

OCT. '25

SOLID GROUND NEWSLETTER



Welcome Shannon!

We are excited to welcome another person to our team this fall and you may have already worked with them! Shannon Raider-Ginsburg (s/hr) is the Farm Liaison for UConn Extension's 'Put Local on Your Tray' supporting direct connections between growers and school buyers and addressing barriers such as food safety, supply-chain logistics, invoicing and more.

Shannon is excited to join the Solid Ground team to support events like the Farm Managers Summit and to help organize other trainings and workshops.

Shannon has extensive experience aligning local agriculture, food justice, and education. As a farmer, Shannon has worked all manner of farms from larger certified organic CSA operations to 450-acre Christmas tree farms, to community gardens and urban agriculture.

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CLIMATE SMART ADAPTATIONS COURSE



The learning season is ready to start! UConn Extension's Solid Ground program is putting out our Climate Smart for Beginning Farmers course to help you understand best practices for your farm in a changing climate. The course includes expert instructors in various fields implementing climate smart agriculture practices, tools under \$2000 that are suggested for use, virtual field trips and more. The course is completely online and asynchronous so that learners can follow at their own pace. Courses start **Dec. 1 and Feb. 4** and are \$35/person, with the ability to apply for a \$2400 grant after course completion!

[Find out more and sign up here](#)

NEW SARE PUBLICATIONS

Now available from SARE, the “Northeast Crop Production Manual” and “Northeast Harvest Manual” are user-friendly guides offering step-by-step information on growing, harvesting and handling dozens of specialty crops, from arugula to watermelons. Developed by farmers themselves, these guides are ideal reference materials for beginning farmers, apprentices and crews based on years of on-the-ground experience.

[The Northeast Crop Production Manual](#) covers soil preparation, planting and transplanting, pest management, and more. [The Northeast Harvest Manual](#) addresses harvest timing, best practices for picking, and post-harvest handling and storage guidelines.

SOLID GROUND Upcoming Events

[Climate Smart Adaptations Strategies Class](#)

Online

Start Dates: December 1 & February 4

Ag Mechanics Classes

Dates, times, and sign ups are coming soon!

OCTOBER FARM TASKS: SOIL TESTING

Of all the tasks that pile up in autumn, soil testing the one that often slips through the cracks. Fields may still be in use for grazing or late crops, markets are busy, and there's no shortage of seasonal chores competing for your time.

Still, it's worth carving out a moment for soil testing—if not this fall, then soon. A test can save money by showing you exactly what your soil needs (and what it doesn't), while helping you grow healthier crops that bring in more income. It can also alert you to potential contaminants, like lead, that may affect production or safety.

But why in the fall? [Michigan State University Extension wrote an article](#) to share some of the best reasons to soil test in the fall including:

- Testing the soil at the same time each year gives consistency
- Fall provides more time for sampling and planning
- Fall applications of amendments can often work just as well as spring
- Wetter spring soils make sampling harder.
- It informs your lime application and Fall is best to apply lime—pH adjusts before planting.
- Fertilizer are often cheaper in fall
- Soil labs are less busy in fall, so you get faster results.

If you've never done a soil test before we of course [have a video that our friend Kip](#) put together to help you. There are many places you can send your soil, but we the [UConn Soil Lab](#) that many farmers in the state utilize as part of our Extension services. In addition, we have some great extension educators that are happy to help you interpret these soil tests, including our [Soil Specialist Amelia Magistrali](#).

So get that soil tested and your fields will be ready to go in spring and you'll have one less thing to think about in all the early season madness.
Happy Farming!

