

SOLID GROUND NEWSLETTER



Team Talks

Hello friends! Many of you get emails from me, or have seen me around over the years, but I'm Becca Toms, Communications Coordinator for Solid Ground and farmer at Off Center Farm in Woodbridge!

I've been involved in farming in our CT community in one shape or another for the past 9 years or so, and one of the most valuable parts of that experience has been learning from other farmers. One of the best ways I can think of to formalize this knowledge sharing, rather than the brief convos we snag from each other during events, is through Farmer Circles.

A couple years ago, Solid Ground, New CT Farmers Alliance, & CT NOFA put together small groups of farmers that met around 12 hours a year to focus on specific farm topics, markets, affinity groups or growing practices. These became Farmer Circles and are meant to be learning spaces, but also an opportunity to solidify relationships in our farming community. Currently

This Month

Team Talks- Meet Becca

May Farm Tasks: Getting ready for market

Upcoming Events

Grants Open

UConn Plant Lab

Marketing Video Series

Partner Highlight: TOPP NOFA



GETTING READY FOR MARKET

By the time you read this, we're sure some of the outdoor markets will have opened up and you have scrambled to get all your marketing materials together once more. Table? Check. Tent and weights? Check. Cashbox, check. Okay, you're ready to go!

Well, not exactly. One of the things about getting ready for market is to think about the marketing of your farm overall. As amazing as the meat, eggs, dairy, veggies, flowers, whatever your selling is, people won't just buy your products because it's in front of them.

there is a Queer Farmers Circle Affinity group, an Herb Growers Circle, BIPOC Affinity group and 2 more that are currently in the works! If you are interested in joining any of these circles, or maybe you want to start a Farmer Circle of your own, reach out to Ella, the NCTFA coordinator, at newctfarmers@gmail.com to sign up or share your idea! The Farmer Circles are a great way to not just expand your learning, but also create new relationships with other farmers in our community so you know who to go to when you have questions about your farm!

SOLID GROUND

Upcoming FREE Events

Soil Health Assessment 3 Ways:

May 11, Sunset Farm,
Naugatuck- 10AM-2PM

First of 3 Growing Hemp for Fiber Skill Share: May 20 (raindate May 21), Ag Expiement Station, Griswold- 10am to 12pm

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

First of 3 Cover Crop Skill Share: June 3, Massaro Community Farm, Woodbridge- 4:30-6:30PM

Becoming Your Own Expert in Soil Health and Microscopy Skill Share: June 5th, 12th, 19th (virtual 5-6:30pm) and June 22nd (11-2pm) at Common Ground, New Haven

First thing that we want you to think about is HOW you are accepting payment. Are you still cash only? Consider adopting a point of sale. Check out the webinar on this we did a few years ago discussing different options that are out there for farmers to use. [You can view it here.](#) Not only will it accept credit card (which folks are willing to spend more money with rather than cash), but it also tracks data for you as you enter items that leave your stand. This data can help inform future items you bring to market, crop planning next winter, and help you understand your consumer's wants and needs without pestering them with some sort of survey.

Secondarily is branding. Do you have your farm name displayed in an attractive, visible, and legible way? Is your product displayed in a way that is attractive to customers? If you have the time/means, do you include your logo on any packaging that is part of your operation? These and other helpful hints are available in an article from [Growing For Market back in 2010](#) which focuses just on marketing your farm.

Marketing expands past the close of your market day however. Be prepared to provide ways at market for people to interact with you after you leave. Do you have business cards ready to give out if folks have more questions? Do people know where they can find you after the market? Is your website and/or social media up to date with clear ways of contacting you?

All these things might seem overwhelming as we are trying to get our animals ready for spring transitions, plant all the things, and manage our fields, but these are just as important to your success if you are doing markets as the care for your animals or crops!

But you don't have to face these challenges alone. If you're looking for help with marketing, feel free to sign up for our [FREE marketing consultation](#) and take a look at the video series later in the newsletter.

Good luck with Farmers Market Season!



