



U.S. Department of Agriculture Natural Resources Conservation Service

Helping People Help The Land

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Connecticut

December 2012/January-February 2013



Welcoming Our New State Conservationist ...

The year 2013 will be an exciting one in Connecticut with the reins of State Conservationist being taken over by Lisa Coverdale!

Although Coverdale hails from Iowa, she and her husband, Bill, have made Utah their home for the last 10 years. During that time, she served as Assistant State Conservationist-Operations; Assistant State Conservationist-Programs; State Resource Conservationist; and State Administrative Officer. In each of those positions, she served as NRCS Partnership Liaison.

Coverdale has completed several special assignments including Acting State Conservationist in Washington and Utah; and Management Analyst for the Regional Conservationist. She was also appointed to the Chief's Programs Advisory Team, National Conservation Security Program Team, and Technical Services Provider Team.

Coverdale has a B.S. in Animal Science/Agronomy from Northwest Missouri State University. She is a 3rd generation Angus cattle producer (even managing a herd in Hackensack, New Jersey). She and her husband are the proud grandparents of six. She enjoys gardening, quilting, and exploring by horseback, bike, and kayak.

To the Connecticut Conservation Partnership, Coverdale says, "To say that I am thrilled and humbled is such an understatement. I have heard about your fantastic partnership... I plan to embrace this opportunity fully and will need your help and guidance. I very much look forward to meeting you in person."

NOTICE TO HISPANIC AND/OR WOMEN FARMERS OR RANCHERS

If you are a woman or Hispanic farmer and believe you were improperly denied farm loan benefits by USDA between 1981 and 2000. You may be eligible for compensation.

To register your name to receive a claims packet, call the Farmer and Rancher Call Center at 1-888-508-4429 or visit: www.farmerclaims.gov



USDA is an equal opportunity provider and employer.

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Biodiversity Showcased at *Walktober* Event

Contact Sally Timmons 860.779.0557, Ext. 106

Walktober in *The Last Green Valley* always draws an enthusiastic crowd, and the walking tour held at Allen Hill Tree Farm in Brooklyn last fall was no exception when walkers young and old turned out to tour the beautiful 300 acre farm.

The event began with a brief history of the homestead by Charlie Langevin (who operates the farm with Bob Langevin and Roland Gibeault).

Langevin was proud to tell participants there is a 5th generation farm that was a dairy until 1964 when they began to grow Christmas trees.

The trio manages 100 acres of trees, and keeps the remainder of the land for conservation and recreation. Approximately 230 acres of the property have been enrolled in Purchase of Development Rights (PDR) easements through the Farm and Ranch Lands Protection Program (FRPP) to ensure it is preserved indefinitely.

Because the trees require care and pruning – not to mention controlling pesky invasive vines – a group of helpers were hired to shape trees and work on the retail operation. The remaining management, however, presents a challenge for three men with high standards for production and conservation. So, Charlie Langevin began working with Windham County District Conservationist Ray Covino to implement conservation practices through the Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP) and the Wildlife Habitat Incentive Program (WHIP).

During the walk, participants had a chance to observe open grassy areas that were previously overtaken by invasives. Cool season grasses, legumes, and forbs filled in nicely to provide habitat diversity both in terms of the number of different plant species and the structure of the landscape. Christmas tree fields, forest, and



Attendees listen as Charlie describes lessons learned in conservation, including the importance of providing dead wood habitat for fungi, microbes, and insects to support food webs.

early successional habitat make up a patchwork utilized by a variety of species.

Covino was on hand for the tour and seized the opportunity to discuss woody debris. He educated walkers on the importance of microbes, fungi, and insects in ecosystem health. As the walk progressed along the Quinebaug River, Langevin recounted memories of industrial pollution from his

childhood. Today the river runs much cleaner with various species utilizing this part of the property, where Langevin says he regularly spots otters, wading birds, and waterfowl.

Walkers also had the opportunity to examine historic Native American fishing weirs –estimated by carbon dating to be 8,000 years old.

As the tour neared the end, Covino described the value of warm season grass habitat. A gravelly portion of the farm with an unsuccessful Christmas tree crop was better suited to grassland habitat. He talked about the benefits of this type of habitat to small mammals for food and cover – especially in the winter when standing grass tufts provide tunnel networks for movement below the snow.

The participants left with a much greater appreciation and understanding of conservation on working landscapes. Some commented they were off to another event; while others departed with EQIP applications in-hand to try some conservation of their own!



DC Ray Covino (foreground, facing back) describing the ecosystem services of little bluestem.

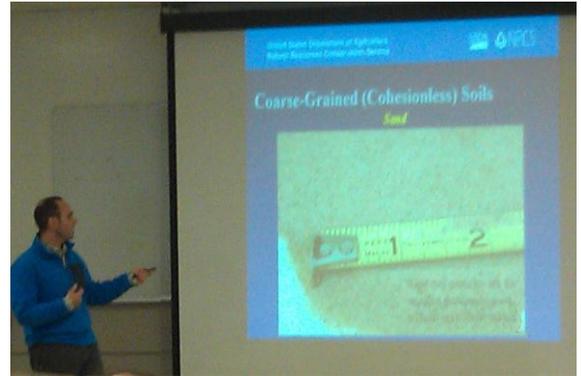
Staff Receives Training from Geologist

Contact Arde Ramthun 860.871.4030

Regional NRCS Geologist Dan Vellone was in Connecticut recently providing Soil Mechanics Level 1 Training to staffs from Connecticut, Rhode Island, and Vermont.

The main purpose of the session was to better understand the Unified Soil Classification System (USCS) and obtain hands-on experience in identifying the various basic USCS soils.

Thanks to Lisa Krall and Shawn Sherraden, who were instrumental in making this course happen.



Vellone makes a point to the class.

NRCS represents Scientific Career Paths at School Career Day

Contact Marissa Theve 860.871.4018

Spreading the word about the mission of NRCS, Soil Scientist Marissa Theve recently participated in the Mohegan Elementary School 5th Grade Career Day.

The event was a highlight of a larger library science project in which students are expected to choose a career to research. Aspects include schooling/training requirements and costs, expected pay levels after graduation, and the predicted job demand. The project will culminate in students' resumes and PowerPoint presentations on how each will achieve their dream job. The experience will no doubt better prepare students for decision making down the road when they begin thinking about college or other educational prospects. The guests explained to approximately 50 students what is required to get into their respective fields and general concepts and options. Students rotated in small groups to each presenter for a brief talk followed by questions.

