



## Organic Association of Kentucky

Advancing Organic Agriculture in Kentucky

Hello ##[Name | First]##,

July, a month when the thrill of eating locally brings people together. Tomatoes abound, sweet corn and the earliest of melons appear at the local farmers markets. The grilling season is here too, with succulent squash and zucchini needing only a brush of olive oil and salt and pepper to delight. Farmers and community members gather at markets across the Commonwealth to share nourishing, fresh foods and stories of Kentucky's agricultural landscapes.

**Have you visited a local farmers market lately?** If not, now is the perfect time to build it into your weekly schedule. Markets aren't just for weekends anymore! Many communities have multiple options on varying days of the week.

Looking for a local market? Check out [OAK's Find-a-Farm Directory](#)! The Directory is searchable by zip code or product, and can help you source locally all year round. The most important work we can do to support a healthy local food and farming system is to show up for Kentucky's farms and farmers. July is a tasty time to do just that.

**Have you met Mad Marchal, OAK's Conservation Outreach Coordinator?** Mad is busy at OAK supporting Kentuckians interested in adding conservation practices to their land or farm. Read below to understand how you can benefit from [OAK's Conservation Outreach Program](#).

Participation in OAK's programs does not require OAK Membership, but **your membership directly supports this work and the food and farming landscape across the region**. If you have let your membership lapse or have never taken the plunge to join OAK, now is the time! [Join OAK or renew your lapsed Membership here](#). OAK is growing and working for a healthier future, join us and be part of this community.

With gratitude to all of the region's farmers for continuing the dedicated work during these longest, hottest days to nourish our communities.

Warmly,  
Robin Verson  
Membership and Communications Coordinator

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## Farmer Profile: Maggie and Melinda Wilder, Wolf Gap

# Gardens

Nine out of ten U.S. farms are considered “family farms,” and for mother-daughter farming team Melinda and Maggie Wilder, the family farm is built around their relationship, supportive partners, immediate family members and a growing community of customers, neighbors and friends of [Wolf Gap Gardens](#). Since 2020, this family farm has offered certified organic vegetables, herbs, flowers and value-added products at the Madison County Farmers Market and through a small, local Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) program. They delight in knowing many of their customers and build their product offerings around the community’s feedback and requests.

Their farm business was launched in 2020 after a couple of years of exploring the market, readying the land and identifying resources and support available to small-scale Kentucky farmers. Recently retired from the role as Director of the Division of Natural Areas for Eastern Kentucky University, Melinda brought an understanding of grant-writing, people management and ecology from her career in higher education and natural resources. Maggie brought a wealth of experience in permaculture, organic farming and crop management from a career path that carried her to Washington, Ethiopia, Alaska and Virginia. Between the two of them, they hold complementary skills, experiences and interests that allow them to build their business and to support each other with a healthy work-life balance.

In their fifth year serving the community from their market farm, Maggie and Melinda are hosting a Farmer Field Day at Wolf Gap Gardens to share their teamwork approach, crop production, infrastructure and lessons learned. Read on for details and registration information.



## Farmer Field Day: Building a Small-Scale Family Farm One Year at a Time

Wolf Gap Gardens, Berea KY -- July 9, 2024 -- 9 am - 12 pm ET

Launching a small vegetable farm requires much more than keeping the crops healthy: recordkeeping, finances, marketing, ongoing learning and countless decisions can overwhelm farmers in the early years. Melinda and Maggie Wilder of [Wolf Gap Gardens](#) in Madison County make the process appear smooth and enjoyable. This mother-daughter team launched their certified organic\* vegetable production in 2020 on 1/2-acre, adding infrastructure and evolving their crop and product offerings on a consistent and intentional scale. Join this Field Day to visit their DIY greenhouse and high tunnel with rainwater catchment, walk through their summer field crops and rotational cover crops, explore their post-harvest wash-pack area and cold storage. Hear their success stories of securing financial assistance, developing value-added products and dividing their labor to fit their individual skills and experiences, as well as their off-farm lives. Maggie and Melinda will highlight the production tools they use on their human-powered farm; explain the crop fertility they implement with cover crops, nutrient management and reduced off-farm inputs and share their whole-farm management and planning activities outside of their vegetable production. Finally, the Wilders will share their farm's certification process and journey working with both the Kentucky Department of Agriculture and the Real Organic Project.

[Grow Appalachia](#) and the U.S. Department of Agriculture's (USDA) National Institute of Food and Agriculture provided support for this Field Day.

