Message from the State Conservationist …

FY2013 was an outstanding year of conservation, due to the hard work and dedication of NRCS employees, our conservation partners, and the innovative, passionate stewards of Connecticut’s resources! YOU are making exciting things happen, for conservation, for people who help the land, for Connecticut! Some highlights…..

- Arriving shortly after Hurricane Sandy, I was greeted by an “historic blizzard” … and quickly came to appreciate not only New England’s ever-changing weather, but more, the resiliency of producers, growers, farmers, and land managers. NRCS staff across the state came through – contacting producers individually to offer financial and/or technical assistance. This effort is just ONE example of how NRCS goes above and beyond and is IN ADDITION to our ongoing delivery of programs like EQIP, AMA, FRPP that, in total, brought $17 million of financial and technical assistance to Connecticut in 2013.

- And, when the opportunity arose to help communities address damages created by Hurricane Sandy, NRCS and partners worked together FOR the communities and people of Connecticut. As a result, $7,500,000 in Emergency Watershed Protection-Flood Plain Easement funds are coming to our state, to mitigate damage from flooding, protect communities, and save lives. The applause and Congresswoman DeLauro’s hugs were well-deserved by the hard-working NRCS staff that attended a recent town hall gathering in West Haven!

- Connecticut’s Earth Team Volunteer Program is a nationally-recognized one: a 50% increase in the number of offices using volunteers, a 50% increase in the number of volunteers and a 40% increase in the number of hours! It is an award-winning one, as well: Our Pedon Team, made up of students from UCONN, CCSU, and ECSU was one of four 2013 national award winners in the group category. And, a big congratulations to Earth Team Volunteer Jessica Rebholz, who was recognized as UConn’s Intern of the Year with Honorable Mention for her work with NRCS.

- Our Feds Feed Families Food Drive effort was impressive – our six offices gathered a total of 3,111 pounds of food and fresh produce – Danielson Field Office a clear front-runner, with (according to my numbers) almost 1100 pounds.
At the Northeast NACD Summer Meeting in Delaware, Connecticut was held up as shining example of PARTNERSHIPS – as one of just TWO states who were poised and ready to accept special funds and solidify NEW cooperative relationships with 1) UCONN Cooperative Extension Service for forestry technical assistance; 2) Eastern Connecticut RC&D for furthering our Soil Health Initiative; 3) National Fish and Wildlife Foundation for Shrub-Land Habitat technical assistance to benefit the New England Cottontail; 4) Department of Agriculture to provide technical assistance to bolster public and private farmland preservation; and 5) Department of Energy/Environmental Protection to help advance the Connecticut Center for Community Resiliency and Climate Adaptation drawing from a broad coalition of partner organizations to fill an existing need for independent and local science, technical, engineering and policy assistance within Connecticut and the Long Island Sound region.

Soil Health is a not-so-quiet revolution in Connecticut! And, the equation isn’t hard: Keep it covered + maintain a living root + minimize disturbance = a LIVING, FUNCTIONING SOIL! Keeping farms in farms, keeping those farms productive, and farm families and communities prosperous is vital. The environmental and production benefits that producers are harvesting .... are REAL. As we reaffirm our commitment to productive, healthy soil, we are working hand-in-hand with farmers, growers and producers in the face of climate, land fragmentation, and production challenges.

On Feb. 18, locations in every state across the country will host Cover Crops and Soil Health Forums where farmers will have the opportunity to learn from one another while exploring local and national perspectives on cover crops. Connecticut NRCS staff is hosting the event at three separate locations, the Danielson and Torrington Field Offices, and the Tolland State Office. All sessions will begin at 9:30 AM and end at 12:30 PM. Attendees will view a live broadcast from the national conference taking place in Omaha, Nebraska, that will feature Howard G. Buffett and Secretary of Agriculture Tom Vilsack. We encourage members of Connecticut’s farming community to come view the broadcast and participate in a healthy dialogue afterward. For more information, contact Ray Covino at (860) 779-0557, Ext. 102.

You have been hearing from us, about how NRCS, nationally, is taking steps to redesign its business processes, reduce administrative burden on the field. We are well underway, and completion is on track. Administrative activities will be standardized, functions will be centralized, and teams in administrative centers, state offices and at NHQ will work together to serve customers. I firmly believe that, at the end of the day, and by working to make this work FOR us, it WILL. Many workload pressures will be relieved, and our staff will get to the field MORE. Stay tuned for regular updates on Administrative Transformation!

It’s no wonder that through YOUR hard work .... our projects, initiatives, staff, and volunteers are always in the spotlight. Daily, I am on the receiving end of phone calls, emails, letters, personal visits – about “....your amazing, hardworking, professional, caring staff in....(insert any Service Center!)” WOW! No prouder moments than those.

I heartily THANK YOU for your ability to adapt to challenges and change, for your great advice and feedback, and for the opportunity to work with you to conserve and protect Connecticut’s resources! Stay tuned.....

Lisa C.
Connecticut Receives Funding for Hurricane Sandy 
EWP-FPE

Residents in parts of the state received some long awaited news in December when USDA announced that selections had been made for funding of floodplain easements to help victims of Hurricane Sandy.

The news was also welcomed by the Connecticut NRCS staff who worked hard on a process that required intensive research to identify qualified areas in the state, and maximum outreach to get the information out.

And after all the visits had been made, the last news release sent, and the final question answered, Connecticut received $7.5 million to be used for permanent floodplain easements and prevent future devastation in vulnerable flood areas. The easement projects chosen are:

- **Old Field Creek area, West Haven**: Purchase floodplain easements on 34 acres in the Old Field Creek salt marsh and 12 homes along Blohm, May, and Third Avenue to mitigate flooding during future storms and provide relief to residents.
- **Old Colony Beach Club, Old Lyme**: Restore and protect 1.6 acres – which includes a creek that flows through many backyards – from future development. The creek has been heavily manipulated and restricted to the point that frequent storms cause homes to be flooded.
- **Madison Land Conservation Trust, Madison**: Restore and protect 256 acres of salt marsh on two separate Madison Land Conservation Trust applications from future development.
- **Branford Train Trolley Museum, East Haven**: Restore and protect 49 acres of salt marsh from future development.

Funds were made possible through the NRCS Emergency Watershed Protection Floodplain Easement (EWP-FPE) Program, which allows the agency to purchase floodplain easements as an emergency response to natural disasters or other circumstances. (These easements were from the first round of application selections; a second application period will be announced shortly.)

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Second Emergency Watershed Protection – Floodplain Easement Signup Announced

NRCS is accepting a second round of applications from January 27-April 18, 2014, for landowners who want to enroll floodplains impacted by Hurricane Sandy into easements. Funds are available for eligible landowners through the Emergency Watershed Protection Program – Floodplain Easements.

