

# Forest Farming Footnotes

## Spring 2020



APPALACHIAN BEGINNING  
FOREST FARMER COALITION

Dear Coalition Members

A new year is underway and while our vision for 2020 likely did not include a pandemic and social distancing, our mission remains the same. Collaboration over the past 9 years, first as a community of practice and then as a coalition, continues to pay off and because of you the movement grows.

Speaking of growing, we have some fantastic news.

The National Institute of Food and Agriculture recently awarded the coalition three more years of funding. At the same time, the USDA National Agroforestry Center is funding work to set in motion a framework that will make our coalition permanent. The goal is to transition the coalition into the nation's premier forest farming association that brings together forest farmers, stakeholder organizations, and targeted initiatives to share expertise and objectives, improve farming opportunities, advocate for forest farming, and provide member services. Stay tuned for more information on our [Facebook page](#). But hold on, there is more! The coalition recently received the American Herbal Products Association's 2020 Herbal Insight award (see p. 9 for more information).

We hope you enjoy this issue and find some peace and happiness in these difficult times. We are preparing for renewal through future networking, engagement, and growth that we will sow together.

**The ABFFC Team**

<b>Funding Update</b>	<b>2-4</b>
<b>What's New in WV</b>	<b>5-6</b>
<b>UPS turns 25</b>	<b>7-8</b>
<b>A Word With Mountain Rose</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>In the News,,, (a <u>must see</u>)</b>	<b>9</b>
<b>Technology, technology!</b>	<b>10</b>

# Ready For Some Good News!

Virginia Tech's Department of Forest Resources and Environmental Conservation secured renewal funding for three more years of coalition programming. The award supports organizations in the coalition's broad regional partnership whose goal is to increase coalition membership, provide experiential education, offer peer-to-peer mentoring, grow the number of forest farmers, enhance training opportunities for producers and harvesters, and expand planting stock supply. The coalition is very grateful for the recognition and support of Virginia's Senators Mark Warner and Tim Kaine (both D-VA), and the National Institute of Food and Agriculture (NIFA). Funds were awarded from NIFA's Beginning Farmer and Rancher Development Program (BFRDP), which provides grants for beginning farmer and rancher education, mentoring, and technical assistance.

Coalition members share the common goal of improving agroforestry production opportunities and farming capabilities among forest farmers. The project is titled "*Seeded and Growing: Sustaining Appalachian Beginning Forest Farmer Education and Engagement*" and represents the continuation of BFRDP-sponsored work that launched the ABFFC in 2015. Since standing up, the coalition has trained hundreds of new and beginning farmers on production, processing, and sales, and improved value-added opportunities and elevated forest farming's national profile.



Core partners include:

**Appalachian Sustainable Development**  
**North Carolina State University**  
**Organic Growers School**  
**Rural Action**  
**United Plant Savers**  
**Virginia Tech University**  
**Warren Wilson College**  
**Yew Mountain Center**

**We look forward to seeing you at future programming!**



## Coalition Panel Presentation Leads to Recognition and Support from Senator Mark Warner (D-VA)

Senator Mark Warner (D-VA) wrote to the Chief of the United States Forest Service emphasizing the importance of forest farming and recognizing ABFFC leadership in supporting new and beginning forest farmers. The Senator's support was the result of an ABFFC specialty products panel presentation he attended in Wise, Virginia. The USDA National Agroforestry Center (NAC) subsequently provided funding to create an American Forest Farming Council (AFFC), which is envisioned as the next step in coalition growth and will ultimately serve as a permanent forest farming association when the coalition retires in 2022. The AFFC will serve as a functionally diverse and financially independent association that provides critical services and support for growth and farming success. Senator Warner is committed to “finding ways to mobilize and sustain advancement of this agricultural opportunity in Appalachia.”



The Forest Grown Verification Program (FGV) was established in 2014 with the purpose of creating a voluntary, third-party verification program for non-timber forest products that are produced and harvested in a sustainable and legal manner.