Register Here

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## Reflections on June Field Days

### Reduced Tillage, Cover Crops and Crop Rotations - June 4 Field Day at Lazy Eight Stock Farm

"Sometimes our experiments fail, but we won't improve if we don't try new things." Putting this into practice, farming trial and error has allowed Bryce Baumann and his family to improve their systems at [Lazy Eight Stock Farm](#) - expanding their crop production while minimizing disturbance to the soil, building soil health and organic matter, diminishing the use of plastic mulch and reducing the workload on the farm crew. Bryce shared this lesson, his system successes and a handful of cautionary tales at this June Field Day. Through their participation in OAK's [Climate Smart Project](#), Lazy Eight Stock Farm has committed to continuing the experimentation and implementation of on-farm conservation practices. Find more details, Bryce's cautionary tales and insight into Lazy Eight Stock Farm's climate-smart production practices on [OAK's website](#).





*Field Day attendees marvel at Bryce Baumann's adaptations of cultivation equipment for Lazy Eight Stock Farm's reduced tillage methods.*

### **Generational Farming Practices, Ecological Approaches and System Efficiencies - June 18 Field Day at Foxfire Farm**

“Letting go” is nearly a mantra for Aaron Lange of Foxfire Farm, as he works to improve the crop production systems and profitability of his three acres of organic vegetables while reducing the time and labor required to keep the systems flourishing. Whether it’s letting go of crops that require extra time and space or long-held markets and management practices that no longer fit the family’s goals, whole-farm planning has taken on a new energy for Foxfire Farm. Stewarded since 1991 by Aaron’s parents, the farm has been in Aaron and Irina’s hands since 2021. While they still maintain the organic certification and commitment to land stewardship that the Lange farm has always held, Aaron and Irina have introduced new practices, markets and efficiencies to make the farm their own. At a recent Farmer Field Day, they shared their biointensive methods, sheep-crop integration and cover crop management with peer farmers and technical service providers. Learn more in the full event summary on our [website](#).





Field Day attendees were grateful for a deep look at Foxfire Farm's biointensive methods at the June 18th Casey County Field Day.

Find Event Resources and Summaries [HERE](#)

Conservation Chat - Register Today

## Do you need Conservation Support on your farm?

### OAK Conference 2024 Recordings

The latest resource for [On-Farm Conservation](#) is now available on the OAK website. Land conservation has a place on all farms and OAK's On-Farm Conservation Program is designed to reach all farmers. Production farm, homestead, or small-scale operation, you can gain from practical resources OAK website.

The third batch of 2024 OAK Conference recordings is now available on the OAK website. OAK events supporting land stewardship and schedule free one-on-one conservation assistance with OAK staff.

- Want to Grow Fruit? Small Fruits for Kentucky (Pre-Conference Workshop)
- Exploring Organic Small Grain Production in Kentucky
- It Takes a Village: Resources for Farms and Farmers
- Silvopasture Opportunities and Challenges For Kentucky Farmers
- Navigating Labor Challenges and Opportunities on a Small-Scale, Diversified Vegetable Farm
- Practical Climate-Risk Management

OAK Conservation Chats are open virtual gatherings where Kentucky farmers, growers and landowners connect with peers and OAK conservation staff to share experiences and ask questions about on-the-ground conservation. Participants will learn about conservation practices and how to engage with technical and financial assistance.

Tailored to the needs and goals of registered participants, topics will include identifying appropriate conservation practices to meet farm/land goals and interpreting NRCS timelines and scenarios.

### OAK Conference 2025: Call for Session Proposals

As interactive conversations, the Conservation Chats will not be recorded. Registration is required to best serve the needs of participants. Register today and let us know what support you need to reach your conservation goals. Join us to learn more about engaging conservation practices from OAK's Conservation Service (NRCS). Now is the time to submit a session proposal for the 2025 OAK Conference, Grounded in Organic.

Our Forest Good Market Submissions are open through July 19, the two scheduled times that works best for you:

- July 23, 6 - 7 pm ET
- July 24, 11:30am - 12:30 pm ET

[Learn More and Submit a Proposal](#)

## Appalachian Regional Initiatives for Stronger Economies (ARISE)

**Are you a forest farmer - or interested in forest farming production and markets? Help us build the industry in Kentucky!**

OAK and Grow Appalachia, along with nine other partners are collaborating on this project led by Virginia Tech to help jumpstart a plan to accelerate Appalachia's forest farming industry and grow the market for non-timber forest products in Central Appalachia. This includes medicinal plants, edible products such as mushrooms and honey, ornamental products like garlands and burl and landscape products. Are you growing, managing or harvesting these crops and have insights to share about what the industry needs in Kentucky? Interested in learning about opportunities and don't know where to start? Tell us more - take the Survey! [Agroforestry \(oak-ky.org\)](https://agroforestry.oak-ky.org).