“Floodplain easements are a long-term solution to provide relief for landowners while preventing future damage from flooding,” State Conservationist Lisa Coverdale said. “We are committed to continuing to help the victims of Sandy recover, and this second round of applications will allow more people in need to apply for this vital program and place more critical floodplain acres under easement. During the first sign-up,” she said, “several landowners and potential project sponsors didn’t have enough time to apply, didn’t know they were eligible, or weren’t aware of the program. This second sign up period is another opportunity to reach those landowners who need relief and assistance.”

Applications not selected during the first sign-up will be automatically submitted for review this time. “Several applications could not be funded because of their isolated nature. We are hoping that areas surrounding these current applications will apply and fill in these gaps,” said Coverdale.

Funds are only available in counties affected by Hurricane Sandy. Private lands and those owned by local and state governments damaged by Hurricane Sandy are eligible if they are located in a floodplain. Lands within FEMA Flood Zones V, VE, and V1-30 are ineligible for EWPP-FPE.

Interested landowners should contact their local USDA Service Center to learn more: Danielson – (860) 779-0557; Hamden – (203) 287-8038; Norwich – (860) 887-3604; Torrington – (860) 626-8258; Windsor – (860) 688-7725.
NRCS Recognized by Congresswoman Rosa DeLauro

In mid-January, Congresswoman Rosa DeLauro (CT-3) and West Haven Mayor Edward M. O’Brien met with residents who will benefit from the EWP-FPE funding.

“When a storm like Sandy hits, the federal government has an important role to play, both in getting disaster aid to help with immediate recovery, and in making the needed infrastructure investments to help prepare for future storms,” DeLauro said. “I am delighted that the NRCS is making this $2.6 million available to protect West Haven from future flooding. Fifteen months later, we are still rebuilding from Sandy. I will continue to fight to ensure that our state gets the federal support we need, and that we are investing in the infrastructure, like these floodplain easements, that will protect property and lives.”

“We have been living in fear until hearing this news, which gives us hope for a new beginning,” said an unidentified West Haven resident. “It is wonderful news; we have been plugging away for a year and can’t believe something actually is being done. We are very appreciative to Congresswoman Rosa DeLauro, City Hall for being our sponsor, and the NRCS for this funding.”

NRCS staff was on hand to answer any questions, and were surprised when they were introduced (each by name) and applauded by Congresswoman DeLauro, Mayor O’Brien, and the residents. NRCS State Conservation Engineer Arde Ramthun was even more startled when he received a hug from the Congresswoman.

DeLauro said NRCS does not get the praise it deserves, and thanked the agency for all they do.

Congratulations to everyone on the Connecticut NRCS staff who had a hand in this effort.

Congresswoman Rosa DeLauro addresses the group while Mayor O’Brien looks on. Photo courtesy of Congresswoman DeLauro’s office.
News From Partners ...

Popular Conservation District Director Retires

Scott Gravatt, Executive Director for the Eastern Connecticut Conservation District (ECCD), is retiring after almost 12 years of service to the organization. A friend to NRCS, Gravatt has been an amazing conservation partner. He has been a catalyst for conservation – especially water quality.

Gravatt partnered with NRCS on many projects, most notably two in the Little River Watershed (Connecticut’s National Water Quality Initiative Watershed).

- The first was the relocation of bunk silos for silage corn at Valleyside Farm, where Gravatt and NRCS staff worked hand-in-hand to eliminate the potential for leachate effluent from reaching the stream.
- The second was for not only roof runoff control at Elm Farm, but working with NRCS and the landowner to install leachate collection. In fact, the landowner was so impressed with the work ECCD does, he became a member of the board!

Another higher profile example is the Hallville Fishway, located on a small water body that eventually ends up in Long Island Sound. Gravatt was instrumental in pulling together all the right partners to get the fishway up and running. The fishway, completed in 2013, will have an enormous environmental impact through the restoration of access to fish spawning habitat that is critical to the Long Island Sound ecosystem. The increased stocks of alewife will ultimately help support larger populations of other species, including game fish that are a large part of the $8 billion Long Island Sound economy. [BT-NHC1]

Of the retirement, NRCS District Conservationist Ray Covino says, “Scott has been with ECCD throughout my entire NRCS career. As I was thinking about him leaving, it struck me as a major change in how I will be able to get conservation on the ground. While he and I have jested in the past, I want to let him know that I really value him as a partner, and that I will miss him both professionally and personally.”

Gravatt is leaving behind an amazing legacy ... and two very hard-to-fill shoes. Congratulations, Scott, from Connecticut’s NRCS staff.

Gravatt was originally hired in 2002 as a Natural Resources Specialist with the (former) Windham County Soil and Water Conservation District. When that District merged with the (former) New London County Soil and Water Conservation District and formed the Eastern Connecticut Conservation District in 2003, he was named Executive Director of the new organization.

Remembering John Spencer

1922 - 2013

NRCS staff said farewell to a conservation partner last October – John Spencer, former Tolland County Soil & Water Conservation District Board Member, former member of the Connecticut Farm Bureau, and owner of Spencer Farms.

“It was a pleasure working with John during his tenure on the soil and water conservation district board. His commitment to agriculture is well known. He will be missed,” said Denise Savageau, President, Connecticut Association of Conservation Districts.
Northwest Conservation District Works to Restore Native Meadows Preserve Along Housatonic River

Contact Robert Purcell (860) 626-8258

In a 1998 settlement, a large company with a facility located in Pittsfield, Massachusetts agreed to clean up and/or pay for actual remediation as a result of the release of PCBs into the Housatonic River. As part of this agreement, the company set up a separate fund for the restoration of natural resources in the area. The company paid out over $15 million – $7.5 million of which went toward Connecticut projects.

These funds are controlled under federal law by natural resource trustees. In Connecticut, a sub-council comprised of the Department of Energy and Environmental Protection, U.S. Department of Interior (U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service), and the U.S. Department of Commerce (National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration) was formed. This sub-council was responsible for deciding how the funds would be used; they accepted applications and awarded grants for projects that met their criteria. The Northwest Conservation District (NCD) applied for and was awarded a grant, and in August 2010, used the funds to purchase the Native Meadows Preserve, a 25 acre parcel of land in New Milford.

In 2011, NCD applied for a Wildlife Habitat Incentives Program (WHIP) contract from NRCS to help restore the property to a more natural state. Through their contract, NCD completed several projects, including improving upland and wetland wildlife habitat by biochemically and manually controlling non-native species (including common reed, reed canary grass, purple loosestrife, autumn olive, and tree-of-heaven). Invasive control took place on over seven acres of the preserve. NCD recently completed their third treatment of the invasive plants and hope to continue suppressing the growth while promoting native species regeneration. NCD Project Manager Michael Morin believes the treatments have been successful and hopes to continue the removal. NCD will plant native pollinator species that will flower at different times throughout the year allowing early, mid-season, and late flowering plants that will be a continuous food and cover source for pollinators.

