

Vol. 4. APRIL 2025

The Stalk



Accomack & Northampton County Cooperative Extension
Eastern Shore Agricultural Research & Extension Center



Extension rebranding its outreach efforts with new "Info on the Go" segments by VCE Agents & Specialists

"Cab Cast: Your Extension Info on the Go" is an exciting new pilot initiative being launched by Eastern Shore VCE agents and Virginia Tech specialists in April 2025. This innovative program is designed to empower you, our stakeholders, by delivering essential information right to your fingertips—whether you're driving a pickup truck, operating a tractor or sprayer cab, or simply relaxing at home. No matter where you are or what your schedule looks like, staying informed has never been easier.



Gone are the days of worrying about missing vital updates because you couldn't attend a meeting. With Cab Cast, you'll have access to concise, insightful podcasts and engaging video segments that you can tune into anytime, anywhere. Covering a diverse range of topics including soil fertility and nutrient management, weed science, plant pathology, entomology, and much more, these episodes are tailored to address the specific needs of our local agricultural community. Whether you're watching on a screen or just listening while on the move, Cab Cast is here to keep you connected, informed, and ready to tackle the challenges of modern farming. Let's redefine convenience and make expert advice accessible wherever life takes you.

Mark, Theresa & Helene

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THE AGENT'S CORNER

Theresa Pittman - Accomack County ANR Agent

Hélène Doughty - Northampton County ANR Agent



2025 Eastern Shore Small Farms & Homesteaders Workshop

On March 26th, 2025, Virginia Cooperative Extension hosted the 2025 Small Farm / Homesteader Workshop at the ESAREC, welcoming an impressive turnout of 40 enthusiastic participants. The workshop focused on three key areas: cut flower production, small fruit production, and poultry production education.

Attendees engaged in a series of insightful discussions after learning from expert growers about cut flower cultivation and the logistics of you-pick strawberry operations.

Sessions also delved into the creative marketing strategies for edible flowers and herbs, beginner-friendly approaches to small fruit production, and essential food safety protocols for handling small fruits.

The poultry education segment offered invaluable information on backyard poultry breeds, housing options, brooding techniques, nutrition essentials, anatomy, and disease prevention, including in-depth information and updates on avian influenza. Participants demonstrated their eagerness and curiosity by asking numerous thoughtful questions, fostering vibrant exchanges and knowledge-sharing.

Thank you to our sponsors Horizon Farm Credit and Northampton Farm Bureau



Agents' Calendar: APRIL 2025

"Working for the Wellbeing of Our Communities!"

- April 1: Northampton Farm Bureau Meeting
- April 3: Food Safety School, ESAREC
- April 7: VCE/ESAREC Monthly Meeting
- April 8: Southeast Unit Coordinator Meeting
- April 10: Northampton AFD Committee Meeting
- April 15: VESA Meeting
- April 17: Commercial Pesticide License Recertification Course
- April 17: Hydroponics 101 Agent Training
- April 24: Eastern Shore Disaster Preparedness Coalition
- April 30: Risk Management in Event Planning Training
- April 30: ESVA Salty Farms Workshop (UVA/ESAREC/VCE)

Ongoing:

- 2025 Eastern Shore producers' sustainability series
- Small Farm/Food Business education series

Weekly:

- WESR VCE AG Radio recordings - daily @8:30am/12:30pm
- WESR Master Gardener Radio recordings - daily @12:20 pm
- Slug Trap check in cover crop study (Soybean Board Project) and slug bait study

THE AGENT'S CORNER

Theresa Pittman - Accomack County ANR Agent

Hélène Doughty - Northampton County ANR Agent



USDA's Emergency Commodity Assistance Program (ECAP)

ECAP Payments

Corn

\$42.91/ac

Soybean

\$29.76/ac

Cotton

\$84.74/ac

Wheat

\$30.69/ac

The U.S. Department of Agriculture announced that starting March 19 farmers can apply for the Emergency Commodity Assistance Program. Authorized by the American Relief Act, 2025, these economic relief payments are based on planted and prevented planted crop acres for eligible commodities for the 2024 crop year.

To streamline and simplify the delivery of ECAP, FSA will begin sending pre-filled applications to producers who submitted acreage reports to FSA for 2024 eligible ECAP commodities soon after the signup period opens on March 19, 2025.

Producers do not have to wait for their pre-filled ECAP application to apply. They can visit fsa.usda.gov/ecap to apply using a login.gov account or contact their local FSA office to request an application.



