

# SOLID GROUND NEWSLETTER



## Team Talks

Hiya! I'm Brittany Hall, one of the UConn Extension's Solid Ground Program Coordinators. When I'm not doing work with Solid Ground, I co-own a certified organic veggie and flower farm with my wife in East Hampton, Beets & Blooms Farm. After working on farms for five seasons we started our farm in 2022, putting me firmly in the "beginning farmer" category a lot of us fall into, which shapes my perspective on the programming we provide from Solid Ground.

Like many other beginning farmers in our state, I do not come from a farming background. Much of what I know I've had to learn from other farmers, the internet, or in-person events. However, when it comes to learning things like safely using a chainsaw, the basics of welding, and how to operate a walk-behind tractor, I find it easiest to learn them in a hands-on setting. That's why I love working on and putting out our Ag Mechanics training series SO MUCH! As the Coordinator of this program I work with the Solid Ground team to offer trainings that farmers ask us for and to find trainers

## This Month

[Team Talks- Meet Brittany](#)

[March Farm Tasks: Soil Testing](#)

[Upcoming events](#)

[Grants Open](#)

[Solid Ground Ag Mechanics](#)

[Soil Video Series](#)

[Partner Highlight](#)



We encourage everyone to go ahead and get their soil testing done in the fall, near the end of the growing season, but we know how things go...most of you are going to go out in your fields in the next month or two to get soil testing done before planting, sowing seeds, letting livestock out, etc.

If you HAVEN'T done a soil test before, we definitely encourage you to do it! As our UConn Soil Lab says, "Soil testing eliminates the guesswork many farmers face when deciding the kinds and

who can relate to your experiences as a farmer, so that when you leave a training, you're just a bit more prepared for what you encounter on the farm.

This winter we've been able to offer trainings like basic carpentry, MIG and stick welding, and small-engine repair. And coming up this spring we have another three exciting trainings planned, **that you can sign up for here!** Hope to see you at some of the trainings over the next two months!

## SOLID GROUND Upcoming Events

Chainsaw Safety and Use for Everyone: Mar. 16, Meechooök Farm - 8:30AM-4:00PM (FULL get added to the waitlist!)

High Tunnels: How to get and use them: April 6, Starlight Gardens, Middlefield- 10AM-2PM

Walk-Behind Tractor Training: Apr. 13, Keney Park Sustainability Project - 9AM to 3PM

Irrigation & Water on the Farm: April 20, Brown Farm, Scotland - 9AM-3PM

Safe and Efficient Water Management: Apr. 28, Russo's Roots Farm, Canterbury- 1PM- 4PM

Energy Efficiency on the Farm  
Date: May 5, Four Root Farm, East Haddam- 1PM- 4PM

Soil Health Assessment 3 Ways: May 11, Sunset Farm, Naugatuck- 10AM-2PM

Soil Health Benefits of No -Till Production: Jun. 2, Sweet Acre Farm, Lebanon- 1PM-4PM

amounts of fertilizers or soil amendments they should purchase and apply. Each soil test report contains recommended amounts of limestone and/or fertilizer needed for optimum plant growth. Knowing how much to apply saves time and money. It is a smart decision to test the soil every few years. Furthermore, it is particularly important in new bed installations or in established plantings that are not performing as well as expected."

So, haven't done a soil test before and need some help getting started? This month, we're showcasing some videos later in this newsletter about soil health- one of which is how to take a soil sample!