UpS took over the reins of FGV in 2019 and is leading the program into a new era. FGV allows price premiums to be placed on forest botanicals that are intentionally farmed or sustainably wild-crafted and the program benefits producers by building consumer confidence, demand, and premium pricing; protecting forest “crops” in the event of theft, land development and legal matters through documentation; and may provide exemptions around wild stewarding plants. FGV standards currently apply to producers, harvesters, processors, and handlers of eleven forest botanical products that are harvested from forestland in the United States. Learn more [here](#).

# Forest Farming Opportunities Grow Westward

Erica Marks, Yew Mountain Center



*WV Forest Farming Initiative Partners. From left: Will Lewis of the Yew Mountain Center, Liberty Newberry-Fetty of Natural Capital Investment Fund, Ruby Daniels of Sprouting Farms, Erica Marks of Yew Mountain Center, Tanner Filyaw of Rural Action, Katie Commender of Appalachian Sustainable Development, and John Stock of United Plant Savers.*

We are excited to announce a new opportunity for West Virginians with an interest in forest farming. The **West Virginia Forest Farming Initiative** (WV FFI) was established in the fall of 2019 with funding from the Claude Worthington Benedum Foundation. WV FFI supports the collaboration of six organizations to develop the potential of West Virginians to participate more fully in the growing herbal product industry. Founding ABFFC partners Appalachian Sustainable Development (ASD), Rural Action (RA), and United Plant Savers (UPS) will draw upon their well of experience with conservation, economic development, and forest farming to help two young WV organizations develop their capacity to support forest farming in the state. Sprouting Farms and the Yew Mountain Center (new ABFFC partner) will be trained in conference organization, technical assistance, and site assessment. Other WV agencies and organizations are invited to participate in these training events. The Value Chain Cluster Initiative of the Natural Capital Investment Fund will offer administrative support and mentor the Yew Mountain Center in managing this and future multi-partner grants.

WV FFI has four areas of focus: education, increasing production, developing policy, and improving access to producer-friendly market opportunities. Mini-grants will be available in early spring to help new and established growers create or improve a forest farming operation.





Volunteers learn how to divide goldenseal for fall

Sprouting Farms and the Yew Mountain Center are also working to increase available planting stock to supply forest farmers. They are drawing on resources created by ASD, RA, UPS, and the larger ABFFC team to learn about, as well as discover best practices for propagating long life-cycle plants. The **Yew Mountain Center** is a community-run non-profit organization on 500 acres near Hillsboro, WV. Their mission is to provide programs that explore Appalachian ecology, culture, and arts while promoting community

and personal wellness. For more information about the WV Forest Farming Initiative, contact Will Lewis at 304-653-4079 or email [yewforestfarming@gmail.com](mailto:yewforestfarming@gmail.com).



## Seeking Goldenseal Research Sites!

ASD is coordinating goldenseal research with support from the American Herbal Products Association and in partnership with the USDA Forest Service, Radford University, Virginia Tech, and the University of Virginia's College at Wise. **And YOU can participate, too!** The project seeks to determine the percentage of goldenseal that can be sustainably harvested to help shape future best practices. **Do you want to be a part of this historical research?** We are currently seeking goldenseal sites that meet the following criteria:

### Needs

**60 square meters** minimum (40 1x1 meter research plots established by the research team + 20 meter buffer between plots) to **1/4 hectare** (~0.6 acres) of established *wild* or *wild stewarded* goldenseal

**50-100** goldenseal plants per plot (40 1X1 meter plots/site)

**6 sites - 3 existing sites** and **3 sites to be planted** in 2020 (paid for by grant funding)

**If you are interested in learning more or participating in this study, please email [kcommender@asdevelop.org](mailto:kcommender@asdevelop.org) or call 276-623-1121 today!**

# UNITED PLANT SAVERS CENTER FOR MEDICINAL PLANT CONSERVATION

DEDICATED TO JIM & PEGGY DUKE

Celebrating 25 Years of  
Stewardship

John Stock, United Plant Savers

Grassroots non-profit organizations are by nature, fragile. **United Plant Savers** (UpS) was no different back in 1994 when a group made up of herbalists, herbal entrepreneurs, and conservationists began to formally recognize the threat to native medicinal plants from habitat loss and over-harvesting.



