

VICFA VOICE

Our Mission: *To promote and preserve .unregulated direct farmer-to-consumer trade that fosters availability of locally grow products n or home-produced food*

Special
Legislative Update

IN THIS ISSUE:

Virginia General Assembly
out of control-Lois Smith
recounts the 2016 GA
session's treatment of HB
619-the bill that went twice

Legislative Updates

Find out what happened to
the bills This years results on
several bills

Virginia Pipeline Update

Anne Buteau gives us an
inside look at the ongoing
fight many Virginians are
facing over the pipeline,
IT's all about the Soil...
getting ready for spring
planting

Got Moo?

Old Orchard Farm Presents-
Come learn about owning a
Family Cow...March 5, 2016

2016 Virginia General Assembly

By Lois Smith

It was so appropriate when I jumped into the car to come home from the General Assembly (GA) that a song was playing with lyrics that said, "the rich man does the dancing while the poor man pays the fiddler". I couldn't sum it up better myself. After many years and GA sessions I realize all the regulations put on farmers are not for everyone's safety and well being, but to help a few cooperate agribusinesses to monopolize our food system. They use the government and a smokescreen of safety scare tactics to come up with regulations that only a select few can fulfill. They have loads of money set aside just to buy certain government legislators into allowing the use of questionable practices and certain chemicals into our food supply that have been shown to cause cancer and many other illnesses while simultaneously destroying any real nutritional value the food may have had. In short they are being allowed to slowly poison the public which has no other choice but to consume their food because the govt. is cutting off their access to healthy farm fresh food for greed not safety

VICFA was at the GA again this year to lobby for the raw milk bill introduced by Delegate Morris and for HB 619, the home processing bill introduced by Delegate Rob Bell. The raw milk bill tanked with lack of a motion in the agricultural (Ag) subcommittee, so there was not a vote. Technically it is not dead and can be brought to the full Ag committee for a vote if the full Ag committee Chair will allow it, but knowing Delegate Danny Marshall has typically voted against us in the past that would

So, we turned our attention to HB619 the home-processing bill which stated that you could make anything in your kitchen and sell it as long as it did not go into commerce and stayed as a direct sale. We amended the bill to dumb it down to one line that took time and temperature control off of baked goods (code of VA 3.2-5130). This was done because last year when we were lobbying our constitutional amendment which stated- "That the people shall have a right to acquire, for their own consumption, farm-produced food, directly at the farm from the farmer who produced it.". The legislators told us they did not want to open the constitution of Virginia to include more language. Why not? The Virginia Constitution is amended all the time. It is not the Constitution of the United States of America. We were advised to change the law with legislation by amending the code. We knew it would not work, because of the many years we have tried doing just that. This year proved us right again. Not that we take any pleasure in being correct, in fact we were really hoping we were going to be proven wrong.

In the Agriculture Subcommittee our amended bill passed out of the Ag Subcommittee with a 4 to 3 in favor vote. Farm Bureau and Agribusiness council did not oppose it!! It could not get any better. Unbelievable! Woohoo! We could not believe it, people across Virginia were so excited. Delegate Bell told us that we could stay home we did not need to lobby it in the house anymore and if it got in trouble of not passing the full committee he would let us know. Delegate Bell did not want the masses showing up. VICFA was willing to take direction from him since he was the patron. I was going in case there was a substitute (they love to introduce weird substitutes from the floor) or incase anyone had questions.

I get to the office at 7:15 the morning of the Full Agriculture committee and I see an email from Del. Bell stating our bill is going back to the sub-committee because Virginia Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services (VDACS) has a problem with our amended bill. I went to the GA that morning in hopes of coming to a compromise.

Delegate Bell and I sat down with the Commissioner of Agriculture, Sandra Adams and the Head Vet Richard Wilkes to hear their objections. We were told "*they have given us enough and there will be no more compromises*". They said we keep coming back for more and more and this is where they are drawing the line and that Virginia is the one state with the most lenient food laws (I have news for everyone, it is because VICFA has been fighting for them and no doubt if we lived in another state they would have them also. Senator Frank Nicely of Tennessee is pushing our constitutional amendment in his state. Delegate Bell then asked, "what the requirements to sell a pumpkin pie at the farmers' market?", they replied, "*they did not know*". Yes folks, you read that right; the Commissioner of Agriculture had no idea what the existing law was. When asked, "Why they did not object during the first subcommittee meeting?" they said, "they could not hear.". I was sitting right next to them and I heard. Do you think if things were reversed and we said we could not hear we would *ever* get a bill back into subcommittee? I think not. I spoke up trying to find some common ground and asked what if we put on the label that this product should be kept at a certain temperature and that the food inspector still had the right to inspect at the market and check the temperature. I was told, no. Even when I brought up the fact that with my name and contact info on the label if I made anyone sick they could find me immediately, unlike when big business makes you sick and it takes months to trace it back to its origin.