### ARISE Partner Event

Join OAK and partner [Grow Appalachia](#) for a Forest Farming Listening Session at the Goldenrod Gathering - August 4, 12-4pm ET, Irvine, KY. More information about the Gathering can be found on the Facebook Event: <https://www.facebook.com/share/vZ31pHMUcfUYcCK/>  
Tickets on sale <https://www.hollerhomefarm.com/.../goldenrod-gathering-2024>

## Opportunities, the Latest News & Calls to Action

### Organic Certification Cost Share Program

Organic Certification Cost Share Program (OCCSP) is available for operations submitting applications or renewing certification. OCCSP provides cost share assistance to producers and handlers of agricultural products who are obtaining or renewing their certification under the [National Organic Program](#) (NOP). Certified operations may receive up to 75 percent of their certification costs paid during the program year, not to exceed \$750 per certification scope. The deadline to apply is October 31, 2024. Some certifiers process cost share requests through the certification application, others do not. If your certifier does not process certification cost share then you can apply for cost share through your local USDA Farm Services Agency office. Learn more [here](#), and contact your certifier or [local FSA office](#) for details.

## KFAN (Kentucky Food Action Network) Steering Committee Open Positions. Deadline to nominate is July 13!

There are a few positions to fill on KFAN's Steering Committee! KFAN is looking for anyone who is a resident of Kentucky and especially encourage Kentuckians who are black, indigenous, or people of color (BIPOC), public benefits recipients, farmers, or agricultural producers to apply. Click here to [apply or nominate someone](#) who would guide KFAN's work in a positive direction. Members of the Steering Committee will work closely with staff to help plan statewide network meetings, identify and orientate potential members, review and edit Network materials, and help guide the direction of the KY Food Action Network.

Message Robin Kunkel with any questions 859-351-7730.

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## County Committee Elections

Farm Service Agency county committees are a critical component of the day-to-day operations of FSA and allow grassroots input and location administration of federal farm programs. Nationwide, more than 7,700 dedicated members of the agricultural community serve on FSA county committees. The committees are made up of three to 11 members who serve three-year terms. Elections occur each year in certain Local Administrative Areas (LAA). LAAs are elective areas for FSA committees in a single county or multi-county jurisdiction. This may include LAAs that are focused on an urban or suburban area.

[Find out more here](#)

**Please Read:** Uniform Guidelines For Conducting Farm Service Agency County Committee Elections ([Text 39 Bytes](#) | [PDF 66 KB](#))

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## Educational & Farming Support

### In-person Events Throughout the Region

**Develop Hands-On SKILLS at Salamander Springs Workshop with Susana Lein**

**Monthly Workshops, June - September, 2024 - Berea, KY**

These on-farm workshops are for anyone wanting to get firsthand experience with permaculture principles and methods on the ground, will include hands-on practicums and intensive education in principles, methods and materials, timing, hard lessons learned...not to be missed! [Learn more and register here.](#)

**Business of Blooms workshop**

July 8, 2024

Hardin County Extension Office

Whether you are new to floral design, looking to take your design skills to the next level, or thinking of trying event and wedding design, this one-day workshop will have something for you!

<https://kentuckyhorticulturecouncil.ticketspice.com/the-business-of-blooms-short-course>



### **Ag Drone Day**

Tuesday, July 9th from 1pm to 5pm (ET)

Harold R. Benson Research and Demonstration Farm in Frankfort, KY.

Interested in Ag Drones? Join us for a special training to learn how agricultural drones can help Kentucky producers more efficiently manage land, crops, and livestock! We will be flying drones and hearing from a variety of specialists on how this exciting technology can be leveraged for your business. Whether you are interested in simple scouting and aerial imagery of your farm or want to expand into commercial drone applications, this training is for you!

Follow the link for more details and to register for this free event: [Ag Drone Training Day \(ticketspice.com\)](https://kentuckyhorticulturecouncil.ticketspice.com/ag-drone-training-day)

[kentuckyhorticulturecouncil.ticketspice.com/ag-drone-training-day](https://kentuckyhorticulturecouncil.ticketspice.com/ag-drone-training-day)

### **Alley Cropping Workshop for Ag Professionals**

Join Grow Appalachia for an in-person training on alley cropping and agroforestry led by Stesha Warren of Appalachian Sustainable Development!