- The Solid Ground Team



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Upcoming:

Partner Events

[Organic Fertilizer – How Much?](#) Oct 14, online- 1PM

[Seed Farm Tour at the Hickories:](#) Oct 15th, The Hickories, Ridgefield CT- 4PM to 5:30PM

[2025 Farm Bureau New England Leadership Conference:](#) Oct 18, Nashua, NH- 7:30 to 4:45

[Compost Tea Workshop & Demonstration:](#) Oct 21, Lathrop Farm, Lebanon CT- 1PM to 4 PM

[HACCP for Meat and Poultry Processors:](#) Oct 28-30, Tolland County Ext. Center- multiples times

[UConn Native Plants and Pollinators Conference:](#) Nov 13, Storrs Campus: 8:45 PM to 3:15

Our Food Our Future: Nov. 15, Bridgeport- 10 AM to 3PM (more info coming)

CT Fruit and Veg Conference: Jan 8, UConn Storrs- more info coming soon

Grants

[Livestock Relief Program:](#) DUE OCT 31

[CT Grown for CT Kids Week-](#) (full grant) DUE OCT 31

UConn Extension Survey

If you've been following along for any period of time, you know Solid Ground is a program run out of UConn Extension- and we are always looking to improve what we provide for the community. So, we're asking you all to help us improve what we offer- not just through Solid Ground, but through the many other programs supporting our community that come from UConn Extension. We want your voice to be heard! If you're willing, please take about 10 minutes and give us some of that valuable feedback by taking the survey below.

[Complete Survey Here](#)



Now accepting applications for our last cohort Topp Mentorship Cohort! Who is this program intended for? Anyone that is:

- Interested in organic farming and has owned a farm business for at least 2 years AND wants to get certified, or have just gotten certified on your own (you **can** apply to become a mentee!)
- Already certified (for at least 3 yrs) and you feel like you have some valuable lessons to share (you can apply to be a mentor to someone that wants to pursue organic farming practices)
- Interested in providing guidance on specific topics, skills, or areas of interest to farmers who are transitioning to organic methods.

If you are interested in becoming a mentor or mentee, CT NOFA will connect you with another farm and support you through the process for a year. Farmers on both ends are matched with folks that best fit their operations so that the work is relevant to your business goals.

Click the link below to find out more and apply!

[Find Out More](#)



Video Highlight

You all have a lot going on. When you're not farming, you're most likely thinking about farming, when you're farming, you're thinking about all the other things you need to do in your personal life. It's stressful and sometimes it feels like you're playing a giant game of catch up. This video series was made with farmers that were willing to share how they take care of themselves and deal with stress, and hopefully, it'll help you manage some of your stress too!

[View the Videos here](#)



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2026 Cohort

A partner organization of ours, the Venture Farming Institute, have applications open for their **January to May 2026 program!** The Venture Farming Institute is a cohort-based agricultural training program for aspiring farm and land stewards who identify as Black, Indigenous, Latinx, Asian or Person of Color, and live in Connecticut and Rhode Island. The program provides online trainings, field days, ag trainings and technical skills in a hands on environment, technical support to access resources, and grounding in advocacy and social justice.

The program will include both online classes and in person learning opportunities that are made to help farmers who are just starting in their farming journey. To find more info see the website here: www.venturefarminginstitute.org

Applications are open NOW and are due **October 15** to participate in this year's program.

[Find Out More](#)



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

Protecting You & Your Animals From Ticks

If you have ever had a tick borne disease before then you know how frustrating dealing with these infections can be. Just because the weather is cooling, doesn't mean we should be less vigilant about protecting ourselves and our animals from these diseases.

This recent fact sheet out of UConn helps you identify different types of ticks in our area, the types of diseases they can spread, and preventative measures you can take for yourself, and your animals. To learn more visit the link below:

[Read the article](#)

Free Consultations!

Did you know? As part of UConn Extension's Solid Ground programming, we offer **free** one-on-one consultations with specialists in specific areas of expertise to assist beginning farmers in Connecticut.

This includes consultations on Vegetable production, Commercial Fruit production, Urban Farming, Livestock Production/Bio-security, Marketing/Branding, Soil Health, and more. Now is the perfect time as we are still in the midst of so much activity at our farms! Sign up today!

[Find Your Consultant Here](#)

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