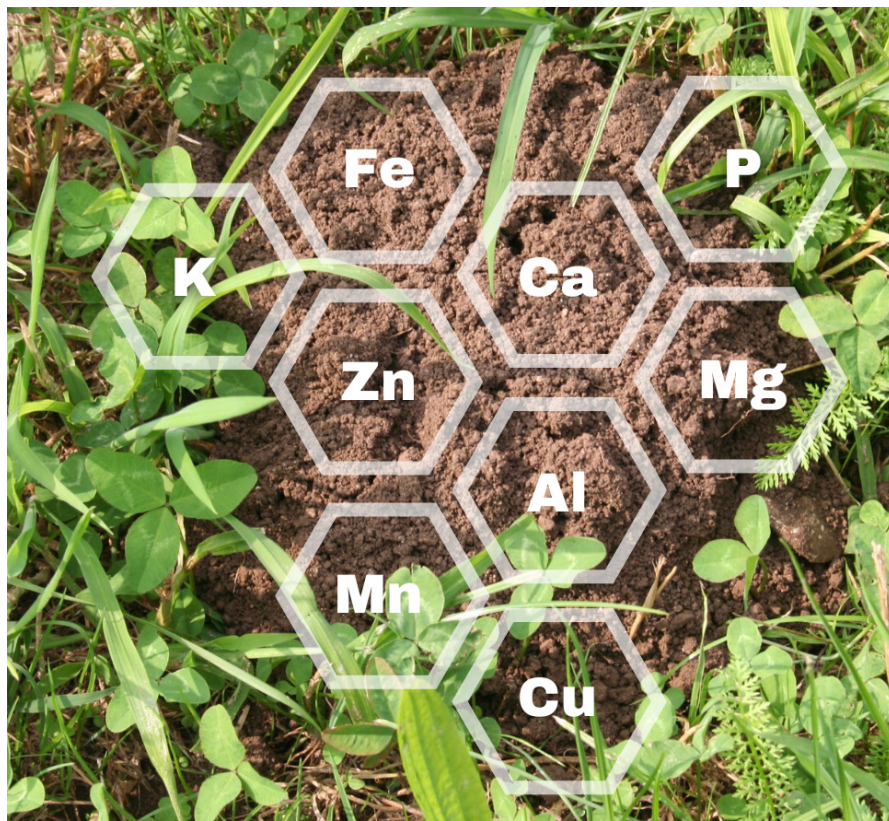
What can you expect when you get the results from a soil sample? It can vary depending on where you send it, but at the UConn Soil lab they provide you with:

- amounts of Calcium, Magnesium, Phosphorus, and Potassium in your soil
- Soil pH
- Any presence of lead in your soil
- Parts per million of the elements Boron, Copper, Iron, Manganese, Zinc, Sulfur, and Aluminum
- Limestone and fertilizer recommendations
- Suggested fertilizer practices for your crops
- and more!

All of this information will help you establish a good nutrient management practice for your soil by letting you know if you are under (or over!) applying nutrients. If you test your soils at the same time each year, it also gives you a record to understand how the actions you are taking are effecting your overall soil health over time.

So get your soil tested! Whether you're growing crops or pasture, the plants will thank you for it.

Find forms and instructions at: [soiltesting.cahnr.uconn.edu](http://soiltesting.cahnr.uconn.edu)



# Upcoming:

## Partner Events

Economic Analysis & Decision Making in Pasture Based Livestock Systems: Mar 15th, Virtual- 10AM to 12 PM

2024 eFMNP Farmer Certification Meeting: Mar. 18th, Hartford County Extension Center- 10AM to 12PM

Climate Record Keeping Workshops: Farmer-friendly point of sale software: Mar 18th, Virtual- 6PM-8PM

CT NOFA Winter Conference: Mar. 23, Eastern Connecticut State University- 8 AM to 7PM

Farming Forward: A Climate Adaptation Workshop for Farmers: Mar. 16- Guthrie Center in Great Barrington, MA - 9AM to 4PM

2024 Grape Grower Symposium: Mar.26, Jones Auditorium, New Haven- 8:30AM to 12PM

Practical Approaches to Positively Impact Economics of Pasture Based Livestock Systems: Apr. 9th Virtual- 10AM to 12 PM

Online Microscopy Training with CT NOFA: April 10, 17, & 24, Virtual- 5PM to 6:30PM

In-Person Microscopy Training with CT NOFA: May 4, 9, 18, & Jun 8, Multiple locations- 11AM to 2PM

Urban Ag Conservation Tour: Apr. 29th, Reservoir Community Farm, Bridgeport- 1PM to 3PM

## Grants Open Now

Ignite Women's Business Development Council Grant: DUE MAR 14 (TODAY!)

