, Ohio on October 17-19. The name of the project is a reference to the History Channel’s television series “Appalachian Outlaws,” a program that portrays ginseng harvesters in an inaccurate and defamatory light. A collaboration between Rural Action Environmental Education and Sustainable Forestry, They spent three days in the classroom and outside with 80 5th grade students covering the basics of forest herb biology, the history of ginseng harvest, and the importance of conservation. Utilizing Morrison’s landlab, a forested tract of school-owned property, they built a raised bed under the canopy and students planted ginseng seed as part of the lesson. With a number of other schools on board to partner with them for this project, they look forward to teaching many more kids about ginseng’s unique historical and cultural significance to the Appalachian region!

Upcoming Event - Rural Action Inquiry-Based Education Conference

On November 1st through the 3rd Rural Action will be hosting its 3rd annual Inquiry-Based Education Conference, offering hands-on learning opportunities for educators and others interested in environmental education. Karam Sheban of Rural Action Forestry will be facilitating a session that will tie Rural Action’s Non-Timber Forest Product educational efforts, including our “Appalachian Stewards” project and recent two-day forest farming conference, to the broader context of making a career out of forest farming. For more information on the conference visit <http://ruralaction.org/econference/>. For more information about any of these projects and events, or for more information on Rural Action visit www.ruralaction.org or contact Karam Sheban at karam@ruralaction.org or 740-677-4047.



Partner Updates

Appalachian Sustainable Development's Planting Stock Program



VHCC horticulture students pot up ginseng rootlets



Drop Collaborative students plant a test plot of ginseng rootlets



Chester Crain, owner of Granny's Ginseng in Saltville, VA

Appalachian Sustainable Development, along with Virginia Highlands Community College, and other partners, is moving forward to teach students and community members about native forest botanical propagation. The program recently received a donation of ginseng rootlets from Chester Crain, a Virginia Department of Agriculture inspected grower in Saltville, VA. Chester is an enthusiastic supporter of the future generation learning about the plant and how to be a good steward of ginseng populations. He grows rootlets from seed, which he sells locally and on ebay to forest farmers throughout the United States. Students in the horticulture department of Virginia Highlands Community College and their instructor, Ben Casteel, potted up some of the rootlets for use in 2017 demonstration plantings and plant exchanges using a potting mix that included thoroughly composted pine bark. The students will take care of the plants, overwintering them in a protected location. VHCC students and staff will be establishing on-campus demonstration plantings of black cohosh, goldenseal, wild ginger, and ramps in late fall.

Students in Unaka High School's Drop Collaborative (Carter County, TN), an experiential agriculture learning program, learned about ginseng and its requirements for forest cultivation, and planted a small patch with the help of Emily Lachniet, ASD program coordinator, and Emily Bidgood with the Appalachian RC&D. The students will also be planting a patch of ramp bulbs and seeds in the spring of 2017.

Michelle Bouton, owner of Appalachian Acupuncture in Johnson City, TN, and co-director of HERBalachia, an Appalachian Herb School, is also partnering with ASD on some demonstration plantings for herb school students and future grower education. In Unicoi County, TN, she will be also be making a late fall planting of ginseng seed and rootlets, goldenseal root divisions, black cohosh, and wild ginger. Her vision for the herb school includes establishing a local growers network for the cultivation and sale of forest-grown and chinese medicinal herbs. Emily Lachniet, program coordinator with Appalachian Sustainable Development, hopes that these demonstration plantings will be cultivated over time and will become a source for future planting stock through plant division and seed collection. In 2017, projects will include the distribution of bloodroot plants grown from locally collected seed, local black cohosh root divisions, and ramp seed and bulbs collected sustainably from wild populations. Forest farmers that want to take part in this "living seed bank" project should contact Emily at elachniet@asdevelop.org.

This Year's ABFFC Trainings at a Glance



APPALACHIAN BEGINNING
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Growing Opportunities Beneath the Canopy



We want to send out a big "Thank you!" to everyone who joined us for the ABFFC training events held throughout the year in collaboration with our project partners. We hope that you had ample opportunity to learn more about the vast realm of Appalachian forest medicinals, ask questions, and network with other forest farmers in your region. Our goal for this first year was to provide an overview of these valued forest medicinal plants from the forest floor to the retail shelf. Our journey has taken us across Appalachia and into the communities of lots of great people.

For our first events we gathered folks together from across the forest medicinal products supply chain to discuss new opportunities for growers and buyers in November of 2015 in Front Royal and Abingdon, VA in collaboration with United Plant Savers, Mountain Rose Herbs, Pennsylvania Certified Organic, NC State, and Penn State.