Upcoming:

Partner Events

Impacts of Increasing Annual Temperatures for New England Farms: May 13, Virtual- 4PM to 5:30PM

Agroforestry and Soil Health Field Day: May 16, Adamah Farm, Falls Village- 10AM to 3PM

2nd Annual Northeast Disability and Agriculture Conference: May 18, Simsbury United Methodist Church, Simsbury- 10AM to 3PM

Fostering Sustainable Poultry Innovation in CT through Academic Community Collaboration: May 24, Tolland County Ext. Center, Vernon- 10AM to 4PM

Tractor and Equipment Safety with the CT Farm Bureau Young Farmers: May 24, Kahn Tractor in North Franklin- 6PM to 8PM

Southern New England Farmers of Color Farmer's Circle Gathering: June 9, Woven Roots Farm, Tyringham, MA- 10AM to 3PM

Pomological Society Summer Field Day: June 11, Holmberg Orchards, Gales Ferry- 4PM and on

Grants Opportunities

Climate Smart Agricultural Implementation Grant for Northwest CT: DUE MAY 31

Ocean Hour Farm Grant Giving program: DUE MAY 31

HPAI Updates

As more dairy cows are testing positive for exposure to Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza, we highly encourage livestock farmers to keep their eyes on the [CT Dept of Ag website dedicated to HPAI updates](#). HPAI has not been discovered in any dairy cows in CT, and has not been reported in poultry since 2022 and the last known case in wild birds was Feb 2024. However, livestock farmers should still keep informed on updates and best practices to protect animals, so please keep yourself updated.

UConn Extension Plant Lab

There are plenty of diseases and pests showing up on our plants we can't always figure out on our own, including brand new problems because of our changing climate. As we are farming in the midst of a changing climate we need to be aware of what is impacting our plants.

Luckily, we have the UConn Plant Diagnostics Lab. They are able to diagnose plant problems including diseases, insect pests and abiotic causes that you may be seeing in your plants. You can send images with a description of the host plant, symptoms you're seeing, and any relevant site history (date of your last soil test, number of affected plants, planting date, etc.) to ladybug@uconn.edu. You can also drop off a sample of the LIVE plant or alcohol suspended bug at the lab, or follow their instructions to ship a sample. You can find all that info on how to do this at their website below.

LEARN MORE HERE



Video Highlight

We put out a series of webinars a few years back to help farmers think about different tools, methods and places to market their farms. These videos cover social media, website design, relational marketing and more! If you're looking to beef up some of your marketing skills as the selling season gets underway, give this series of videos a look and perhaps they'll give you that little boost you need for your farm business!

View the series here





ORGANIC

CT NOFA & Transition to Organic

Partner Highlight

The Northeast/ Mid-Atlantic Transition to Organic Partnership Program (TOPP) mentorship program (of which CT NOFA is a core partner) pairs experienced organic producers with producers transitioning to organic, supports the transition process, and creates a stronger network of organic producers across the country.

As this program works with certified organic producers and those getting ready to get certified, CT NOFA is looking for producers on both sides of the process. Already certified producers may serve as paid mentors, supporting producers throughout the organic transition and certification process.

For producers that are looking to become certified, CT NOFA will pair you with an experienced grower that will mentor you. These mentors can answer your questions and help guide you through the hurdles presented by the certification process.

In addition, they are offering technical assistance through 1:1 consultations, field days, and workshops. Learn more at their website below.

Find out more here



ctnofa
Creating an Organic CT Since 1982

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

Summer Skill Shares!

Check out our newest series of learning events coming this growing season: Skill Shares! These groups will meet 2-4 times throughout 2024 in smaller groups (8-10) to discuss:

- **Soil Health and Microscopy**
(June 5, 12 & 19 Virtual and June 22nd at Common Ground)
- **Poultry Processing for Retail**
(June 29- Coruscant Farm, July 10 - Muddy Roots, and Aug 23 at Tolland Ag Center)
- **CSA Operation and Management** (June 22- Long Table Farm, July 24- Cloverleigh Farm, and August 23rd-Provider Farm)
- **Evaluating Land for Agricultural Use** (Sept. 8- Gunther Farm and Sept. 15- Off Center Farm and Beets and Blooms)
- **Cover Cropping and Crop Rotation** (June 3, Aug 12, and Sept. 23 at Massaro Farm)
- **Hemp Fiber Cultivation**
(May 20, Aug. 31, and Sept 31 at Goshen CT Ag Experiment Station)
- **Natural Weed and Pest Management Strategies**
(more info coming soon)

Keep your eyes on our [Upcoming Trainings page](#) on our website and on our listserv for more details!