According to the school's library staff who coordinated the program, many students benefited by becoming aware of additional career paths which may not be obvious to children in the 5th Grade. The students are not only expanding their ability to carry out research, they are also becoming more aware of the world. For NRCS, this is a perfect chance for more extensive outreach, especially within underrepresented demographics. Hopefully, introducing young people to the idea of a career in the sciences will help to foster more interest in future NRCS interns and permanent employees, or other jobs related to the goal of conservation.



Theve talks about careers in conservation.

Connecticut Gets New Extreme Rainfall Data

Contact Lesley Sweeney 860.779.0557, Ext. 105

Connecticut, along with the other New England States and New York, has new extreme rainfall data. This new information is the result of a joint collaboration between NRCS, the Northeast Regional Climate Center (NRCC), and Cornell University.

Extreme precipitation is a large rainfall event that can be described as a design storm of a certain recurrence with a given duration (i.e., a 25-year 24-hour storm). The recurrence is about probability, so a 25-year storm has a 1/25 – or 4% -- chance of occurring in any one year. The handling of extreme precipitation events is a critical component of many civil engineering design projects.

Extreme precipitation in these particular states has not been updated since the early 1960's when the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) released Technical Papers TP-40 and TP-49. Since then, studies have indicated that rainfall has changed in the northeast – including Connecticut. NOAA has been updating rainfall in other parts of the country with Atlas 14, but did not have any immediate plans to update the northeast. So, NRCS teamed up with NRCC and Cornell to revise the rainfall data.

As a result, NRCC created a web-based product (www.precip.net) with more up-to-date estimates of extreme rainfall amounts of various recurrence intervals and durations, new rainfall distribution curves (used in conjunction with the rainfall amounts), and new intensity-duration-frequency (IDF) curves. The recurrence data range is from a 1-year to 500-year storm, with durations ranging from 5 minutes to 10 days.

storm specific data can now be obtained from the website for use in these programs.

Connecticut Hydrologist Ben Smith has created county rainfall from this data to be used in conjunction with regionalized rainfall distributions that can be used in EFH-2 and WinTR-55. For NRCS, this new data replaces the TP-40, TP-49, and NWS HYDRO-35 statistics previously used in hydrologic modeling.

In an effort to get this information out to the public, two NRCS employees recently gave presentations – Lesley Sweeney spoke at the Connecticut Chapter of the American Society of Civil Engineers meeting in Storrs; and State Conservation Engineer Arthur Ramthun at the River Alliance Connecticut Watershed Conservation Network Conference in Ridgefield.

For more information, contact Ben Smith (860.871.4027) or Lesley Sweeney (860-779.0557, Ext. 105).

Extreme Precipitation in New York & New England
An Interactive Web Tool for Extreme Precipitation Analysis

Navigation: About this Project | Data & Products | Daily Monitoring | Documentation

Select Product ?

- Extreme Precipitation Tables - HTML ?
- Extreme Precipitation Tables - Text/CSV ?
- Partial Duration Series - by Point ?
- Partial Duration Series - by Station ?
- Distribution Curves - Graphical ?
- Distribution Curves - Text/THI ?
- Intensity Frequency Duration Graphs ?
- Precipitation Frequency Duration Graphs ?
- GIS Data Files >
- Regional/State Maps ?

Select Location ? Double-click the map to place a marker, or enter address or latitude/longitude.

Map: Hybrid | Locate by Address ? | Locate by Lat/Lon ? | Locate by State/County ?

Select Options ?

Smoothing ?
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USDA Finalizes New Microloan Program

Microloans up to \$35,000 aim to assist small farmers, veterans, and disadvantaged producers

Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack has announced a new microloan program from USDA designed to help small and family operations, beginning, and socially disadvantaged farmers secure loans under \$35,000. The new microloan program is aimed at bolstering the progress of producers through their start-up years by providing needed resources and helping increase equity so farmers may eventually graduate to commercial credit and expand their operations. The microloan program will also provide a less burdensome, more simplified application process in comparison to traditional farm loans.

“I have met several small and beginning farmers, returning veterans, and disadvantaged producers interested in careers in farming who too often must rely on credit cards or personal loans with high interest rates to finance their start-up operations,” said Vilsack. “By further expanding access to credit to those just starting to put down roots in farming, USDA continues to help grow a new generation of farmers while ensuring the strength of an American agriculture sector that drives our economy, creates jobs, and provides the most secure and affordable food supply in the world.”

The new microloans represent how USDA continues to make year-over-year gains in expanding credit opportunities for minority, socially-disadvantaged and young and beginning farmers and ranchers across the U.S.. The final rule establishing the program will be published in the Jan. 17 issue of the *Federal Register*.

Administered through the Farm Service Agency (FSA) Operating Loan Program, the new program offers credit options and solutions to a variety of producers. FSA has a long history of providing agricultural credit to the nation’s farmers and ranchers through its Operating Loan Program. In assessing its programs, FSA evaluated the needs of smaller farm operations and any unintended barriers to obtaining financing. For instance, the new program offers a simplified application process. In addition, for those who want to grow niche crops to sell directly to ethnic markets and farmers markets, it

offers a path to obtain financing. For past FSA Rural Youth Loan recipients, the microloan program provides a bridge to successfully transition to larger-scale operations.

Since 2009, USDA has made a record amount of farm loans through FSA—more than 128,000 loans totaling nearly \$18 billion. USDA increased the number of loans to beginning farmers and ranchers from 11,000 in 2008 to 15,000 in 2011. More than 40% of USDA’s farm loans now go to beginning farmers. In addition, USDA has increased its lending to socially-disadvantaged producers by nearly 50% since 2008.

Producers can apply for a maximum of \$35,000 to pay for initial start-up expenses such as hoop houses, essential tools, irrigation, delivery vehicles, and annual expenses such as seed, fertilizer, utilities, land rents, marketing, and distribution expenses. As their financing needs increase, applicants may apply for an operating loan up to \$300,000 or obtain financing from a commercial lender under FSA’s Guaranteed Loan Program.

USDA farm loans can be used to purchase land, livestock, equipment, feed, seed, and supplies, or be to construct buildings or make farm improvements. Small farmers often rely on credit cards or personal loans, which carry high interest rates and have less flexible payment schedules, to finance their operations. Expanding access to credit, USDA’s microloan will provide a simple and flexible loan process for small operations.

