

For immediate release

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Northern Virginia Groups Host October Urban Agriculture Month Events

Urban agriculture groups responded to COVID-19 crisis to provide food to families in need

This year's October Urban Agriculture Month will shine a spotlight on the significant role urban agriculture plays in our regional and local food system. Several urban agriculture, food security and garden groups in northern Virginia have come together to offer a series of virtual events that highlights the local urban agriculture response to the COVID-19 pandemic. The theme of the month is Urban Agriculture: Resiliency Rooted in Innovation.

The virtual event this year includes panel discussions on how local businesses and urban gardens adapted to the pandemic, a town hall with local elected officials, and cooking and gardening workshops. In addition, there are in-person garden tours and recorded classes by Master Gardeners and Master Naturalists. The month-long event showcases urban agriculture in Arlington, Alexandria, Fairfax, and Falls Church.

"In response to the COVID-19 health crisis, our groups have been working to support and expand efforts to grow fresh produce for our neighbors in need," said Robin Broder, President, Arlington Friends of Urban Agriculture. "This global crisis will have long lasting health and economic impacts for our local community, and has shown that we need a resilient local and regional food system that is not fragile in the face of crises."

"Individuals, churches, schools, and other groups have stepped up to grow fresh, nutritious produce for our community, but they can't go it alone to meet the need," said Stacey Evers, co-chair of the Fairfax Food Council's Urban Agriculture Working Group. "We need policies and incentives that will support the many exciting local urban ag initiatives that can boost everyone's access to healthy local food."

"Our communities experienced a dramatic and rapid increase in demand for supplemental food programs and our local governments, nonprofit organizations, schools, PTAs, and businesses came together to find ways to meet that demand," said Aisha Salazar, Family & Consumer Sciences Agent, VCE Arlington & Alexandria. "Now the question is how do we meet the ongoing food needs of our communities who will continue to suffer from food and economic insecurity."

Event details and registration can be found [HERE](#). Garden tour registration is [HERE](#). Tours begin the weekend of October 3-4.

Sponsoring organizations: Virginia Cooperative Extension, Arlington Friends of Urban Agriculture, Fairfax Food Council, Fairfax Master Gardeners, Master Gardeners of Northern Virginia, Falls Church Garden Club, and Master Food Volunteers of Northern Virginia. October Urban Agriculture month website: <https://arlington.ext.vt.edu/programs/urbanag.html>.

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Schedule of Events

<https://arlington.ext.vt.edu/programs/urbanag.html>

(list as of Oct 1, 2020)

School Victory Garden Tours:

- Wakefield High School: Tour Date/Time: Saturday, October 3rd (9-11 am)
- Tuckahoe Elementary: Tour Date/Time: Sunday, October 4th (2 - 4pm)
- Hoffman-Boston Elementary: Tour Date/Time: Saturday, October 10th (10a-12p)
- Thomas Jefferson Middle School: Tour Date/Time: Saturday, October 24th (9-11a)

Town Hall & Panel Discussions:

The Pandemic Pivot - Businesses adapting to keep afloat. Hear how local restaurants, businesses, and farmers markets pivoted to meet customers needs.

Date: Tuesday, October 13, 9:30am - 11:00am

Moderator: Dr. Caroline Boules, Lecturer at the Environmental Science and Public Policy program at University of Maryland

Panelists:

- **David Guas**, Chef/Owner at Bayou Bakery, Coffee Bar & Eatery and Co-founder Chefs Feeding Families
- **Ryan Pierce**, Fresh Impact Farms
- **Dalila Boclin**, Director of Programs at FreshFarm
- **Juan Pablo Echeverria**, Outreach and Education Coordinator, Arcadia Center for Sustainable Food and Agriculture

Future of Urban Agriculture Town Hall. With local policymakers and elected officials to highlight successes and ask what's next for urban agriculture in Fairfax County, Fairfax City, Falls Church, Arlington, and Alexandria.

