

SOLID GROUND NEWSLETTER



Caption This!

It summer, and there is a little less going on our end, and a LOT more going on out in the fields.

So we thought we should add some fun to our newsletter- because we all know you need a smile! So PLEASE, send us your photos and captions and we'll share with everybody the best of them next month!!

To kick us off- let us know what this pumpkin (painted by Farmer Maria Macri at Rivercrest Farm) is saying! For example- perhaps a caption for this pumpkin would be, "I'm smiling because I'm at the farmers market, **but** I haven't slept since February."

Send your captions or photos!

This Month

Caption This

June Farm Tasks: Weed Management

Upcoming Events

Grants Open

Fruit Pricing

Livestock Video Series

Welcome UConn Ext. Soil Health Educator



WEED MANAGEMENT

Weed Season. The race to save our newly planted crops from being overwhelmed by numerous grasses again and to get rid of all the unwelcome pigweed before it goes to seed.

Shuresh Ghimire, our UConn Extension Vegetable and Hemp Specialist, has done quite a bit of research on paper, plastic, and biodegradable plastic mulch. [You can see some of that here.](#) We know that unfortunately for certified organic farms, the biodegradable mulch is currently not an option, and many of you



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Upcoming FREE SKILL SHARES 2024 Season

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). We still have openings in these groups:

Growing Hemp for Fiber Skill Share: Aug 31st | Sept. 30, Ag Expiement Station, Griswold- 10am to 12pm

Poultry Processing Skill Share: Jun 29 | Jul 10 | Aug 23, multiple locations and times

Land Evaluation and Farmland Access: Sep 8 | Sep 15, multiple locations and times

don't like the idea of plastic in the fields. However if you get a more heavy duty landscape fabric, that you can use for many seasons, this can save you time on tackling the weeds that inevitably catch up to you.

Of course, you can also mulch with natural materials like leaves or wood chips, but these pose problems you should be aware of too. These materials can carry pathogens/diseases or invasive plants/bugs to your farm- so *always* know where the material is coming from. In addition, woodchips need to be cured if using directly around plants, and at times they need to be "re-mulched" before the season is over.

If you don't go the mulch path, then there are other options. If you're lucky enough to have a tractor, you can always use one of the many types of cultivators to lift the weeds out of the soil before the crop gets too big in size to drive over.

If a tractor isn't in your inventory, there are a couple options that make weeding easier. For instance, a flame weeder could be used for the smallest weeds when they are just beginning to sprout. This could give your plants a head start. There are also scuffle (stirrup), wheel, tine, wire, and colinear hoes of all shapes and sizes that get in between the plants for a precise weeding. These uproot the plants, but there is a chance that some of these weeds could re-root, so remove debris if you can.

What if you have a space that you are not growing in, but don't want weeds to flourish and send their seeds to your production area? Cover crops are best to help manage what will grow in an area and they feed the soil in the meantime. If you have just harvested from a field, and there are weeds you want to deal with before replanting, occulation or solarization with tarps can knock back the weeds (and create organic mass in the process). Keep in mind, that if you are using solarization in the heat of summer (clear tarps), don't keep it on for more than a day as it can start to harm some of that good soil biology.

If there is one thing you remember- try to catch your weeds before they go to seed, otherwise they'll be adding to the seed bank in the soil and will come back to haunt you year after year. That, and if they get too big, there is not much to do besides hand weeding, and your back will thank you for avoiding that farm task.



Upcoming:

Partner Events

Business Opportunities in Farming-Getting Started in Farming: June 18, Easton Library- 6PM to 8PM

CFBA Young Farmers Committee Farm to Table Dinner Fundraiser: Jun 22 CT Ag Experiment Station, Hamden- 6PM to 8PM

Grow Together Nights-Farm Grants 101: July 14, Hungry Reaper Farm, Morris- 6PM to 8:30PM

Grazing Workshop with Berkshire Crown: July 15-16 at farms in MA and NY. Full day events

Northeast Cooperative Soil Survey Conference: July 29 - Aug 1, Bridgewater State Univ. MA

Vegetable IPM Field Workshop: Aug. 1, UConn Plant Science and Research Education Facility, Storrs- 3PM to 6PM

Grow Together Nights-Scaling Up: Aug 7, River Ridge Farm, Portland-6PM to 8:30PM

Grant Opportunities

AFT's Brighter Future Fund National Grant for Historically Underserved Farmers and Ranchers DUE JULY 7

Piloting Rewards for Ecosystem Services from AFT- DUE SEPT 6

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.

Pricing Your Fruit

Pricing products can always be a little difficult- you want to pay yourself and your staff, but still price your product competitively.

Well, the Connecticut Pomological Society and UConn Extension conducted a Qualtrics survey in late spring 2024 asking for 2023 fruit pick-your-own (PYO) and retail pricing across Connecticut and surrounding states. Nineteen (19) Connecticut responses and one (1) Rhode Island response was received. Responses were from non-organic farms.

The hope with this survey was that farmers would have a better sense of how to price their product for the growing season ahead. If you're growing fruit (both large or small) take a look at the pdf that was put together showing a summary of the results. And let us know if this information is helpful to you!

[See the results here](#)



DIY HUMANE ANIMAL HANDLING

Video Highlight

As part of our DIY series, we visited a couple farms in the state that have DIY'ed some of their essential parts of managing their livestock. We love the different, innovative infrastructure and tools they created to keep their livestock safe and make their lives a little easier. These range from a portable feed dispenser, shelters, water distribution hacks, and more. Check them out and see if there is a DIY project that fits your livestock operation.

[View the series here](#)





New Soil Health Educator at UConn Extension!

Dr. Amelia Magistrali

Hello, my name is Amelia Magistrali, and I'm the new Soil Health Educator with UConn extension! I grew up in Torrington and have spent the past 10 years in North East England, studying and working at Newcastle University, including an MSc in Organic Farming and Food Production Systems and a PhD assessing alternative fertilizer impacts on spelt and rye production and quality.

I'm excited to bring my passion for regenerative and agroecological farming to UConn extension as I develop new soil health-focused programs and support existing ones (including Solid Ground). This is a new role for UConn Extension, so I'm spending my first few months familiarizing myself with the resources and experience already available in the state. If you see me at Skill Shares or Field Days, please come and say hello ([or send me an email](#)) to share what you would like to see from Soil Health Extension!

[Find out more here](#) 

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

Free Consultations!

Just a friendly reminder that we have free consultations from professionals at UConn Extension on a range of topics that can help you with your farm this summer. Consultants can come out to your farm, or meet you over a video chat to help you tackle the challenges you are facing. Topics for Consultation include:

- **Vegetable and Hemp Production** (Shuresh Ghimire)
- **Fruit Production and IPM** (Evan Lentz)
- **Urban and Small Space Agriculture** (Jacqueline Kowalski)
- **Soil, Conservation and Land Evaluation** (Kip Kolesinskas)
- **Resources for Organic Transition** (Saquana Seltzer)
- **Branding and Marketing** (Becca Toms)
- **NEW* Farm to Institution Sales** (Shannon Raider-Ginsburg)

Once you sign up, Consultants will reach out to you within around 2 weeks to schedule a time to meet and get more details