



Dear ##[Name | First]##,

The autumn equinox on September 22 marked the start of fall. This celestial event, which occurs again on the spring equinox, means that the sun is directly over the equator. While the spring equinox heralds the start of the growing season, autumn reminds us to enjoy the last of this year's harvests.

This is a great time of year to get out and explore everything that Kentucky farms have to offer from apple picking to pumpkins and bountiful meals sourced from the farmers market, a Fall CSA share, or at a in-person or online farm store. If you are looking for farms in your area, check out the [OAK Find-A-Farm Directory](#) for options near you.

In this September issue, we'll visit Wolf Gap Gardens to see what steady growth looks like on a beginning farm, showcase a seasonal Thai curry recipe, and explore three fall garden tasks that you can do now to ensure a vibrant spring!

Wishing you a cozy start to fall,  
The OAK Team

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## Kentucky Farmer Feature...

### Big Picture Thinking for Beginning Farmers with Wolf Gap Gardens

Meet Melinda and Maggie Wilder, the mother-daughter duo behind Wolf Gap Gardens, a certified organic farm nestled in the heart of Berea, Kentucky. With a passion for nurturing both the land and their community, they grow vegetables and flowers for their Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) members and the local farmers market on their ½-acre market garden.

Committed to sustainable practices at every step, Wolf Gap Gardens has a remarkable story of growth—one that emphasizes thoughtful business planning, holistic farm management, and deep care for the environment. Let's explore how they are not only growing crops, but a thriving business.



## Growing a Healthy Business

Before planting their first seed, Melinda and Maggie were busy cultivating a vibrant market for their farm's produce. They spent time visiting local farmers markets to understand which products resonated with consumers. With valuable insights in-hand, they crafted a detailed business plan shaped by focus groups of local residents, ensuring their offerings truly met community needs.

The duo also tapped into Kentucky's resources for beginning farmers, joining [Grow Appalachia's Beginning Farmer Education Program](#).

Organic certification was important to Wolf Gap Gardens, and Melinda and Maggie took advantage of the support offered by the [Organic Association of Kentucky Organic Transition Program](#) to achieve their USDA certification. By establishing a CSA as the farm's primary sales channel, Wolf Gap Gardens entered its inaugural growing season with a solid customer base, providing stability and a foundation for future growth.

## Cultivating a Holistic Farm Plan

At Wolf Gap Gardens, teamwork and a holistic approach are at the core of their farm management. Melinda and Maggie divide responsibilities based on their individual strengths—Melinda handles recordkeeping and finances, honed during her career in education, while Maggie focuses on crops and soil health, drawing from her rich farming experiences. This thoughtful division of labor not only enhances productivity but also allows them to balance their farm work with life's other commitments.

Their big-picture perspective also encompasses the eight acres surrounding their garden, enabling them to explore innovative ventures like [agroforestry](#) and perennial plantings of herbs and flowers—all while preserving the native flora and fauna that enrich their land. Together, they're nurturing a diverse ecosystem that supports both their farm and the broader environment.

## Tending to Long-Term Soil Health

Melinda and Maggie use a methodical approach in building their soil health. Using a low-till, human-powered approach, they maintain their garden beds with hand tools like broadforks and wheel hoes. They practice a [stale seedbed technique](#), using black tarps to manage weeds and prepare beds between crops. In their early years, they enriched their soil with compost and tailored amendments based on soil tests.



Today, cover crops play a vital role in their soil health strategy, with seasonal mixes designed to boost soil biology and protect against erosion. By rotating crops and incorporating beneficial plants like field peas, oats, and sunn hemp, they're fostering vibrant soil ecosystems that will sustain their farm for years to come.

At Wolf Gap Gardens, Melinda and Maggie embody the principles of sustainable farming, building the health of their farmland and business over time. Their journey highlights the importance of patience, strategic planning, and community engagement in building a successful farm. Through their commitment to organic practices, they demonstrate that it is possible to cultivate a thriving operation that supports the environment and their local community. Their work serves as an educational model for aspiring farmers and advocates for sustainable agriculture. Follow Wolf Gap Gardens on [Facebook](#) to stay in touch with Melinda and Maggie and learn more about where to find their products on their [OAK Directory Farm Profile](#).

