

West Virginia

Farm Bureau News

March 2024



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the Mountain State*

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On the Cover: Pickens Farm, Randolph County. Photo by Al Tucker

EASTERN

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Agriculture Innovation 2024 Trainings March-June

TRAINING/EVENTS	DATE/TIME	LOCATION	COST
HORTICULTURE MANAGEMENT SYSTEMS CERTIFICATION			
Construction Set Up & Site Preparation for a High Tunnel with a focus on Cover Cropping & Soil Health	Wednesday, March 20 1 P.M. - 4 P.M.	Tentative: Laurel River Club B&B, Bowden, WV 26254	\$20
Integrated Pest Management*	Tuesday, April 16 1 P.M. - 4 P.M.	Eastern WV Community Action Moorefield, WV 26836	\$20
Crop Management 101	Wednesday, May 22 1 P.M. - 5 P.M.	White Barn Market, Moorefield, WV 26836	\$20
<i>Instructed by Dr. Lewis Jett of WVU Extension</i>		<i>*Instructed by Dr. Carlos Quesada of WVU Extension</i>	
AGRIBUSINESS SUPPORT			
Agribusiness Mental Health & Support	Wednesday, March 6 5:30 P.M. - 8:30 P.M.	Misty Mountain Event Barn, Fisher, WV 26818	\$0 (Free)
<i>Instructed by Michele Payne</i>			
LIVESTOCK MANAGEMENT SYSTEMS			
Beef Quality Assurance (BQA)	Friday, June 14 8 A.M. - 10 A.M.	Tri-County Fairgrounds Petersburg, WV 26847	\$20
<i>Instructed by Dr. Kevin Shaffer of WVU Extension</i>			
Stockmanship & Stewardship	Friday, June 14 10 A.M. - 4 P.M.	Tri-County Fairgrounds Petersburg, WV 26847	\$20
<i>Instructed by Dr. Ron Gill of Texas A&M Extension</i>			

Contact: aginnovation@easternwv.edu and call 304-434-8000 ext. 9606
to register for these trainings and learn more!



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The Way I See It

Charles Wilfong, President, West Virginia Farm Bureau



I have probably written more articles about the illegal immigration disaster that is happening at our border than any other topic over the past few years. With that being said, I feel compelled to do it once again. The short-term and long-term impacts of this invasion on our soil are unthinkable. As we approach this year's general election, it seems obvious that these masses of illegals (conveniently termed "migrants") are part of a larger plan to influence not only the current election, but future elections as well.

Is it possible that those mail-in ballots could be used to make bon-a-fide voters out of those illegals? Ballot harvesting is another real threat to our elections. I believe that we must return to the days of single-day elections with a photo ID required if we want to restore the trust and integrity of our elections. In addition, absentee ballots should be limited to those with a true need.

This immigration invasion will also affect future elections because the liberal sanctuary cities and states could count these illegals in an effort to increase apportionment in the U.S. House of Representatives. If you include the "got-aways," it is estimated that at least 10 million illegals have entered our country since the beginning of President Biden's term. When you consider that West Virginia has a population of approximately 1.8 million, then the illegals would have about 6 times more representation than we do.

I am certainly glad that West Virginia has the distinction of having the lowest percentage of illegals of any state in the country. I hope that we can maintain that! The neighboring states of Virginia and Maryland have fairly high percentages, so we must be vigilant.

It is inexcusable that Biden and company absolutely refuse to enforce border and immigration laws. Not only do they refuse to protect our borders, but they are using our tax dollars to encourage more illegals to come to the United States. Illegals are given pre-paid cash cards, EBT cards, housing, travel, cell phones, prepared meals, and more. This represents a gross injustice to the nearly 600,000 homeless population in this country.

Public safety should be of major concern when we hear of the murders and various other crimes being committed by this newly created protected class. Many of these illegals were hardened criminals in their countries of origin. It is now known that some countries simply emptied their

prisons and sent them here. The Mexican cartels are controlling much of the invasion and the flood of drugs coming across the border. The duly elected or appointed officials who are allowing the killing of hundreds of thousands of our children should face criminal charges. The current regime, however, seems willing to destroy this country rather than lose political control.

I applaud the U.S. House of Representatives for impeaching Homeland Security Secretary Mayorkas for his inaction to secure our border. I wish that the U.S. Senate would do its job and finish the process of removing him from office, but that is unlikely to happen.

The real disservice in this whole process is happening to the people who are legally immigrating to this country and doing this process the right way. We must do whatever it takes to protect the future of our great country for our children, grandchildren, and future generations. We cannot let the current corrupt administration destroy the American dream.



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Around the Dome

Dwayne O'Dell, WVFB Director of Government Relations



I hope each of you are doing well. Please consider the following state and national information.

United States Congress members have been urging EPA not to propose a rule that would require farmers to report air emissions from animal waste facilities. Environmental groups want EPA to revoke the exemptions to this rule, saying that pollution from animal waste is sickening people in rural communities.

Reinstating the reporting requirement would be a regulatory burden that many small farmers would not be able to achieve. The bipartisan request from over 40 members of Congress said the rule was unnecessary and burdensome to livestock farmers throughout the U.S. The request is supported by AFBF, NCBA, and the National Pork Council.

In early February, USDA released the first insight into the 2024 farm income forecast. This report indicated a decrease of nearly \$40 billion, which is down 20 percent from 2023. If this data is accurate, it would be the largest year-to-year dollar decrease in net farm income in many years.

The projected 2024 farm income is \$116 billion. In comparison, farm income in 2022 was \$185 billion. Additionally, USDA expects an increase of \$17 billion in production expenses. Numerous factors, including weather, geopolitical events, and inflation, will shape supply and demand conditions throughout 2024. Row crop income is expected to drop over \$15 billion.

Prices for livestock will be strong; however, the lowest cattle inventory in 73 years will offset and limit overall income for beef producers. Cash receipts for turkeys are projected to be down 21 percent. The bright spot in the report is that broilers and hogs are expected to be up 700 million and 300 million respectively.

USDA also released the Census of Agriculture in February. Highlights of the report include:

1. The United States now has only 1.9 million farms, which is the lowest since 1850 when we had only 31 states and 4 territories.
2. Nearly 4 out of every 10 farmers are over the age of 65.

3. 20 percent of farm output is exported.
4. There was a 12 percent increase of farmers over age 65, with a 9 percent decrease of farmers age 35-65.
5. The number of farmers with less than 10 years experience increased 11 percent.
6. 75 percent of U.S. farms have sales of less than \$50,000.
7. 8 percent of farms have renewable energy systems, and 79 percent of farmers have internet access.

