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## The Farm & Market Report – April/May – 2024

Massachusetts Department of Agricultural Resources (MDAR)

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## Commissioner's Column



The sun is rising earlier and setting later, maple sugarhouses are boiling sap, and farmers are making preparations for spring planting. The flowers are blooming, the peepers can be heard chirping in the meadow, and farmers are anxiously awaiting drier days to get field work done. It's been a wet spring to say the least.

Spring officially kicks off for our MDAR team and the agricultural community with the annual March Maple Month Kick-Off. This year, we traveled to Severance Sugarhouse in Northfield to visit with owners Milt and Robin Severance and tap the ceremonial maple tree. While it was a beautiful, sunny day, it was still too cold for the sap to flow. It was an earlier season this year, with some producers starting to tap in late December (out in the Berkshires) and reporting runs until the end of March. Throughout maple month, several sugarhouses offered pancake breakfasts and opportunities to enjoy a taste of the season's sweetest crop. It was great to visit with the producers as I managed to partake in a few pancake breakfasts with my family. Blueberry pancakes are my maple vehicle of choice!



With Milt and Robin Severance

We also celebrated the Massachusetts Animal Fund, which provides free and low-cost spay and neuter services, when it helped its 20,000th animal. We joined our friends at the MA Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (MSPCA) for a voucher day to meet with pet owners and see the impact of the program first-hand. One gentleman had brought his dog in that morning, thinking she would have to be put to sleep due to her needing surgery, and we were able to help with the surgery costs through the Fund. He picked up his dog with deep gratitude and tears in his eyes. The program is supported through voluntary contributions on Line 33F of the State Income Tax Return. While it may be too late to contribute this year, please keep it in mind for future years. A small contribution makes a big difference.



With pet owners and their recently spayed/neutered dogs

An organization making a tremendous impact in the area of food security is Community Servings. Rose and I were thrilled to attend the Grand Opening of their new distribution center in Mansfield, along with local legislators and community members. Community Servings provides over one million medically-tailored meals to more than 6,000 individuals each year. They are also a proud supporter of local farms and fisheries, and their chef intentionally creates meals that are sourced from the region and that are nutritionally sound. It's a true testament to the work they do to address food insecurity in MA and RI and embodies community serving community.



With local elected officials, Congressman Auchincloss and CEO David Waters

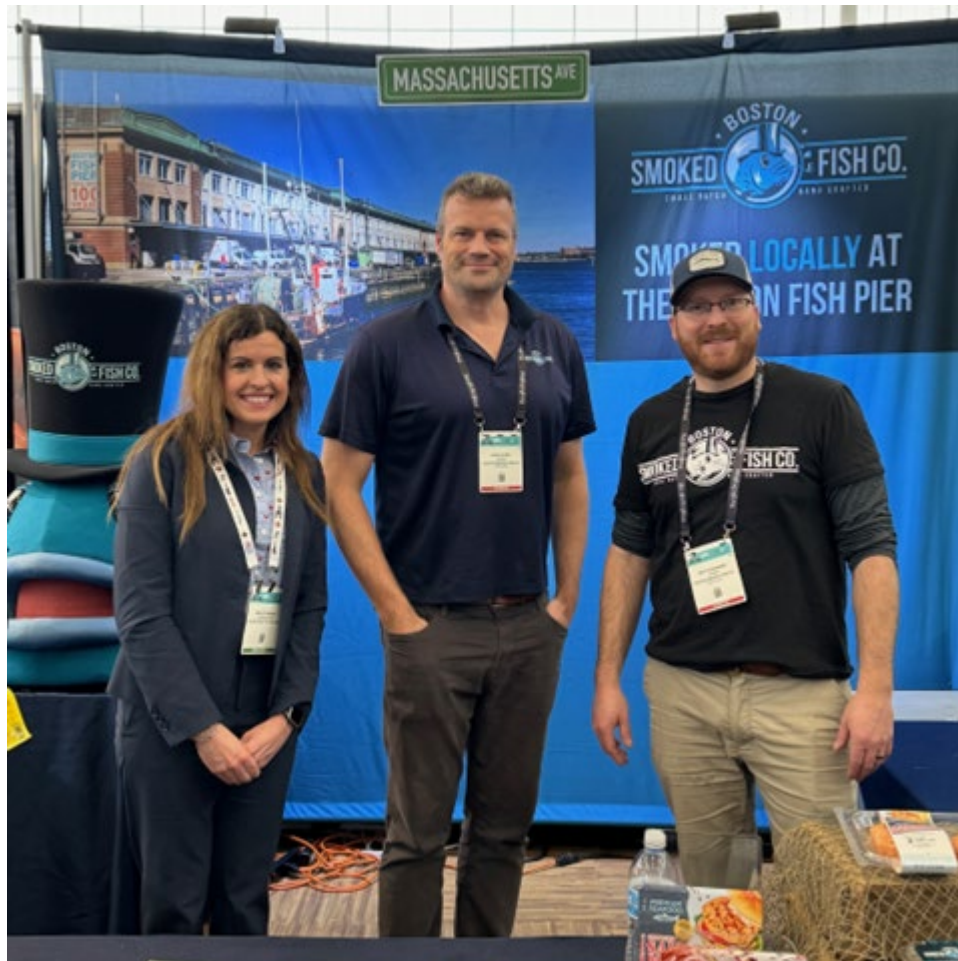
Our annual Growing Your Farm Business course final presentations were held at our West Springfield office in early March. I always enjoy joining team member Melissa Adams and our class participants to hear about the vision for their businesses. This year's class included Adrienne Bashita of Passalong's Farm in Florence, Laura Leighton of Rock Harvest Farm in New Braintree, and Lea Moreau of Wildberry Acres Farm in Brookfield. The 8-week long class is a great opportunity for participants to learn about marketing, financial management, and develop a business plan to help guide the farms in their goals and vision for the future. Congratulations to this year's class!

MDAR was excited to collaborate with the Urban Farming Institute (UFI) to bring back the popular MA Urban Farming Symposium. UMass-Lowell was a great host for the event, showcasing their on-campus greenhouse purchased with support from an MDAR Urban Ag Grant, as well as their dining program that features many local products. MDAR's Urban Ag Coordinator, Rose Arruda, plays a pivotal role in supporting urban ag across the state and brought together dynamic panelists to speak throughout the day. I enjoyed seeing several urban farmers and practitioners at the event, as well as making new connections.