Producers interested in applying for a microloan may contact their local Farm Service Agency office.

The Obama Administration, with Agriculture Secretary Vilsack’s leadership, has worked tirelessly to strengthen rural America, maintain a strong farm safety net, and create opportunities for America’s farmers and ranchers. U.S. agriculture is currently experiencing one of its most productive periods in history thanks to the productivity, resiliency, and resourcefulness of our producers.

News You Can Use Bulletin Board

Producers ... Don't Forget to Complete Your Ag Census

Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack reminds producers to complete their 2012 Census of Agriculture. "It's important for farmers and ranchers in America today to stand up and be counted by participating in the Census of Agriculture," said Vilsack. "By participating in this survey, producers help provide a snapshot of the current state of agriculture in our country, which helps policymakers make better decisions about farm safety net programs and policies."

All farmers and ranchers should have received a Census form in the mail in January. Completed forms are due by February 4, 2013. Forms can be returned by mail or online at www.agcensus.usda.gov. Federal law requires all agricultural producers to participate in the Census and requires NASS to keep all individual information confidential.

For more information, visit the website or call 1-888-424-7828. The Census of Agriculture is your voice, your future, your responsibility.

Health & Wellness

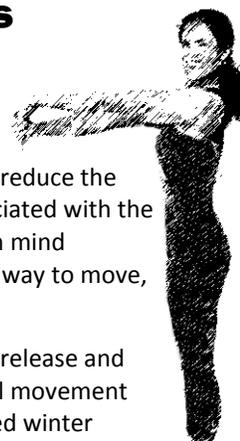
Contact Marissa Theve 860.871.4018

Finger Stretch - welcome to your stretch of the month. These simple movements can help you reduce the effects of physical ailments associated with the work we do. Please keep these in mind throughout your work week as a way to move, breathe, and stay awake.

The first stretch is a simple wrist release and finger stretch. It may be a helpful movement during these computer-work-filled winter months when limber fingers are a prized commodity.

- 1) Begin by outstretching your right arm perpendicular to your body; palm facing up.
- 2) Inhale through the nose and exhale as you use your left hand to gently bend your pinky finger towards the floor/back of your right palm. Stretch only until you just feel sensation in your joints- if you feel pain you've stretched too far and should back off.
- 3) Inhale again and exhale as you repeat this movement on your ring finger. Make sure to use long deep breaths if possible. Repeat for middle and pointer fingers as well.
- 4) When you get to your thumb, stack the backs of your hands left under right and use the left pointer finger and thumb to grab the right thumb and pull it gently toward the floor and away from the right hand.
- 5) Take a clearing breath and begin the same movement on the left hand beginning with the pinky.

Feel free to try combining this stretch with other movements.

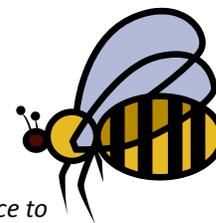


Prepping for Field Season ...

Contact Debbie Surabian 860.871.4042

Bee Stings (information taken from www.mayoclinic.com)

In many situations, most people would not know what to do if they, or someone they are with, were seriously stung by a bee(s). Reviewing signs and symptoms and what you can do gives you the confidence to act when others cannot. Knowledge is power and skills are the tools. Learn to make a difference.



Bee stings are a common outdoor nuisance. In most cases, they are just annoying and home treatment is all that is necessary to ease the pain. However, if you are allergic to bee stings or you get stung numerous times, you may have a more serious reaction that requires emergency treatment. Bee stings can produce different reactions, ranging from temporary pain and discomfort to a severe allergic reaction. Having one type of reaction does not mean you will always have the same reaction every time.

Most of the time, signs and symptoms are minor:

- Instant, sharp burning pain at the sting site
- A red welt at the sting area
- A small, white spot where the stinger punctured the skin
- Slight swelling around the sting area

In most people, swelling and pain go away within a few hours.

About 10% of people have a large local reaction, with signs and symptoms such as:

- Extreme redness
- Swelling at the site of the sting that gradually enlarges over the next day or two

Large local reactions tend to resolve over 5-10 days. Having a one does not mean you will have a severe allergic reaction the next time you are stung. However, some people develop similar reactions each time they are stung. If this happens to you, talk to your doctor about treatment and prevention.

A severe allergic reaction (anaphylaxis) to bee stings is potentially life threatening and requires emergency treatment. About 3% of people who are stung quickly develop anaphylaxis. Signs and symptoms include:

- Skin reactions in parts of the body other than the sting area, including hives and itching and flushed or pale skin (almost always present with anaphylaxis)
- Difficulty breathing
- Swelling of the throat and tongue
- A weak and rapid pulse
- Nausea, vomiting or diarrhea
- Dizziness or fainting
- Loss of consciousness

People who have a severe allergic reaction have a 30-60% chance of anaphylaxis the next time they are stung. Talk to your doctor or an allergy specialist about prevention measures such as immunotherapy to avoid similar reactions in the future.

Generally, insects such as bees and wasps are not aggressive and only sting in self-defense. In most cases, this results in one or perhaps a few stings. However, in some cases a person will disrupt a hive or swarm of bees and get stung multiple times. If stung more than 12 times, the accumulation of venom may induce a toxic reaction and make you feel quite sick. Signs and symptoms include:

- Nausea, vomiting or diarrhea
- Headache
- Vertigo
- Feeling faint or fainting
- Convulsions
- Fever

Multiple stings can be a medical emergency in children, older adults, and people who have heart or breathing problems.

Call 911 or other emergency services if:

- You are having a serious reaction to a bee sting that suggests anaphylaxis, even if it is just one or two symptoms.
- If you were prescribed an emergency epinephrine autoinjector (EpiPen, Twinject), use it right away.

Seek prompt medical care if you have been swarmed by bees and have multiple stings.

Anaphylaxis is a severe allergic reaction and the most dangerous complication of a sting. A rapid fall in blood pressure can lead to loss of consciousness, and can sometimes be fatal. Anaphylaxis requires an emergency shot of epinephrine and a trip to the emergency room.

Toxic reaction to multiple stings can be dangerous, especially in children. Because children are smaller, fewer stings can create high levels of venom in the bloodstream. Complications of massive poisoning by venom include heart problems, rapid muscle tissue damage and kidney failure.