The entire census report may be viewed at www.nass.usda.gov.

The West Virginia legislature has been considering more than 2,400 proposed bills. It is anticipated that 300 bills will be presented to the governor for approval or veto. There also have been 200 resolutions submitted. Most resolutions are used to provide special recognition to certain West Virginia citizens or issues. They are also used as a vehicle to present special issues to voters as constitutional amendments. Resolutions receiving approval for voter action would be considered during the 2024 election cycle. A full list of bills and resolutions may be found at www.wvlegislature.gov.

As we face the future, don't forget the words of Martin Luther King, Jr.: "The ultimate measure of a man is not where he stands in moments of comfort and convenience, but where he stands at times of challenge and controversy." And remember President John F. Kennedy's quote: "Change is the law of life. And those who look only to the past and present are certain to miss the future." Winston Churchill said, "To improve is to change, so to be perfect is to have changed often."

Have a great day!



County Corner *News from the Fifty-Five*

Harrison County

Scholarship Winners Announced

This scholarship is awarded for the use of college, technical accredited schools, tuition and fees. Recipients must be the child or grandchild of active members or youth in good standing of the Harrison County Farm Bureau. In order to apply, students must achieve a cumulative GPA of 2.5 and have no significant documented disciplinary infractions. Applications for 2024 are due by July 1 and may be obtained from the Harrison County Farm Bureau.

2022 Winner

Caleb Law

Son of Fred and Mary Ruth Law

Caleb is a 4H member, he received the FFA Star Farmer Award (2022), was active in the Boy Scouts of America, and participated in the WV State Livestock Roundup and Harrison County Livestock Shows. He graduated in 2022 from South Harrison High School and is currently attending Morning Star University studying Transformational Leadership. Caleb received a \$1,000 scholarship.



Caleb Law and Harrison County FB President Bill Coffindaffer

2023 Winners

Ashley Law

Daughter of Fred and Mary Ruth Law

Ashley is a 4H member, attended Rhododendron Girls State, and participated in the WV State Livestock Roundup and Harrison County Livestock Shows. Ashley graduated from South Harrison High School in 2023 and is attending West Liberty University studying Speech Pathology/Audiology. Ashley received a \$1,000 scholarship.



Ashley Law

McKinnley Riley

Daughter of Clay & Whitney Riley

McKinnley graduated from Lincoln High School in 2023 and is attending Fairmont State University to study Nursing. McKinnley received a \$1,000 scholarship.



McKinnley Riley with parents Clay and Whitney, Harrison County FB president Bill Coffindaffer and Harrison County FB Womens Committee and Scholarship Committee Stephanie Reel

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The Zipline

Zippy Duvall, President, American Farm Bureau Federation



Investing in the Future of Agriculture

The investment and protection of the next generation to enter agriculture or keep their family farm running has long been a priority at Farm Bureau. And encouragingly, the latest data from the USDA's 2022 Census of Agriculture reveals a promising trend that the number of beginning farmers has surpassed over 1 million. That's up 11% from 2017. However, alongside this growth, the average age of farmers has continued to climb, reaching 58, highlighting the pressing need for initiatives and partnerships aimed at engaging and supporting young people in agriculture—it is crucial for the future of the agricultural sector.

At Farm Bureau, we believe that leadership development begins early. Young Farmers & Ranchers programs at the professional and collegiate level are just one example. Through our partnerships with the National 4-H Council, the National FFA Organization, the National Society for Minorities in Agriculture, Natural Resources, and Related Sciences (MANRRS) and Agriculture Future of America (AFA), we are not only strengthening agriculture for the future but empowering our future agricultural leaders.

As I travel across the country, I am continually impressed by the leaders emerging from these organizations. They are trailblazers, paving the way for new frontiers and fostering the next generation of leadership today. Our individual relationship with each of these organizations represents an investment in the future of agriculture. Each one has its own unique approach and together we are cultivating a diverse group of leaders who will generate new ideas and pioneer innovative solutions to the present and future challenges facing our sector.

We partner with all four organizations through individual meetings, participating in mutual events, exchanging speakers, promoting our AFBF internship opportunities and cross-promoting any major initiatives and resources.

We also partner with each organization specific projects and initiatives. With 4-H, we sponsor an agriculture education experience at their National 4-H Congress, provide ag literacy materials to educators and tap into the expertise of their national staff and leadership to serve as judges for our competitive events.

Working with MANRRS, we developed our Farm Bureau Fellowship Program, supported by sponsorship of CoBank. These Farm Bureau fellows, undergraduate and graduate MANRRS members, receive a complimentary year of Farm Bureau membership and free registration for our 2024 YF&R Leadership Conference.

With FFA, we sponsor a leadership development event and booth at the National FFA Convention. We also collaborate year-round with National FFA staff to provide valuable D.C. experiences for FFA members, national FFA officers and alumni.

Finally, our newest partnership with AFA focuses on engagement with their flagship trainings and conferences. Farm Bureau provides speakers for the AFA Policy Institute and Leaders Conference and sponsors the AFA AllianceX (AFA alumni event) and AFA Leaders Conference, allowing us to directly network with these young agricultural leaders.

Every year, we also invite middle- and high-school members of 4-H, FFA and Jr. MANRRS to take part in our Youth Leadership Program at the American Farm Bureau Convention. This program provides a chance for students to connect with farmers and ranchers from across the U.S., receive leadership training, and learn about various parts of the agriculture.

We are so grateful for each of these relationships and hope to watch each one continue to grow. Each organization has a unique approach, but the mission to strengthen agriculture for the future is the same. By investing in our relationships and building our leadership pipeline, we can cultivate an environment that empowers the next generation to take agriculture to new frontiers and secure our sustainable food, fiber and fuel supply for generations to come.



State FFA Vice-President Hannah Goode (Jefferson), President Isaiah Ash (Doddridge), and Vice-President Chloe Irwin (Cabell-Midland).





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From the Attorney General

Patrick Morrissey, Attorney General of West Virginia



Consumers Need to Exercise Caution During Last-Minute Tax Filing

It's that time of the year again: income tax filing.

This year, both the federal and state taxes have a deadline of April 15, and I want to remind last-minute filers to take their time filling out personal information. It's easy to feel rushed when you have a limited amount of time. However, make sure you take enough time to fill out everything correctly and send your information to the right place.

Getting things right in the beginning means no delay in a potential tax refund or confusion caused by submitting incorrect information.