Our team then had a unique opportunity to visit the Plymouth County Correctional

Facility Farm in Plymouth for a tour. Through our Urban Ag Grant Program, the farm invested in an aquaponics system for their greenhouse. The farm is over 70 acres and includes greenhouses for starts and flowers, a herd of Belted Galloway cattle, goats, sheep, chickens, a hydroponic growing system, and vegetable production. Much of the food they produce is donated to a local food pantry. The team works closely with Plymouth County 4-H and Plymouth County Beekeepers on educational opportunities for inmates and the public. It's not only a source of education and healthy food for the local community, but a great example of rehabilitative services that can be provided in this setting.

The Boston Convention Center was a sea of activity with the return of Seafood Expo North America. Each year, this global event brings together seafood businesses to showcase their products and shines a spotlight on several of our Massachusetts-based businesses. With aquaculture being the fastest growing agricultural sector in the state, it's a key economic driver and important part of our work at the department. We collaborate with our colleagues at the Division of Marine Fisheries (DMF) to help support the businesses that attend the Expo, with a special "Massachusetts Avenue" that Bonita Oehlke from our team helps to coordinate. It was fun to attend the event with Department of Fish and Game Commissioner Tom O'Shea, DMF and MDAR team members, and connect with the businesses in attendance.



With Chris Avery and Matt Baumann of Boston Smoked Fish Co.

MA Farmers Markets Association hosted their annual Market Managers Conference in Framingham in March. It was a strong return of the event, with over 80 attendees from across the state. Framingham Mayor Charlie Sisitsky has prioritized the farmers' market in the city and ensuring it has a diverse and robust set of vendors throughout the season. With the theme of "Farmers Markets Connect," the panel discussions and networking throughout the day provided a vehicle for market managers and staff to connect. Our MDAR team shared about the \$200,000 in grant funding recently awarded to farmers markets across the state, as well as our upcoming Spanish language course for market managers. Be sure to find your local farmers market and visit them this season!

The MA Beekeepers Association held their annual Spring Meeting at Topsfield Fairgrounds in March. MDAR's Apiary team attended to provide educational materials and technical assistance to beekeepers. Elizabeth Barnes, MDAR's Forest Pest Outreach Coordinator, gave a great presentation on Spotted Lanternfly (SLF) that had the crowd engaged and asking questions about this pesky "hitchhiker." If you haven't heard of SLF, please visit our website so you know how to stop the spread and [this invasive pest!](#)

The county Farm Bureaus held their annual legislative breakfasts that were very well attended by farmers and the respective county legislators. Our MDAR team covered the state and were able to attend almost all the breakfasts and provide updates on new programs, the FY25 budget cycle, and timely topics relevant to the membership. Thank you to Ag Markets Director Mary Jordan and Deputy Commissioner Winton Pitcoff for attending several of the breakfasts. It's always a nice way to kick-off the year with the Farm Bureau members and engage with legislators on ways they can help to support the agricultural community.

MA Farm to School held their 20th Anniversary celebration at Black Birch Vineyard in Hatfield, on the eve of their annual Farm & Sea to School Conference. The celebration was a wonderful way to recognize the critical role that the organization plays in connecting local farms to schools across the Commonwealth. MA Farm to School began as a small seed many years ago at MDAR when Kelly Erwin was a staff member at the department, and then MDAR continued to support farm to school by contracting with Kelly as she started MA Farm to School in 2004 in Amherst. MDAR has continually supported MFTS each year with organizational funding and maintaining close working relationships between staff. It has been exciting to see the growth of MFTS through the years and how schools have become a vital sales outlet for many of our Massachusetts farms.

The 21st Century Ag Commission hosted its March hearing at UMass-Amherst. The hearing focused on technical assistance and education and was a great way to spotlight the value of UMass Extension. The esteemed panel of individuals testifying included

Clem Clay, Director of the UMass Extension Agriculture Program; Stan Lalor, Director of Knowledge Transfer for Teagasc, the Agriculture and Food Development Authority in Ireland; Dr. Brian Schilling, director of the Rutgers University Cooperative Extension, Senior Associate Director of the New Jersey Agricultural Experiment Station, and Associate Extension Specialist in Agricultural Policy for the Rutgers Department of Agricultural, Food, and Resource Economics; Dan Wright, United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) State Conservationist for Massachusetts at the USDA Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS); Ali Mitchell, Executive Director of the Association of Northeast Extension Directors; Derek Costa, Superintendent of the Bristol County Agricultural High School in Dighton, MA; and Javier Reyes, UMass Amherst Chancellor. The panelists provided a unique perspective on the types of educational resources and technical assistance that will be required to support a sustainable and resilient farming economy for years to come.

MDAR team members Laura Barley, Tina Smith, and intern Elizabeth Peila and I traveled to Albany, NY for the Northeast Dairy Business Innovation Center (Northeast-DBIC) Summit the first week of April. The event brought together industry leaders, farmers, government officials, and service providers to discuss opportunities for growth of the Northeast dairy sector. Panel discussions included how to produce more dairy locally for consumers in the Northeast, how to increase diversity in the industry, and workforce development programs specific to dairy. The summit had over 200 attendees and provided a great venue for networking and building connections with other dairy enthusiasts.

The following morning after the summit was an event we all look forward to...Ag Day at the State House! It always feels like Christmas morning as a kid, waking up to the excitement and anticipation of the day ahead. MDAR organizes the event in collaboration with MA Farm Bureau and the Agricultural Promotion Board. It's truly a team effort with all of the logistics in planning for registration/check-in, the vendors, speaking program, awards, and legislative meetings. The Hall of Flags was buzzing with activity, with many legislators in the building for formal session and members of the administration stopping in to visit with organizations and sample the delicious fare. MDAR was excited to announce our inaugural MA Agriculture Youth Council, with

twelve rising high school seniors from across the state comprising the first class. The Council will provide students with an opportunity to learn about the varied agricultural sectors in Massachusetts, emerging trends and innovation in farming, and deepen understanding of other states' agricultural issues through connections with youth councils across the United States. The Council will also have the opportunity to share ideas, which may be used to help in the further development of MDAR programs and support of agriculture in Massachusetts. We also recognized Mateo Rull Garza, Master's Student at UMass-Amherst and President of the Minorities in Agriculture, Natural Resources and Related Sciences (MANRRS) Chapter, with an Excellence in Leadership Award. Mateo has been helping to inspire the next generation of agricultural leaders through engagement at industry events, hosting speakers, and cultivating excitement for careers in agriculture. Thank you for your leadership, Mateo!