July 17, 2024

Richmond, Kentucky

<https://growappalachia.berea.edu/alley-cropping-workshop/>

### **Agrarian Voices Series: Summer 2024**

July 11, 18 - Zoom and in-person meetings

Join Dr. Leah Bayens of the Berry Center Farm and Forest Institute in an extended study of Wendell Berry's iconic book, *The Unsettling of America: Culture and Agriculture*. Retrace the story of this land's unsettling and the resulting agricultural, ecological, and social calamities. Join with friends and neighbors, near and far, to consider the roots of current challenges and the threads of the past that help make it possible to farm in full health through land-settling cultures, parity-based economies, and kindly-use communities. Along the way, explore how The Berry Center translates this book's lessons into its own guiding principles. *Reduced-rate scholarships are available to farmers and to residents of Henry County* <https://www.berrycenterfarmandforest.org/homecoming>

### **Loretto Motherhouse Ag Bash**

August 3, 2024

Nerinx, KY

Find out more here: <https://www.facebook.com/events/1620728315395565>

### **Black Soil KY inaugural conference, "The State of The Soil"**

Appalachian Rose Farm in Rogers, Kentucky

September 8-11, 2024

**Registration will close on Monday, July 1, or when capacity is met.**

This conference will be an opportunity to hear from industry professionals to learn more about how we can build an intersectional and equitable food system. We have a highly curated lineup of experts who are bringing their skills, experience, and passion for moving our food system on a local, national, and global scale forward.

You can find the link to register here: <https://www.blacksoilky.com/product/the-state-of-the-soil/453>

### **2024 Midwest Mechanical Weed Control Field Day**

September 11, 2024

MEIGS Horticultural Research Farm 9101 S 100 E Lafayette, IN 47909

[Purdue University's MEIGS Horticultural Research Farm](#) in Lafayette, Indiana will be the host site for the 2024 Midwest Mechanical Weed Control Field Day (MMWCFD). MMWCFD connects farmers, machinery manufacturers, and the allied trades for a single day event that draws farmers from all over the Midwest. MMWCFD is THE place to see weeding tools. The morning features a trade-show where

companies can connect one-on-one with farmers, and educational sessions, and the afternoon features field demonstrations in vegetable and row crops. [Find out more and register here.](#)

### Third Thursday

Don't forget, the monthly Third Thursday workshops can be viewed in-person at the [Harold R. Benson Research and Demonstration Farm](#) or streamed live at [www.youtube.com/kysuag/live](http://www.youtube.com/kysuag/live).

## Virtual Events

### Good Idea Shop Talks

This free meet-up series is for row crop and livestock producers who want to exchange ideas and advice for troubleshooting on-farm challenges related to improving soil and water resources. It will help producers connect with and learn from each other about how to be good stewards while protecting their profitability. The second season of these weekly, virtual meet-ups will take place on Thursdays, August 1st, 8th, and 15th at 11:30am CT / 12:30 ET via Zoom. Learn more and register here: <https://goodideafarm.org/shop-talks/>

**FACT** has weekly, relevant free webinars.

Check out the [full schedule here](#).

**Rodale Institute** weekly, relevant free webinars.

Check out the [full schedule here](#).

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## Resources and Funding for Farmers

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### USDA Commits Greater Conservation Assistance for Producers Transitioning to Organic Production

On April 10, 2023, the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) announced details about its \$75 million investment in conservation assistance for producers transitioning to organic production. The Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) is dedicating financial and technical assistance to a new organic management standard and partnering with new organic technical experts to increase staff capacity and expertise. NRCS will dedicate \$70 million to assist producers with a new organic management standard under the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP). This program is for farmers who are beginning or in the process of transitioning to organic certification. OAK is in conversation with NRCS Kentucky and will work to communicate with farmers about the opportunity to apply for this new Organic Management Practice when it is available. Stay tuned for more info in upcoming e-newsletters and a webinar this fall! Click here to access a factsheet on certified organic production created by NRCS-Kentucky <https://drive.google.com/file/d/1lomJSqOY2OmOYKQWrlXblSef9e7HPcZT/view>

### **\$1 Billion Available to Help Farmers Invest in Renewable Energy**

U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) Secretary Tom Vilsack announced that USDA is accepting applications starting on April 1 for \$1 billion in grants to help agricultural producers and rural small businesses invest in renewable energy systems and make energy-efficiency improvements. USDA is making the \$1 billion in grants available under the [Rural Energy for America Program \(REAP\)](#), with funding from President Biden's landmark Inflation Reduction Act, the nation's largest-ever investment in combating the climate crisis. For additional information on application deadlines and submission details, see page 19239 of the March 31 [Federal Register](#).