Along with invasive plant control, NCD also completed a riparian buffer planting along the Housatonic River by successfully planting 325 bare root stock trees over a one-acre area, expanding the buffer’s width from 70 feet to over 110 feet. Tree species planted include green ash, American sycamore, silver maple, swamp white oak, and American larch. The one project remaining in the contract is a pollinator habitat planting, which is scheduled for completion in May 2014.
Several months ago, the Eastern Connecticut Regional Ag Commission* held their quarterly meeting. Because the recent passage of a Genetically Modified Organism (GMO) crops labeling law in Connecticut had generated both buzz and misinformation in the community, the group invited Dr. Carol Auer of the UConn Department of Plant Science to answer questions.

Dr. Auer’s presentation began with an overview of the science of GE crops, which are developed by molecular methods that add, remove, or modify DNA to produce novel traits. There are a variety of molecular methods employed, and Dr. Auer noted the importance of examining each GE crop independently to evaluate health and environmental risk.

Auer discussed the inability of science to address co-existence issues between organic and GE farmers, religious and ethical concerns, and to determine the acceptable level of risk from GE crops that will be tolerated by society. Addressing the mistrust many consumers express toward large multinational seed companies, Dr. Auer displayed a graphic which showed a consolidation of seed companies since the adoption of GE crops. Development of these crops on the market today would not have been possible without centralized ownership of crop varieties, technology, and patents, but the effects of this consolidation have raised concerns for many sustainable farmers, agronomists, and informed consumers. Concerns include loss of regional seed dealers, decreased biodiversity of crop seed, and the disappearance of the seed-saving industry which allowed farmers to select for their best performing seed stock.

The U.S. is the largest producer of GE crops in the world; many consumers have decided to avoid these crops based on recent studies, media coverage, or fear. Farmers are faced with consumers who are increasingly more informed about their food choices, but Auer revealed that many consumers are also misinformed and distrustful. The reality is that the number of GE crops is very small, though the number of foods containing GE crops in your supermarket may be very large. Table 1 shows the common GE crops in the U.S. Note that most of these crops make up the ingredients for processed foods and livestock feed (corn, soy) and non-edible products (textiles, fuel). Genetically modified fruits and vegetables are being developed or awaiting approval, so concerns about most produce are not currently supported but may become more valid in the future.

The science of GE crops is clearly expanding, but public opposition appears to be on the rise as well. Only time will tell what the future holds for these crops.

Table 1. Common GE Crops with Percentage of US Production, if provided (Source: Dr. Carol Auer)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Crop</th>
<th>GE (% of total U.S. production)</th>
<th>Novel Traits</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Soybeans</td>
<td>93%</td>
<td>herbicide resistance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cotton</td>
<td>80%</td>
<td>herbicide resistance, insect resistance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Corn</td>
<td>73%</td>
<td>herbicide resistance, insect resistance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sugar beets</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>herbicide resistance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Canola</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>herbicide resistance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alfalfa</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>herbicide resistance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Squash</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>virus resistance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Papaya</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>virus resistance</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

How Should I Respond to Questions About GMO’s?

1. **Recognize that each GE crop has unique benefits and risks.** Glyphosate tolerant corn may use herbicides to replace cultivation, conserving soil and reducing fuel usage. Insect resistant corn may decrease the application of insecticides, but some consumers are concerned about Bt present within the cells of the crop. Farmers can give insight regarding considerations when choosing seed.

2. **Remind concerned consumers that they can reduce their consumption of GE crops by consuming more farm-fresh Connecticut grown produce and less processed food.**

3. **Currently, GE livestock is not commercially produced,** although GE salmon may be on the market soon. Animal meat and products are likely to have been produced using GE feed unless labeled otherwise. Such products would not be required to be labeled as containing GE/GMO’s in the CT GMO labeling law. Note that this law does not come into effect until neighboring states pass similar laws.

4. Expect myths and urban legends regarding GE crops, which are frequently perpetuated on the internet and even in the media. For example, some people believe that most commercial tomatoes are GE, although the seed for GE tomatoes has been off the market for years. **Remind customers that they are unlikely to encounter GE CT grown crops except silage corn, alfalfa, sweet corn, and squash.**

5. **Recognize and respect issues of ethics, religion, and justice.** Understand that different individuals tolerate different levels of risk to human health and the environment, and discussions about research will not change these perspectives.
EARTH TEAM

Connecticut’s 12-TOL Pedon Team Volunteer Group Recognized with National Award

This year, when the National Earth Team Volunteer Awards were announced, Connecticut had reason to be proud ... The 12-TOL Pedon Team had been chosen for the National Team Award!

Members Aaron Parsons, Bonnie Potocki, Daniel Grondin, Daniel Beutler, David Angeletti, Devin Spector, Michelle DuCharme, and Ryan Esling will receive awards for their work entering over 160 typical pedons into the National Soils Information System.

The group, who worked mainly from home, saved hours of NRCS time. The group also spent some time assisting with field work. And these volunteers (mainly students) not only saved staff time and cost, they also gained valuable experience and became familiar with subjects such as soil taxonomy, soil survey nomenclature, and pedon descriptions – a win-win for everyone!

Students and professionals have had to balance employment, some part or full-time course work, and other obligations with this project. These obstacles exemplify why the work-from-home model is so successful for student ETVs. Volunteers can work during the times most convenient for them, regardless of whether or not the office is open or their supervisor available.

This project was the first in the 12-TOL Soil Survey Region dedicated to entering soil survey data remotely. It has expanded to include seven Earth Team Volunteers including students from three Connecticut universities. Because of the minimal requirements of staff time, the project has piqued the interest of other offices within the region, and fostered new and continued relationships with universities across the state.

NRCS Represented at Plant Symposium

Contact Charlotte Pyle 860.871.4066

NRCS ecologist Charlotte Pyle recently hosted a display at the Native Plants and the Long Island Landscape Native Plant Symposium. The goals of the event were to continue the dialog on the ecological importance of using native plants genetically adapted to the region, and site type where they will be planted; to demonstrate successful native plant business operations; and to highlight the diverse array of native plants now commercially available, as well as their appropriate uses. Pyle reminded residents to take note that most native plants that are suited to Long Island are also native and suited to the Connecticut coast — some are applicable for planting throughout the state. Pyle reported many of the 240 attendees stopped by her display table to talk and pick up NRCS handouts.

NRCS Ecologist Charlotte Pyle (l) talks with Viola Cause about native plants culturally significant to Native Americans.
Calf Pen Meadow Creek EWP Project Completed

Last year, Hurricane Sandy devastated the coastline causing major damage along much of the eastern seaboard. Communities along Connecticut’s shoreline were a part of that devastation. NRCS responded through the Emergency Watershed Protection Program (EWP) to help these areas recover from the storm. NRCS recently completed one of these EWP recovery projects, located at the outlet of Calf Pen Meadow Creek in Milford.

The Damage
During the storm, large amounts of sand were deposited downstream of the Melba Street Bridge where the creek drains into Long Island Sound. The sand deposit obstructed stream flow, which could potentially cause upstream flooding of homes and streets. The sand deposit was also forcing flow against an existing retaining wall, threatening that structure.