This is also the time that scammers would try to victimize unsuspecting consumers into giving their personal identifiable information. So, be very careful and try not to rush your filing. According to the Internal Revenue Service, tax schemes usually ramp up this time every year. Scammers have also been known to pose as IRS agents, informing the consumer of a pending refund or taxes owed.

Do note that the IRS does not initiate contact with taxpayers by email to request personal or financial information. Generally, the IRS first mails a paper bill to the person who owes taxes—the IRS will never call to demand immediate payment using a prepaid debit card, gift card or wire transfer.

If opting for a remote or virtual transaction in your tax filing, make sure you're dealing with a legitimate tax preparation service. Also, make sure the tax preparer uses a secure portal to receive sensitive information involving income, Social Security numbers, finances, birth dates, addresses and other items scammers could steal.

Consumers should ask for the Preparer Tax Identification Number (PTIN) and check the IRS list found at <https://irs.treasury.gov/rpo/rpo.jsf>.

Legitimate tax preparers will ask for records and receipts. Additionally, they will never ask a client to sign a blank tax return. If they suggest as much, it should raise an immediate red flag.

Consumers should also ensure their tax preparer signs and includes his or her IRS Preparer Tax Identification Number. Federal law requires paid tax preparers to take both steps.

Other tips to consider if hiring a tax preparer:

- Research tax preparers online and/or seek a trusted friend's recommendation.
- Make sure the tax preparer offers e-file. Anyone who prepares and files more than 10 returns for clients generally must do so electronically.
- Make sure the tax preparer will be available after filing the return should any questions arise about the filed tax return.

Taxpayers who file through traditional mail should use caution and consider taking the mail to a local post office—tax identity thieves have been known to steal tax documents from mailboxes.

Here are some simple steps to avoid making a last-minute mistake:

- File electronically. It's time efficient, safer and ensures a faster tax refund.
- Double-check your information.
- If you decide to mail your tax return, double check the mailing address at IRS.gov.
- Make sure to validate the legitimacy of any tax preparer or tax filing service you use.
- Shred any discarded documents that contain personal information. Doing so makes it harder for thieves to steal information.
- Be aware of scammers who claim to be IRS representatives as they request personal information. Scammers often make these requests with the threat of arrest or lawsuit.

If you believe you've been the victim of a tax-related scam or identity theft, contact the Attorney General's Consumer Protection Office at 800-368-8808. Find more information at www.irs.gov/identitytheft or www.ftc.gov/identitytheft.



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Are You Prepared for Spring Storm Season?

Just about the only predictable pattern concerning spring weather in West Virginia is, well—that it's unpredictable. Sunshine, snow, sleet, rain, hail... you never know what you're going to get. One thing that never fails is that our state is hit by some variation of severe spring weather.

The highest risk of severe thunderstorms in West Virginia typically occurs in the spring and summer months. The FB Insurance Company – West Virginia suggests there are several things you can do to prepare yourself in the face of impending severe spring storms:

1. Have a plan

If disaster strikes, will your family be on the same page? The Centers for Disease Control (CDC) recommends planning how you will connect to one another in the event of an emergency. Make sure everyone knows at least two ways to escape from each room in the house, and designate multiple meeting places. If you have pets, be sure to remember them in the process.

Nowadays, most people have important numbers pre-programmed into their cellphones. It's imperative to make sure all members of the family also memorize emergency contact numbers in case they need to use a landline or borrow someone else's phone. Make sure to also post numbers for the fire department, police station, and hospital in a visible spot in the home.

2. Stock up

An emergency kit is a great thing to have on hand in case you need to quickly vacate your home due to a severe weather emergency (like flooding). The CDC recommends gathering a flashlight, a battery-operated radio for listening to weather reports (plus some extra batteries), and a first-aid kit. You'll also need a three-day supply of bottled water and nonperishable food, personal hygiene items, extra clothes, and blankets or sleeping bags.


3. Organize and protect important documents and belongings

If you have enough warning of an impending storm, move and store important documents (like insurance policies, birth certificates, passports, etc.) to an off-site location. If it isn't possible to move these items, store them in waterproof, sealable bags on a high shelf. Don't forget to include important keepsakes, like photos!

4. Create a home inventory

Should damage occur, an accurate, up-to-date inventory of your possessions will greatly simplify the process of filing an insurance claim. A home inventory logs the valuables in your home and each item's worth. An accurate and up-to-date home inventory can help you make sure you initially elect the right amount of insurance protection, and in the event of a loss, it can make filing a claim much simpler.

5. Buy or rent a back-up generator

If it's possible to acquire a portable generator, do so! Severe storms have the potential to knock out power to your home for hours, days, or even weeks. The use of a generator can power important electrical equipment, such as portable heating units, fans, computers, water pumps, freezers, refrigerators, and lighting. Generators do come with their own list of hazards, though, so be sure to check up on safe portable generator use from the Occupational Safety and Health Administration's website, [osha.gov](https://www.osha.gov). 



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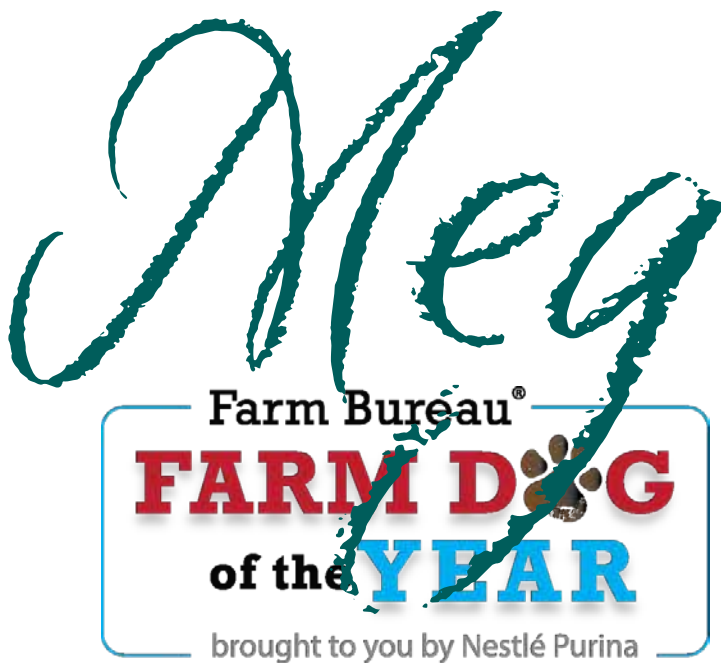
HOME



FARM

Coverage when it counts.SM

When it comes to insurance, it's important to have the right coverage from a company you can trust. If the unexpected happens, you can depend on **The FB Insurance Company - West Virginia** to help protect the people and things you love most.