Beware of ...



Spear phishing is a **targeted** phishing attack. In a spear phishing attack, the enemy tries to get personal, financial, or other sensitive information from a specific victim or set of victims. The attacker uses what they know about the victim(s) to make the phishing attack more effective. As with more generic phishing attacks, spear phishing attacks can be carried out in any context, including via e-mail, fax, traditional mail, phone, text message, and instant messaging services.

Signs of a Potential Spear Phishing Attack:

- You were not expecting the message or call
- You are asked to provide or verify personal, financial, or other sensitive information
- You are asked to complete an urgent or important task (e.g., verifying an account, completing a form)

Spear phishing attacks are tailored to their victims; this makes them harder to detect than general phishing attacks.

Use caution anytime someone asks you to give or verify information.

To protect yourself against spear phishing attacks:

1. **Be suspicious of requests for information.** Consider the source, the value of the information being requested, the request method, and whether the request is expected. The more critically you analyze requests, the better you can spot any phishing attempt.
2. **Check the legitimacy of a request by directly contacting the company or sender.** Use reputable contact information from another source. For example, if you receive a call from someone claiming to represent your bank, offer to call him or her back. When you call back, use a phone number from your regular bank statement.
3. **Look for variations on legitimate names in the sender's message.** Look for differences in the website domain (e.g., Comcast.net instead of Comcast.com), misspellings of the site name, or other minor variations that could indicate you are being directed to a different site.
4. **Avoid opening attachments and clicking on links in e-mail messages.** For example, if it appears you need to log in to check a bank account, open a new browser window and visit the web address you normally use for your bank.
5. **Report suspicious activity or phishing attempts to OSB.** Contact the ITS Operations Security Branch at (816) 823-1619. Suspicious e-mails can also be sent to OSB at ITSOSBIncidents@one.usda.gov. To send a suspicious e-mail... create a new e-mail message, address it to OSB, and attach the suspicious message to it. OSB will review it and report its findings to you. Until then, do not reply to or forward the message.

Salazar Announces Fee-Free Days at National Parks, and Other Public Lands for 2013

Secretary of the Interior Ken Salazar has announced dates in 2013 ranging from Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Day to Veterans Day when more than 2,000 national parks, national forests, national wildlife refuges, and other federal lands will offer free admittance to everyone.

“Our national parks, national wildlife refuges, national forests and other public lands offer every American a place to enjoy outdoor recreation, learn about our nation’s history and culture, and restore our souls and spirits by connecting with the natural beauty and wildness of our land,” Salazar said. “By providing free admission, we are putting out an invitation to all Americans to visit and enjoy these extraordinary treasures that belong to all our people.”

“National parks and other public lands are becoming increasingly important for both our mental and physical health,” said National Park Service Director Jonathan B. Jarvis. “In our fast-paced world, they provide places for good, old-fashioned social networking with others – places where we can relax and unwind, where we can experience new and different things, and where we can easily share thoughts and communal activities.”

Tourism and outdoor recreation are also powerful economic engines in communities across the country. Recreation on federal lands in 2009 provided 440,000 jobs and contributed \$55 billion to the economy.

The fee waiver does not cover expanded amenity or user fees for things such as camping, boat launches, transportation, or special tours.

Active duty military members and their dependents are eligible for a free annual pass that provides entrance to lands managed by the National Park Service, U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service, Bureau of Land Management, Bureau of Reclamation, and the U.S. Forest Service. The America the Beautiful National Parks and Federal Recreational Lands Pass Program also offers a free lifetime pass for people with disabilities; a \$10 lifetime senior pass for those age 62 and over; and a \$80 annual pass for the general public.

America’s great outdoors should be experienced by everyone,” said Salazar.

Date	Event	Agency Participating
January 21	Martin Luther King Jr. Day	National Park Service; Fish & Wildlife Service; Bureau of Land Management; US Forest Service
April 22 - 26	National Park Week	National Park Service
June 8	Great Outdoors Day	US Forest Service
August 25	National Park Service Birthday	National Park Service
September 28	National Public Lands Day	National Park Service; Fish & Wildlife Service; Bureau of Land Management; Bureau of Reclamation; US Forest Service
October 13	National Wildlife Refuge Day	Fish & Wildlife Service
November 9 - 11	Veterans Day weekend	National Park Service; Fish & Wildlife Service; Bureau of Land Management; Bureau of Reclamation; US Forest Service

FEBRUARY

is Black History Month

Contact Marissa Theve 860.871.4018

Following are some event dates from the 2013 Carter G. Woodson African-American Studies' Black History Month Lecture Series that are free and open to the public. For directions and a map, visit www.ccsu.edu/visit

SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THUR	FRI	SAT
					1	2
3	4	5	6	7	8	9
				Memphis and the Civil Rights Movement Mayor A.C. Wharton Torp Theater 1:45-2:55 PM		
10	11	12	13	14	15	16
		Inside the Nation of Islam: Perspectives from A Former Muslim, Now Christian Pastor Pastor Hussien Abdullah Tuesday, , Founders, Davidson 11 AM-12 Noon	The Significance of the Black Church in America: From Bishop Richard Allen to President Obama (New Book) Dr. Felton O. Best, CSU Professor of Philosophy, History, African-American, and Religious Studies CCSU Bookstore 12:15-1:15 PM			
17	18	19	20	21	22	23
				Citizenship and Humanity: Existentialism As A Philosophical Concept Regarding African-Americans Professor Femi Bogle-Assegai, Professor of Philosophy Capital Community College 3-4:15 PM		
24	25	26	27	28		
		Reflections on the Election of 2012: President Barak Obama and the Political, Historical, and Philosophical Implications of the Next Four Years Panel Discussion: Dr. Walton Brown-Foster, Professor of Political Science and African-American Studies, CCSU (Moderator); Marcus White Living Room 2-4 PM		Atlantic Creoles: How Enslaved Africans Built New York City Dr. Shawn Council, Adjunct Professor of Philosophy and African-American Studies Sprague Carlton, First floor, Student Center 2-3 PM		

News From Partners ...



The Southern New England Chapter of the Soil & Water Conservation Society has announced their Winter Conference will be held February 15, 2013, at the Northeast Utilities, in Berlin, Connecticut.

The conference will highlight the importance of choosing the right erosion and sediment controls for construction sites, as well as some of the most commonly made mistakes involving their implementing and use.