There are 1100 inspected home kitchens in the commonwealth that pay the commonwealth \$44,000 a year to oppress us. It is \$40 a year and they come to your home, make sure a cat is not sitting in the window and that you have a sink to wash your hands. They can pop in anytime, "just to check".

Who could possibly believe that this will keep your food safe? No folks, it's just another tax hiding behind the ever present safety smokescreen. I made up a joke after sitting at the GA so many times. Here it is...How can you tell the difference between a government paid employee and a private sector citizen at the GA?.....The private sector citizen has a bad hair cut.....I try to laugh, but it's not really funny.

I tried to find out where VDACS, a government department and a sub-committee chair get the power to put a bill back into the sub-committee when it was already voted to go to the full committee. There is a pamphlet call the rules to the house, but I could not find it there. I was told by numerous legislative aids that the subcommittee has the right to do whatever they want and that it was inside baseball. My response was that God gave us a Bible so we would know the rules and you are telling me there are no rules for a chairperson of a subcommittee???

So, our bill returns to the subcommittee to go without a motion just like the raw milk bill? Kinda reminds me of that funny line in Willy Wonka and the Chocolate Factory, "I said, good day sir!"

I recall a conversation with Delegate Bloxom who's district is in the Eastern Shore part of the state. He is a "big" oyster man you know and he said to me that he was all for inspections. He went on to tell me how it isn't whether you will get sick eating oysters; someone is going to get sick eating oysters. It's just how many oysters you can sell before someone gets sick. The inspections are all about ratios. How many oysters and how much sickness. If you keep it under a certain amount you are good to go. Sounds simple enough, but wait there is a bigger catch, not everyone is allowed the same opportunity to risk the health, wealth, and safety of the commonwealth, its only the people that can afford the processing plants that have the ability to jump through all the hoops the inspector oversees. If you have ever visited the Eastern Shore you would see great poverty. Watermen that are so oppressed because they are not allowed to sell any shucked oysters directly to the public because in theory that might make us sicker then the big Agribusiness businessmen do.

Agribusiness businessmen love to talk about insurance and by the way so does Farm Bureau. They talk about it because they have the big bucks to afford it since they monopolize the industry in which they provide the commodity called food. I refuse to call them farmers because they are no different then the wall street stock traders in how they conduct business. Can you really farm 2,000 acres? As a small farmer I cannot even imagine a 2,000 acre "farm". Don't worry I am a capitalist. Though I agree with Benjamin Franklin that Capitalism without morals cannot work!

I went on to talk with Delegate Keam from the Tyson Corner, Virginia who informed me that he really did not know much about agricultural issues. I think that would be maybe acceptable if this was his first year on the agriculture sub-committee. I would give him a break, but it is unacceptable to not get up to speed after sitting on the sub-committee for a couple of years.

I went into his office with the fast food cheeseburger that I purchased last year during the GA session because someone broke my last cheeseburger I had for 3 years and it still looked the same as when I purchased it. I told him that if we were allowed to eat these cheeseburgers why could we not eat anything we wanted? He told me his kids did not drink soda and that his teenage son snacked on bowls of peas. WHAT ? WHAT ? WHAT ?

He must think that if you choose so called healthy foods verses junk food you would be exempt from food poisoning. "News flash" on January 22, 2016 Dole , the food conglomerate company recalled

6 different packaged salads, in 6 different states and it only took the inspectors 6 months to track it to this company as the culprit to killing 1 and hurting 11 people that they know of and can really without a doubt trace back to package salad. Only God knows how many people really got sick or died eating healthy salad greens and all this in their regulated safety inspected food processing facilities. What a Joke!.