Small Farm Innovation Projects: DUE MAR 15

CTRC&D Climate Smart Ag. Grant, Round 2- DUE APR 5

Western New England Regenerative Agriculture Project (financial assistance for Land Management) DUE APR 5

Resilient Food Systems Infrastructure Program: DUE APR 10

# Solid Ground Ag Mechanics

There are just some skills that need to be learned in a hands-on environment. That's why over at Solid Ground, we've put together our Ag-Mechanics Training Series to help you learn the practical skills you may need to run your farm!

This past winter, our instructors were able help farmers sort through small engine repair by actually doing the work on engines so they could feel more comfortable fixing weed-whackers, chainsaws, or walk behind tractors, all of which we know can act up during our busy farm seasons.

With Workshops coming up, you too could gain the tactical experience of setting up an irrigation system, using a chainsaw to cut down a tree, or figuring out how to use different models of walk behind tractors for your farm operations.

All of these classes are capped at 15 people or less so you can really dive in with instructors and learn by doing the things you need to do on your farm anyways. Sign up and see the whole list of offerings below!

[SIGN UP HERE](#)



## Video Highlight

Our soil is the foundation of all that we do in farming, so it is integral that we understand our own soils, how soil is tested, and how soil reacts to different conditions. This month, we wanted to highlight some videos we've put together which dive deep into how to take a soil test, what work goes into testing and understanding your soil, and how different soil types react to extreme rainfall events. Give them a look and see what you can learn about YOUR soils!

[View the series here](#)





**USDA-NRCS EQIP/  
CSP FUNDING**

## Partner Highlight

The National Resources and Conservation Services branch of the USDA has funding that they need to get out to farms for greenhouses, maple syrup operations, forestland, cropland, livestock farms, pastureland, vegetable operations and urban farms, and our CT NRCS agents want to help!

Apply by **April 1, 2024** to the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) or the Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP) to be considered in NRCS Connecticut's 2024 Round 3 funding, made possible through the Inflation Reduction Act (IRA).

Practices can include: Ecological Forest Management and Agroforestry practices, Energy Conservation, Pasture Management and Agroforestry, and Soil Health Practices. To see examples of what some of these practices are, click the link below to see more information and specific practices that qualify.

Haven't worked with NRCS before? Make sure you reach out to your local office and connect with an agent before applying to understand what is best for you farm.

**Find out more here** 



**See you next month!**

*For questions surrounding this newsletter,  
please reach out to  
rebecca.toms@uconn.edu*

## Free Consultations

Of course you can use our Solid Ground Consultations that are from our UConn Extension Professionals, but there are some more options available!

From The **CT Small Business Development Center**-a consultation includes: Business Planning, Product Development for value-added goods, Marketing and Sales, Raising Capital, Grant Assistance namely with applying to DoAg grants, Financial Analysis, Cash Flow Management, and more!

To sign up Contact:  
**ctsdbc@uconn.edu | 877-723-2828**

Consultations are available from the **Northeast Farmers of Color Land Trust**, which focuses on supporting Farmers of Color and POC led ag organizations. They provide holistic technical assistance including: Business Planning, Land Access Assistance, Navigating Financial Options, Farm Planning, Grant Writing Assistance, and more.

To sign up contact: Gaby Pereyra at **[gaby@nefoclandtrust.org](mailto:gaby@nefoclandtrust.org)**

And from us at Solid Ground: a consultation on where to find **Resources for Organic Transition** with Saquana Seltzer. Send her an email if you are interested in a free consultation with her! In your email, indicate if you are interested in Climate Smart Ag practices, Organic Production practices, Agroforestry, Production practices, Organic Certification, Conservation Planning, Business Development, Marketing, Record Keeping, or funding to assist in implementing practices.

You can reach her at **[Saquana.Seltzer@uconn.edu](mailto:Saquana.Seltzer@uconn.edu)**