Four-legged friends often play a vital role on family farms and ranches, prompting Farm Bureau to launch the Farm Dog of the Year contest several years ago – now a popular feature of the American Farm Bureau Federation’s Convention.

The winner of the 2024 Farm Bureau Farm Dog of the Year award was Skippy, owned by Georgia Farm Bureau members Donald and Laura Adams. AFBF, with support from Nestlé Purina PetCare, recognized Skippy, three regional runners-up and a People’s Choice Pup at its convention.

Meg is owned by Charles, Michelle and CW Wilfong, and was chosen as one of the three runner’s-up in the 2024 Farm Dog of the Year contest. A panel of judges with expertise in the pet care industry, veterinary medicine and communications reviewed more than 100 nominations to select the 2024 Farm Dog of the Year. Judging criteria included the dog’s helpfulness to the farmer and his/her family, playfulness and their role in making life better on and off the farm. Farm Bureau members submitted written responses to questions, photos and video clips to nominate their dogs for Farm Dog of the Year.

FB: How does Meg enrich your life and that of your family?

Michelle: All dogs are full of personality, but Meg’s is like no other! This special dog never has a bad day. She is always the first to greet you or a stranger on the farm, but knows when it is time to work! Having a 5-year-old son, I know he is safe and entertained with Meg around. She will play ball, fetch, soccer with him for hours! In turn, this allows me to focus my attention on the task at hand. He has learned about responsibility and patience ever since Meg came into our lives. When Meg rides to town with us, there is always a crowd of



CW and Meg

people who come to the truck to visit her. She loves visiting the school and our library! Having a dog that we can trust with children and in the barn is awesome!

FB: How does Meg support you, the farmer, in doing your job?

Michelle: Meg is a herding dog and is trained on sheep, cattle, and geese. Her primary job on our farm is to assist my husband and me with our 1200-head sheep farm. She is our first herding dog and has taught us so much as well. She knows both voice and whistle commands. She is a huge help when it comes to working

sheep in our barn. We have a TePari sheep handling system, and she can pretty well bring the sheep in by herself.

FB: What activities on the farm or ranch does Meg perform or is she involved in?

Michelle: Meg is trained on sheep, cattle, and geese. On the farm, she goes almost everywhere with us. When we are checking sheep, she can get around them and bring them to us in order to do a thorough check. With the cattle, she can bring them up the chute for my husband to catch them. If there are geese or any sort of birds in the cornfield, she loves to go and chase after them to prevent them from destroying our crops. As mentioned earlier, her primary job for us is to assist in our sheep barn. She can guide the ewes/lambs into the TePari handling system, hold the sheep while we fill bale feeders and so much more!

FB: What non-farm-work activities do you and Meg do together for recreation?

Michelle: Meg loves to play with our son, go for walks, visit the library, visit with groups who come to our farm, swim in our creek, and go to our local store for a cup of ice cream! Her favorite activity is probably relaxing on the couch at night with our son while they watch cartoons and eat popcorn!



Meg taking a break in the grass

FB: Describe your commitment to responsible dog ownership (safety practices, current vaccinations, proper nutrition, and care, etc.).

Michelle: Meg is a very special dog and receives great attention. She will routinely receive her vaccinations



Meg and Charles Wilfong, II hard at work

through our local veterinarian and will have quick checkups while our veterinarian is here for farm visits. We feed Purina ProPlan Complete Essentials dog food to ensure Meg can perform at her peak performance. On hot days, she enjoys lounging in our small pool in the front yard.

FB: What other awards has Meg received, and what special skills does she have?

Michelle: Meg has won numerous trials through USBCHA, is a USBCHA cattle and sheep dog finals qualifier and Brenham double lift qualifier. She is also knowledgeable when it comes to commands-sit, stay, lie down, come by, away, walk up, etc. We are currently teaching her to walk up the slide on our swing set and slide back down.



CW, Charles II, and Michelle Wilfong posing with Meg

God, Farming, and Sourdough Bread

....*Stories from the Farm*

Susan Wilkins Taylor



Our second year of boiling in our sugar shack is under our belts and my maple syrup cupboard is full! We had great fun and a bountiful harvest. But there is one thing I regret about Sherman and I building our own sugar shack -- boiling syrup every weekend leaves us with no time at all to visit *other* sugar shacks!

We both grew up going to the Highland County Maple Festival in Virginia every year. My family always made the drive over the mountain to get maple donuts at one of the sugar camps and maybe go to a pancake feed at Blue Grass. One of my favorite memories of my Grandma Wilfong is a trip she took us on to get donuts when I was a child. We visited a camp, saw the water boiling, got our donuts, and maybe ate half a dozen sitting in the car. Then, as my grandma stuck the key in the ignition to leave, her new car refused to start. As she panicked (and visions of being stuck at a sugar camp danced through my head) a message flashed on the dashboard of her car.

"CLEAN KEY," it said. "Clean key??" I can remember my grandma asking. And so she wiped her key off, stuck it back in the ignition, and the car took off. Cars, apparently, do not like maple syrup as much as we do.

Sugar time has always been a bright spot in the middle of winter to look forward to. After the excitement of Christmas is over, when the winter days just seem to stretch on forever, we start cleaning our taps and I start getting cravings for maple donuts. It is a halfway point of sorts between Christmas and spring.

If you have been reading my columns long enough, you will know I have been a Laura Ingalls Wilder enthusiast since I was a child. One of my very favorite parts of her book "Little House in the Big Woods" was a couple dozen pages devoted



to the sugar harvest. I remember my Aunt Jane reading aloud to my first grade class about Laura riding in the sleigh to her grandmother's house to participate in the sugar boiling. Afterwards, Laura's aunts put on all their fanciest petticoats and her grandmother made sugar snow candy. Pa played his fiddle and everyone danced and danced to celebrate. The scene was, and even now on re-reading is, just magical.

We are always a little too tired for any dancing when we are done with our sugar harvests, but one particular night of boiling stands out as pretty special to me. My parents and my brother had come over late in the evening after the cows were fed. My mother brought us soup and pepperoni rolls. As it got dark, we lit our candles and lanterns. We sat around the fire and told stories and ate and laughed. The dog lay at my feet, and for a moment, I felt a little bit of the same magic that Laura surely must have.