Guest speakers include professionals in erosion and sediment control planning, construction, soil preservation, and low-impact development. They bring the experience of the construction industry, private sector, and state and federal agencies. NRCS District Conservationist Ray Covino will address the group on the topic of Vegetative Covers for Erosion Control.

Farm-to-Chef Conference to be Held

From the Office of Commissioner Steven K. Reviczky, Connecticut Department of Agriculture

On February 23, 2013, the Connecticut Department of Agriculture's Farm to Chef Program will host *Growing Farmer-Chef Relationships*, an event that will introduce Connecticut Grown producers to chefs and foodservice buyers

Many farms in the state are interested in doing business with restaurants and institutional facilities, and many restaurants and institutions want to use Connecticut Grown farm products. A gap exists, however, in the farms' ability to produce sufficient and consistent supply—in the forms needed—of the products sought by those customers.

This is an opportunity for farmers to meet and develop relationships with chefs and buyers from some of the state's finest restaurants, schools, hospitals, corporations, and state-run facilities seeking to serve quality local ingredients.

Going beyond a *meet-and-greet* or *get-to-know-your-farmer* approach, the program is encouraging farmers and chefs to enter into agreements in advance of the season to help balance supply and demand, and to share the risks associated with growing, producing, and using fresh, local farm products.

The Department of Agriculture launched the Farm-to-Chef Program in 2006. Moving forward, the program

is looking to the Governor's Council for Agricultural Development, which has spent the past year working on the first-ever, holistic strategic plan for Connecticut agriculture, to help it better serve its members.

To date, the council's planning process has included 110 hours of in-depth information interviews with key stakeholders, an online survey completed by 232 participants, four regional listening sessions around the state, and a full day of topic-focused meetings, to which 90 experts in specific subject areas were invited to brainstorm and prioritize ideas for recommendations.

The ideas generated at November's topic-focused meetings have been incorporated into the council's first annual report, which will be presented to Governor Malloy. The report recommends action steps that will help Connecticut farmers strengthen, diversify, and improve their businesses.

For more information about the Farm-to-Chef Program, visit www.CTGrown.gov/FarmtoChef. For more information about the Governor's Council for Agricultural Development, go to www.CTGrown.gov/GovernorsCouncil.

THE NATURALIST'S NICHE

Old Apple Trees

Contact Charlotte Pyle 860.871.4066

Take a walk through the winter woods and you will probably be surrounded at some point by the bare straight trunks of oaks, hickories, maples and birches. Then, in an opening or at the woods' edge, you might see a relatively low-growing, round-crowned apple tree. Compared to a well-groomed orchard tree, abandoned apple trees have too many thin branches shooting upward off their gnarled limbs. And, they may bow to the ground where they have split with the weight of past winters' snow.

When you come upon an isolated apple tree, scout around a bit and you might find signs of an old home place. Just think! It might be sixty years ago, or so, that somebody looked out a window at that tree as it stood proudly, its spreading branches unshaded by other trees. On a crisp February day, the bare branches gave the watcher little indication of how eye-catching the tree soon would be when covered in springtime's frilly, white blossoms.

Sometimes, when people still occasionally mow an in an old orchard, you will come upon a

field of white blooming trees. There might just be scattered trees left or sometimes just one clump of apple trees.

Why would trees survive better in one part of the old orchard and not another? Many reasons. I know one place where old apple trees grow in a very gently sloping field. In the upper half of the field, a clump of apple trees remains with various upland grasses and herbaceous plants growing beneath. In the lower half, the trees are widely scattered. Overall, there is a reduced proportion of grass in this part of the field. And, in some places there is a dominance of Marsh fern. In some other treeless places, Marsh fern, Sensitive fern, and Blue flag iris are present, though not dominant.

Together, these three species tell us something about the lower half of the field. They are wetland indicators. Marsh fern and Sensitive fern are *facultative* wetland species (they are usually found in wetland soils, but they can handle upland soils) and Blue flag iris is an *obligate* wetland species (almost always found in wetland soils). Except where the marsh fern

dominates, the species composition in the lower half of the field is not dominated by wetland plants. It is not a wetland, but it does have wet microsites and in general there is more moisture held in the soil than in the upper half of the field. Apple trees do not do well in soils with poor drainage.

One of the things that continually fascinates me about Connecticut is the idea that 20,000 years ago, the surface of Connecticut was hidden under glacial ice. At the peak of glaciation, the ice was more than a mile thick in places. That ice was heavy! Even today, there are many places in Connecticut where the weight of the glacier so tightly compacted the soil particles that water now pools or there is still a layer in the soil through which water drains very slowly. On sloping land, the water above compacted layers moves sideways downhill rather than straight down. At the bottom of a slope or in other places where the topography begins to level out, the laterally-flowing water may come close to the surface or may even seep out of the soil.

NRCS 2013 Program Update

Agricultural Management Assistance (AMA) –AMA provides payments to agricultural producers to voluntarily address issues such as water management, water quality, and erosion control by incorporating conservation practices into their farming operations. Producers may construct or improve water management structures or irrigation structures, and mitigate risk through production diversification or resource conservation practices.

Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) - CRP reduces soil erosion and sedimentation in streams and lakes, improves water quality, establishes wildlife habitat, and enhances forest and wetland resources. It encourages farmers to convert highly erodible cropland or other environmentally sensitive acreage to vegetative cover such as tame or native grasses, wildlife plantings, trees, filterstrips, or riparian buffers. Farmers receive an annual rental payment for the term of the multi-year contract. Cost sharing is provided to establish the vegetative cover practices. *CRP is administered by the Farm Service Agency, with NRCS providing technical land eligibility determinations, conservation planning, and practice implementation.*

Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP) –A voluntary program that provides financial and technical assistance to promote the conservation and improvement of soil, water, air, energy, plant and animal life, and other conservation purposes on Tribal and private working lands.

Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) –EQIP is a voluntary program that provides financial and technical assistance to farmers and ranchers who face threats to soil, water, air, and related natural resources on their land. Through EQIP, NRCS provides financial incentives to producers to promote agricultural production and environmental quality as compatible goals, optimize environmental benefits, and help farmers and ranchers meet federal, state, Tribal, and local environmental regulations.

Farm and Ranch Lands Protection Program (FRPP) –A voluntary program that helps farmers and ranchers keep their land in agriculture. The program provides matching funds to state, tribal, or local governments and non-governmental organizations with existing farm and ranch land protection programs to purchase conservation easements.