The truth is the fast food cheeseburger is safer as far as getting sick from food poisoning because no matter what there are no bacteria- to date- that can attach themselves to the cheeseburger and make it decompose. You see, you need bacteria to decompose matter. This is sickening! As I stated before, "big business" uses government regulations to monopolize the market so they have the right to poison people, claiming that without inspections the little guy would go around poisoning their neighbors for pocket change while they make billions.

This is not about pumpkin pies, this is about Freedom and Liberty. If we cannot make and sell a pumpkin pie to our friends and neighbors without the governments' stamp of approval, are we living in a free country? Should we have to pay a tax to get granted government permission because the government feels that's what we owe government for them to bestow the right to sell a pumpkin pie? Sounds more like organized crime to me.

Our laws should reflect the sacrifices our fore-parents made to protect the attributes of a free society. They laid down their lives, and most people today do not seem to care as long as their bellies are full with whatever the government allows them to eat. How can we look are children in the eyes and say, oh well, there goes the neighborhood! We should be ashamed we have allowed this to happen. The government takes our tax money and lobbies the government to take our rights. How do we manage to sleep at night!?

We need a constitutional amendment stating-

"THAT THE PEOPLE SHALL HAVE THE RIGHT TO ACQUIRE FOR THEIR OWN CONSUMPTION FARM PRODUCED FOOD DIRECTLY AT THE FARM WITH AGREEMENT FROM THE FARMER WHO PRODUCED IT"!

And we should not rest until those words are written in Virginia's Constitution!



Who's your Legislator? Go to-
<http://whosmy.virginiageneralassembly.gov/>

Oligarchy in the GA

By Richard Altice

Last spring I found an article (truthinmedia.com/princeton-study-declares-u-s-government) that said that our nation is no longer acting as a republic, but is an oligarchy. As of yesterday I have seen evidence that oligarchy (wisegeek.org/what-is-an-oligarchy.htm) is thriving in our Virginia General Assembly. Last Monday, the 26th, House Bill (HB)619, was proposed by Delegate Robert Bell (<https://www.richmondsunlight.com>, search word HB619) that would give individuals more freedom to exercise their rights of selling value enhanced food from their land and from un-inspected kitchens. A number of my friends and collaborators in the food liberation movement were there, though I wasn't.

Each side gave testimony as to their opinion and the Agriculture Sub-committee voted 4 to 3 to advance the bill to the full committee. People from Virginia Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services (VDACS) were there, one of my friends was sitting next to one of them. VDACS realized that they had not testified and complained to the chairman of the committee and requested a re-hearing, which was granted. I was notified of what had happened and that HB619 would be re-heard 4:30 on 2/1/16, yesterday. I don't know about you, but I was alarmed and disgruntled with an agency of the state being able to ask for a re-hearing on an issue. My immediate thought was that if I, one of the people were in such a position, being disgruntled with an outcome, could I ask similarly for a second bite at the apple?? It is clear in my mind that the VDACS people were asleep at the wheel.

The issue here is food inspection, the frame of mind of the producers and the unalienable rights of the people of the Commonwealth. In the late 19th century food production started being concentrated to serve the growing cities. Unscrupulous producers started squeezing for maximum profit by using unacceptable practices in their food production making people sick; bringing out the need for the government to protect the people with inspection agencies to control the fraud.

We have been indoctrinated into believing that only inspected food is safe, but in the mean time, the food/agriculture corporations have been busy at still squeezing for maximum profit, have infiltrated the agencies purposed with protecting the people to use these agencies to control the people and to monopolize the industry making efforts to strangle all small independent competition.

You must know that these corporations have sped up the the production lines, shortening inspection viewing and in an alarming number of cases removing the supposedly independent government inspectors and doing the inspections themselves.

You can go on the internet, (foodsafetynews.com/sections/food-recalls/), and find where inspected food is not safe. Just 10 days ago Dole, with their vegetable bags, made a number of people sick and one died from their contaminated food. We must not assume that because something was "inspected" it's safe. Look at present times, how your neighbors and family members produce and consume un-inspected food and we cook for ourselves with no adverse effects. We don't need "experts" with an alphabet of letters behind their name to know how to properly handle food. Though not innate, food safety is quickly learned from our parents as we prepare the family meal. Our family and friends know to be most careful in their food preparation protocols as they would be

mortified if they made loved ones sick or worse. Take, also, in the fact that a successful law suit would render the farmer without the farm and home. How many times have we seen guilty businesses shut their doors because of dirty food?