UpS Center for Medicinal Plant Conservation

In the twenty-five years since, UpS has garnered over 14,000 members, 4,000 of which are currently supporting our work with their membership. Over 150 interns have left the UpS Botanical Sanctuary and gone on to spread the word of medicinal plant conservation through their work as teachers, herbalists, researchers, activists, artists, and citizens of Earth. With 130 participants in the Botanical Sanctuary Network, UpS has supported a significant web of biodiversity across the U.S. and Canada. Other UpS

programs that have been implemented over this time include Partners in Education, Forest Grown Verification, and the UpS Deep Ecology fellowship. Each of these programs has positively influenced the UpS mission to conserve at-risk native medicinal plants of the U.S. and Canada to ensure a sustainable supply into the future.

UpS recently celebrated twenty-five years of progress with the grand opening of the Center for Medicinal Plant Conservation in Rutland, OH dedicated to Jim and Peggy Duke. Over two days in September, 250 people joined Rosemary Gladstar, Paul Strauss, Susan Leopold, Steven Foster, and others at the UpS Botanical Sanctuary for the celebration. Rosemary and Paul spoke and told stories about the early days of UpS and Steven Foster presented a photographic history of Jim Duke's work.



Rosemary Gladstar and Paul Strauss



Guests were entertained by storyteller and musician Doug Elliott and the 1000 Faces theater troupe. Everyone celebrated into the evening with bands Lobo Marino followed by the Intermittent Animals. People were up bright and early Sunday morning to take advantage of hikes through the sanctuary with naturalists Betzy Bancroft, Marc Williams, Tanner Filyaw, Lonnie Galt-Theis, Chip Carroll, and Rebecca Wood. There couldn't have been a more fitting end to the weekend than spending time with some of the plants and native habitat that inspire us to speak for them.



Stories and music on the Center's lawn.

UpS is poised to be a leader for the next twenty-five years and beyond with the new Center and a vibrant and supportive membership. UpS invites everyone to come and visit UpS Botanical Sanctuary in Rutland, OH and see for yourself what, because of the plants, has been created here. For more information visit [www.unitedplantsavers.org](http://www.unitedplantsavers.org), find us on Facebook and Instagram, or call 740-742-3455.

## Sustainable Forest Farming with John Munsell and Mountain Rose Herbs

When companies like [Mountain Rose Herbs](#) take on a leadership role and support forest farmers, they're demonstrating that it is possible to be part of much-needed economic development in rural communities, while also conserving ecosystems and providing customers with high quality products. Check out this video produced by Mountain Rose Herbs featuring Virginia Tech forest management professor, John Munsell, on the topic of forest farming and developing markets.



Interested in more videos? Subscribe to our Forest Farming YouTube channel where you can learn everything from rhizome division to seed saving and more.

FOREST BOTANICALS WEEK

# SAVE THE DATE!

Discover the people and plants behind Appalachian forest botanicals. The power to foster sustainable and responsible sourcing is in *your* hands.

**May 18-22, 2020**

A campaign brought to you by Appalachian Sustainable Development and the American Botanical Council's Sustainable Herbs Program. Follow along and get involved at: [www.sustainableherbsproject.com](http://www.sustainableherbsproject.com)



## Coming Soon...

### **Forest Botanicals Week!!**

A campaign to increase awareness of sustainable sourcing issues surrounding our most beloved native herbs. Appalachian Sustainable Development and the American Botanical Council's **Sustainable Herbs Program** will release videos, blogs, and a host of other informative resources to help educate herbal consumers regarding their choices in the market place. You can help so stay tuned for more!

## Coalition in the Spotlight



**MONGABAY**  
NEWS & INSPIRATION FROM NATURE'S FRONTLINE



When Mongabay and Civil Eats zero in on coalition efforts, you know people are paying attention. Read all about it [here](#) (Civil Eats) and [here](#) (Mongabay).