The Solution
Using the EWP Program, NRCS performed debris removal opening up the outlet of the creek, providing additional flow area to the stream, and allowing more natural tidal exchange between Long Island Sound and the marshes upstream of the Melba Street Bridge. Stream flow was also directed away from the retaining wall, protecting that structure from potential undermining.

NRCS staff involved in the project include Contracting Officer Alan Leta; Civil Engineer Joe Kavan who served as Contracting Officer’s Representative; Construction Inspector Mike Rosado (primary); Resource Conservationist Todd Bobowick who provided backup inspection. Clover Hill Forest, LLC, was the contractor for the project.

Construction took place in November 2013.

NRCS Gives Manchester Police Help in 60 Year-Old Cold Case

Last fall, Connecticut NRCS soil staff answered a call from Manchester police for help in a case that would have occurred more than 60 years ago. Police dug up parts of a yard on Pine Hill Street last September, but found nothing to help aid in the investigation of a child suspected of being murdered in 1950. NRCS staff assisted the detectives using their knowledge in soil forensics.
NRCS Assists with Walktober Event
Contact Charlotte Pyle 860.871.4066

NRCS Landscape Ecologist Charlotte Pyle co-led a guided hike along the Old Connecticut Path last fall for Walktober 2013. Pyle reported that more than 80 people attended the event, sponsored by the Ashford Conservation Commission.

Present-day explorer Jason Newton* led the way of the path, through the Fenton-Ruby Park and Wildlife Preserve along a section of the route approximated by an abandoned road connecting the Fenton-Ruby in Willington to the Langhammer Forest in Ashford. During the first of several planned stops, Willington Conservation Commission Treasurer Carol Jordan spoke about the acquisition and management of the Fenton-Ruby. During another stop, Pyle spoke about what the forest of the 1630s might have looked like to the settlers (and their cattle) who travelled slowly – walking approximately 10 miles each day. In the Langhammer Forest, Ashford Conservation Commission Member Gwen Haaland spoke about plans for future management of the forest. Prior to the group retracing the settlers’ footsteps back down the Path, Pyle initiated a discussion about the importance of connecting wildlife habitat within and across town boundaries.

*Newton has researched the route taken by Rev. Thomas Hooker and his congregation in the 1630s extensively – from the Massachusetts Bay Colony to the Connecticut River Valley.

Connecticut Valley Red Soils Workshop
Contact Donald Parizek 860.871.4044

Thirty-five soil scientists from four states gathered in the rolling hills of Wallingford last fall to learn about new developments in the study of soils formed in the problematic red parent materials within the Connecticut Valley. The workshop was a cooperative effort between the Society of Soil Scientists of Southern New England (SSSSNE), NRCS, and the University of Rhode Island.

Delineating wetlands in the red soils of the Connecticut Valley has always been a challenge for soil scientists due to their richness in Hematite, an iron mineral that gives the soils a deep red hue. These soils do not exhibit the normal morphologies typical of wetland soils. In 2012, URI Graduate Student Eric Ford, along with CT-12 TOL Leader Donald Parizek, installed monitoring equipment such as shallow wells, piezometers, and IRIS tubes at three sites in Wallingford to better understand the hydrology and reducing conditions within the soils. Soil scientists representing NRCS from Connecticut and Rhode Island assisted with the effort along with numerous earth team volunteers including Tom Pietras, a private consulting soil scientist, who took on-site water level measurements for over 18 months.

The workshop trained soil scientists to closely observe, estimate percent volume, and color of redoximorphic features within the upper 12 inches of the soil. The end result of this work will be a proposal to the National Hydric Soils Technical to adopt a new hydric soil indicator for the problematic red soils of the Connecticut Valley.
Welcome to your stretch of the month

Down Dog
These simple movements can help you reduce the effects of physical discomforts associated with the work we do. Please keep these in mind throughout your work week as a way to move, breathe, and stay awake. Some good times to use these stretches include waiting for coffee/tea to brew, microwaving food, starting up/restarting computer, waiting for programs to load, during teleconference breaks, whenever you need to move!

The Down Dog is an excellent release for back and shoulder tension. The movement can be used with or without a chair or other support to build back body strength.

1. Begin by standing straight, upright, with feet parallel directly below your hips. If using a support, stand about an arm’s length away. Make sure your support is stable and don’t use something that can roll.
2. Inhale through the nose as you raise your arms over your head and exhale as you grasp the support or fold forward placing arms on the floor 2-3 feet from your feet.
3. Inhale again and exhale as you bend your knees deeply, lengthening the spine. You should try to have equal weight in your hands as you do your feet. Press the back towards your feet.
4. Inhale and exhale slowly as you reach your heels towards the ground. Do not be discouraged if you cannot reach the floor - this is an intense calf and quad stretch. Let the head, neck, and face relax. You can alternate relaxing and going deeper into the stretch as you inhale and exhale, or try paddling the feet back and forth.
5. Once you feel the effects, take a clearing breath and stand up straight. Shake out your arms and legs if it feels good to you. Notice how your back and shoulders feel.

Feel free to combine this stretch with other movements that you are already familiar with for a stretch flow exercise.
NRCS Staff Reaching out at Career Fairs

Contact: Marissa Theve 860.871.4018

As part of an ongoing effort to establish new – and maintain – effective recruitment locations, last fall for the first time NRCS attended an event at the University of New Haven (UNH).

Employees Charlotte Pyle, Lisa Krall, Petra Volinski, and Randy Snow staffed a booth at the UNH career exposition in late October. The group displayed eligibility information which described different NRCS occupations, instructions on utilizing the USAjobs.gov website, Earth Team volunteer brochures, and more.

Additionally, NRCS staff returned to the University of Connecticut’s College of Agriculture and Natural Resources (CANR) career fair in November, after missing 2012 due to the fair’s cancellation. Over 150 CANR students participated, as well as 25 students from outside the college and some ambitious local high school students. Many were eager for information that NRCS provided about specific career paths within the agency, as well as Pathways and Earth Team.

By branching out to universities across the state, NRCS has conveyed a message of conservation to more culturally diverse groups and hopefully planted the seeds for promising future employees. One of the barriers discovered in visiting these schools is that some just don’t have the courses that most NRCS positions require.

Despite these hindrances, NRCS employees look forward to continuing contact with the schools, and hope to be able to attend future events.

Key Points on the USDA Pathways Program
- This program is replacing the STEP and SCEP programs
- All positions will be posted competitively on USAjobs.gov
- Veteran’s preference will be applied to all positions
- Interns may have full or part time appointments
- Participants are eligible for benefits as full-time employees
- Interns must work 640 hours before consideration for conversion to career or career-conditional
- There is no US citizenship requirement, but non-citizens may not be converted to the competitive service
- Targets students in:
  - High schools
  - Certificate programs
  - 2 and 4-year colleges and universities
  - Tech and vocational schools
  - Home schools
  - Graduate schools

Key Points on the USDA Recent Grads Program
- All positions will be posted competitively on USAjobs.gov
- 1-year program (can extend up to 2 years)
- Career-conditional appointment eligible
- Veteran’s preference will be applied to all positions
- Targets:
  - Recent grads within 2 years
  - Veteran recent grads within 6 years
CT 12-TOL Staff Participate in Pedon Sampling in NY

Last October, soil scientists from the NRCS-NJ Soils Staff, the Tolland, CT (12-TOL) MLRA Soil Survey Office, and the National Soil Survey Center (NSSC) joined faculty members and students from the City University of New York-Brooklyn College in sampling four pedons in New York City.