Grassland Reserve Program (GRP) - A voluntary program for landowners and operators to protect, restore, and enhance grassland. The program emphasizes support for working grazing operations; enhancement of plant and animal biodiversity; and protection of grassland and land containing shrubs and forbs under threat of conversion.

Wetlands Reserve Program (WRP) –A voluntary program that provides technical and financial assistance to private landowners to restore, protect, and enhance wetlands in exchange for retiring eligible land from agriculture. Includes 30-year and permanent easement options and funding for restoration.

Wildlife Habitat Incentive Program (WHIP) –WHIP is a voluntary program for private landowners to develop and improve high quality habitat that supports wildlife populations of national, state, Tribal, and local significance.

Office Locations

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Tolland State Office

344 Merrow Road, Suite A
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860.871.4011
Lisa Coverdale
State Conservationist

Calendar of Events

February

- 5 2013 Understanding Organic and Sustainable Agriculture Webinars – **MULTIPLE SPECIES GRAZING FOR SUSTAINABLE FARMING** – 3-4 PM – Instructor Gregg Brann, State Grazing Lands Specialist, NRCS, Tennessee. Audio/video info to join a webinar released app.3 weeks prior to scheduled event. Visit <http://conservationwebinars.net>. Visit www.nrcs.usda.gov/wps/portal/nrcs/main/national/entsc/ to join webinar announcement email list and have event information sent directly to your Inbox.
- 5 **CONNECTICUT FARM ENERGY GRANT ASSISTANCE WORKSHOP** – UConn Extension Center, Vernon – 2-4 PM – Contact 860.345.3977 or via email ctfarmenergy@aol.com
- 7 **GAP UPDATE** – Tolland Ag Center, Vernon – 9:30 AM – 3 PM - The GAP SCHOOL (Good Agricultural Practices) offers a variety of programming for those interested in finding out more about reducing the risk of foodborne illness from fresh produce. This 1-day workshop updates farmers and discusses how to improve their audit scores, upgrade their food safety plans, and be better prepared for the next audit. Prerequisite: this is for farmers who have been through a GAP audit. Contact Diane Hirsch 203.407.3163 or diane.hirsch@uconn.edu
- 9 **BEE SCHOOL** – Northwest Park, Windsor – For more info visit <http://ctbees.com>
- 9 **STARGAZING AT HAMMONASSETT BEACH** – Meigs Point Nature Center at Hammonasset Beach, Madison – 7:30 PM – Come view the heavens and learn some constellations and other astronomical wonders. Telescopes provided. Contact Russ Miller, Director, Meigs Point Nature Center 203.245.8743 or 860.462.9643
- 9 **WINTER TRAILS DAY** – CT Forest & Park Headquarters, Rockfall – 10 AM – 3 PM – Event features hikes on the newly expanded Highlawn Forest Trail System, and activities for families. For more information visit www.ctwoodlands.org/contact
- 11-14 **NOFA ACCREDITATION COURSE IN ORGANIC LAND CARE** – Three Rivers College, Norwich. Visit www.ctnofa.org
- 13 **CONNECTICUT'S BALD EAGLES** – Sessions Woods, Burlington – 6-8 PM - Join Laura Saucier for an informative program on Connecticut's bald eagles. Learn about their natural history and population recovery. Contact Laura Rogers-Castro 860.675.8130 or via email laura.rogers-castro@ct.gov
- 16 **SUNDAY MORNING BIRDWALK** – Kellogg Environmental Center, Derby – 9-11 AM – Experience the joy of observing birds in the wild, sharpen your bird identification skills, or just enjoy a Saturday morning hike through the grounds of the Kellogg Estate and Osbornedale State Park. Contact Donna Kingston 203.734.2513
- 16 **PLANNING FOR A BOUNTIFUL GARDEN** – Common Ground High School, New Haven – 10 AM – 12:30 PM – Connecticut NOFA and Common Ground will cover basic principles of planning for organic vegetable and organic gardens. Choosing the site and style, soil testing and improvements, choosing the right vegetable for the season, crop rotation, and companion planting will be covered. Instructors Betty Lou Sandy and Shannon Raider-Ginsburg. Contact CT NOFA 203.888.5146
- 16 **GAP SCHOOL – LITE** – New Haven County Extension Center, North Haven – 9:30 AM – 12:30 PM – The GAP SCHOOL (Good Agricultural Practices) offers a variety of programming for those interested in finding out more about reducing the risk of foodborne illness from fresh produce. Snow date March 9. Contact Diane Hirsch 203.407.3163 or diane.hirsch@uconn.edu
- 19 **BALD EAGLES OF CONNECTICUT** – Kellogg Environmental Center, Derby – 7 PM – The bald eagle is a wildlife success story in our state and across the country. Laura Saucier, Wildlife Technician with CT DEEP will present a program about the bald eagle's status in the state, its life history, and its population decline and recovery. Contact Donna Kingston 203.734.2513
- 21 **A PLACE CALLED HOME** – Dinosaur State Park, Rocky Hill – 1 PM – Wildlife Rehab Center presents a live raptor program featuring a red-tailed hawk, broad winged hawk, great horned owl, and eastern screech owl. contact Margaret Enkler 860.529.5816
- 21 **WRITING A FOOD SAFETY PLAN** – Tolland Ag Center, Vernon – 9:30 AM – 3 PM - The GAP SCHOOL (Good Agricultural Practices) offers a variety of programming for those interested in finding out more about reducing the risk of foodborne illness from fresh produce. This is a 1-day hands-on workshop focused on helping farmers write their food safety plans. Bring laptop (some will be available) and get started putting plans on paper. Prerequisite: attendance of a GAP training program (not lite version). Contact Diane Hirsch 203.407.3163 or diane.hirsch@uconn.edu
- 21-24 **32ND ANNUAL CONNECTICUT FLOWER & GARDEN SHOW** – Connecticut Convention Center, Hartford – For more information visit www.ctflowershow.com
- 23 AgVocate: **CULTIVATING A HEALTHY AGRICULTURE NETWORK** – EastConn, Hampton – 9 AM – 3 PM