With Mateo Rull Garza and EEA Secretary Rebecca Tepper

Community Involved in Sustaining Agriculture (CISA) hosted their Annual Meeting at Smith College, highlighting the dining program and local partnerships with farms. From the cheese board to poultry to produce, the dinner showcased the many farms that Director of Culinary Services, German Alvarado, works with in preparing fresh, healthy meals for students. Recognized at the event were this year's Local Hero Award recipients, including Marty's Local, D&R Farm, and Sutter Meats. Winton, Farmland Action Plan Coordinator Katharine Otto, and I enjoyed attending to visit with farmers, business owners, and fans of local food. Congratulations to the Local Hero Awardees

and thank you for all you do to support a vibrant local food system!

New this year, the APR Program hosted several “Farm Chats and Flapjacks” events across the state to share updates on the APR program and connect with interested landowners. I attended the last event, hosted at Ioka Valley Farm in Hancock, and appreciated the opportunity to connect with farmers and service providers from the Berkshires. The APR team did a fantastic job answering questions and helping farmers understand what the available options are for land protection programs. It was also a good opportunity to share some of the priorities outlined in the Farmland Action Plan and how those align with our programs and policies at the department. We will continue to provide more education and outreach opportunities to learn about the APR program throughout the year.

MDAR was thrilled to host our 1st Annual Agricultural Resource Fair at Mass Wildlife headquarters in Westborough. The building was bursting with activity throughout the day, with over 30 vendors participating and 250 attendees. We lucked out with the weather, as it was a rainy day, but recognize that it will be more convenient for attendees if we host future events during the winter months. From panel discussions to one-on-one conversations with participating organizations to networking, the event provided a “one-stop-shop” for farmers to learn about grants and programs available to them across the state and on the federal level. We plan to make the event bigger and better next year!

One of the areas we have prioritized as a team is volunteer events. It’s a good way to experience firsthand the work that our partner organizations are doing on the ground to support the local food and agricultural sectors. In March, our MDAR team volunteered at Community Servings new location in Mansfield to help with food sorting and packing for individuals with medically-tailored diets. More recently, a small group braved the wind and rain on the Friday before Marathon Monday to help plant daffodils. Marathon Daffodils provides the flowers, grown by MA Flower Growers Association President and Olson’s Greenhouses owner Matt Piscitelli, to remember and inspire hope after the tragic events of the 2013 Boston Marathon bombing. Both activities were impactful and provided meaningful days outside the office.

The Massachusetts Agricultural Club, founded in 1840, recently held its Annual Meeting at Verrill Farm in Concord. Steve Verrill is the longest serving member of the Club, having been a member since 1970! As an Ex-Officio member, I enjoy attending to visit with the members and hear from guest speakers on topics relevant to our work at the department. We enjoyed a delicious dinner prepared by the team at Verrill Farm, learned about the history of the club as well as Verrill Farm, and thanked Chris Grant for his service as President of the club the past two years. Chris brought a great sense of humor, steady hand, and perspective through his leadership. The new club president will be Donna Woolam, who many of you may know through her many years serving as Director of Agriculture and Education at Eastern States Exposition. Thank you to Steve, Joan, and Jen Verrill for hosting us and a wonderful evening of camaraderie with ag friends.

The Massachusetts State Grange held the first “Agriculture in Action Expo” at Holy Cross in Worcester over the weekend. The event was consumer-oriented and featured local Grange booths, service providers, and talks on timely topics such as climate change, pollinators, and how to shop and source local food and flowers. Winton and I enjoyed attending the event to visit with exhibitors and attendees. Thanks to our MDAR team for staffing a booth, including Mary Jordan, Rick LeBlanc, Katie Rozenas-Hanson, and Fran Pearson. Congratulations to the Grange on a successful event and thank you for helping to promote Massachusetts agriculture in all its forms.

MDAR celebrated Earth Week with tours of Amherst Survival Center and Mapleline Farm in Hadley. Amherst Survival Center is a non-profit, providing food and services to community members facing food insecurity. They provide many local products to community members through their partnerships with the Food Bank of Western Massachusetts and local farms. They also are one of the recipients of the Local Food Purchase Assistance Cooperative Agreement Program Plus (LFPA+) and are now sourcing from forty local farms to provide dairy, produce, meat, and seafood to clients. Mapleline Farm in Hadley is celebrating its 120th anniversary this year and is home to 130 Jersey cows and 240 head total. They have over 150 acres preserved through the APR program and have continued to prioritize environmental stewardship in producing

feed for the herd. They also process all of their milk into several flavors for the local community, with all of the milk being distributed to retailers and schools in MA. They continue to reduce their carbon footprint with technology upgrades, rooftop solar, and distributing to their local communities. It was a beautiful day to honor and recognize Earth Day with our friends in Western MA.



With MDAR Staff, State Rep. Daniel Carey and Jessica Dizek, co-owner of Mapleline Farm

While farmers have been busy in their fields getting ready for the season ahead, our MDAR team is preparing for fairs, festivals, and farmers market visits. It's the best way to engage with farmers and food system members and hear directly about ways we can assist the agricultural community. We look forward to meeting more of you in our travels and enjoying the bounty of local food in the months ahead!

And for those sports fans among us, I hope you're able to sneak away from the fields to cheer on the Bruins and Celtics in the playoffs. Go Bs and Go Cs!

Locally grown and proud,

*Ashley E. Randle*

Ashley

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## **Deputy's Dispatch**

Just about every child's alphabet book starts with an apple to illustrate the letter A. The children's book sections at libraries and bookstores are filled with books about farming, from what sounds animals make, to the basics of how water and sunlight make seeds grow, to how animals are raised. But somewhere along the line the availability of age-appropriate books about farming trails off, and with it goes an opportunity to engage and inspire young people about agriculture as a career path.

County 4-H groups will soon host their annual livestock shows and later in the summer fair exhibit halls will be filled with vegetables and flowers grown by youth in their gardens. But for every student participating in these events, there are dozens who aren't, whether due to lack of opportunity or a lack of awareness of the opportunities that exist. And even for those who do participate there are not enough resources to help them connect those passions and skills with consideration of agriculture as a vocation. For agriculture to remain viable in Massachusetts, young people need to understand the options that exist for careers in the field and need supportive programs to align their skills with jobs.