Across the pond, the BBC is turning its sights to the future of food production and what that means for the planet. Forest farming was featured in [this article](#) and the ABFFC was recognized as a leading US forest farming organization. Steve Gabriel of Cornell's Small Farms program and Holly Chittum, a supply chain scientist at the American Herbal Products Association, provide valuable perspective. You may recognize them both from our [YouTube channel](#).



**Follow the Food**

## National Award for the ABFFC!



The Appalachian Beginning Forest Farmer Coalition received the American Herbal Products Association 2020 Herbal Insights Award! This is big news! Read all about it [here](#).



# Using Technology to Create Exciting New Forest Farming Opportunities

Ben Addlestone, Virginia Tech

Most of you know the basic premise of forest farming, but do you feel confident that you know where and how to farm? Forest farmers rely on this type of strategic information because they intentionally cultivate and rotate crops in the land they own or have access to. But knowing how to get there is not a simple proposition and the ABFFC has developed two technologies that will help.

ThePlantShoe siting tool is an online mapping application developed by Virginia Tech's [Center for Geospatial Information and Technology](#) that anyone with a web connection can use to draw a boundary up to 1,000 acres around a section of woodlands and create a report that maps suitable habitat for four species. The report is delivered to your email in minutes, including a "heat map" (see image below). There is also species-specific information [here](#).

## Forest Farming Site Evaluation Report

This report is provided by Virginia Tech's Center for Geospatial Information Technology for the PlantShoe project. The project is supported by the eXtension Foundation. The report serves as a siting tool that assesses habitat quality for plant species across a selected landscape broken out by 10 meter square grids. The ranking is expert-based and uses environmental criteria (e.g., percent forest cover, slope) identified in relevant literature. It is intended to help forest farmers and consultants when deciding where to establish forest farms. It is not a tool for "hunting" woodland plants, nor does it guarantee farming success. It is also not intended to replace on-the-ground feasibility assessments.



Figure 1: USGS Orthomagey

Species	Aspect	Elevation	Slope	Soil Fertility	Soil Moisture	Soil Drainage	Forest Canopy	Total Score
Black Cohosh	50.459	100.0	77.19	21.085	27.205	66.46	20.44	362.839
Bloodroot	50.459	100.0	77.19	21.085	22.92	66.46	9.62	347.734
Goldenseal	50.459	100.0	77.19	21.085	22.92	66.46	9.62	347.734
Ramps	62.365	41.25	80.422	21.085	22.92	66.46	25.87	320.372
Average Score								344.67

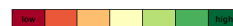


Figure 34: Overall site suitability scores.

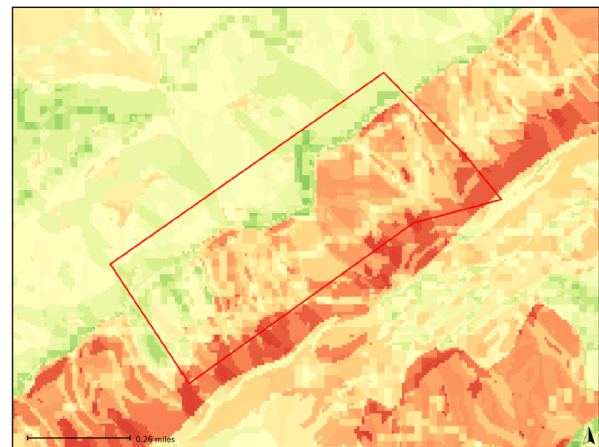


Figure 35: Overall site suitability.

To assist professional service providers that work with woodland owners and provide module-based education online to the wider public, Virginia Tech and the [Southern Regional Extension Forestry](#) team developed an online course consisting of video-based tutorials that introduce forest farming, products, management, harvesting, marketing, and economics. The course leads you on a tour through exemplary forest farms and introduces pioneers in the field so that you can learn from their successes. If you need them, Continuing Forestry Education (CFE) are available. The course can be found [here](#).