Both my and Sherman's families made syrup at some point in the past and our parents tell the stories. We love preserving this part of our own families' heritage. And of course, we love eating maple syrup. Because everyone knows that real maple syrup tastes a lot different than the artificially flavored corn syrup you buy in the store. When you make it yourself, it tastes even better; and it is like Laura says in her book, "they could eat all they wanted, for maple sugar never hurt anybody." **

*** As someone who works in the healthcare industry, I feel compelled to add this cautionary note. This quote is repeated in fun, not as an actual fact. While pure maple syrup may have many antioxidant properties, it is still comparable to other syrups and sugar products in both calories and carbohydrates. Fact -- Maple syrup is a sugar. Fact -- too much sugar can hurt you. Moderation is still key.*



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Spring Mushrooms for Beginners

By Matt Kasson, Associate Professor of Forest Pathology and Mycology,
WVU Davis College of Agriculture, Natural Resources and Design

Last month in Punxsutawney, Pennsylvania, a celebrity groundhog with seemingly supernatural meteorological powers woke up and did not see his shadow, calling for an early spring. Whether or not you believe in the weather-predicting powers of a pampered rodent from Pennsylvania, spring and all its timely edible bounties, including a feast of fungi favorable for foraging and frying, eventually will arrive.

But knowing of something's arrival does not guarantee one's success, especially when it comes to finding and foraging fungi, such as morels, oyster mushrooms or pheasant's back mushrooms. As the old adage goes, "You can't always reap what you sow," and you certainly can't always reap what you didn't sow. Edible fungi are difficult to predict compared to cultivated crops because their "fruits," or fruiting bodies as we call them, are not guaranteed on an annual basis. Also, many associate with specific plant hosts whose own distributions vary considerably across the landscape. Even though many fungi fruit on dead and dying trees, eventually they consume all the usable food, and spots that yielded fungi last year may not again for years. Here are some tips to turn your new-found fascination of fungi into a delightful and safe harvest.

True Morels

There's a reason spring turkey hunters and trout fishing enthusiasts make great morel hunters. Both dedicate considerable amounts of their time to walking and paying attention to the ground, especially in swampy wet lowlands and alongside creeks and streams in mid-April, when morels are in peak season. All fungi need water to thrive, so spring mushrooms, including morels, are often bountiful in low-lying wet areas where they fruit on the roots of trees.



True Morels

At least four species of true morels can be found in West Virginia, but white or yellow morels are by far the most common. Their honeycomb-like hollow cap and hollow stem are helpful for identifying them, as is the host tree under which they are often found, including but not limited to apple, ash and tulip-poplar. Proceed with caution as there are such things as false morels, potentially poisonous lookalikes, that at best will still induce gastrointestinal stress.

At least three species of false morels have been reported from West Virginia. False morels often have a more brain-like cap, and the stems and cap are not completely hollow like they are in true morels. It's always a safe bet to cut each fruiting body in half to determine if they are hollow prior to cleaning and cooking. As with all wild foraged fungi, cooking is highly recommended. If you are still uncertain, do not take a chance. Learning from a more experienced forager is strongly recommended. Bear corn, a yellow-colored pinecone-shaped parasitic plant of oak trees, is often mistaken for morels from afar, as they occur during the same time period and are generally the same size.



Bear corn, a morel lookalike, is a parasitic plant found underneath oak trees in the spring.



Pheasant's Back/Dryad's Saddle

A common sight on dead elm and maples in West Virginia, the pheasant's back or Dryad's saddle mushroom is a wood-decaying bracket fungus that forms large saddle-like scaly-capped fruiting bodies at the base and on the main stems of snags and downed logs. The pattern on their caps is reminiscent of a pheasant's feather pattern, hence the name.

Many morel hunters will stumble upon this fungus as both morels and Dryad's saddle have similar fruiting times and hosts. Unlike morels, their fruiting bodies can reach up to 20 inches across and often fruit in clusters on the same tree. The undersides of these mushrooms are not gilled like a majority of store-bought mushrooms, but rather have hundreds of thousands of small pores or tubes, hence the name "polypores" generally given to this group of fungi.

Pheasant's Back/Dry Saddle

Unfortunately, by the time these fungi reach maximum size, they are already too old, rubbery, and riddled with insect larvae for consumption. Instead, foragers should focus on young fruiting bodies found emerging in close proximity to mature ones to better confirm their identity. Dryad's saddle smells distinctively like cucumbers or watermelon rind and has no real dangerous lookalikes. The scaly hedgehog mushroom, a highly prized edible mushroom, has a similar looking large cap but with teeth instead of pores underneath, fruits from the forest floor not directly on trees, and are more commonly found in summer and fall.



Scaly hedgehog mushroom caps look very similar to Dryad's saddle from above.



Oyster Mushrooms

One of the more commonly sought wild mushrooms among foragers is the fan or oyster-shaped capped mushrooms known as oysters or oyster mushrooms. These mushrooms are also popular in grocery stores and in grow-at-home kits. At least five species of oyster mushrooms have been reported from West Virginia with pearl oyster mushrooms being the

cont.

Oyster Mushrooms



Stinking orange oysters (top) and late oysters (bottom) are oyster lookalikes often seen fruiting in the fall.

most commonly reported species ahead of the summer oyster mushroom. Pearl oysters also have a spring emergence in addition to a fall flush. Pearl oyster mushrooms have a white to gray or tan to dark-brown cap that ranges in size from 1 to 10 inches across.

Like many fungi, oyster mushrooms are quickly colonized by insect larvae, so pay attention to the condition of the caps prior to picking. Also, as with many fungi, soaking in cold water prior to cooking helps rid them of insects.

Elm oyster mushroom, an edible oyster mushroom lookalike, is also found on elm, but it is less common in West Virginia compared to true oyster mushrooms. The stinking orange oyster is an inedible oyster lookalike that not only stands out because it's orange but also its strong, unpleasant odor. Late oyster mushroom, another oyster lookalike, has greenish overlapping fan- or oyster-shaped caps and is common in the fall, but it is questionable regarding edibility. Lastly, angel's wings, a white oyster-like mushroom exclusive to conifer wood, especially hemlocks, should be avoided even though old identification guides list it as edible; in 2004, 59 people in Japan got sick from eating them and 17 of the 59 died of acute encephalopathy.



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Adding Wild Ramps to Your Spring Menu

By Alex Mathias, WVU Extension Agent – Grant County and Assistant Professor

There is so much wild and forgeable food available in West Virginia, from spring to summer and year-round! Some of the more notable foraged foods include:

- Ramps and morel mushrooms: Spring, usually April
- Teaberries: Late March into April
- Blueberries, raspberries and blackberries: July
- Chanterelle mushrooms: Fall
- Cranberries: After first frost (around October)

Ramps

Ramps are well-known in West Virginia as a pungent wild leek. They are some of the first wild greens that sprout in the forest in the spring. Ramps are found in woody areas and are commonly cooked with bacon and potatoes, although they can replace other aromatics, like onion or garlic, in a recipe.