The sampled pedons will supplement data for the recently completed NYC Soil Survey. These soils will also be included in the Soil Survey Division-funded research project Soil Microbial Diversity in Urban Environments, awarded this year to Drs. Zhongqi Cheng and Theodore Muth of Brooklyn College. This research will examine microbial community composition using metagenomic analysis, and look at C distribution and dynamic soil properties in the urban environment. Data from these soils, in addition to the other selected sampling sites, will be used widely, and will be available to support further research, mapping, and land use issues. Urban soils are an essential component of ecosystem restoration, brownfield remediation, storm water management and green infrastructure, and urban agriculture and reforestation. Information on these soils will become even more important as the world’s population becomes increasingly urbanized.

NRCS Celebrates Ag at Celebrating Ag!

The 13th Annual Celebrating Ag Event last fall was a sight to behold! The weather was beautiful, and the turnout – great!

NRCS staff brought along the rainfall simulator, which is used to demonstrate rain’s erosive impact on soil if it isn’t adequately covered. The display featured examples of soil and cover collected from a forest, long-term no-till with cover, conventional tillage, tilled vegetable field, and lawn. As water is poured into the simulator, spectators can see the dramatic differences between the samples. People were amazed at how much water runs off the tilled vegetable field and conventionally tilled cornfield, while little collects from the forest and fields with reduced disturbance.

The staff answered many questions, helping to get the word out about soil health and keeping the ground covered! NRCS staff also assisted during the event in other ways, including assisting with breakfast and helping out at the children’s craft table.

A big thank you to Earth Team Volunteer Skyley Parizek for participating and taking photos throughout the day!
CIVIL RIGHTS

February is African American History Month

In honor of African American History Month, the Tolland State Office will be hosting a lunchtime viewing of a film 42 (2013) daily from 12:00pm to 12:30pm the week of Monday February 10th to Friday February 14th in the large conference room. In keeping with the 2014 AAHM theme “Civil Rights in America”, CT NRCS staff and any interested partners are encouraged to bring a lunch and learn about the story of Jackie Robinson’s (1919-1972) controversial and ground breaking signing with the Brooklyn Dodgers. Field offices and those unable to attend are encouraged to view this film or other African American History related films. Some suggestions* include:

- **The Abolitionists** - depicts the fight to end slavery by Black, White, Northern, Southern, wealthy, and poor people in the United States
- **Betty & Coretta** - a tale of the lives of Coretta Scott King (MLK Jr.’s wife) and Dr. Betty Shabazz (Malcom X’s wife)
- **King: A Filmed Record Montgomery to Memphis** - a biography of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. and his civil rights movement from the beginnings to his assassination
- **Ida B. Wells- A Passion for Justice** - the life of a journalist, community organizing, and leader (1862-1931) combatting against lynching and violence toward Blacks
- **Red Tails** - WWII Black pilots known as “Tuskegee Airmen” prove themselves while civil rights for Blacks in the US was still a prominent battle

For more information about Black History Month, visit [www.africanamericanhistorymonth.gov](http://www.africanamericanhistorymonth.gov)

Celebrating American Indian Heritage Month in Connecticut

*Contact Charlotte Pyle 860.871.4066*

Concluding the celebration of American Indian Heritage Month in Connecticut last fall, NRCS, Soil Conservationist Garrett Timmons presented a talk at the Norwich Service Center on Holistic Management: What Ag could learn from Indians. Of Cherokee background, himself, Timmons began with a history of the Cherokee people. His ancestors were among the groups of Cherokees that moved west (including the forced removal of 1838) from the southeastern U.S., ending up in what is now Oklahoma.

Timmons drew upon memories, teachings, and a written memoir of his grandmother, Alice Tyner Timmons, as well as material he researched to put together his presentation. He outlined an American Indian way of thinking about the Earth as a place where the spiritual and physical worlds are one. And, humans are not above all creation, but have important relatives in plants and animals. Right Action is one component of this worldview, and people act not for their own benefit, but as members of a whole. They act to maintain balance with the living earth, a life that includes not just people, plants, and animals, but also what Western thinkers consider inanimate forces of nature such as water. There is an attitude of respect for the land that plays out in actions that maintain and give back to the land. For NRCS, Garrett noted that the offering when taking something from the land might take the form of site mitigation, carbon sequestration or cover crops.

Traditional knowledge about agriculture involves concern with preservation, protection, and perpetuation. Timmons suggested as we move forward, we incorporate such deeper values into our decision making. And, noting that traditional knowledge includes ways of thinking beyond scientific facts, he suggested we expand our perspective as to what constitutes the foundation of knowledge useful for our work.
Focus on Computer Security

As federal employees, how secure we keep our computers and passwords is a big part of our job. Here are some ways to keep your computer safe ...

Limit your personal use of the Internet at work. By limiting the amount of time you spend browsing the web, shopping, or checking your personal e-mail accounts, you limit your exposure to malware and other web threats. If you get a malware infection on your work computer, it can compromise your credit card information, account usernames/passwords, or other personal information you’ve entered on that computer.

When traveling for personal reasons, do not bring USDA-owned devices with you. Only take USDA-owned devices with you if you are working during your trip or if you’re on-call. If traveling internationally for any reason, you must receive approval to bring a USDA-owned device with you. There are restrictions on which devices can be taken abroad and how they must be handled before, during, and after a trip. For more information about traveling with USDA devices, view the USDA Department Regulation for Mobile Computing at http://www.ocio.usda.gov/sites/default/files/docs/2012/DR3580-003_Mobile_Computing.htm

While traveling, monitor or physically secure your electronic device at all times.

- At the airport, watch your device as it moves through the security checkpoint.
- Do not leave your laptop, tablet, or smartphone in an unattended car. If you must leave them, place in the trunk of a locked car.
- Before leaving a vehicle or hotel, confirm you have taken all of equipment you brought.

Do not plug your laptop, tablet, or smartphone into a charging station at an airport, train station, or other public location. These charging stations can be used to spread malware or copy personal information from your device. If you need to charge your device, use your own adapter and a power cord that plugs into a wall outlet.

Connecticut River Not Only Nation’s First Blueway; it’s the Only Blueway

Secretary of the Interior Sally Jewell recently released a Secretarial Order 3331 that dissolves the National Blueway System (established in 2012 by Secretarial Order 3321), and affirms the Department of the Interior’s commitment to support community-based watershed partnerships. Importantly, the order maintains the designation of the Connecticut River as the Nation’s first and only National Blueway. Further, it recognizes the many successes and on-the-ground accomplishments of the residents, communities, public agencies, and others who have participated in partnership efforts in the Connecticut River watershed, spanning well over half a century.