The practice of agriculture is changing rapidly. With those changes come the need for workers and stakeholders with a wide range of skills, from fieldworkers who can spot and mitigate problems brought on by climate change or invasive species, to post-harvest workers who understand and can navigate the complex web of regulations that keep food safe, to mechanics and operators who are trained on the latest equipment, to financial advisors who can help farmers plan so that they may remain economically sustainable. In many cases, there is a lack of resources to teach those skills. In others,

relevant skills are being taught but an eye toward students applying those talents in industries other than farming.

In the last few months, agricultural education has come up again and again as I have spoken with farmers, colleagues, policymakers, and other stakeholders. Farmers have told me about the dire need for reliable workers. Applicants to MDAR's new Agriculture Youth Council wrote powerful essays about the impact agriculture has had on their lives, and about how they hope to pursue their passions further. A handful of remarkable students at UMass have established the state's first chapter of Minorities in Agriculture, Natural Resources & Related Sciences (MANRRS), a national organization that professionally and academically supports students from racial and ethnic minority groups in the natural sciences, a much-needed effort in an industry that can only benefit from greater diversity.

Recent events I have attended have underscored the relevance and urgency of this issue. At an event at Bristol County Agricultural High School I was moved by the story told by a graduating senior about her journey to the school, the transformational impact it has had on her as a person, and how she plans to build upon what she has learned and who she has become thanks to what the school offered her. At other events at Bristol Aggie I have been repeatedly inspired by conversations with students who excitedly explain their studies on topics ranging from shellfish farming to the use of drones in agriculture. The superintendents of all four state agricultural high schools will be presenting at the next Board of Agriculture meeting to further the discussion about the value of their offerings, and the visible successes of their programs.

And the topic comes up regularly in policy discussions as well. The Massachusetts Local Food Action Plan featured recommendations on integrating food system education into classrooms, connecting the issue with positive impacts on public health and economic development as well. The more recent Farmland Action Plan talks about the need for "agriculture, nutrition, and the local food system curricula in K-12 classrooms." The FY24 state budget provided new resources for professional development for teachers who want to better teach their students about food system issues. Bills have been filed that would define food literacy, begin the process of

developing standards for curricula, and allow for the incorporation of those standards into STEM and social science classes.

All of these efforts are positive steps forward, but farmers still struggle to find employees and many who want to work in agriculture or supportive fields still find their skills to be mismatched with what is needed. The department has engaged a consultant to develop a landscape analysis of resources, talk with stakeholders throughout the industry about needs, and help develop a roadmap for future programming and projects to better ensure that farmers have the labor pool they need, and that people making career and education choices understand the opportunities that exist in this dynamic and essential field.

Even for those who don't choose farming as a vocation, the lessons of those childrens' books can prove valuable later on. Just as a single apple seed can yield bushels of fruit for many years, small, coordinated investments in agricultural workforce development today will have a positive impact on the sector's sustainability for generations to come.

Winton Pitcoff

Deputy Commissioner / Legislative and Policy Director

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**Farm Energy Updates**



## **MDAR's Climate Smart Agricultural Grant Program (CSAP)**

**Applications are due by 4:00pm on Friday, May 31, 2024.**

CSAP links MDAR's water, energy, and climate grants together into one application. This includes the Agricultural Climate Resiliency & Efficiencies (ACRE) Program, the Agricultural Environmental Enhancement Program (AEEP), and the Agricultural Energy Grant Program (ENER). This program continues the goals of the three individual grants by implementing projects that help the agricultural sector adapt to climate change, mitigate climate change, reducing or preventing impacts to natural resources that may result from agricultural practices, and that improve energy efficiency and facilitate adoption of alternative clean energy technologies.

The CSAP grant is broken into two sections. Section I: Environment is for environmental projects such as soil health, water use efficiency, or other projects working towards reducing or limiting greenhouse gas emissions. Section II: Energy is Ag-Energy projects to improve energy efficiency or to facilitate clean energy adoption.

Applicants can apply to either or both sections. Participants selected for funding under either section are provided with reimbursement grants for 80% of total project costs up to \$50,000.

Program details here: [Climate Smart for Agriculture Program | Mass.gov](#)

**Contacts:**

Section I: Environment - Laura Maul at [Laura.Maul@mass.gov](mailto:Laura.Maul@mass.gov) or 857-507-5972

Section II: Energy - Gerry Palano at [Gerald.Palano@mass.gov](mailto:Gerald.Palano@mass.gov) or 617-571-4969

**MA Farm Energy Program (MFEP) - Energy Audits**

MDAR's Massachusetts Farm Energy Program (MFEP) has funds to help farms cover audits, energy efficient projects, and select renewable energy projects. You will need a technical assessment to file an energy grant application whether with MDAR or USDA.

**MFEP pays 75% of the technical assessment, first come, first served.**

Contact our MFEP now for more information through the Center for EcoTechnology (CET), our partner helping us administer the MFEP: 413-727-3090, [info@massfarmenergy.com](mailto:info@massfarmenergy.com), or visit [www.massfarmenergy.com](http://www.massfarmenergy.com), and submit a *Request Form*, and we will contact you.

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**The Markets Corner**

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**Seeking Massachusetts Dairy Farmers and Ice Cream Stands for 2024  
Massachusetts Ice Cream Trail**

We are excited to extend an invitation for your participation in the upcoming 2024 Massachusetts Dairy Promotion Board's "Massachusetts Ice Cream Trail," brought to you by the Massachusetts Dairy Promotion Board, MDAR, and the Massachusetts Office of Travel and Tourism. This trail will not only promote local businesses, but also celebrate the Massachusetts dairy industry, support travel and tourism, and excite ice cream enthusiasts everywhere.

Submissions will be sent through the Commonwealth's procurement portal

COMMBUYS. If you are interested in participating and meet the criteria for inclusion, please complete and submit information **by 9am, Monday, May 13, 2024.**

[COMMBUYS link with submission details here.](#) Bid # - BD-24-1002-1003-001-101860. Questions, contact Katie Rozenas-Hanson at [Katelyn.Rozenas@mass.gov](mailto:Katelyn.Rozenas@mass.gov).