We have the right, the unalienable right (breitbart.com/big-government/2013/09/23/what-did-thomas...), to choose the food we want to consume. With that right, as with all rights, comes the responsibility of learning that it is clean and acceptable to us, which is another right.

Here I want to demonstrate a difference of attitude between the two groups: one motivated primarily for profit and the other to produce something with loving care and to secondly earn compensation. When we research what is wrong with the food that agriculture industries produce, we quickly find that there are colossal problems with modern industrialized agriculture and food production (organicconsumers.org/old_articles/Organic/IndustrialAg502).

With this being the computer information era and information being easily accessible and shared, many people are seeing the harm caused by industrial food and are seeking to return to old tried and true methods of food production and processing; individuals and small farms working at small lots and using time tested methods of raising crops and animals, with no chemicals, pharmaceuticals or toxins.

The big agriculture (big Ag) has monopolized and seized control over food production and detests any and all competition and works diligently to stifle all independent small producers (factoryfarmmap.org/problems/). They have infiltrated government which was established by the people to protect the people's rights and property, to control them and take their property.

At the General Assembly sub-committee meeting yesterday Del. Bell, members of the VDACS office and two proponents were there. Del. Bell explained the bill and the changes that he was looking to make. Questions of liability were asked by one of the committee members, with injured parties being able to sue for damages. VDACS was given their opportunity to speak against the bill saying how un-inspected food hurts people, but only being able to give statistics from 2008 of a few incidents from church picnics causing illness. Nothing was said about across the nation, of regular outbreaks of illness and deaths from inspected food. Nothing being said about food grown in clean atmospheres, using methods as intended by nature, from small farms, in small lots, prepared by concerned, caring people being far cleaner than what big ag with their industrial practices can do.

Del. Bell was given an opportunity of rebuttal and then the discussion was over. Proponents weren't given a chance to speak. One would think with this being a re-hearing that both sides would be heard from. I would like to say that a vote was taken, but it wasn't. No motions were made to up or down vote on the bill, thus it simply died on the table. This is a tactic which this committee is famous for using, this issue of quietly tabling a bill is what prompted a bill before the GA this year, which would mandate votes on all bills in committees, HB1315. It is disheartening to know that there had been 4 members in favor of HB619, but it seems that they kowtowed to the "experts" and usurped the people's rights.

Several red flags appear with what has happened; that governmental agencies though experts and should be looked at for educated opinions, but are looked on as having authority over the people, their employers (as in the parable of the pot telling the potter what to do). (George Allen, when governor, issued an executive order banning state agencies testifying before committees) I later

asked Del. Bell about agencies getting to ask for re-hearings, to get a second bite at the apple, with his reply, that it happens with fair regularity and seemed to be no big deal with him. I would like to know what rule or regulation allows this, its not proper. He went on to say that we may not be successful with the present makeup of the committee, to get legislation thorough that supports the peoples rights. Waiting for their retirement is a lengthy option that I have a hard time accepting. It is obvious that this committee is ignorant of or is ignoring their oath of office and that they are deputies of the people and are there to do the people's business and not that of *run away* governmental agencies and monopolizing corporations.

Thomas Jefferson said, "If a nation expects to be ignorant and free, in a state of civilization, it expects what never was and never will be". We must be educated in and participatory in the governmental process. If we sit idly by doing nothing, the wolves of government will see us as food and eat us, we must take charge and eat the wolf instead.

There are four Supreme Court decisions that Virginia is ignoring, which addresses the issues here, which can be found on: (freedom-school.com/acceptance/constitutional-law-by-carl): If any statement, within any law, which is passed, *is* unconstitutional, the *whole* law is unconstitutional, Marbury v. Madison, 5 US 137: (1803); No state may convert any secured liberty into a privilege and issue a license and a fee for it, Mudook v. Pen. 319 US 105: (1943); If a state does convert your right into a privilege and issue a license and a fee for it, you can ignore the license and a fee and engage the right with impunity, Shuttlesworth v. Birmingham al. 373 US 262: (1962). An unconstitutional act is not law. It confers no rights, it imposes no duties, it affords no protections, it creates no office. It is in legal contemplation as inoperative as though it has never been passed, Norton v. Shelby County, 118 USR 425.