Summer 2016 took us to Kentucky and Ohio for the United Plant Savers 1/2-day and 1-day introductory forest farming workshops with collaborators from the KY Department of Agriculture, Pine Mountain Settlement School, and Mountain Rose Herbs. Attendees got an introduction to the forest botanicals market and supply chain and learned about an exciting Forest Grown cost-share program funded by United Plant Savers.



Late summer took us to Floyd, Virginia with the Blue Ridge Woodland Growers where we got a glimpse of the grounds and drying facilities at the Blue Ridge Center for Chinese medicine during an energizing field trip and station rotation where attendees had an opportunity to float around the property and learn about difference aspects of production from site selection and propagation to post-harvest handling and value added production. Back at the Floyd EcoVillage after the field trip, the advanced forest farmer round table was a huge hit with seasoned folks while newbies had a chance to dig into the basics of growing Appalachian Forest medicinals with Jeanine Davis of NC State.



Next we joined forces with Appalachian Sustainable Development in the forests of northeastern Tennessee near Mountain City, in at the end of August where we dove into a diverse set of topics from how to make value added products like wild cherry bark syrup to forest farm management and budgeting strategies. We enjoyed the beautiful landscape during a forest walk on the event property and a field trip to nearby Elk Knob natural area. We looked forward to connecting with each other and sharing over the amazing, wholesome, made from scratch meals served by our hosts each day.

Eight Events Held in Four States!

Finally, we journeyed up to Rutland, Ohio and the United Plant Savers Goldenseal Sanctuary in late September with Rural Action. The weekend was full of events in the classroom and in the field. Some attendees spend time in the woods with Eric Burkhardt of Penn State and Chip Carroll of United Plant Savers discussing site selection and related topics while others learned the process of tincture making with local herbalist Caty Crabb. Evening found us all around the bonfire sharing thoughts about valuable things gleaned from the event and sharing excitement for what is to come.

We are so happy to have shared these events with our forest farming community across the Appalachian region are humbled and impassioned by both the truly astounding body of knowledge and experience each attendee brought and shared at the events as well as the growth of the ABFFC member base we have experienced as we have traveled and watched folks connect and develop relationships across Appalachia. There is so much to learn about non-timber forest product cultivation and the industry surrounding these valuable botanicals. The ABFFC year-one events were designed to shed light on every aspect of this industry from "seed to self". Next year we are excited to dig in deeper and focus on certain crucial forest farming topics for those coalition members who are ready for the next step in learning, while also covering the broad spectrum of topics for the next generation of newcomers. We plan to keep this momentum going with something for everyone in year two so keep an eye out for announcements on upcoming events!

Please access the ABFFC [forums](#) to continue conversations with coalition members and event attendees, participate in seed swaps and equipment sharing, and further the forest farming movement. Our [experts](#) are available to members through our website if you have further questions or ideas to share. Finally, if you haven't become a member of the Appalachian Beginning Forest Farmer Coalition yet, please consider joining at this [link](#). Your free membership will provide you with resources, expert contact information, and forum access.

Next year is looking just as promising as this year was with more events on the horizon, additional resources, and a growing movement in the realm of forest farming that, in many ways is due to your interest in and dedication to cultivating these wild plant populations that are a part of the Appalachian heritage. We are so pleased to move forward together to steward these medicinal forest plants that we value so much!





**APPALACHIAN BEGINNING
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Growing Opportunities Beneath the Canopy

Find and Share Resources in our ABFFC Website Forums!

During this past year of engaging events and face-to-face meetings, we have received a lot of feedback from folks interested in continuing to connect with the forest farming community back at home. We took this feedback to heart and developed this resource to be sure there are ways to connect with other coalition members on the ABFFC website! The **forums** are a new feature of our website that can be found in the "connect" tab and will be a great place to share information and resources with each other as well as access news from coalition partners on topics ranging from seed and planting stock sources, to existing and upcoming opportunities, and a range of specific topics of interest related to forest farming. In fact, several people have already posted and we encourage you to join the conversation if you have any info to contribute!

Please feel free to jump into existing conversations and/or start your own in the forum to share information or ask questions whenever and wherever you see fit! If you are interested in continuing any conversation in the forum, be sure to check the box at the bottom that says "Notify me of follow up replies via email". Also be sure to check out our other resources under the "Connect" tab, including a section where you can contact the ABFFC administrative support team with any general questions you may have about the coalition and the "Ask an Expert" section for any forest farming related technical questions.

Next year promises even more additions to the website as we dig deep to turn up and compile news about regional and forest farming community-wide resources like processing facilities, reputed seed sources, online learning opportunities, and more so stay tuned and be sure to contribute by sharing in the forum if you become aware of similar offerings!