## **Massachusetts Agricultural Fair Workshops**

### **Level 1 - Judging Workshop in West Springfield, MA**

Kevin England will be leading a Judging Class on **Saturday, June 1<sup>st</sup>** at the Massachusetts Building on the Avenue of States at the Big E Fairgrounds. This class will cover judging for jams, jellies, relishes, fresh fruits, and fresh vegetables. The class is open to anyone wanting to obtain Level 1 Judging Certification. Class registration is at 8:30 am, class begins promptly at 9:00am and will close by 2:00 pm. What to bring: a notebook; your own brown bag lunch (30 minutes allotted for lunch).

[Register here](#) - Deadline to register, May 24th.

### **Social Media Training for Massachusetts Agricultural Fairs**

MDAR is hosting virtual training sessions for all fair staff, representatives, and volunteers to learn how to effectively use website design, social media, and media relations to promote upcoming fairs and programs. We are offering **three identical sessions:**

- Monday, May 13 - Noon to 3:00 pm.
- Saturday, May 18 - 9:00 am to Noon
- Wednesday, May 22 - 5:00 pm to 8:00 pm

Choose the training that works best for your schedule. Be sure to take advantage of this free training to learn best practices on sharing your message with the community, and

don't forget to come with questions! 2024 Fair Dates [flyer here](#).

Contact Fran Pearson at [Frances.Pearson@mass.gov](mailto:Frances.Pearson@mass.gov) for session links and questions.

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## Recent Listings on the MassGrown Exchange

If you have crops to sell, equipment, or looking for job postings, remember that the [MassGrown Exchange](#) offers free listings to connect farmers, buyers, sellers, and service providers.

### Recent listings include:

- [Wholesale Daylilies](#) by Sunset Farm
- [Fedco Seeds](#) looking for seed garlic
- [Fat Moon Mushrooms](#) selling organic mushrooms
- [Madison Ave Farm](#) offering CSA orders available for all consumers, schools, hospitals, institutions and businesses,
- [Fern Hill Farm](#) looking for BCS Flail mower attachment and potentially other BCS attachments.
- [The Farm Shop and Cafe](#) selling equipment & displays for a farm shop & ice cream stand
- [Ashmont, Dedham, Waltham, Berkshire Farmers Markets](#) looking for Coordinators and Managers
- [Other Listings](#): Lime, bakery services, and more!



### Three ways to use the Exchange:

1. Search [Listings](#).
2. [Register](#) and create Alerts for yourself.

3. [Register](#) and make a Listing (or two!). You can list something for sale and/or list something you are looking for.

**Farmers** - Looking for new buyers? Selling equipment? [Register](#) and post today! Quick and easy registration.

**Buyers** - Be notified automatically for crops or products of interest when posted. [Register](#) and create automatic email "Alerts" for yourself.

Questions, or if you'd like one-on-one support with the free MG Exchange, contact [Richard.LeBlanc@mass.gov](mailto:Richard.LeBlanc@mass.gov). You can also watch the [short video](#) for a tour of the platform. 500 business accounts registered to date, [bookmark today!](#)

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## **Farmers: Opportunities Abound at Farmers Markets for the Coming Season**

Farmers Market Managers are busy gearing up for the fast-approaching summer season and there are many opportunities across Massachusetts for farm and food vendors looking to reach new customers. Farmers Market Managers are looking for a wide array of farm and food products including fruits and vegetables, cheese and dairy, meat, poultry, fish, flowers, bakery items and lots more! To help farmers markets and vendors connect, MDAR maintains a list of farmers markets looking for vendors on its [website](#). This list is updated periodically throughout the year so check back often for additions!

To further help farmers markets and vendors, The Sustainable Business Network's [Local Food Program](#) and [Mass Farmers Markets](#) have partnered to create lists of farmers markets seeking vendors and vendors looking to sell at farmers markets, and they includes all the contact information you need to get in touch. Find over 50 markets looking for farmers [here](#). If you are a farmer who wants to sell at farmers markets, you can add yourself to the list of vendors looking for farmers markets by [clicking here](#).

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## Cast Your Vote: 2024 Terrific Tray of the Year

Join Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education's Office for Food and Nutrition Programs in partnership with MA Farm to School in celebrating School Year 2023-2024's monthly [Terrific Tray Winners!](#) School nutrition programs across the Commonwealth have submitted photographs of trays featuring delicious local foods sourced from local and regional farms, dairies, and fisheries. They now need YOU to cast your [vote](#) in selecting a 2024 Terrific Tray of the Year amongst the monthly winners. The tray with the most votes will be recognized as the 2024 Terrific Tray of the Year at the [Healthy Kids, Healthy Programs Summit](#) on Tuesday, May 21st.

Congratulations to all of the Terrific Tray winners for their outstanding representation of delicious, local foods across Massachusetts.

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## The Big E - One Day Vendor Opportunities

Apply early - space is limited! Exhibit at the Massachusetts State Exposition Building during The Big E Fair. The Big E, located in West Springfield, is a 17-day event that draws over 1.6 million people from all over the northeast!

### **Massachusetts Day: Thursday,** **September 19th**

Be a part of a family-friendly, fun environment with games, giveaways and entertainment that showcases the very best of Massachusetts culture, agriculture, and tourism. We are looking for tourist attractions, agricultural commodity groups, non-profit and other organizations to set up a booth to engage attendees with



games, giveaways, and entertainment. The sale of merchandise, food items, and goods is not permitted.

[Massachusetts Day Application here](#). For more information: [Katelyn.Rozenas@mass.gov](mailto:Katelyn.Rozenas@mass.gov),

### **Harvest New England Day: Friday, September 27th**

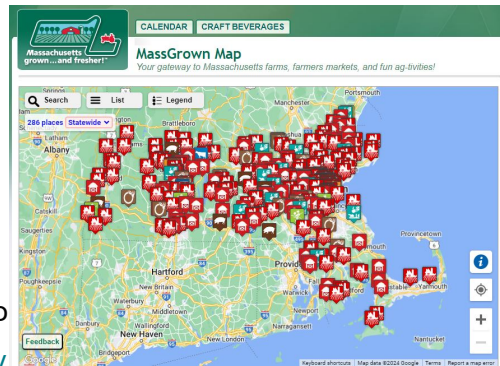
Massachusetts organizations and businesses promoting and/or selling local food and fiber products (grown, produced, or manufactured in Massachusetts) are invited to sell and/or promote Massachusetts agriculture and commerce on a 10' x 10' space on the front lawn of the Massachusetts Building. Food and beverage products, hard goods, and other products or services sold must be commercially available on a regular basis.

