

SOLID GROUND NEWSLETTER



Team Talks

Since we started this newsletter in January, we've used this space to highlight different members of our team- the majority of which are farmers themselves. We wanted to take a minute and review because these folks are HERE FOR YOU!

Project Co-Directors - Jiff Martin & Robert Chang
 Training Coordinators - Brittany Hall, Melanie Desch, Saquana Seltzer
 Communications - Becca Toms

Announcing Solid Ground Trainings for Late Fall/Early Winter 2024:

- **Accessing Grant Funding for Your Farm (virtual)** - two virtual sessions plus one-on-one coaching, virtual sessions are 11/19 and 12/3
- **Intermediate Farm Financials - Enterprise Budgeting** (in-person) - 11/12
- **Business of Farming (hybrid)** - 6 session intensive course will be offered twice starting 1/2/25 and 2/12/25
- **Farm Managers Summit** [SAVE THE DATE] - 1/29/25 (snow date 1/30)

[Meet the Team](#)

[September Farm Tasks: Cover Crops](#)

[Upcoming Events](#)

[Grants Open](#)

[CT Farms for CT Kids Week](#)

[Farmer Stress and Solutions Video Series](#)

[Partner Highlight: NRCS](#)



COVER CROPS

If you haven't thought about starting cover crops yet, start! This is the perfect time to start sowing cover crop seeds to provide ground cover during the winter, provide nutrients to rebuild your soil health and even help suppress weeds!

So why Cover Crops? Well as our [UConn Extension website](#) notes, "Cover crops provide multiple potential benefits to soil health, while also helping maintain cleaner surface and groundwater. They prevent erosion, improve soil physical and biological properties, supply nutrients to crops, suppress weeds, improve



soil water availability, and break pest cycles. Different types of cover crops are able to break into compacted soil layers, increase nutrient retention, and/or reduce soil erosion by covering the ground with living vegetation and living roots that hold on to the soil.”

So if you haven't consider using cover crops for your farm operation before, give it a try, but keep in mind that each operation is different. For example, if you're a livestock operation, [Penn State in this article](#) encourages you to think about:

- What type of livestock do you have/class of cattle are you running?
- What are your soil types and it's ability to drain?
- What is the fencing situation?

If you are a fruit or veggie farmer you want consider:

- Timing required for the crop
- Method for termination (will it be winter killed/killed by frost, be mowed, tilled, crimped, or solarized)
- what species work best for your farm

To help you navigate the many options you have, [University of Maine put together a bulletin](#) to help you make decisions based on your farm that includes tables comparing different cover crop species and how to best utilize these cover crops for what you want to get out of them.

For many things, it's great if you were already able to get your seeds in, but many of us farmers know the reality that things happen when they happen, and cover crops can still offer some benefits even if they are planted later than the suggested date.

Lastly, always remember to try to make sure plants are terminated before they go to seed as these wonderful cover crops can then turn into weeds when you try to plant going forward!

So find the cover crop that works with your farm and try it out. If you don't get it down just right this year, their's a chance that you'll have better luck learning from this year so you can do it even better for NEXT year.
Happy Farming!



SOLID GROUND

Upcoming FREE Events

[Land Evaluation and Farmland Access:](#)

Sep 15-
multiple locations and times

[Growing Hemp for Fiber Skill Share:](#)

Sept. 15, 2nd Date: TBD, Ag Experiment Station, Griswold- 10AM to 12PM

Save the dates and get ready for

- Ag Mechanics this Fall
- Climate Smart Adaptation Strategies for Beginning Farmers (online course) starting in November
- Accessing Grant Funding for Your Farm (November)
- And more!

This project is supported by USDA-National Institute of Food and Agriculture, Award 2023-49400-40870 supported by USDA-National Institute of Food and Agriculture, Award 2023-49400-40870

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Upcoming:

Partner Events

[CT NOFA Tree and Shrub Establishment](#): Sept 14th, The Hickories - 10AM to 1PM

[CTFB: Understanding PA 490 Webinar Introduction to Farm Estate Planning](#): Sept 17th, Online - 6PM to 9PM

[Reduced Tillage Field Walk](#): Sept 17th, Fort Hill Farm- 4PM to 6PM

[CT NOFA Soil Health Field Day: Cover Crops](#): Sept 29th, Assawaga Farm - 10AM to 2 PM

[CT NOFA Soil Health Field Day: No-Till Farming Practices](#): Oct 12th @ Sub Edge Farm in Farmington, CT

Grant Opportunities

[CT Grown For CT Kids Grant- DUE SEPT 18](#)

[WBDC Ignite Grant Program- DUE SEPT 24](#)

[Northeast Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education \(SARE\) Farmer Grants- DUE NOV 12](#)

Flood Damage Info

Important opportunity for anyone that experienced flood damage on 8/18.

\$5M in state funds from DECD, administered by the Women's Business Development Council. Up to \$25,000 available for businesses and non-profits. Submit ASAP.

ctwbdc.org/flood-recovery/



October 7-11th is [CT Grown for CT Kids Week](#) and October is National Farm to School month. CT Grown for CT Kids Week is an annual event every October in Connecticut where schools showcase their purchasing relationships with local farms. They feature CT grown products, invite farmers to the cafeteria to talk with kids, and have taste tests with recipes using locally grown. Each year, legislators, food service directors, farmers and students gather in school cafeterias and gardens for farm to school activities and to enjoy local products.

[With a new state Farm to School Incentive Program](#) and the ending of a federal locally grown incentive program there are more districts than ever planning significant events for this week.

If you are selling to a school or would like to work with schools, this is a great week to partner up, promote your farm and create cross marketing opportunities! For support and ideas on how to get engaged email shannon.raider@uconn.edu



FARMER STRESS & SOLUTIONS

Video Highlight

Summer is coming to a close, but that doesn't mean that our lives are slowing down. There are still markets we have to fit into our schedule, daily animal or crop care, and staff shortages we're facing as some folks leave for other opportunities. We're all running pretty thin at this point. Check out our video series on farmer stress and solutions and remember to take care of yourself...even when there is so much to do because YOU are the farm.

[View the Videos here](#)





NATURAL RESOURCES AND CONSERVATION SERVICES

APPLICATIONS DUE SOON

Are you an agricultural producer looking for ways to conserve water, or address water, air, or animal waste issues? Are you looking to reduce erosion, improve wildlife habitat, or obtain a seasonal high tunnel? Do you want to improve overall conservation on your farming operation?

If you answered yes to any of these, you may be eligible for technical and/or financial assistance. The United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) offers assistance to all eligible producers – from small urban farms to larger rural operations with production on rented, leased, or owned land, through a variety of programs.

Although NRCS accepts applications year-round, to be eligible for the first sign-up period for FY2025 funding, be sure to submit your application to your local NRCS office by October 15, 2024. Find your local USDA service center at farmers.gov/service-locator. Learn more about NRCS programs at www.ct.nrcs.usda.gov.

[Find our 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 in about 2 weeks to schedule a time to meet and get more details

SAVE THE DATE

UConn Extension
Vegetable and Small
Fruit Growers
Conference: *January 9th*

2nd Annual Farm
Manager Summit:
*January 29th (snow date
Jan. 30th*