Date: Wednesday, Oct 21st at 7-8:30pm.

Moderated by: David Sachs, Friends of Urban Agriculture

Panelists include:

- **Libby Garvey**, County Board Member, Arlington County
- **Ross Litkenhous**, City Council Member, City of Falls Church

- **Jon Stehle**, Councilmember, City of Fairfax
- **Dalia Palchik**, Providence District Supervisor, Fairfax County Board of Supervisors

In the Dirt: How urban gardeners responded to the needs of food pantries - Food Insecurity during COVID-19: the impact of coronavirus on food pantries and community response.

Date: Tuesday, October 27 at 7-8:30pm

Moderated by: Robin Broder, Arlington Friends of Urban Agriculture

Panelists:

- **Ilana Rea**, Hoffman-Boston PTA Garden Chair
- **Becky Halbe**, Master Gardener, Tuckahoe Victory Garden, Rock Spring Victory Bagging Site
- **Stacey Evers**, Grow a Row FC and Co-chair of Fairfax Food Council Urban Agriculture Working Group
- **Cory Suter**, Co-chair of Fairfax Food Council Urban Agriculture Working Group

From the Ground Up: Starting Community Gardens - Tools, tips, and tricks to start a community garden, including at a school or faith-based institution run by volunteers

Date: Friday, October 30 at 12:30-1:30pm

Moderated by: David Sachs, Arlington Friends of Urban Agriculture

Panelists:

- **Adria Bordas**, Unit Coordinator & Extension Agent, Agriculture and Natural Resources, VCE Fairfax
- **Kirsten Conrad**, Extension Agent, Agriculture and Natural Resources, VCE Arlington & VCE Alexandria

Urban Gardening Series:

Arlington Friends of Urban Agriculture and Arlington Virginia Cooperative Extensions present a 5 week gardening class that presents research based best practices and real-life experiences of Arlington gardeners in 2020. **Thursday nights starting October 8-November 12, 2020.**

Week 1, Thursday, October 8, 2020 – Starting a Garden? It's Mostly about the Soil.

Week 2, Thursday, October 15, 2020 – What's the Plan? Site & crop selection.

Week 3, Thursday, October 22, 2020 – Protect me, I'm YOURS! Planting and Tending Your Vegetable Garden

Week 4, Thursday, October 29, 2020 – The Insects Might Inherit the Earth. Encouraging the Good and Limiting the Bad Crop Pests

Week 5, Thursday, November 5, 2020 – When 28 Weeks Aren't Enough! Tips on Extending Your Season.

Cooking & Gardening at Home

Seed Saving: Monday, October 5, 7:30pm

Irena Holowell, Southern Exposure Seed Exchange, Falls Church Garden Club

Cooking Your Fall Harvest: How to Cook Squash

Date: Friday, October 9, 1:00-2:00pm

Gardening with Deer: Management, Exclusion, and the Case for Population Control in Arlington County.

Tuesday, October 13, 7:00-8:30pm

Moderated by: Joanne Hutton

Panelists:

- **Bill Browning** on White tail deer population management in the DC Metro area;
- **Dave Smith and Ted Edwards** on tips and tricks for preventing deer damage on vegetable and fruit crops.

Kids in the Garden

How to work with kids in the garden at school, after school, and at home

Date: Friday, October 16, 3-4pm

Easy Home Preserving during COVID-19

Join kitchen-experts and Master Food Volunteers to learn tips and tricks for making the most of your produce.

Part I - Use it or lose it! Avoid food waste

Monday, October 19, 6:30-7:30pm

Part II - Hands-on harvest: What to do with your fall bounty

Mondays October 26, 6:30-7:30pm

Kids in the Kitchen: Cooking at Home with Kids

How to work with kids in the kitchen at school, after school, and at home. Get tips to cook with kids of all ages.

Dates: Tuesday, Oct 20 5:30pm-6:30pm