[Harvest New England Day Application here](#). For more information: [Bonita.Oehlke@mass.gov](mailto:Bonita.Oehlke@mass.gov).

*The mission of the Massachusetts Building is to showcase Massachusetts agriculture, culture, commerce, and tourism through informational, educational, promotional, and retail exhibits. In accordance with MDAR's Environmental Justice goals, MDAR is looking to increase the diversity of vendors at the Massachusetts Building and increase economic opportunities for Environmental Justice communities.*

## MassGrown Map

Farmers - Does your farm have new and updated information for 2024? Visit your listing on the [MassGrown Map](#). Over 200,000 searches are made each year. If edits needed or website to be linked, send updates to [Richard.LeBlanc@mass.gov](mailto:Richard.LeBlanc@mass.gov). New farm open to the public, and want to be listed? Fill out [survey here](#).



Offer special events at you farm - open houses, workshops, music, festivals? Send these as well to be added to our consumer [calendar](#).

MDAR has a fresh supply of posters and price cards to help you promote "Massachusetts grown...and fresher" - [details and order form here](#).

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## New "Summer in the Cities" Buyers Mission - Boston

Calling all food businesses! Mark your calendar for the first "Summer in the City" Buyers Mission, Boston, July 31, and August 1. USDA funds support this event, facilitated by [Food Export](#) USA Northeast, or which MDAR is a member. You'll have one-on-one meetings with buyers of your choice, pre-qualified through a network of international In-Country Marketing Representatives. A networking lunch with the buyers is included.

[Register here](#). For more information, contact [Bonita.Oehlke@mass.gov](mailto:Bonita.Oehlke@mass.gov).

## Three Ways to Connect at the Summer Fancy Food Show

Serving up the newest and best in specialty food and beverage, the 2024 Summer Fancy Food Show, June 23 - 25 at the Jacob Javits Center, NYC, is the largest of its kind in the U.S, offers delicious product discovery, fruitful networking, and inspiring business opportunities. Plan to exhibit, join the Buyers Mission, or attend to source local products for your farmstand, retail store, or restaurant.

1. Exhibit as part of the Massachusetts Avenue. The USDA funded [Branded Program](#), facilitated by Food Export, can offset 50% of eligible costs including the booth, promotion, and furnishings.
2. Meet buyers one-on-one during the Specialty Food [Buyers Mission](#), Friday or Saturday before the show starts. Buyers will be attending from 15 countries. Check out the [buyer profiles](#) to review their products of interest. Choose who you'd like to meet, and the date you'd like to have your meetings scheduled. USDA funds offset costs for this activity, facilitated by [Food Export](#), to provide low-cost, low-risk opportunities to explore export markets.

*You must be a member of the Specialty Food Association to exhibit or to join the Buyers Mission. [Membership details here.](#)*

3. [Attend](#) the show and find local products. You'll find new and innovative products from Massachusetts entrepreneurial businesses to add pizzazz for your farmstand or store customers.

Through MDAR's membership in Food Export USA Northeast, there are plenty of resources to help in with preparation for these events as well as other programs and services to build and expand export markets. Deadlines vary, but for more information, contact [Bonita.Oehlke@mass.gov](mailto:Bonita.Oehlke@mass.gov).

## **Massachusetts Farmland Action Plan Implementation Picks up Steam**

In December 2023, MDAR was excited to release the [Massachusetts Farmland Action Plan](#). The Plan provides a roadmap to accelerate the pace of farmland protection, address issues of inequity in farmland access, and help farms with funding, technical assistance, and business planning to enhance their viability.

### **Why is the Plan important?**

We are losing agricultural land and farms fast! Between 1997 and 2022 Massachusetts lost 113,000 acres ([2022 Census of Agriculture](#)). That's about 3.7 times the size of the land area of Boston or 1.8 times the size of Martha's Vineyard. According to American Farmland Trust's ["Farms Under Threat 2040" Report](#), between 2016 and 2040 Massachusetts, without additional investment and policy changes, is projected to lose 1,200 farms and 50,000 – 89,000 acres of farmland. The farmland that we do have is often out of reach of farmers and aspiring farmers, primarily due to cost. And farms themselves struggle to remain viable, and their tenuous financial sustainability risks the loss of even more farmland to other uses.

### **How do we work together to put the Plan into action?**

In late February, MDAR welcomed Katharine Otto as the Farmland Action Plan Coordinator, a new staff position dedicated to facilitate implementation of the Plan. Since her arrival she has attended various events where she's shared information about the plan, including at Ag Day at the State House. She has also started meeting with MDAR staff and will be reaching out to partners across Massachusetts to start conversations about what comes next for implementation, building momentum from existing programs and initiatives.

Partnerships and collaboration are essential for implementation! Nonprofits, municipalities, land trusts, other state agencies, educational institutions, private entities, and many others have key resources, capacity, expertise and/or jurisdictions that will be needed for successful implementation.

### **Want to stay in the loop on Plan implementation and opportunities to get involved?**

We are updating our contact lists for the Plan as we embark on the implementation phase. Many people were involved in the development of the plan, but participation in implementation is open to anyone. It will take a broad group of committed stakeholders to reach the Plan's ambitious goal, and we want to hear from you if you or your organization are interested in participating.

Please email Katharine to let her know of your interest – whether to help with implementing the plan, or simply staying in the loop on its progress! [Katharine.S.Otto@mass.gov](mailto:Katharine.S.Otto@mass.gov)

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## **Farmers Complete MDAR's Winter 2024 Ag Business Training Courses**

### **Farmers complete farm business plans through MDAR's Growing your Farm Business**

Three farm businesses completed farm business plans through participation in MDAR's course this winter. Course topics guide completion of a section of the plan each week including resource assessment, marketing, financial management, risk management, quality of life, and goal setting. The course was taught by Ray Belanger and Jaqueline Mestrangelo of Fish Park Consulting along with guest speaker Myrna Greenfield of Good Egg Marketing. Congratulations to the following participants for completing a farm business plan and financials and receiving a completion certificate from Commissioner Randle!

