



Dear ##[Name | First]##,

Tis' the season for gratitude. We want to thank you for being a part of the OAK community and wish you a wonderful rest of the year! Our hope is that you find time to connect with loved ones and celebrate around nourishing food.

OAK is participating in the #GoodGivingChallenge this week organized by the Blue Grass Community Foundation. There are lots of matching opportunities to make your gift go further. If you are able, please give or inspire others to support OAK. Together, we can grow a more organic, regenerative food network! Check out and share our [Good Giving Challenge Fundraising Page](#).

If you are looking for local, organic options over the holidays, make sure to check out the [OAK Find-a-Farm Directory](#) for farm products near you and find out if your nearby farmers market is still open or offering a holiday pop-up!

In this month's issue, we are highlighting an inspiring farmer from Coleman Crest Farm, twice baked sweet potatoes, and useful tips to for planting fruit trees in your home garden!

Warm wishes,  
The OAK Team

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## Farm Feature...

### Building Relationships at Coleman Crest Farm

For Jim Coleman, "Farming is about building relationships". To Jim, these relationships live within the land and generations of his family, connections with his customers and markets, and the interconnectedness between a thriving farm and nature.





The relationship between the Coleman family and the property in Fayette County, known today as Coleman Crest Farm, is deep. In March 1888, Jim's great-grandfather, James Coleman, purchased the land that he and his parents worked while living under enslavement. Jim Coleman and his wife Cathy purchased this same parcel in 2001 and visited a few times each year with dreams of farming this ancestral land. When Jim lost Cathy in 2020 to breast cancer after 37 years of marriage, he moved to the farm full-time to pursue their shared dream.

Jim was driven by his desire for the farm to achieve three primary functions within his community: becoming certified organic, serving as an incubator farm for aspiring farmers, and welcoming visitors as an agritourism site. In a century when African American landowners have lost 12 million acres of farmland in the South, Jim's efforts to retain and restore his family's land and transform it into a hub for organic, regenerative agriculture and a thriving business are inspirational. "You don't need 1,000 acres to build your farming business," Jim encourages.





“I’m a businessman who happens to be a farmer - that’s how we have to think about ourselves to be successful in the organic farming business. We have customers - and we intend to satisfy their needs; how can we do that in a way that makes them believe that they can’t do it without us?” That’s where the relationship-building comes in. Jim explained, “I’m approaching them with the message that we’re all in this together.”

In addition to feeding his loyal customers, Jim also focuses on how he provides for the land that was stewarded by generations of his family. “We’re part of nature - and in farming, we’re working with nature - not against it,” Jim advocates. “This is the stewardship of the organic farmer that my ancestors adopted over the last 135 years.”

After attending OAK’s virtual conference in 2021 and working with OAK’s Transition Trainer at the time, Tony Silvernail, and farmer-mentors Gayle Tomkinson, Erik Walles, and Grant Walles (formerly of Berries on Bryan Station), [Coleman Crest Farm](#) became the first\* African American-owned certified organic vegetable farm in Kentucky in July 2022. The farm has 3 acres allocated to growing certified organic vegetables and flowers, serving markets and restaurants throughout Fayette County.

Anyone who has visited Coleman Crest Farm can attest to the natural beauty that has been cultivated there by Jim and his ancestors alike. His work honors farmers’ relationship with their land, clients, and the wider world. OAK is immensely thankful for Jim’s willingness to share his expertise with us and fellow farmers at the OAK July Field Day (view resources [here](#)) held in collaboration with Grow Appalachia. Learn more about Jim Coleman and Coleman Crest Farm on their social media [here](#) and the OAK Find-a-Farm Directory [here](#).

*\*Based on OAK’s experience, narrative feedback from the Kentucky Department of Agriculture (KDA), and USDA’s Organic Integrity Database (which does not collect demographic data).*

## Seasonal Recipes...

### Twice Baked Sweet Potatoes



Thanksgiving dinner has come and gone, but that doesn’t mean sweet potatoes must be absent from your dinner table! These twice-baked sweet potatoes are the single-serving version of the classic casserole dish. They can be made with the traditional yam, or you can shake things up by opting for a purple Japanese sweet potato instead. All options will be delicious with a crumble topping!

[View Recipe](#)

## In the Garden...

# Debunking Three Home Orchard Myths

Nothing sounds more idyllic than escaping the heat under a blooming apple tree on a summer day. This dream (like many beautiful garden moments) starts with fall planting. Fruit trees can be planted while dormant in the fall or early spring for best results. To a gardener who typically sticks to annual vegetables, the ins and outs of fruit tree care can be shrouded in mystery.