Although ramps may have been looked down upon as a smelly meal, they are seeing a popular revival by showing up in large cities as well as West Virginia festivals, such as Richwood's Feast of the Ramson and Elkins' Ramps and Rails Festival in late April. Ramp dinners and roadside stands also are common during the season. Pick up ramps or take part in a community meal to enjoy this spring tonic. If harvesting yourself, try to harvest above the bulb so the ramp can continue to be an important part of our heritage moving forward!

Ramp Butter

Yields one large butter roll (approximately 1 cup)

2 sticks of salted butter, plus a little more for sautéing, softened

8 to 10 ramps, greens only

Parchment paper or cling film

Roughly chop ramps and lightly sauté in a teaspoon of butter. Place softened sticks of butter into a bowl and spread sautéed ramps over butter. Use a fork to mash ramps and butter until thoroughly distributed. Once mixed, empty bowl onto parchment paper and form into a log, spinning the ends closed. Place in refrigerator for at least an hour until hardened. It can be kept up to several months in the refrigerator for use or much longer in a freezer. Use on breads, steaks, pastas or any recipe where you would use butter and garlic.

Bread Tip: Add freshly chopped ramps into your favorite bread recipe for double the flavor.

West Virginia Ramp Pesto

This recipe is a quick way to use lots of ramps if you're tired of fried ramps and potatoes or want to make something that will stretch their life. I absolutely love pesto for its flexibility and ease. You can put it on pastas, sandwiches, burgers, grilled cheese and more. Pesto also keeps well in the fridge, so you can prolong the life of whatever herb or greens you have around.

While I had experimented with pesto before, I learned how to make "proper" pesto with my Italian friend when visiting



West Virginia Ramp Pesto

her in Rome in 2014. They, of course, have access to the best Parmesan cheese, beautiful basil, high quality olive oil and good pine nuts. It was amazing to make pesto with a native, and I try to keep that educational session in mind whenever I make pesto.

For this ramp pesto (or really any strong or wild green you may use), I suggest using walnuts over pine nuts. Pine nuts have a beautiful light flavor that will be covered by stronger flavors. Without further ado, here is my (approximate) recipe. I typically eyeball it and add more ingredients as necessary. Taste it and observe the texture as you go until it's what you want out of a pesto.

15 to 20 ramps, cleaned

4 to 5 tablespoons extra virgin olive oil

1/2 teaspoon salt

1/4 cup freshly grated Parmigiano-Reggiano (Parmesan) cheese

A squeeze of lemon juice

1/2 cup walnuts, whole or pieces

Blend together in a food processor until desired consistency. You may need to add additional olive oil as you go until it is a spreadable consistency. Enjoy on pasta, toasted burger buns or a grilled sandwich.

Pasta Tip: If you use it on pasta, make sure to leave a little extra pasta water in the pot for the pesto to mix with for a smoother consistency. Also, use pastas with ridges or curls to "grab" the pesto.



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Grazing Management

— submitted by Rebecca Haddix, NRCS-WV Public Affairs Specialist

Grazing management benefits both livestock and the environment. Proper management aims to balance the needs of livestock with the health of the land, preventing overgrazing and promoting growth. Let's take a closer look.

What is Grazing Management?

Grazing management is the combination of pasture, livestock, fencing, and grazing systems used to manage forage production and harvest. The development of a grazing management plan should be flexible and dependent on the livestock producer's goals and resources.

Rotational grazing is where livestock are moved between pastures during the grazing season, concentrating their feeding on one pasture for a few days and then moving them to a new field that is ready to graze. The grazed paddock is allowed to rest and regrow for a suitable length of time.

Why Manage?

Many pasture problems such as slow growth, weed invasions, and bare ground, are caused by the pasture management methods being used. Good management is the key to healthy, productive pastures that lead to healthy, productive animals.



Prescribed Grazing is the application of livestock grazing at a specified season and intensity to accomplish specific vegetation management goals. Prescriptive grazing can be used to control invasive plant populations and enhance desirable vegetation conditions.



Access Control and Fencing Controlling access is often used to protect, maintain, or improve the quantity and quality of natural resources in an area.



Soil Health



Proper grazing management often leads to a more productive mix of plants. Therefore, soils are less compacted and more protected from the erosive forces of wind or water and the self-regenerative capacity of the land is improved. Collectively, this improvement is considered a gain in grazing land health.



A **Watering Facility** is used to provide livestock with drinking water to meet their daily needs. The proper location of a trough improves animal distribution and vegetation associated with the watering facility. A watering facility is sometimes installed to keep livestock out of streams and other surface water areas where water quality is a concern.

Benefits of Grazing Management

- Decreased feeding of hay and silage
- Improved forage quality and quantity
- Enhanced manure distribution
- Decreased weeds
- Decreased soil compaction and erosion
- Improved animal health and productivity
- Potential increased number of animals supported

Some Common NRCS Grazing Management Practices in West Virginia include prescribed grazing, access control and fencing, watering facilities, stream crossing, spring development, and heavy-use area protection.



Heavy Use Area Protection areas frequently and intensively used by people, animals or vehicles are stabilized by establishing vegetation cover, by surfacing with suitable materials, and/or by installing needed structures.

For help with your grazing management plan, call or email your local USDA Service Center to set up a farm visit. Visit the NRCS-WV webpage at www.wv.nrcs.usda.gov to find your local service center and learn more about USDA's financial and technical conservation assistance.

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Touch the Earth

— by Mike Snyder

What's under our feet has a strong influence on us. The first chapter of Romans in the Bible proclaims that God reveals himself through Creation which He created. The mountains, the plains, the seas, the sky, the stars, and the planet Earth inform all that God is real and omniscient and all who deny Him are without excuse. (Romans 1:20-21).

My being here in the mountains on my acreage between Haines Knob on Rich Mountain and Job Knob on the Allegheny was the result of a long quest to find out where I belong. I learned that the concrete pavement of Charleston, Manhattan and San Diego is where I did not belong—my heart yearned for the trout streams of the mountains, for land to grow apple trees and to plant a garden and raise a family. Was that drive in me, set in my heart by God before I fully accepted Jesus as Savior? I feel that the prayers of my wife Jill's parents and the Mennonite community, and the Lord all played a part.