- Laura Leighton of Rock Harvest Farm, New Braintree
- Adrienne Bashista of Passalong's Farm, Northampton
- Lea Morea of Wildberry Acres Farm, Brookfield



### **Succession School in the Berkshires Concludes with 9 Graduates**

On March 27<sup>th</sup> the last class in a 3-course session of Land For Good's Succession School, sponsored by MDAR, saw nine farmers create tangible next steps towards the future succession of their farms. Participants participated from January through March to learn from experts about strategies for retirement planning, facilitating difficult family conversations, and options for land transfer. The Succession School was led by Land for Good instructors Shemariah Blum-Evitts, Kali Lucey, and Jae Silverman, and is offered each winter in a new location with assistance from MDAR's Agricultural Business Training Program.



Congratulations to Succession School participants, pictured from right: David Gage and Nancy Wyman (Snowshoe Farm), Maureen and Mitch Feldmesser (Left Field Farm), Bruce Howden (Howden Farm), Dom Palumbo (Moon In The Pond Farm), Joseph Pease (Blue Heaven Blueberry and Raspberry Farm), Katherine Newey (Solid Rock

Farm), and Sandra Moderski (Moderski Emu Acres)

### **20 participants from across Commonwealth complete Exploring the Small Farm Dream**

Congratulations to Heather Roy, Chad Roberston, George DiFrancesco, Mike Lavigne, Kerri Carlson, Ashley Bermudez, Enrique Velez, Erica Laurenzi, Cally Toong, Jacob Matalon, Blaise Alonzo, Jean Bennett, Jennifer O'Connor, Rob Armstrong, Adrienne Alstatt, Brian Laumann, Oscar Almeida, Denise Koran-Klisiewicz, Donald Klisiewicz, and Kathleen Budaj for completing the Exploring the Small Farm Dream course that was offered online this winter.

This course is offered by the Massachusetts Department of Agricultural Resources, using a workbook created by the New England Small Farm Institute and taught by experienced instructor, Jennifer Hashley. Thanks to this year's farmer panel of Elena Coleman of Small Farm, Emily Day of Bell Brook Farm, and Sara Davis of Oak Hollow Livestock for sharing their experiences of starting and operating their farm businesses.

For more information about any of these courses, visit MDAR's [Agricultural Business Training page](#).

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## **Notice of Public Hearing - Massachusetts Prohibited Plant List**

MDAR will hold a [public hearing](#) on April 26, 2024 at 10am (EDT), to hear testimony from the public regarding the intent to [restrict entry](#) of the following plants into Massachusetts:

- **Japanese black pine** (*Pinus thunbergii*) – Adding limited exceptions to address the cultivation of this species as bonsai
- **Callery/Bradford pear** (*Pyrus calleryana*) – Adding an exception to address the use of this species as grafting rootstock for pears being grown as a fruit crop

The meeting will be held online using Zoom. Written testimony will also be accepted until 5pm on April 26, 2024. Please view [this pdf](#) for details, including the Zoom meeting

link and how to provide written comments, or visit [this webpage](#) for details.

**Helpful Prohibited Plant List links:**

- [Main Page](#)
- [Recent Updates](#)
- [Species List](#)

Feel free to share this information with anyone that you think might be interested, or use [this blog post](#).

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## **Boston Local Food Festival Seeks Vendors**

14th Boston Local Food Festival - Sunday, September 15, 2024 at The Rose Kennedy Greenway, Boston

The Boston Local Food Program (SBN MA) wants to personally invite your farm or food business to vend at the 2024 Boston Local



Food Festival from 11:00 am to 5:00 pm, Sept. 15th. Grab your spot now by taking advantage of our Early Bird Prices, available only until May 31st! Showcase your fabulous food and share it with the Boston community!

Showcase your Massachusetts food creations at the 2024 Boston Local Food Festival, an annual festival drawing 40,000-60,000 food enthusiasts to the Rose Kennedy Greenway. Exclusively inviting New England-owned food and beverage businesses, this vibrant event promises a prime marketing and promotional platform for your product. Submit your vendor application now and join us in celebrating the vibrant flavors of New England!

Early bird discount (\$50) by 5/31, Final registration August 16th. [Register here.](#)

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## **FY25 Destination Development Capital Grants Now Open**

The Executive Office of Economic Development (EOED) and the Massachusetts Office of Travel and Tourism (MOTT) have announced the Destination Development Capital (DDC) Grant program for fiscal year 2025. Destination Development Grants are included in the economic development plan, “The Mass Leads Act: An Act Relative to Strengthening Massachusetts’ Economic Leadership,” as a strategy to support critical capital improvements at tourism assets across Massachusetts.

The DDC Grant Program is a competitive grant program that will award funds to improve facilities and destinations visited by in state and out-of-state travelers, with the goals of increasing visitation, enticing repeat visitation, and increasing the direct and indirect economic impacts of the tourism industry in all regions of the commonwealth.

[Guidelines and details here.](#) Applications due May 31, 2024.

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## **Mass Cultural Council Launches Operating Grants for Organizations**

New grant program offers unrestricted support to cultural organizations - Applications are now being accepted to Mass Cultural Council’s Operating Grants for Organizations program FY25 grant round.

This is a new grant program for [Mass Cultural Council](#), which will provide multi-year, unrestricted operating grants to nonprofit cultural organizations and cultural affiliates that enrich cultural life across the Commonwealth. As the Commonwealth’s independent state arts agency, Mass Cultural Council is charged with bolstering the creative and

cultural sector, thereby advancing economic vitality, supporting transformational change, and celebrating, preserving, and inspiring creativity across all Massachusetts communities. The Agency pursues this mission through a broad range of programs, services, advocacy, and the equitable investment of public resources.

[Learn more here.](#)

For information and to stay up to date on other [Mass Cultural Council funding opportunities](#) this fiscal year, prospective applicants are encouraged to follow the Agency on social media - @MassCultural – or [sign up](#) to receive the monthly Power of Culture e-newsletter.