The order stresses that the collaboration around the 7.2 million acre Connecticut River watershed is a model for coordinated stewardship by diverse partners and communities. .

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service remains committed to working with other federal agencies, states, Tribes, local government, non-profit organizations, private landowners, businesses, communities, and other partners to protect species and habitat, provide environmental education opportunities for urban and rural populations, and promote opportunities for environmental education and access for recreation.
Secrets of Hidden Valley Farm
By Alan Page, Soil Conservationist, Torrington Field Office (retired)

Tucked deep in the woods of northwestern Litchfield County, in the Town of Sharon, is a wonderfully pastoral place called Hidden Valley Farm. A restored colonial farm 200 acres in size, it is owned and operated by Richard Gottlieb and Josephine Wright. According to them, to fully understand why the farm’s name was chosen, one would have to visit.

The farm occupies a small valley high on a shoulder of Sharon Mountain, one that can only be seen from the farm itself. In addition to the area’s stunning natural beauty, wildlife is abundant throughout. The Housatonic Forest and Sharon Audubon property comes together at the northern end of the farm.

Gottlieb and Wright have lived in the old farmhouse since 1978, and have always dreamed of restoring the abandoned fields and pastures to its former use – farming and grazing. In particular, Wright, who grew up in sheep country, spending her childhood in Yorkshire, England and Western Australia: living on the land and raising sheep was forever on her mind. Gottlieb, a native of New York City and its suburbs, had always been a lover of the outdoors and nature. Together, they shared the passion necessary to restore the farm to what it is today.

I first met the pair in 2008 when they applied for technical assistance from NRCS. Their plans were to raise sheep, which included a small herd of eight animals that were housed off the farm at another location. They had a lot of hard work ahead to achieve their goals – the woodlands were wild with invasive plants and the areas marked for pastureland were undeveloped for grazing. A previous Forest Management Plan (FMP) had been developed for the property which identified areas, and improvements, for more efficient farming.

Through the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP), financial assistance was provided to implement the improvements, including removing invasive plants and preparing some of the land for grazing.

In 2011, Gottlieb and Wright applied for additional technical and financial assistance through EQIP to develop approximately six acres for proper livestock grazing management, including conservation practices such as fencing, water wells, water pipelines, water troughs, and a prescribed grazing plan to maximize the available grazing forage and minimize the impacts to the natural resources on the farm.

Although the total restoration of the farm is still a work in progress, the metamorphosis of the restoration over the years is truly a testament of their determination and commitment to achieve their goals!

Today, that hard work and planning is helping Gottlieb and Wright achieve the goals developed many years ago. The herd has grown to 40 Romney Marsh sheep (a long wool breed originating from England in 1800). The fleece is ideal for hand-spinning. The farm is a registered breeder.

Other farm features include an apple orchard and cider production (complete with a hand cranked wooden cider mill), blueberry and raspberry patches, and an organic vegetable garden.

Farm products include USDA facility processed natural, antibiotic and hormone free, grass fed freezer lamb, colorful fleeces, processed wool as yarn and roving (long narrow bundles of fiber for making spun yarn), and washable lambskins.

This article was written by Alan Page, Soil Conservationist in the Torrington Field Office, who retired at the end of 2013.
What Better Way to Thank Farmers than by Buying Local, Farm Fresh Foods?

Contact Kathleen Johnson 860.626.8258, Ext. 200

Local farms are more than struggling local businesses helping us on the road to economic recovery. They also provide multiple benefits, including scenic vistas, habitat for wildlife, clean water to recharge our streams, and healthy food for our tables.

USDA’s Know Your Farmer, Know Your Food Initiative is trying to increase consumer awareness of where food comes from. The increased interest by Connecticut residents in buying locally grown helps farmers stay on the land.

Local markets provide farmers with a higher share of the food dollar, which often stays local, circulating within a community. The increased awareness helps build a bridge between farmers and consumers and the understanding of the critical importance of taking good care of the land that provides us with food, fiber, clean air, and clean water.

One example in our state is Young’s Long Range Farm, in Watertown. It’s a great example of these multiple benefits. The 300 acre livestock farm provides a stunning landscape to enjoy when traveling along Route 6 between Watertown and Woodbury.

Farmer Stuart Young has been working with NRCS to improve pastures allowing cattle to graze; removing invasive plants to discourage growth; and fencing off a brook to improve water quality. These environmental improvements are transforming the landscape.

The farm grows beef cattle, chickens, turkeys, and seasonal vegetables. And talk about Know Your Farmer – these turkeys sure know theirs … just watch them come running when they see him during the day!

Young raised 95 broad-breasted white turkeys last year for Thanksgiving. His turkeys usually range in size from 15-30 lbs., and live in a large coop with free access to an outdoor run – giving them protection from both weather and predators.

To find other Connecticut farms in your area, check out the CT Department of Agriculture’s website: http://www.ct.gov/doag/cwp/view.asp?a=3260&q=412836.

Remember … eat fresh, buy local.
NRCS Attends the Coventry Regional Farmer’s Market’s Asian Vegetable Day

The Coventry Regional Farmer’s Market is one of the best attended and well considered farmer’s markets in New England, usually drawing a crowd of 75,000 annually – about half of those coming from out of state. Each Sunday, the summer market (June-October) has a unique theme. Last year’s themes ran the gambit – from a wellness fair to Blues, Brews, & BBQ. Connecticut’s agricultural community benefits not just from the mere existence of the market or the special events, but because all products sold there are required to be produced in Connecticut.

Last fall, NRCS staff and Earth Team Volunteers were honored to host a display during the market’s Transplanting Traditions: Asian Vegetables theme. Prior to the event, NRCS staff met with Vicheth Im and Jim Dombroski at their incubator farm at Simsbury Community Gardens. The two have been growing for about a year and bring their products here regularly. It was a great opportunity for NRCS staff to talk with and learn from them about some of the issues associated with growing Asian vegetables.

Members of the Connecticut Civil Rights Advisory Committee worked diligently to prepare Asian Vegetable Fact Cards to hand out to attendees interested in learning about or growing traditional Asian vegetables. Some of the foods featured on the cards included bitter melon, chrysanthemums, and Asian eggplants. The booth also featured crayons made from soil, conservation tattoos, and Farm Bill and soil health handouts. Staff and volunteers were able to connect with growers, sellers, and visitors and their children during this celebration of cultivation and culture.

For more information on the farmers market, visit their website at http://coventryfarmersmarket.com

Earth team volunteer Aaron Parsons, plant ecologist Charlotte Pyle, soil scientist Marissa Theve, and Earth Team Volunteer Greg Anderson

Earth Team Volunteer Zoë Lerman tests out the soil crayons
I've been watching my native Eastern red-cedar tree. This autumn, its evergreen foliage is thickly covered with blue, fleshy seed cones. Though technically a cone, these smoky, dark turquoise fruits often are called cedar or juniper berries.