I am writing this in the first week of February; the nights are cold, and the days have been bright and sunny. The sap is rising, its power undeniable, and we saw our first robin. Out our window, we got to watch two yearling deer racing full speed in sheer exuberance, back and forth on the meadow across the fence from us. Folks, including our son, are tapping their sugar trees—no matter that a lot more winter is ahead, but for now, this “false Spring” brings renewal and vitality to all.

I have a circle of old timers--like me, that I meet with from time to time at the Harman Senior Center.

We talk about such things as the hardships of earlier days and the struggles of life. I wish we could be transported to the old general store of days past. Wooden floors, heating stoves, and wooden benches were where we unconsciously imbibed the rustic way of life, like in a Norman Rockwell painting. Talk of Winchesters, hunts, pocket knives, old cars and jobs where you had to toil your hardest to make a living, and some of us of our military days. But all agree, it's the country life we love; cities and their turmoil are not for us.

When I was in my twenties, I tried city life, pursuing various shades of journalism. Some aspects of it were rewarding, but the urban settings I lived in never led me to inner peace. Now, for those reading this who live in towns or cities where you earn your livings, if you are happy, then I am happy for you. The apostle Paul, who wrote two-thirds of the books in the New Testament, stated, “...for I have learned, in whatever state I am, to be content.” (Phil. 4: 11). He was beaten, stoned, jailed, and shipwrecked—all for his commission to spread the Gospel of Jesus Christ. An embroidered sampler Jill stitched hangs on our kitchen wall proclaiming, “When Life Gives You Lemons, Make Lemonade.” This has given me a reason to examine myself and more than a little of what I see; I wish I didn't. “None is righteous, no, not one...” (Romans 3:10).

The sun is so bright today it hurts my aging eyes, but I rejoice and love it, after the dark days of snow, cold and wind just recently passed and will come again. But the land needs winter for rest and nourishment from the snow and rain. Apple trees must have so many days of cold temperatures to bear fruit. If the temperatures get close to zero, it checks many pests like the woolly adelgid that is killing our beautiful native hemlocks which provide a welcome touch of green to the gray limbs of the hardwoods that cover our hills and hollers for six months of the year.

The sap that courses in the trees is felt in the young lambs—how I loved to see them leaping into the air and springing “boing, boing” back up and down in sheer exuberance. The calves and the colts are also frisking about in the ageless rites of the young. My old-timer pals—it even puts spring in our feet, if not in fact, at least in feeling. “Got to get some rays, bring it on—we need that sunshine energy!”

When I was a junior high and middle school teacher, the warm, sunny spells that got the sap flowing also saw fights break out among some of the youngsters.

And one of the worst I helped breakup was between two young teenage girls. It took place in the hallway in front of my classroom. Bob Smith, a big guy who had been a college linebacker was trying to restrain one of the girls. He was only partly successful and was unable to stop her from kicking her legs and feet. I remember I had to hold down the other girl's arms and was able to check her flailing legs. It was fast and furious—like two wildcats. After we stopped it, which took all our effort, I took the girl I restrained to the vice principal's office. She sat down on a chair and believe it or else, took out her compact, looked in the mirror, patted her hair down, and put on her lipstick. By then she had completely calmed down as if nothing had happened, just another day, thank you.

Maybe my success as a teacher was partly because I was a maverick as a youngster and had my share of problems. My gift for teaching was God-given, I know that. I loved working with kids because I loved the kids and really cared about their lives and futures. When those Spring vapors ascended on them and got their sap up and surging, I felt it and identified with it and remembered my own youth and the challenges of being a teenager. There was a very popular James Dean movie when I was a kid, *Rebel Without A Cause*. It tried to portray the challenges of teenagers—some sail

through those years on calm seas. For some, the waves run more stormy, to others, typhoon force. Kids are the product of their rearing.

A teacher is the captain of the classroom, the crew is the students. Strong principles are vital. If the teacher lets the kids rule there is turmoil. Take a look at our society today, the schools are mirrors of that. Fortunately, I could control my classes just as farmers must keep a strong hand and constant eye on their fields and flocks. My strict parents, teachers and mentors, the Marine Corps—it all helped, and it came naturally to me. But I also loved my students, and they knew it. Fortunately, I also had the knack of injecting humor and fun into their learning. And I taught all subjects to kids with learning disabilities. Outside the books with hands-on stuff, they were ahead of many of the other students and me, their teacher. We played a lot of touch football, and they heard a lot of my life experiences. I let them know I also had my share of misadventures as well.

So, when the sap is running and the sun's shining, and the heavens above are their bluest and full of promise—thanks be to God for making us free Americans and for living close to the earth in West Virginia. *Montani Semper Liberi*—"Mountaineers are Always Free."

— IN GOD WE TRUST



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Grandma's Recipe Box

H O M E C O O K I N ' A T I T ' S B E S T

We seek to honor the heart and soul of Grandma's cooking and preserve the memories that make her recipes truly irreplaceable. May this mix of down-home farm recipes remind you of soul-warming Sundays at Grandma's house. Would you like to share your favorite recipe with the rest of West Virginia? Please email them to ronw@wvfarm.org.

Mary's Lemon Pound Cake

- 1 cup of butter, softened
- 2 cups sugar
- 4 eggs
- 1 teaspoon vanilla extract
- 1 teaspoon lemon extract
- 3 cups all-purpose flour
- 1/2 teaspoon baking soda
- 1/2 teaspoon baking powder
- 3/4 teaspoon salt
- 1 cup buttermilk

Instructions:

1. Preheat oven to 325 degrees.
2. Mix butter, sugar, eggs, vanilla & lemon extracts together in a big bowl.
3. Mix flour, soda, baking powder and salt. Stir in wet mixture with buttermilk.
4. Bake for one hour & 15 minutes. Cool, then enjoy.

— Mary Purdy

Mary Purdy is my mother-in-law & she's 85 years old. She's got grandkids & great grandkids. She was always a wonderful country cook & her kids/relatives love her recipes. This cake was & still is her "go-to" cake for family celebrations, funerals or special occasions.



Mary's Apricot Ice Cream Dessert

- Two 1/2 gallons vanilla ice cream
- Graham crackers or vanilla wafers, crushed (enough to fill a baking pan/dish)
- 1 stick of butter
- 1 jar of apricot preserves
- 1/2 cup or more of toasted almonds



Instructions:

1. Melt butter & mix into graham crackers/wafers. Put in bottom of pan.
2. Slice ice cream to fit in the pan & arrange on top of crumbs.
3. Spread with apricot preserves, then add toasted almonds on top of that.
4. Alternate ice cream, preserves & almonds until gone. Freeze then enjoy!