You see, though we have a usurping General Assembly, we do have remedies outside the ballot box and short of the bullet box. *The key is that we, individually, must be educated for if we don't know our rights, we have no rights.*



2016 Legislative Updates

Written by Alyssa and Josiah Tillet

HB 699 (supported) Summary: Production of industrial hemp. Clarifies that it is lawful for a person with a license to manufacture industrial hemp products or engage in scientific, agricultural, or other research involving the applications of industrial hemp and that no person shall be prosecuted for the possession, cultivation, or manufacture of industrial hemp plant material or products. The current law authorizes the Board of Agriculture and Consumer Services to adopt regulations necessary to license persons to grow industrial

hemp or administer a research program. The bill requires the Board to adopt regulations as necessary to license persons to grow and process industrial hemp for any purpose and requires the Commissioner of Agriculture and Consumer Services to establish a licensure program, with a maximum license fee of \$250.

HB 699 passed the House unanimously and is now in Senate Committee on Agriculture, Conservation, and Natural Resources. This is a great step towards farm freedom in Virginia!

SB 298 (opposed) Summary: Increasing rents for certain planting grounds. Increases the annual rent from \$1.50 per acre or portion thereof to \$5,000 per acre or portion thereof for leasing planting grounds that are within 1,000 feet of shoreline residences.

VICFA opposed SB 298 because it would effectively cost-prohibit oyster farming in certain areas where aquaculture is now permissible. It was pulled from consideration in Committee by its patron and will not be considered this session.

HB 62 (supported) Summary: Exemptions from milk production requirements. Exempts persons who own three or fewer milking cows and three or fewer goats from the oversight of the Milk Commission and the Board of Agriculture and Consumer Services' requirements governing the quality, grading, and sanitary standards for milk so long as the milk their cows or goats produce is sold directly to consumers and contains a label stating that the product has not been inspected by the state and the consumer is purchasing the product at his own risk.

After lengthy public comment, this bill failed to move out of Agriculture Subcommittee for lack of a motion. It is not technically dead but is effectively dead, barring unlikely action by a subcommittee member.

HB1315 (supported) Summary: General Assembly; introduction of legislation; recorded vote. Requires all legislation introduced by a member of the House of Delegates or the Senate to be considered by the committee of purview or a subcommittee thereof and receive a recorded vote. All legislation reported from the house of introduction shall be considered by the committee of purview or a subcommittee thereof in the other chamber and receive a recorded vote.

HB1315 had been referred to the House Rules Committee. On February 11, the bill was tabled by voice vote. VICFA supported this bill because so many of our legislative priorities in the past have been killed in subcommittee or committee without a motion, vote, or recorded vote. The bill would have been a significant transparency measure which would have enabled us to identify where subcommittee and committee members stood on our legislation.

Atlantic Coast Pipeline Update: USFS reject route through forests, PEIS and Repeal of 56-49.01

By Anne Buteau

On Thursday 21 January 2016, the US Forest Service (USFS) rejected the current route of the Atlantic Coast Pipeline through the Monongahela and George Washington National Forests in a filing to FERC (the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission). They specifically rejected any route over Cheat Mountain and Shenandoah Mountain, including ACP LLC's proposed alternatives in these areas. The Cow Knob Salamander (a candidate for the Endangered Species List), flying squirrels, bats, mussels, and multiple other species as well as red spruce ecosystem restoration areas would all be irreversibly impacted by this project should it be built.

On February 16, 2016 Dominion/ACP adopted a new proposed route, GWNF 6 to avoid these areas of environmental concern, however this new route was previously discarded by Dominion as being "too challenging and potentially hazardous". In addition, 249 new property owners are being impacted and it adds 30 miles to the pipeline, traversing some of the most concentrated karts topography in the Allegheny region.

The USFS has also been extremely critical of Dominion's soils sampling, and archaeological and cultural surveys. It is my opinion that Dominion/ACP feel they do not really have to do thorough and appropriate studies and surveys as FERC have rubber stamped so many pipeline projects in the past.

The new route through the National Forests which will extend Dominion's timeline, add to expense, and increase the projects uncertainty. No new route is acceptable to me as construction of this pipeline supports fracking which is destroying communities in West Virginia, and any route would carve a permanent gash through pristine wilderness areas of the Blue Ridge and Allegheny Mountains.