February *(continued)*

- 23 **WALKCT FAMILY RAMBLE: Cheney Railroad History Walk** – Cheney Railroad Trail, Manchester – 1-3 PM – An easy but bumpy 1-mile walk along this former railroad, built in 1869. Hear the history of the railroad and see maps and old pictures. Sponsored by CT Forest & Park. Extreme weather cancels. Contact Susan Barlow 860.643.9776
- 26 **CONNECTICUT FARM ENERGY GRANT ASSISTANCE WORKSHOP** – UConn Extension Center, Norwich – 4-6 PM – Contact 860.345.3977 or via email at ctfarmenergy@aol.com
- 26 **NATIONAL INCUBATOR FARM TRAINING INITIATIVE WEBINAR SERIES** – Land & Site Management – 1-2:30 PM – Contact 978.654.6745 or visit <http://nesfp.nutrition.tufts.edu>
- 26 **ORGANIC LAWN CARE CERTIFICATE COURSE** – Three Rivers Community College, Norwich – For more information visit www.ctnofa.org
- 27-28 **2013 HARVEST NEW ENGLAND AG MARKETING & TRADE SHOW** – Sturbridge Host Hotel, Sturbridge, Massachusetts – Contact 617/626.1754 or visit www.harvestnewengland.org

March

- TBD **SPRING AMPHIBIAN WALK** – St. Luke's School, New Canaan – March is a magical time to search for frogs and salamanders. Dave Havens of Norwalk River Watershed Association will begin with a short intro on amphibians and how to spot them. He will then lead a woodland walk to visit vernal ponds coming to life. Discover some of the many species in our area, search for eggs and tadpoles, and learn about amphibian development. Contact 877.679.2463
- 1 **CHANNELING PINCHO – PART 2** – CT Forest & Park, Rockfall – 6-8:30 PM – The second in a series of films and discussions about the early conservation movement and its two major figures: Gifford Pinchot and John Muir. View a segment of the Forest Service Centennial Film The Greatest Good, discussion to follow. Refreshments. Contact 860.346.8733 or infor@ctwoodlands.org
- 2 **CONNECTICUT NOFA'S 31st ANNUAL WINTER CONFERENCE** – Wilton High School – 8:30 AM – 5 PM – Conference brings into focus the challenges of adjusting to climate change for farmers, gardeners, and consumers. Discuss the future of sustainable farming and celebrate local food. Workshops, vendors, exhibits, silent auction. Keynote speaker David Wolfe Ph.D., Faculty Fellow and Chair of the Climate Change Focus Group, Atkinson Center for a Sustainable Future and Professor of Plant and Soil Ecology, Dept. of Horticulture, Cornell will speak on Farm and Landscape Management for a Changing Climate. Contact 203.888.5146
- 2 **CSA FAIR** – NOFA Winter Conference, Wilton – 12 Noon – 2 PM – Talk to CSA farmers and ask about their produce, sign-up if you'd like a share. Contact CT NOFA 203.888.5146
- 2 **MAPLE SUGAR FESTIVAL** – Stamford Museum & Nature Center – 11 AM – 2 PM – Visit the little red sugarhouse on Heckscher Farm and see firsthand how sap is turned into sweet maple syrup. Watch how trees are tapped and sap is collected; make a maple-themed craft; scavenger hunt; face painting, watch local chefs create delicious dishes. Enjoy pancake brunch. Contact 203.322.1646 or www.stamfordmuseum.org
- 7 **CSA FAIR** – Billings Forge Farmer's Market – 11 AM – 2 PM – Talk to CSA farmers and ask about their produce, sign-up if you'd like a share. Contact CT NOFA 203.888.5146
- 9 **FIRESIDE STORIES WITH RANGER RUSS MILLER** – Meigs Point Nature Center, Madison – 7 PM – Hear Native American tales and fables by a campfire at the outdoor amphitheater. Contact Russ Miller 203.245-8743
- 9 **MAPLE FESTIVAL** – Sweet Wind Farm, Hartland – 10 AM – 4 PM – Maple syrup and sugar making demonstrations, classes, tours, story time for kids, recipe class, free sugar-on-snow, tree tapping demo, food, more. Fun and educational. Contact 860.653.2038 or www.sweetwindfarm.net
- 10 **MUSHROOMS** – Sessions Woods, Burlington – 9:30-11:30 AM – Join the Connecticut Mycological Society for an indoor mushroom presentation suitable for beginners and more seasoned mushroom seekers. Contact Laura Rogers-Castro 860.675-8130 or via email laura.rogers-castro@ct.gov
- 10 **CSA FAIR** – Fiddleheads Food Coop, New London – 3-6 PM – Talk to CSA farmers and ask about their produce, sign-up if you'd like a share. Contact CT NOFA 203.888.5146
- 16 **SATURDAY MORNING BIRDWALK** – Kellogg Environmental Center, Derby – 8-10 AM – Experience the joy of observing birds in the wild, sharpen your bird identification skills, or just enjoy a Saturday morning hike through the grounds of the Kellogg Estate and Osbornedale State Park. Contact Donna Kingston 203.734.2513 or via email donna.kingston@ct.gov

April

- TBD** **NORWALK TRAIL MAINTENANCE DAY** – Help enhance the Norwalk River Valley Trail by cleaning up trash, cutting back invasive plants, planting native trees and indigenous wildflowers and grasses. Elizabeth Craig will identify and discuss invasives along the trail and provide instruction on proper removal. Bring work gloves and clippers. All ages welcome. Contact Norwalk River Watershed Association 877.679.2463
- 2** 2013 Understanding Organic and Sustainable Agriculture Webinars – **INTEGRATING LIVESTOCK INTO CROPPING SYSTEMS ON SUSTAINABLE FARMS** – 3-4 PM – Instructor Jay Fuhrer, DC, NRCS, North Dakota. Audio/video info to join a webinar released app.3 weeks prior to scheduled event. Visit <http://conservationwebinars.net>. Visit www.nrcs.usda.gov/wps/portal/nrcs/main/national/entsc/ to join webinar announcement email list and have event information sent directly to your Inbox.
- 12** **STAR GAZING AT HAMMONASSET BEACH** – Meigs Point Nature Center, Madison – 8:30 PM – View the heavens and learn about constellations and other astronomical wonders. Telescopes provided. Contact Russ Miller 203.245.8743 or 860.462.9643
- 15-19** **EARTH WEEK CELEBRATION** – The Dinosaur Place at Nature's Art Village, Oakdale – 19 AM – 5 PM – Contact 860.443.4367
- 16** **HONEYBEES** – Kellogg Environmental Center, Derby – 7 PM – Beekeeper Ralph Harrison will give a presentation on the fascinating lives of honeybees. Contact Donna Kingston 203.734.2513 or via email donna.kingston@ct.gov
- 18** **SNAKES ALIVE** – Dinosaur State Park, Rocky Hill – 11 AM – 12:30 PM – Jay Kaplan, of Roaring Brook Nature Center, will present a wide variety of live snakes. Contact Meg Enkler 860.529.5816 or via email Margaret.enkler@ct.gov
- 20** **SATURDAY MORNING BIRDWALK** – Kellogg Environmental Center, Derby – 8-10 AM – Experience the joy of observing birds in the wild, sharpen your bird identification skills, or just enjoy a Saturday morning hike through the grounds of the Kellogg Estate and Osbornedale State Park. Contact Donna Kingston 203.734.2513 or via email donna.kingston@ct.gov
- 28** **Talons! A Bird of Prey Experience** – Sessions Woods, Burlington – 1-2 PM – Attend the Friends of Sessions Woods Annual Meeting for an up close, unforgettable live birds of prey experience. Contact Laura Rogers-Castro 860.675.8130 or laura.rogers-castro@ct.gov