— Mary Purdy

I married Mary's son, Dave. She made this for our wedding reception & everyone loved it. She still makes it for us to this day.

Mary's Peanut Butter Fudge

- 1 cup white sugar
- 1 cup brown sugar
- 2 tablespoons butter
- 1/2 cup evaporated milk
- 10 regular marshmallows
- 1/2 cup peanut butter
- 1 teaspoon vanilla extract

Instructions:

1. Put sugars, butter & evaporated milk in a saucepan on top of stove & bring to a boil for two minutes. Add 10 regular size marshmallows & stir until melted. Turn fire off under saucepan then add peanut butter & vanilla. Stir until all combined.
2. Pour into a greased casserole dish covered with wax paper. Put in fridge to cool, then cut into squares & enjoy!

— Mary Purdy

Mary's fudge is legendary! She used to always make it for Christmas. Dave and I lived in Roanoke, VA, for over 30 years before we retired from work & moved back to WV. We always went to WV for Christmas to visit my family & Dave's family. We looked forward to going to Mary's house to eat this fudge!



A garden of love grows in a grandmother's heart.

— Anonymous Author

Submitted by: Mrs. Pam K. Purdy,
Putnam County

COME SIT A SPELL

Monthly Puzzles with a Few Words of Country Wisdom Tossed in fer Good Measure!

Theme: Classic Toys

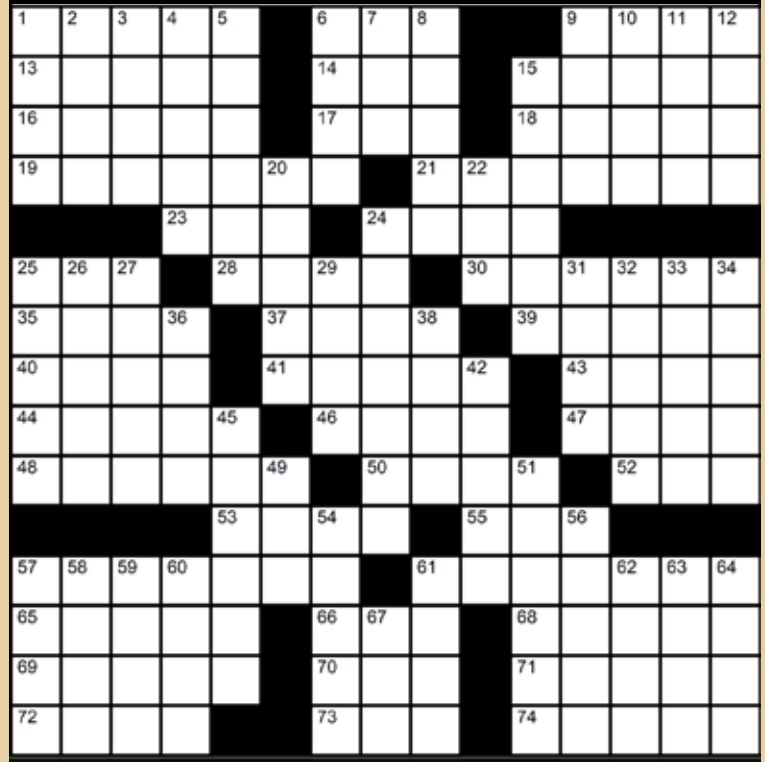
ACROSS

1. Sri Lankan language
6. Something to chew on, especially for cows
9. Mascara holder
13. Muscat resident
14. "____ Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest"
15. Father, colloquially
16. Jewish folklore creature
17. Debtor's letters
18. Art class prop
19. *Barbie's little sister
21. *____ 4 game
23. One less than jack
24. *____ Frog educational toy
25. Nutcracker's distinguishing feature
28. Taboo, alt. sp.
30. Cooking fat
35. Deserter's acronym
37. President's David
39. Shower accessory
40. Pro ____
41. Conical dwellings
43. Prep flour
44. *Thomas or Henry, e.g.
46. Law school test acronym
47. Genealogist's creation
48. Maurice of "Where the Wild Things Are"
50. Flying saucers
52. Make mistakes
53. Chemically-induced curls
55. Harry Potter's Hedwig
57. *Certain Patch
61. *Not real dough
65. Normal
66. Clingy seed container
68. ____-____-la
69. Theater curtain fabric
70. Put into service
71. Female deer, pl.
72. Pub offering
73. Goo on a trunk
74. What's in your e-wallet?

DOWN

1. Duds or threads
2. Wildly
3. French Sudan after 1960
4. All thumbs
5. Marine gastropod
6. Coconut fiber
7. *Shedding-type card game
8. Tie in tennis
9. Shark's provision
10. Part of cathedral
11. Work detail
12. "Stop!" to marchers
15. Correspondence friend (2 words)
20. Make, as in a law
22. Edible type of grass
24. Complete payment (2 words)
25. *Banned lawn darts
26. Fully informed
27. Supreme Teutonic god
29. Get-out-of-jail money
31. Like Neverland boys
32. France's longest river
33. Bid on a house, e.g.
34. *Certain gun ammo
36. "Best ____ schemes o'Mice an' Men"
38. "La Vie en rose" singer
42. Counter seat
45. Flamethrower fuel
49. Party barrel
51. Swaddle
54. Type of puzzle
56. Words in song, sing.
57. Intersection of two arcs
58. Ascus, pl.
59. "____ after reading"
60. Switch's partner
61. Get ready, for short
62. Comedian Carvey
63. Ford contemporary
64. Jumble
67. North American country

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WHEN TWO PEOPLE HIT THEIR HOES TOGETHER WHILE WORKING, THEY WILL BE WORKING TOGETHER THE NEXT YEAR.

SOW TURNIPS BETWEEN SUNDOWN AND DARK, AND YOU WILL NEVER FAIL OF A CROP.
A HEAVY DOGWOOD BLOOM MEANS A GOOD CORN CROP.
PLANT POTATOES WITH THE CUT-SIDE DOWN FOR A GOOD CROP.
WHEN THE LILAC BLOOM IS HEAVY, THERE WILL BE A GOOD CORN CROP.
TO CUT BRUSH SO THAT IT WILL NOT GROW AGAIN, CUT IT ON EMBER DAYS.

— FROM WITCHES, GHOSTS AND SIGNS, BY PATRICK W. GAINER, MORGANTOWN, WV, SENECA BOOKS, 1975.





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