



Dear ##[Name | First]##,

Welcome to the July edition of the Make Mine Organic Newsletter! This time of year the summer crops are in full-swing on Kentucky farms, with many growers harvesting the much loved classics of the season like tomatoes, sweet corn, and melons. Check out the [OAK Find-A-Farm Directory](#) to locate farm fresh products near you!

We hope you enjoy the abundance of crops this time of year, and if you are looking for cooking inspiration consider joining our [FREE virtual August Chef Demo](#) next Thursday, August 1 from 12-1pm ET with Chef Tanya from the University of Kentucky's The Food Connection. She will be showing off a delicious eggplant dip, high protein salad dressing, and a homemade popsicle recipe!

In this issue, we are excited to share Foxfire Farm's innovative farming practices on a multi-generational farm, a refreshing recipe for Soba Noodle Salad, and a highlight of three beneficial garden insects.

Happy tomato season,  
The OAK Team

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## Kentucky Farmer Feature...

### Innovation on a Multi-Generational Farm at Foxfire Farm

Aaron and Irina Lange have owned and managed [Foxfire Farm](#), located in Casey County, since 2021, but their ties to the land go back much further. Aaron's parents stewarded the farm for over 30 years before passing it on to the next generation. Aaron grew up there, and Irina spent her teen years working on the farm.

Continuing the farm's legacy, Aaron and Irina maintain the farm's USDA organic certification and deep commitment to soil health. Meanwhile, they have infused new vitality into Foxfire Farm's operations, adapting them to their own vision that is aligned with new research and practices.

In this issue, we want to feature innovative strategies from the June Foxfire Farm [OAK Field Day](#) that celebrate Aaron and Irina's generational commitment to sustainable land stewardship.



Pests and diseases always pose significant challenges for organic farmers. Foxfire Farm employs crop rotations to ensure that crops susceptible to the same pressures are not planted in the same beds for at least one year. Additionally, Aaron and Irina incorporate cover crops like winter rye, Austrian winter pea, crimson clover, and buckwheat into their annual planting cycles. These cover crops support pollinators, enhance soil organic matter, optimize soil nutrients, suppress weeds, and maintain active photosynthesis through living roots to build up the soil. Healthier soil can grow more robust crops that can better withstand pest pressure.

As part of their holistic farming approach, Foxfire Farm also maintains a flock of approximately 20 Katahdin, Dorper, and St. Croix sheep. These animals play a crucial role in enhancing the farm's ecosystem. During winter and early spring, the sheep graze on plant residues from cash and cover crop beds, supplemented by quality hay produced on-site.

As they roam, the sheep incorporate plant matter and their waste into the soil, enriching its fertility. By incorporating livestock, the farm can reduce the need for off-farm fertilizers.

Aaron and Irina have also organized their fields into a block system, facilitating the efficient movement of materials such as irrigation and row covers for pest protection by grouping crops together. Each field block follows a three-year crop rotation plan: cover crops, quick crops (e.g., lettuce, radish, beet) and long-term crops (e.g., tomatoes, peppers, cucumbers). The farm makes sure that all of the crops within the same bed share similar planting, weeding, and harvesting schedules to maximize efficiency.

These innovative agricultural practices enable Foxfire Farm to grow more than 40 diverse crops for their community. Through their Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) program, fresh produce goes directly from the farm to families throughout the growing season. With a deep-rooted commitment to the land and a spirit of innovation, Foxfire Farm is well-positioned to sustainably nourish its community for years to come. Learn more about Foxfire Farm and where to find their products [here](#).



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## Seasonal Recipes...

### Summer Soba Noodle Salad

Earlier this month, Kentucky Farm Share Coalition joined Amanda Veneman from Flik Hospitality Group at the American Printing House in Louisville for a chef demo for their workplace CSA program. The demo highlighted produce from their CSA partner farm, Barr Farms, and featured a cold soba noodle salad. This salad is adaptable to whatever produce is in season and is refreshing on a hot day. As a bonus, leftovers can be repurposed easily into spring rolls for lunch the next day!



[View Recipe](#)

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## In the Garden...

### Meet Three Beneficial Garden Insects

A healthy garden has a thriving population of beneficial insects that help keep pests in balance while promoting a diverse ecosystem.

**Here are three insects to promote in your garden this season:**

#### Ladybugs

Ladybugs, also known as ladybirds or lady beetles, are incredibly beneficial insects. Despite their cute appearance, ladybugs are formidable predators with a singular mission: safeguarding your vegetables from pests. They voraciously consume thousands of aphids and other harmful soft-bodied insects that can devastate a garden's leafy greens. A single lady bug can consume [5,000 aphids](#) in its lifespan.

The good news is that if aphids are present, ladybugs will naturally be drawn to them. You can also attract ladybugs and other beneficial insects by planting flowers and herbs that enhance biodiversity like marigolds, calendula, and yarrow. Keep an eye out for purple and orange larvae and leave these on any plants to maintain healthy ladybug populations.



### Parasitoid Wasps

Have you ever inspected your tomato plants in the morning only to discover their tops mangled and their fruits ruined? The culprit, easily identifiable by its large size and distinctive bright red tail spike, is the tomato or tobacco hornworm. These sizable pests can blend into the foliage and evade detection until significant damage is done. Fortunately, there's a beneficial garden ally keeping a watchful eye on your homegrown tomatoes.

The parasitoid wasp lays its eggs inside unsuspecting hosts. The wasp larvae feed on the insides of the tomato hornworm, eventually emerging from its body.

If you come across a hornworm adorned with white wasp cocoons on its back, the best course of action is to leave it undisturbed to support the growth of this wasp population.

### Ground Beetles

Ground beetles are the unsung garden heroes because they're rarely seen in the daytime. They are nocturnal predators that prey on a wide range of pests such as slugs, snails, and insect eggs. They are known for their long legs and powerful mandibles (aka jaws) that make them particularly effective in combating soil-dwelling pests and even weed seeds.

Due to their longer life cycles, these beetles thrive in gardens that use organic practices that minimize tillage and pesticide usage. To promote ground beetles, add perennial spaces in the garden that provide year-round habitat and minimal soil disturbance. Check out [this University of Kentucky webpage](#) for more information on specific beneficial insects.

## Upcoming OAK & Community Events

### Beat the Heat Virtual CSA Chef Demo

Are you looking to cool off this summer? Join us virtually with Chef Tanya from the University of Kentucky's The Food Connection (TFC) for a demonstration featuring easy dishes to cool off this summer including a roasted eggplant dip, creamy high-protein salad dressing, and a homemade popsicle recipe!

**Date:** Thursday, August 1, 2024

**Time:** 12:00 - 1:00 p.m. ET

**Location:** Zoom Meeting

[Register Here](#)



## KY Proud Fall CSA Week

Save the date for the 4th annual Kentucky Proud Fall CSA Week! Meet farmers around the state who offer fall shares of their products (including produce, eggs, meat, and more) and connect with other local food enthusiasts in the [CSA in Kentucky Facebook Group](#) during this event and all season long!

**Date:** September 16 - 20, 2024

**Location:** Virtual in the CSA in KY Facebook Group

[Join the CSA Facebook Group](#)



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