May

- 5** **EARLY MORNING BIRDWALK** – Meigs Point Nature Center, Madison – 6 AM – Meet for a guided bird walk near the beach. Spotting scopes and experts will be available to help identify birds. An easy walk for all ages. Contact Russ Miller 860.462.9643 or 203.245.8743
- 18** **EARLY MORNING BIRDWALK** – Kellogg Environmental Center, Derby – 8-10 AM – Experience the joy of observing birds in the wild, sharpen your bird identification skills, or just enjoy a Saturday morning hike through the grounds of the Kellogg Estate and Osbornedale State Park. Contact Donna Kingston 203.734.2513 or donna.kingston@ct.gov
- 21** **STINKOLOGY – FRAGRANCES OF FIELD AND FOREST** – Kellogg Environmental Center, Derby – 7 PM – Peter and Barbara Rzasas will present a program on the fragrances resulting from chemicals produced by plants as a defense against insect and animal predators and to protect against fungal and bacterial attack. Contact Donna Kingston 203.734.2513 or donna.kingston@ct.gov

June

- 1-2** **CT TRAIL DAYS WEEKEND** – Trails throughout Connecticut – all day June 1 and 2 – Celebrate Connecticut Trails! Dozens of events to choose from – outdoor activities for everyone – including hiking, biking, trail running, horseback riding, trail maintenance, kayaking, educational walks, bird watching, letterboxing, and more. Events guided by volunteers from local hiking clubs, parks and rec departments, state agencies, conservation organizations, historic groups, naturalists, educators, and land trusts. Listing will be published in the CT Trail Days Weekend Booklet, available May 2013. Contact CT Forest & Park 860.346.8733
- 4** 2013 Understanding Organic and Sustainable Agriculture Webinars – **ORCHARD FLOOR MANAGEMENT IN ORGANIC SYSTEMS** – 3-4 PM – Instructor David Granatstein, Sustainable Ag Specialist, Washington State University. Audio/video info to join a webinar released app.3 weeks prior to scheduled event. Visit <http://conservationwebinars.net>. Visit www.nrcs.usda.gov/wps/portal/nrcs/main/national/entsc/ to join webinar announcement email list and have event information sent directly to your Inbox.
- 15** **SATURDAY MORNING BIRDWALK** – Kellogg Environmental Center, Derby – 8-10 AM – Experience the joy of observing birds in the wild, sharpen your bird identification skills, or just enjoy a Saturday morning hike through the grounds. Contact Donna Kingston 203.734.2513 or donna.kingston@ct.gov

July

August

- 4 2013 Understanding Organic and Sustainable Agriculture Webinars – **CROP ROTATION ON DIVERSIFIED FARMS** – 3-4 PM – Instructor Charles Mohler, Senior Research Assoc., Cornell University. Audio/video info to join a webinar released app.3 weeks prior to scheduled event. Visit <http://conservationwebinars.net>. Visit www.nrcs.usda.gov/wps/portal/nrcs/main/national/entsc/ to join webinar announcement email list and have event information sent directly to your Inbox.
- 13 **REMEDATION ROUNDTABLE** – DEEP Headquarters, Phoenix Auditorium, Hartford – 1:30-3:30 PM – An open forum to exchange ideas and information on site cleanup in Connecticut and to solicit opinions, advice, and information from outside sources on a routine and established basis. Contact Camille Fontanella 860.424.3705 or camille.fontanella@ct.gov

September

- 29 **TRAILBLAZER: RUN THE GAUNTLET** – Hammonasset State Park, Madison – 8 AM – 12 NOON – 5k run with obstacles such as haybales, hurdles, etc. Race followed by cookout. Event benefits Shoreline Greenway Trail. Contact John Bysiewicz 203.481.5933

October

- 1 2013 Understanding Organic and Sustainable Agriculture Webinars – **PASTURED POULTRY AND CONSERVATION PLANNING** – 3-4 PM – Instructor Terrell Spencer, Poultry Spec., National Center for Appropriate Technology. Audio/video info to join a webinar released app.3 weeks prior to scheduled event. Visit <http://conservationwebinars.net>. Visit www.nrcs.usda.gov/wps/portal/nrcs/main/national/entsc/ to join webinar announcement email list and have event information sent directly to your Inbox.

November

- 12 **REMEDATION ROUNDTABLE** – DEEP Headquarters, Phoenix Auditorium, Hartford – 1:30-3:30 PM – An open forum to exchange ideas and information on site cleanup in Connecticut and to solicit opinions, advice, and information from outside sources on a routine and established basis. Contact Camille Fontanella 860.424.3705 or camille.fontanella@ct.gov

December

- 3 2013 Understanding Organic and Sustainable Agriculture Webinars – **SUSTAINABLE PRODUCTION USING YEAR-ROUND HIGH TUNNELS** – 3-4 PM – Instructor Michael Kilpatrick, Kilpatrick Family Farm. Audio/video info to join a webinar released app.3 weeks prior to scheduled event. Visit <http://conservationwebinars.net>. Visit www.nrcs.usda.gov/wps/portal/nrcs/main/national/entsc/ to join webinar announcement email list and have event information sent directly to your Inbox.
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