It has been an amazing year for cedar berries and other soft mast. First a proliferation of flowers, then fruits galore. In contrast, hard mast (at least acorns) is in short supply this year, and I wonder how soon deer will be coming into residential areas in desperate search of food.

But for now, there are Robins, just a few, in the Red-cedar. The Robins gulp and gulp, making no visible dent in the bumpy blue layer of berries. Another bird flits around with some yellow feathers showing. But it is too deeply hidden in the foliage to recognize except to say it is not a Cedar Waxwing.

Cedar Waxwings have crested heads like Cardinals, but the crest often lies flat. Smaller than a Cardinal, their heads and shoulders are a light brown which changes to a pale yellowish color on the belly and grey on the lower back. Besides the crested heads and the flock size, the things that are eye-catching are the white-edged, black eye-mask, the square, yellow-tipped tails and the small blotch of red on the wings. The red blotches are the waxy tips of secondary wing feathers that give the name Waxwing. The cedar part of the name comes because these birds often are seen in Eastern red-cedar trees.

Every year, a huge flock comes and stays in my cedar tree until every berry is gone. It is amazing how a person can be admiring the sun illuminating a gorgeous display of berries one day and the next day not a berry remains. Whether or not Waxwings were the culprit, you may have seen the same overnight transformation on Dogwoods, Winterberry holly, or even European mountain-ash. Cedar waxwings love to eat fruit and, unlike native insect larvae, they are not picky about what species they consume. They even eat the fruits of invasive shrubs.

Invasive fruit-bearing shrubs including several non-native, shrubby Honeysuckles are increasingly common in our landscape. Some twenty years ago, a feeding study showed that when Cedar waxwings in the process of growing tail feathers ate Morrow’s Honeysuckle berries, the rhodoxanthin pigments from the red berries were transferred to the tail feathers making the yellow tips orange. More recently in Canada, Jocelyn Hudon and co-authors, writing in The Wilson Journal of Ornithology, described Baltimore orioles that have been found with aberrant reddish tones in their feathers. The color also was associated with the unexpected presence of rhodoxanthin in the feathers. The presumed source of the red pigment was Honeysuckle berries (genus Lonicera); and a test on Tatarian Honeysuckle (Lonicera tatarica) showed that like Morrow’s Honeysuckle, the berries of Tatarian Honeysuckle also contain rhodoxanthin.

It has long been known that diet affects feather color. But rhodoxanthin has previously been considered rare in bird feathers. In their article, Hudon and co-authors included an interesting discussion on how the consumption of Honeysuckle berries during moult when new feathers are growing might possibly be able affect the genetics of bird populations. The possibility arises because the presence of dark red color in male plumage is correlated with vigor (because it takes a good supply of extra resources to produce) and is instinctively preferred by females seeking mates. But when reddish colors are merely the result of eating Honeysuckle berries, the color is not a valid signal of vigor. There, then, is the possibility of alpha females mistakenly choosing to mate with males of lesser quality and failing to produce high quality offspring ultimately, perhaps, leading the loss of the instinctive response to red.

Although Hudon and co-authors did not actually study mate choice and genetic change, the possibility their discussion raises is intriguing. And, as invasive plants continue to become more common in our forests, fields and wetlands, I expect that we will hear more about observed changes in associated plants and animals, and even in non-living things like soils or water. And further, I expect that observation of those changes will lead to scientific studies that track down some unexpectedly convoluted effects of invasive plants in our native ecosystems.
Calendar of Events

February

4 **ORGANIC GARDENING: Making the Switch!**
   Hartford County Extension Center - 7:00 - 9:00 PM
   Insights, tips and tricks to cultivating gorgeous garden spaces that are truly green.
   FEE: $50/Non-Master Gardener, $40/Master Gardener

8 **CURB APPEAL SEMINAR**
   Litchfield County Extension, 9:30AM - Noon
   Learn to follow the basic curb appeal principles of *Clear, Concentrate, and Color.* Please bring pictures of your home.
   FEE: $75/Non-Master Gardener, $60/Master Gardener

18 **LOCAL COVER CROP & SOIL HEALTH FORUM**
   Danielson NRCS Field Office * Tolland NRCS State Office * Torrington NRCS Field Office
   9:30 AM-12:30 PM
   One Connecticut Forum, three convenient locations. Event will begin with a live stream of the national conference being held in Omaha, Nebraska. Opening remarks by Secretary of Agriculture Tom Vilsack and Howard Buffet, followed by local discussion on how to fully organize local efforts to further the soil health movement at the grassroots level. Contact carolyn.miller@ct.usda.gov

19 **RHODODENDRONS – An Expanded View – PART II**
   Hartford County Extension Center, 7:00 - 9:00 PM
   An in-depth look at the varieties and their more expansive range of uses. *This is the second in a multi-part presentation – you do not have to have taken Part I to attend.*
   FEE: $50/Non-Master Gardener, $40/Master Gardener

19 **BUILD YOUR NETWORK, GROW OUR FUTURE**
   Scout Hall Youth Center, 28 Abbe Road, East Windsor, CT, 8:30 AM – 1:30 PM
   A networking event to strengthen Connecticut’s agricultural community. This program is designed for farmers within their first 10 years of commercial production. *Snow date February 20.*

24 **A VISION FOR THE FUTURE OF SHELLFISH IN CONNECTICUT**
   Courtyard Marriott, Shelton, Connecticut, 9:00 am – 6:00 pm
   A showcase about the importance of our natural, recreational and commercial shellfish resources. Learn more about and get involved in the Connecticut Shellfish Initiative.
   Learn more at: http://smp.uconn.edu
   Sponsors: Connecticut Sea Grant/UCONN Extension and the Connecticut Shellfish Initiative Committee

25 **WINTER TREE Identification**
   Fairfield County Extension Center, 1:00—3:00 PM
   FEE: $50/Non-Master Gardener, $40/Master Gardener
   **Class limit: 20**
   Using winter buds as well as bark, fruit, and other clues, we will walk the grounds and identify many of the tree specimens on the property. We will also discuss some of the ways you can identify trees during the growing season. Meet inside the White Education Building. Bring your favorite tree identification guide, dress warmly and wear appropriate shoes or boots for muddy and/or snowy conditions. *Snow date: March 4*
26 PLAN YOUR VEGETABLE GARDEN To Preserve for the Winter
New London County Extension Center, 10AM - Noon
FEE: $50/Non-Master Gardener, $40 Master Gardener
Start planning your vegetable garden now so you will have home grown food all year!
Choose what and how much to grow, following Connecticut Crop schedules, and processing what you produce.

March

1 YOUR LANDSCAPE IN CYBERSPACE: Online Tools that Help You Visualize and Build Your Best Landscape
Middlesex County Extension Center, 10:00 AM – Noon
FEE: $50/Non-Master Gardener, $40/Master Gardener
Be introduced to a wide variety of online and desktop tools to show you how professional designers research and create visual representations of landscape plans. Expect to be introduced to 25 or more resources, but this seminar does not include any hands-on instruction. A list of resources will be provided.