The ACP and the Mountain Valley Pipeline (MVP) are only 2 out of 5 proposed huge pipeline projects that could cross Virginia, all moving gas through the state from the Marcellus Shale, involving a massive land grab of private property for corporate profit. Are they all really needed? Do the benefits outweigh the costs to Virginians and the environment?

Ernie Reed (President of Wild Virginia) stated recently "We ask that they (FERC) require that there be a programmatic environmental impact statement which would look at all of the impacts, all of these pipelines together, to consider whether any of them should be permitted." At least 27 Virginia legislators (State and Federal) have already asked this of FERC. Please ask yours to add their support to this campaign, as do we really need Virginia to be crossed multiple times by these huge natural gas pipelines?

Along the routes of the ACP and MVP, communities are still fighting back. Dominion is currently awaiting the result of at least 53 suits in Nelson County against property owners who have refused permission to survey. Dominion sued to force access under VA Code 56-49.01, the "Survey without Permission" Statute. For the second year in a row, bills have been introduced to repeal this section of code (HB1118 and SB614). This year the bills were stalled in subcommittee's which chose not to vote on the bills and subsequently let them die quietly.

56-49.01 should be repealed because-

- The Federal Natural Gas Act already grants companies the right to force people to allow survey IF FERC has granted the Certificate of Public Convenience and Need at the end of the regulatory process. A judge would determine the terms of access.
- repealing 56-49.01 would not affect surveying for other utilities
- without 56-49.01 there would be an incentive for companies to propose responsible, necessary projects that were in the public interest
- gas pipelines were successfully built before 56-49.01 was enacted in 2004, so it is not necessary

**For the latest news go to- www.friendsofnelson.com , or facebook
Anne Buteau February 23, 2016**

“Building Better Soil”

By Jillian Lowery, January 23, 2016

Luscious, abundant gardens such as the ones featured on Better Homes and Garden magazines are every gardener’s dream. Yet such beautiful success is not always a reality. A far more common reality is a garden that thrives for a few weeks only to end with struggling crops, lower yields, and an exasperated gardener. Successful gardens can be achieved, however, with closer attention and care of the soil. Healthy, productive soil makes for healthy, productive crops. In order to establish and maintain healthy soil, one must first understand the complex components with which it is created.

Soil contains a vast, interconnected food web of microorganisms, earthworms, and other symbiotic elements. Plants contain mycorrhizal fungi, which are “the intricate associations roots form with specific fungal groups [that] represent the underground

absorbing organs of most plants in nature” (Gianinazzi-Pearson, 1). These filaments interact with plant roots and surrounding bacteria to provide nutrients to the soil and to create a looser soil structure (Howard, 1). The carbohydrates released by the plants into the soil provide a nutrient-rich environment for the microorganisms teeming at the roots. Healthy topsoil can contain “600 to 800 million individual bacteria from a possible 10,000 species; several miles of fungal hyphae; 10,000 individual protozoa; and 20 to 30 beneficial nematodes from a possible 100 species” in just a spoonful of soil (Ussery, “Build Better Garden Soil,” 1). This complex ecology can be easily damaged, however, by poor soil structure or an imbalance of nutrients.

In its basic elements, soil can be characterized as three distinct soil separates: sand, silt, and clay. These materials are derived from various parent materials of differing chemical compositions and ultimately make up topsoil (Ussery, “Build Better Garden Soil,” 1). Sand may originate from rock fragments or, more typically, from quartz, thus containing little in the way of plant nutrients (Brady, 167). Silt contains many similar properties to sand but has much smaller, finer particles that give it a silky smooth feel (Brady, 168). Clay contains the smallest particle size of these three separates and has a greater water absorption capacity and plasticity (Brady, 169). A mixture of these three separates in equal proportions is called loam. The arrangement of these particles makes up the soil structure and defines the soil tilth, which is “the physical condition of the soil in relation to plant growth” (Brady, 187). Organic matter is another essential component of healthy soil and is constantly being produced by decomposing plant matter, animals, and animal waste. The resulting material is referred to as humus. Energy from this decomposing material is harvested by various microorganisms throughout the soil that in turn provide nitrogen, enzymes, minerals, and other nutrients back into the soil for reuptake. Many gardeners struggle to establish or maintain the right soil type and often make matters worse by adding the wrong elements in efforts to amend the soil. Thankfully, there are several ways to bring soil back to a healthy, thriving, and productive balance.