### **Silvopasture and Forest Farming Support / Funds Available**

The Catalyzing Agroforestry Grant Program is focused on implementing silvopastures and forest farming practices through direct support payments and will assist producers in designing appropriate projects using technical assistance and science-based planning strategies. The ultimate goal of the effort is to increase ecosystem sustainability and diversity by scaling up agroforestry practices. The Appalachian Beginning Forest Farming Coalition (ABFFC) project will provide up to \$1500/acre for silvopasture implementation and up to \$1000/quarter acre for forest farming implementation depending on project scale and scope. To enhance shared learning, producers who receive support will share successes and lessons-learned with their peers and other interested stakeholders. Minority, female, Indigenous, LGBTQ+, and/or socially disadvantaged farmers are highly encouraged to apply. <https://www.appalachianforestfarmers.org/emef>

### **Slow Food Bluegrass Garden Grant**

**Deadline:** ongoing

**Link:** <http://www.slowfoodbluegrass.org/gardens>

Slow Food Bluegrass micro-grants support groups in Kentuckiana who foster education about and access to good, clean, fair food. Special priority is given to limited resource communities and to projects that demonstrate a strong buy-in from participants. Grants range from \$500 - \$1,000 and may be awarded throughout the year. If you have any questions or need assistance, please reach us at [slowfoodbluegrass@gmail.com](mailto:slowfoodbluegrass@gmail.com).

### **KSU Small Scale Farm Grant**

**Deadline:** The 1st day of every other month

**Funding Amount:** Up to \$5,000 for farmers, \$15,000 for groups benefiting multiple farmers

**Eligible Entities:** Kentucky farmers and Kentucky agriculture groups including farmers markets

**Link:** <https://www.kysu.edu/academics/college-accs/school-of-ace/co-op/small-scale-farm-grant-program.php>

**Overview:** The KSU Small Scale Farm Grant is designed with the small operation farmer in mind. This grant application is relatively simple to complete and the funds can be used to purchase needed equipment related to the proposed project. To qualify, applicants must be producing a value-added product, be an organic farmer, and/or be an aquatic farmer. Farmers markets are often eligible. Previously approved projects have included canning equipment, a walk-in cooler, a water line to a hoop house, a root cellar, a cool-bot for vegetables, and a trailer for keeping meat cool and recently added farmer education assistance with a maximum of \$500.

### **Kentucky Proud Promotional Grant**

**Deadline:** On-going

**Funding Amount:** Up to 10% annual gross farm income, max at \$8,000 per year; \$1 for \$1 match

**Eligible Entities:** Kentucky farmers and agribusinesses

**Link:** <http://www.kyagr.com/marketing/grants.html>

**Overview:** The Kentucky Proud Promotional Grant is a cost share program to help Kentucky farmers and agribusinesses pay for advertising and marketing expenses. The award amount is based on 10% of direct farm impact; for a farmer it would be 10% of their total farm gross sales. The applicant must be



a registered member of Kentucky Proud to apply and use the Kentucky Proud logo/brand in marketing efforts paid for with program funds. Examples of fundable items include TV ads, radio ads, web expenses, hats, t-shirts, demos, sampling, labels, packaging, tradeshow, UPC, and bar codes. This is a great program that helps promote our local farms!

**ON-Farm Energy Efficiency Incentives Program**

**Deadline:** Applications are accepted year round

**Funding Amounts:** 50% cost share - up to a \$10,000 incentive, plus \$150 for an approved third party energy audit

**Eligible Entities:** Kentucky farmers with a gross farm income of at least \$25,000

**Find out more here:** <https://mtassociation.org/energy/funding-farm-energy-projects/>

**Overview:** The Kentucky Agricultural Development Fund offers an On-Farm Energy Efficiency Program to help Kentucky farmers with energy projects. These cost share funds are available to increase on farm energy efficiency and to support renewable fuel production projects. The applicant is required to have a third party energy audit completed. This program can be combined with the USDA-NRCS Rural Energy for America Program (REAP) to get up to 75% of a total project cost covered.

Many thanks to [KCARD](#) for promoting many of these grant opportunities. Did you know KCARD can also answer questions about funding programs and help you prepare an application? [resources](#)

Your tax-deductible gift helps germinate, cultivate and activate a resilient food and farming network.

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

Donate

Become an OAK Member

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