1 DESIGNING GARDENS FOR CONSERVATION – A TALK BY ROBERT ASKINS
Connecticut College, 270 Mohegan Ave., New London—Olin Building 113, 11 AM
Dr. Robert Askins, Katharine Blunt Professor of Biology and bird conservation expert at Connecticut College, will present a one-hour talk on designing small gardens and managing private woodlands for conservation. All interested persons are invited to this free-of-charge talk sponsored by the Mountain Laurel Chapter of Wild Ones. For more information, contact landscape653@gmail.com or visit http://www.wildones.org/cal/ct/.

1 32ND CONNECTICUT NOFA WINTER CONFERENCE
Western Connecticut State University, Danbury, 8:30 AM – 5 PM
Keynote speaker Fred Kirschenmann, a Distinguished Fellow for the Leopold Center for Sustainable Agriculture at Iowa State University will talk about Tomorrow’s Farmer & You. Visit http://www.ctnofa.org/winterconference/index.html

4 FRUGAL GARDENING for a Greener World
6:00 – 8:00 PM
Tolland County Extension Center
Fee: $50/Non-Master Gardener, $40/Master Gardener
Concerned about environmentally appropriate gardening practices? Want to keep your yard and garden attractive and healthy without spending a lot of money? You can do both by adopting a number of easy and practical steps.

3 COASTAL CERTIFICATE—SOUND GARDENING: SUSTAINABLE LANDSCAPING FOR CLEAN WATERS
4 Bartlett Arboretum & Gardens, Stamford, 6 - 9 PM
Fee: $75/Non-Master Gardener, $65/Master Gardener
Program is designed to generate ambassadors of alternatives to nutrient-and chemically-intensive landscaping practices for Connecticut coastal and watershed residents. Must attend all classes and complete two approved outreach activities to receive the Coastal Certificate.

12 STATE TECHNICAL COMMITTEE
NRCS State Office, Tolland, 9:30-12:30 PM
For more information, contact Joyce Purcell joyce.purcell@ct.usda.gov (860) 871-4028

15 CONNECTICUT LAND CONSERVATION COUNCIL CONFERENCE
Wesleyan University, Middletown, 8:30-4:45 PM
Visit http://www.ctconservation.org/2013conference

17 CONNECTICUT CONFERENCE ON NATURAL RESOURCES CCNR
Student Union, University of Connecticut, Storrs, 9 AM – 5 PM
April

1  DE-FENCE-LESS GARDENING in Deer Country
   Bartlett Arboretum and Gardens, 10:00 AM to Noon
   FEE: $50/Non-Master Gardener, $40/Master Gardener
   You CAN win the battle against deer and other furry rodents. Presentation features delightful garden photography.

2  DEER-RESISTANT LANDSCAPING: Taking Your Landscape off the Menu at the Deer Cafe
   Middlesex County Extension Center, 6:00 – 8:00 PM
   FEE: $50/Non-Master Gardener, $40/Master Gardener
   Learn ideas that will help your landscape become a "Deer Survivor." Learn how to employ three strategies for deer resistance: Plants, physical barriers, and other barriers (including trickery!).

9  COMPANION PLANTING With Herbs, Flowers & Vegetables: Traditional Companion Planting Practices
   New London County Extension Center, 10:00 AM - Noon
   FEE: $50/Non-Master Gardener, $40/Master Gardener
   Class will include in-depth information on attractant and repellent plants and their role in companion planting as well as practices for attracting beneficial insects to the garden, rotating crops, and nourishing the soil.

8  LIVABLE GARDEN DESIGN
   Fairfield County Extension Center, 1:00—4:00 PM
   FEE: $100/Non-Master Gardener, $80/Master Gardener
   Limit: 12 students
   Basic garden design class - first class covers identifying and defining your location's specific purpose and the nuts and bolts of basic design: tools, site analysis, measuring and color and design principles. Students will then have two weeks to develop a garden design and the results will be shared in the second class, along with suggestions and feedback. Students can work on a new or existing garden.

10  NATIVE PLANTS for the Home and Community Landscape
    Middlesex County Extension Center, 6:00 – 8:00 PM
    FEE: $50/Non-Master Gardener, $40/Master Gardener
    Participants will learn about native plants that are "hiding in plain sight" and discuss approaches to using natives in a managed landscape, including an overview of meadow planting. Participants will receive tips for finding the right native plant for their landscapes as well as sources of native trees, shrubs and perennials.

12  GENETICALLY MODIFYING Our Foods: 10,000 years of experience in altering our food's genome
    Middlesex County Extension Center, 10:00 AM - Noon
    FEE: $50/Non-Master Gardener, $40/Master Gardener
    Class limit: 40
    This lecture will review the techniques used in the past and provide information on how genetically modified organisms (GMO) got their start in the 1980's and continue to cause great controversy. Snow date April 19
AN HERBAL FIRST AID KIT
Green Goddess Classroom & Herbary, Brooklyn, CT, 2:00 – 4:00 PM
FEE: $50/ Non-Master Gardener, $40/ Master Gardener + MATERIALS FEE: $20
Class limit: 15
Build your own basic herbal first aid kit. Participants will make their own herbal oils and be given recipes for other preparations.

HISTORY OF CONNECTICUT FORESTS
New Haven County Extension Center, 6:00 – 8:00 PM
FEE: $50/ Non-Master Gardener, $40/Master Gardener
Take a look back at the forested landscape as it was experienced by its original human inhabitants, and by the first European settlers. Many residents of our state are unaware that 200 years ago, forests had been almost entirely been replaced by sheep pastures.

SHADE GARDENING: EXPLORE THE OPTIONS
New London County Extension Center, 6:00-8:00 PM
FEE: $50/ Non-Master Gardener, $40/Master Gardener
Learn more about shade tolerant plants and options for beautifying that non-sunny part of your garden. Moss propagation, care, and the do’s and don’ts of moss gardening will be covered. Moss samples will be available to view. There will be a brief discussion of what to do with trees, which produce the densest shade, trees that can be limbed up to open up the canopy for more light and air circulation.

NATIVE PLANTS IN THE Landscape
Woodland Trails Native Plant Nursery, Eastford, CT, 12:30 – 3:30 PM
FEE: $75/ Non-Master Gardener, $60/Master Gardener
Class limit: 15
Identify native woody and herbaceous plants, discuss their ecological roles and how you can use them in your garden and in larger designed landscapes. This will be a partly indoor/partly outdoor class. The class will run rain or shine and will involve some walking on trails in the woods and around other landscapes, so dress appropriately.

May

Setting Up a PUBLIC DISPLAY GARDEN—PART IV
Windham Extension Office, 5:30 – 8:30 PM
FEE: $75/ Non-Master Gardener, $60/Master Gardener
Class limit: 15
Part IV of a hands-on series on how to plan a garden project. You may participate even if you did not take the first three parts of this series.
Learn to map the boundaries of the garden and its parts using GPS technology. Plan the layout and stake the garden and access paths, and discuss required maintenance. As time and light permit, we will begin installation. Dress for gardening.