Adding diverse sources of organic matter is a great way to naturally improve soil. Livestock manures are a good source of nitrogen and provide readily available nutrients to soil life (Ussery, “8 Steps for Making Better Garden Soil,” 1). Composting recycles nutrients from organic wastes and increases production of humus. Compost is generally applied every spring at a rate of 1 inch deep (Howard, 1). Mulching also provides similar benefits to soil as composting but is less disruptive of soil organisms during application (Kent, 1). Because its nutrients are so readily available, typical mulch applications are only 2 inches deep (Kent, 1). Throughout the decomposition of mulch and other organic materials, earthworms and other microorganisms mix the resulting product into the existing soil, which improves soil tilth. Chickens are also a great resource to rotate through garden beds, as their scratching habits work the soil without the extreme disrupt of tilling practices. Minimizing tilling is important

because it preserves surface-layer organisms, earthworm tunnels, and webs of beneficial fungi and prevents poor water drainage and compacted soil from buried plant debris (Howard, 1). Cover crops are also an effective means of adding nutrients back into the soil, preventing soil erosion, and improving soil structure and fertility (Ussery, "8 Steps for Making Better Garden Soil," 1). The best soil will have a combination of what poultry farmer Harvey Ussery calls "the living, the recently dead, and the very dead," which refers to live plant matter; the decomposition of soil organisms, compost, and animal wastes; and the final result of humus (Ussery, "8 Steps for Making Better Garden Soil," 1).

Once the organic matter has had sufficient time to incorporate into the existing soil, it is advisable to collect a soil sample for analysis prior to planting the next crop. Soil analyses pinpoint areas where the soil is deficient and can be tailored to the next intended crop's needs. Additional soil amendment products such as a mineral mix, calcium, or soil conditioner may be needed to boost the soil. Once these things have been established, gardening methods such as companion planting and crop rotation will continue to build up and maintain the soil. As previously stated, healthy, productive soil makes for healthy, productive crops with the added benefit of a healthy ecosystem. With these practices and a better understanding of soil properties and the expansive life found within it, the dream of a successful garden becomes much more achievable.

◆ "This article is courtesy of Jillian Lowery, New Country Organics' Farm & Garden Consultant. New Country Organics is an organic livestock feed and soil amendment company based in Waynesboro, VA. Visit their website or call directly for more information: www.NewCountryOrganics.com (540) 469-0694."

Works Cited

- Brady, Nyle C., and Ray R. Weil. "Soil Architecture and Physical Properties." *Elements of the Nature and Properties of Soils*. 14th ed. Upper Saddle River, N.J.: Pearson Prentice Hall, 2014. Print.
- Gianinazzi-Pearson, Vivienne. "Plant Cell Responses to Arbuscular Mycorrhizal Fungi: Getting to the Roots of the Symbiosis." *The Plant Cell* 8.October (1996): 1871-883. Web. 7 Dec. 2015. <http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC161321/pdf/081871.pdf>
- Howard, Doreen. "Building Fertile Soil." *Mother Earth News - The Original Guide to Living Wisely*. Ogden Publications, Inc., 1 June 2003. Web. 7 Dec. 2015. <<http://www.motherearthnews.com/organic-gardening/building-fertile-soil-zmaz03jjzgoe.aspx>>.
- Kent, Kathy. "Mulch Works Miracles by Building Up Garden Soil." *South Bend Tribune* (Indiana). 9 Aug. 2003. LexisNexis Academic. Web. 3 Dec. 2015.
- Ussery, Harvey. "Build Better Garden Soil." *Mother Earth News*. Ogden Publications, Inc., 1 Apr. 2007. Web. 8 Dec. 2015.
- Ussery, Harvey. "8 Steps for Making Better Garden Soil." *Mother Earth News*. Ogden Publications, Inc., 1 Jun. 2007. Web. 8 Dec. 2015.

Don't Miss Our March 13, 2016 Meeting!

VICFA MONTHLY MEETINGS ARE HELD THE 2ND SUNDAY OF EACH MONTH.