**Today, let's debunk a few common misconceptions about the backyard orchard!**

## **1. MYTH: Fruit trees take up too much space.**

While a tree does take up more space than a cabbage, you don't need a sprawling orchard to enjoy homegrown fruit. Dwarf varieties of most fruit trees are commonly available and will only reach 8-10 feet tall (compared to a typical orchard tree that reaches 20-25 feet). Dwarf trees are also easier to care for as they can be pruned and harvested safely from the ground - no ladder required! Another option if space is your primary concern is espaliered trees. This ancient practice refers to training the limbs of a tree to grow flat along a frame or trellis. Apples and pears are the best candidates for espaliering because their new growth is supple and easily trained.



## **2. MYTH: Fruit trees require multiple of each variety to get fruit.**

While some fruit trees require cross-pollination from a nearby tree to produce fruit, plenty of trees are self-pollinating. Some trees are also partially self-pollinating, meaning they will produce some fruit independently but perform much better with another compatible variety nearby. Check out self-pollinating options that might work for your area and ask an orchardist before purchasing.

## **3. MYTH: Fruit trees are more work for a homeowner than fruitless trees.**

While it is true that fruit-bearing trees create NEW kinds of work (i.e. "What do I do with all of these apples?"), they don't necessarily create MORE work. Even fruitless trees require fertilizing, watering, pruning, and yearly maintenance. They can also drop other things into your yard or produce pollen that irritates allergies. Fruit trees have the added benefit of connecting you to your food while beautifying your space. Bonus: the local wildlife is always happy to help you clean up any dropped fruit that you can't get to yourself.





If you'd like to learn more about planting fruit trees this fall and spring, check out these resources:

- [University of Kentucky Extension Growing Tree Fruits](#)
- [Food In Neighborhoods Growers Guides](#)
- [Oldham County Extension Native Fruit Trees in Kentucky](#)

## Upcoming Events & Resources

**The Good Giving Challenge is happening now through Dec 1st!**

OAK works with farmers every day to build a more organic, regenerative food and agriculture network in Kentucky. We would not be here without your partnership. Support OAK during [#GoodGivingChallenge](#), when your dollar goes further with matching opportunities sponsored by generous donors coordinated by the Blue Grass Community Foundation through December 1st.

Support OAK Today



**Give to OAK during these match times and increase your impact!**

**Match pools are claimed early, so make a gift close to the start time.**



**Tuesday, November 28th**  
BRYANT FUND \$13,000 BED-TIME MATCH  
9:00 PM - 11:59 PM  
Donations matched \$1 for \$1, up to \$100!  
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**Wednesday, November 29th**  
MACADAM FAMILY FOUNDATION  
\$25,000 MATCH DAY  
9:00 AM - 11:59 AM  
Gifts up to \$50 matched \$1 for \$1.  
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**Friday, December 1**  
MARKSBURY FAMILY FOUNDATION  
\$60,000 MORNING MATCH  
6:00 AM - 11:59 AM  
Gifts up to \$500 matched 50¢ per \$1 (maximum \$250 match per gift).  
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**Friday, December 1**  
OUTLAW STATE OF KIND HOMETOWN FUND  
\$100,000 ENCORE MATCH  
Noon - 11:59 PM  
Gifts up to \$500 matched 50¢ per \$1 (maximum \$250 match per gift).



## Get Local Vegetables as a Health and Wellness Benefit Next Year!

Kentucky Farm Share Coalition is a program of OAK and we help connect Kentucky workplaces to farms that offer weekly vegetables boxes as a health benefit. Workplace CSA is a win-win-win that benefits companies, employees, and Kentucky farmers. Contact Dee Owens, OAK's Marketing and Outreach Program Coordinator, at [dee@oak-ky.org](mailto:dee@oak-ky.org) to learn more about offering a CSA program and set up an exploratory meeting to see how we can help you promote local, organic foods from Kentucky farmers.

[Learn More](#)

Find more resources  
[@kyfarmshare:](#)

[Instagram](#)[Facebook](#)

**Donate to OAK. Your tax-deductible gift helps germinate, cultivate, and activate Kentucky's resilient food and farming network.**

[Donate](#)

**Join us! The organic farming network in Kentucky is growing. Together we are creating a more regenerative, organic food system.**

[Become an OAK Member](#)

### Stay in touch:

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