

Six Field Days Offered For Small-Scale Farming

URBANA, ILL.

Soil testing, cover crops, rotational grazing and selecting the right equipment are some of the topics that will be addressed at six New Farmer Field Days being offered this spring and summer for small-scale farming operations.

"The Central Illinois Farm Beginnings (CIFB) Field Days are geared toward people interested in launching a small farm business that is both economically and environmentally sustainable," said Deborah Cavanaugh-Grant, University of Illinois Extension Specialist, Small Farm and Sustainable Agriculture and CIFB co-facilitator.

Now in its fifth year, Central Illinois Farm Beginnings is a program co-sponsored by the U of I Extension and The Land Connection. The year-long program includes course work, field days and workshops, and hands-on mentorships.

"CIFB Field Days give aspiring farmers an opportunity to learn important small-scale farm production information while simultaneously observing and touring successful sustainable farms in our region," said Kathy McGroarty-Torres, Director of Farmer Programs at The Land Connection.

There is a fee of \$15 per workshop for registrants who have not been enrolled in CIFB or are not members of the CI-CRAFT network.

To register, visit http://web.extension.uiuc.edu/smallfarm/begin_farm.html or contact Deborah Cavanaugh-Grant (217-968-5512; cvnghgrn@illinois.edu).

The schedule is as follows:

• Saturday, April 10, 1:30-3:30 p.m.

Topic: Developing Value-Added Products and Navigating Food Rules

Presenters: Teresa Santiago, Teresa's Fruit & Herbs and Sunny Lane Berry Farm and Terra Brockman, The Land Connection

Locations: Teresa's Aronia Acres, Congerville and Teresa's Fruits and Herbs, Eureka

Teresa Santiago will conduct a tour of her aronia bushes and talk about how and why she expanded from a fresh-pick only business to one that also provides value-added products. We will also tour Teresa's fruit and herb farm in Eureka, where she grows over 70 different kinds of fruit. Terra and Teresa will discuss the specific food rules Teresa had to navigate, and the barriers she overcame in order to provide value-added aronia products to consumers.

• Saturday, May 22, 1:00-3:30 p.m.

Topic: Equipment for Small Farmers

Presenters: Marty and Kris Travis, Spence Farm

Location: Spence Farm, Fairbury

Marty and Kris Travis will present information

about the function and use of tractors and other implements including a bale mulcher, crop cart, tractor tiller, converted horse-drawn cultivators, and a potato planter. They will show how to set up a small farm inexpensively using older style equipment while also being innovative with some of the newer equipment.

• Saturday, June 12, 1:30-4:00 p.m.

Topic: Evaluating Soil Quality and Soil Maps
Presenters: Leslie Cooperband and Wes Jarrell, Prairie Fruits Farm and Roger Windhorn, USDA NRCS

Location: Prairie Fruits Farm, Champaign

This hands-on workshop will demonstrate how to collect soil samples for soil testing, and how to measure simple soil quality indicators such as soil structure, water infiltration and soil penetration resistance. "We will review soil test results and how to interpret findings, and also discuss how to use county soils maps developed by the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), particularly when considering land for purchase or lease," Jarrell said.

• Wednesday, June 16, 6:00-8:00 p.m.

Topic: Rotational Grazing and Fencing
Presenters: Jim and Mary Burrus, Indian Creek Farms

Location: Indian Creek Farms, Jacksonville

Learn about the production of certified organic beef and poultry. Jim and Mary Burrus will discuss how they started a management intensive grazing system and why they made the decision to be certified organic. They will also share how they market their products.

• Saturday, July 24, 1:30-4:00 p.m.

Topic: Cover Crops

Presenters: Joel Gruver, Western Illinois University and Dave Bishop, PrairieErth Farm

Location: PrairieErth Farm, Atlanta

Dave Bishop will share how cover crops are used extensively at PrairieErth Farm, both in row crop and vegetable production. Joel Gruver will discuss the benefits of cover crops and how to select the best cover crops for a farm. He will also share information about cover crop research at the Allison Farm as well as information about the Cover Crop Innovators group.

• Saturday, August 14, 1:30-3:30 p.m.

Topic: Farmland Access

Presenters: David Miller, Organic Farmland Management, LLC and Harold Wilken, Janie's Farm

Location: Pleasant Ridge Farm, Forrest

Miller and Wilken will share information about various lease arrangements and will also discuss transitioning from conventional to organic. △



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