We will share in a potluck lunch at 12:00 pm, followed by our general business meeting from 1:00 - 3:00 pm. VICFA membership meetings are open to the public. Please bring a dish and a big helping of enthusiasm to share. Broaden our reach - invite a friend or neighbor to join you.

Sunday, March 13, 2016 at 12:00 pm
hosted by Anne Buteau.
6556 James River Road (Rt 56)
Shipman, Va 22971
Phone: (434) 263-4946

DIRECTIONS:

From the North/West/East:

From Charlottesville, come south on Rt 29 towards Lynchburg. Go about 30 miles to Lovingston and turn left at the traffic lights (the 3rd Lovingston exit). Turn right on James River Road/Rt 56 East. Go about 7 1/2 miles on this road and you come to our house on the left hand side, mailbox 6556, just before an old big white barn. (When you come down a mountain with 25 mph curves you are about 3/4 mile from our house)

From the Lynchburg area:

Come north on Rt 29, pass through Amherst, Colleen (Look for Blue Ridge Medical Center on right/Big Ice Cream Cone on the left). Go another 1 1/2 miles, turn right towards Shipman/OakRidge on Rt 653. Go to T junction (by the Corner Market) and turn right on James River Road/Rt 56 east. Follow above directions from here.

From the Farmville area:

Go west on Rt 60. Go through Buckingham. Turn right on Rt 56. Cross the James River and we are 6 1/2 miles from there on the right. Mailbox 6556, next to big white barn.

Old Orchard Farm Presents

"So you want a Family Cow?"



Saturday
9 January, 2016

at Old Orchard Farm
6556 James River Road • Shipman, VA

Have you thought about getting a milk cow? Have you ever been up close to a real cow with horns? Where do you start? What do you need? Would you like to find out?

This workshop will provide an introduction to small scale family cow keeping, including hands on time with livestock. We want to share our experiences with you, to help you avoid some of the pitfalls that lie on the road to successful cow ownership, and demonstrate what can be achieved with limited time and money.

For more information and registration for this VICFA fundraising workshop, please email:
annebuteau@yahoo.com or call: (434) 263-4946

Advertise in VICFA Voice!

Classified Ad rate per month, prepaid:
\$5 first 25 words, \$ 0.20 per word thereafter.

Display Ad rate per month, prepaid:

PAGE SIZE	1 MONTH	6 MONTHS	12MO.
Full page (size - 8"x10.5")	\$100	\$95	\$90
1/2 page (sizes - 8"x5.25" or 4"x10.5")	\$50	\$47.50	\$45
1/4 page (size - 4"x5.25")	\$25	\$23.75	\$22.50
1/8 page (size - 4"x2.5")	\$12.50	\$11.88	\$11.25

Write For VICFA!

We'd love to feature your article in an upcoming newsletter.
Contact suzicroes@gmail.com

Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world; indeed, it's the only thing that ever has.

Margaret Mead

Share this newsletter with a friend - encourage others to join VICFA!

Annual membership is \$25.00.

Please make check payable to VICFA and send to PO Box 6838, Charlottesville, VA 22906.

MEMBERSHIP FORM (please print clearly) * Required fields

*Date _____

*First Name _____ *Last Name _____

Company /Farm Name _____

*Address _____ *City _____ *State _____

*Zip _____ County _____ Congressional District _____

*Phone (_____) _____ - _____ E-mail _____

Website _____ Producers, please list the products that you sell:

*Do you want to be listed in the Membership Directory? Yes No

Note. Your directory listing will contain all of the above information unless you indicate otherwise below.

How did you hear about VICFA?/Comments:

VICFA



VIRGINIA INDEPENDENT CONSUMERS

Questions or comments about VICFA?
We want to hear from you!

VICFA Board Members:

Lois Smith, President:

804-366-6051

Richard Altice, Vice-President:

434-223-4204

Christine Solem, Secretary:

Members At Large:

Susan Veerbeek:

growinggracefarm@gmail.com

Josiah Tillett: jtillett@liberty.edu *

434-329-1510

Suzi Croes: 540-419-6571

VICFA COMMUNICATIONS WOULD LIKE TO THANK...

VICFA VOICE Editor- Suzi Croes

**CONTRIBUTING WRITERS- Lois Smith, Richard Altice, Alyssa and Josiah Tillitt,
Anne Buteau and Jillian Lowery**

GRAPHIC ART <http://www.standoutarts.com/>