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## Seasonal Recipes...

### Autumnal Garden Thai Curry

Looking for a cozy dish this fall? Experiment with different curries for a simple template recipe that makes it easy to incorporate whatever seasonal foods you have on hand. Curry is a spiced sauce containing vegetables or meats commonly served over rice. Curries are a popular dish around the world. Give this [Autumnal Garden Thai Curry](#) a try for a fall twist that features sweet potatoes and kale. Feel free to swap out the vegetables and experiment with what's in the fridge. Bell peppers, cauliflower, carrots, spinach, scallions, and winter squash all make great additions to this dish. You can also incorporate a preferred meat or plant-based proteins like chickpeas or tofu.



This recipe calls for red curry paste, but you can also use yellow or green paste if that's more accessible. Curry pastes are commonly found in the international section of your grocery store. This is a great recipe to try out different combinations and once you get the hang of curries, they'll quickly become a go-to meal all year round. Make a large batch and freeze some for another tasty meal!

[View Recipe](#)

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## In the Garden...

### Three Autumn Chores for a Thriving Spring

Happy autumn! While your garden harvests may be winding down, the crisp weather and stunning fall foliage provide the perfect opportunity to get outside and tend to your garden. Today, let's explore three fall chores you can tackle now to give your spring garden a boost.

#### Mulching with Autumn Leaves

Gardening supplies can truly grow on trees! Did you know that 50-80% of the nutrients trees absorb during the warmer months end up scattered in your yard as falling leaves? Instead of sending this nutrient-rich gift to the landfill, use it to benefit your garden! Rake your leaves into a layer a few inches high directly onto your garden. You can even shred them with a lawn mower to break them down further. Leaf material spread over your garden beds acts as a nourishing mulch, providing sustenance

for earthworms and other beneficial organisms throughout the winter. Covering your bare soil in the off-season protects it from erosion while enriching it with organic matter for next season's growth.

It's also good to leave some leaves undisturbed to protect hibernating insects; this promotes biodiversity and supports a healthy pollinator population.



### **Planting Spring Bulbs**

For many gardeners, the joy of cultivating plants extends beyond edibles. Planting flowers not only beautifies your space but also attracts pollinators.

Autumn is the perfect time to plant bulbs as a gift to your future self. There's nothing quite like the sight of daffodils heralding spring or delicate snowdrops brightening the winter landscape. During planting, place bulbs 4-6 inches deep, with the pointed end facing up.

Excellent bulb choices for Kentucky include tulips, daffodils, hyacinths, snowdrops, alliums, and crocus.

### **Soil Testing for Fertility Management**

Before you can enhance your soil's fertility, it's essential to understand its current condition. Consider doing a soil test this fall to learn what amendments and practices to incorporate into a future garden plan. All Kentucky residents can get their soil tested through the University of Kentucky's Cooperative Extension Service. In some counties, this is offered free of charge once a year, while others may require a small handling fee. Contact your county's extension office for more details.

### **Fall Garden Resources**

[How to Use Leaves as Fall Mulch](#) by Joe Gardener

[Selecting and Planting Spring-blooming Bulbs](#) by Iowa State Extension

[University of Kentucky Soil Testing](#)

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## **OAK Community Resources**

## Find your Fall CSA Share Today!

KY Proud Fall CSA Week may be over, but it's not too late to sign up for a Fall Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) share with a Kentucky farm. Check out the Partner Farm Guide to see what local farms near you are offering this season. Don't forget to join the [CSA in Kentucky Facebook Group](#) for seasonal eating tips and updates from local farms all year-round!

[View the Fall CSA Guide](#)



## Bring Local Vegetables to Your Workplace

Kentucky Farm Share Coalition partners with employers across the state to bring farm fresh food directly to the office. This workplace wellness program is a win-win-win for organizations, employees, and small farms.

Watch the short video to learn more about the program. Interested in bringing a farm partnership to your workplace? Email program coordinator Dee Owens at [dee@oak-ky.org](mailto:dee@oak-ky.org) with any questions.

[Watch the Video](#)



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## Stay in touch:

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