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## **USDA Surveys MA Maple Syrup Producers**

A sample of producers will receive the maple syrup inquiry questionnaire around May 1, 2024. We encourage you to respond as your information is critical to showing the true picture of maple syrup production in Massachusetts. [Survey here.](#)

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## **MA Choose Fresh and License Plate Program**

The Massachusetts Choose Fresh and Local License Plate ([mafoodplate.org](http://mafoodplate.org)) is a great

way to show your support and take pride for local food and farmers and contribute to the agricultural economy. Supporting organizations like the [New Entry Sustainable Farming Project](#), [Mass Farmers Markets](#), and the [Beginning Farmer Network of Massachusetts](#), ordering a Choose Fresh and



Local license plate demonstrates your commitment to local food and agriculture and is a great conversation starter in the parking lot. Order a [low number plate](#) and you will never forget your license plate number again! Join your fellow local food champions who are supporting initiatives like scholarships for training programs for new farmers; incubator farm experiential education programs; access to marketing and distribution networks; farmers' market coordination and management; knowledge-sharing among farm educators and market managers; and food access initiatives for elderly and low-income youth and families – you can make a big impact with a small plate! **Registration is easy!** You will need your drivers' license number, plate type (passenger plates only), vehicle registration number and expiration date, email address and applicable payment.

#### HOW TO GET YOUR MA FOOD PLATE:

1. Go to the RMV - [website page for Special Plates](#)
2. Select Choose Fresh & Local ("MA Food Plate")
3. Pay 1-Time Plate Changeover Fee (\$20) + Special Plate Fee (\$40) + General Registration\* (\$60)
4. Receive your MA Food Plate in the mail within 10 business days. No waiting in lines at the RMV!
5. Install plate on your vehicle and enjoy supporting local farmers, farmers markets, and a vibrant food economy - Hooray!

\* Please note: The General Registration fee for the new plates when you change over will be determined on where you are in your registration cycle and may not be the full \$60. After you get your Special Plates, renewal is \$100 every 2-years (just \$40 above

normal renewal). The additional \$40 (just \$20/year) is a fully tax-deductible charitable contribution.

For any questions, or to sign up to volunteer as a License Plate “Ambassador” and help promote the plates at events, farmers’ markets, or other venues, please reach out to: Jennifer Hashley, New Entry Director at [jennifer.hashley@tufts.edu](mailto:jennifer.hashley@tufts.edu) or Freddy Soza, New Entry Operations Administrator at [Freddy.soza@tufts.edu](mailto:Freddy.soza@tufts.edu).

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## **Job Opening at MDAR**

### **Job Description - Animal Feed/Pet Food Inspector - (240004RX)**

MDARs Agricultural Food Safety Division seeks applicants for the position of Animal Feed/Pet Food Inspector (Food and Drug Inspector II). This position is responsible for supporting the registration of applicants covered under M.G.L. Chapter 128, Sec. 51, through 63 and for the conduct of regulatory compliance assessments, inspections, and technical assistance support for facilities that manufacture, store and/or offer for sale commercial animal feed and pet food in the Commonwealth. The position will also support the update and maintenance of authorities; recommend and draft compliance and enforcement actions; develop draft program level SOPs (standard operating procedures); respond to complaints; conduct investigations and develop and support annual sampling plans. The position will also provide technical assistance and education to facilities, municipal health boards and the public regarding program level requirements and compliance with applicable state and federal regulatory requirements.

[Details here.](#)

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## Upcoming Events

### April

- **April 26 - Notice of Public Hearing - Massachusetts Prohibited Plant List** - 10:00 - 11:00am. [Details here.](#)
- **April 28 - No-till Gardens and Farms: Healthy Soil, Heal Climate** - 1:00 - 4:00pm, Orange, MA. An experiential learning packed afternoon suitable to farmers or enthusiastic gardeners seeking to learn and use no-till methods that use simple tools, build healthy soil, reduce labor and cost inputs, and promote climate resilience. A perfect time of year to learn and introduce several no-till techniques that build healthy soil while promoting climate resilience. [Details here.](#)
- **April 30 - Crop Production Course** - 5:30pm to 7:00pm. 9-week online course covering essential topics related to sustainable crop production, enabling participants to grow food while caring for the soil at the farm or in the garden. [Details here.](#)

### May

- **May 2 - NOFA's Chemical Harmony: Balancing Nutrients for Healthy Growth** - 10:00am - 2:00pm, Winchendon. Dive into the fascinating realm of nutrient management and soil analysis to explore the intricate balance of elements essential for healthy plant growth. [Details here.](#)
- **May 10 - Massachusetts Food Policy Council Meeting** - 9:30 am - 11:30 am. [Details here.](#)
- **May 11 - Organic Orchard and Berry Management for Whole Farm Health** - 10:00 am - 1:00 pm. Old Frog Pond Farm, Harvard. Hands-on exploration of organic management practices for orchards and small-scale fruit production, perennial intercropping system and its impact on soil health and pest management: we'll learn about Old Frog Pond's foliar spraying methods and approach to tree nutrition. Tour the orchard and berry patch, and see Old Frog

Pond's pruning system for managing fire blight and other pathogens. We'll also have a hands-on demonstration of whip-and-tongue grafting, and examples of top worked trees. [Details here.](#)

- **May 15 - Spotted lanternfly in Massachusetts: Quarterly Update** - MDAR to provide the green industry, environmental groups, and other interested parties with the latest information about spotted lanternfly occurrences, survey updates, and more. Pesticide credits available. [Register here.](#)
- **May 15 - Bloom Time Twilight Meeting** - 5:00-7:00pm, Cold Spring Research and Education Orchard, Belchertown. Dr. Elsa Petit and Dr. Duane Greene will be there along with UMass Ext. staff to cover grapes, apple blossom thinning and a number of other in season concerns. [Details here.](#)
- **May 19 - NOFA's Chemical Harmony: Balancing Nutrients for Healthy Growth** - 10:00am - 2:00pm, Woven Roots Farm, Tyringham. Dive into the fascinating realm of nutrient management and soil analysis to explore the intricate balance of elements essential for healthy plant growth. [Details here.](#)

[Full Calendar here.](#)

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**About the *Farm & Market Report*** - MDAR's bi-monthly e-newsletter provides program and grant announcements, as well as workshop and educational updates within the Massachusetts agriculture community.

- Ashley Sears Randle, Commissioner, [Ashley.Randle@mass.gov](mailto:Ashley.Randle@mass.gov)
- Winton Pitcoff, Deputy Commissioner/Legislative and Policy Director, [Winton.Pitcoff2@mass.gov](mailto:Winton.Pitcoff2@mass.gov)
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Complete staff directory and office locations [here](#). Next issue to be published in June. Please send news and events by June 3rd to [Richard.LeBlanc@mass.gov](mailto:Richard.LeBlanc@mass.gov). Classified listings? Post to the [MassGrown Exchange](#).