For more information, visit: [Emergency Commodity Assistance Program \(ECAP\)](https://fsa.usda.gov/ecap) | [Farm Service Agency](https://fsa.usda.gov/ecap) or contact your local farm service agency.

AGENT QUESTION OF THE MONTH

"My boxwoods turn yellow and brown every year with some years being worse than others. Do they have a disease?"

Bronzing in boxwoods is the discoloration of boxwoods leaves from green to brown, red or yellow. It is a fairly common phenomenon that occurs over the winter and can resolve in the spring. It is the result of cold, windy conditions, sun exposure, freezing and thawing of root structures as well as drought stress. If bronzing persists, root issues from an accumulation of debris in the crown area or nematode pressure, may be to blame.

For additional information or site visit, please contact your local extension agent (Accomack: tpittman@vt.edu; Northampton: hdoughty@vt.edu)



Bronzing on boxwoods

WHAT'S THAT BUG? OR DAMAGE?

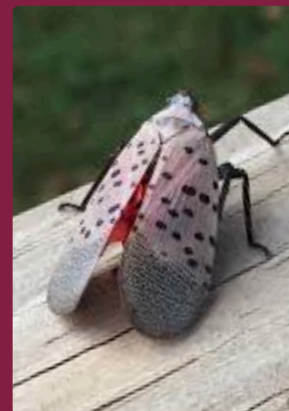
Hélène Doughty, Northampton ANR agent, invites you to test your entomology knowledge.



Take a guess on the pest and email or text your answer to 757-999-0780 / hdoughty@vt.edu

March Answer: Spotted Lanternfly

- The spotted lanternfly (*Lycorma delicatula*) is an invasive insect native to Asia that has become a significant pest in the United States since its first detection in Pennsylvania in 2014. Known for its striking appearance, with gray wings adorned with black spots and vibrant red hindwings, this planthopper poses a serious threat to agriculture and ecosystems. It feeds on the sap of over 70 plant species, including grapes, hops, and hardwood trees, leaving behind a sticky residue called honeydew that promotes mold growth and further damages plants. The lanternfly's preferred host is the invasive tree of heaven (*Ailanthus altissima*), but it also infests other trees and crops.
- Fortunately, it is not found on the Eastern Shore of Virginia as of now!



Visiting Scholar Studies Sustainable Agriculture

Dr. Mark Reiter, ESAREC Director & Soils & Nutrient Management Extension Specialist

Mr. Jean Damascene Tuyizere, visiting scholar from the Sokoine University of Agriculture in Tanzania, recently returned home after spending 7 months working alongside Eastern Shore AREC faculty, staff, and students. Jean spent his time working within the Soils and Nutrient Management research group with Dr. Mark Reiter, Dr. Joseph Haymaker, and Mr. John Mason. The purpose of the visiting scholar program is to improve the student's skills in research and to benefit by receiving mentoring and networking from international researchers. Our sandwich agreement was sponsored by the International Centre of Insect Physiology and Ecology that is headquartered in Nairobi, Kenya. Similar to 80% of Rwanda's population, Jean farms his 1-acre of land with corn, peanuts, and edible beans. Mr. Tuyizere's dissertation is titled, "Conservation tillage for soil fertility restoration in two agroecological zones of Rwanda." Jean completed his M.S. in Food Security and Community Nutrition at Gulu University in Uganda, and his B.S. in Crop Production from the University of Rwanda. Jean plans to finish his dissertation by Summer 2025.



Jean touring a tobacco farm in Dinwiddie County, VA.



Jean toured a peanut farm in Prince George County, VA.



Jean learning more about our geography and prominent Eastern Shore feature, Carolina Bays, by VT Soil Judger Will Ubben (left) and Dr. Joseph Haymaker (middle).



St. Patrick's Day Parade 2025



The Eastern Shore AREC team celebrated being finished with potato planting this year by participating in the Onancock, VA St. Patrick's Day Parade. The theme this year was "Lucky," one theme that certainly resonates with us during the year if we have ample and timely rains and temperatures.



Terminating Rapeseed Mustard Cover Crops

Dr. Vijay Singh, Weed Science Extension Specialist, ESAREC

Brassica cover crop species like rapeseed/canola (*Brassica napus*) have been a popular choice among farmers because of several advantages they offer including improved water infiltration, reduced soil compaction and biological tillage due to their deep tap root systems. However, seed-shattering percentage of rapeseed is quite high and these seeds become a part of soil seed bank which subsequently germinate identifying themselves as volunteer weed plants in the upcoming cash crops like corn. Later the termination of the cover crop in the season, higher is the biomass achieved which directly corresponds to better weed control and higher organic matter added into the soil. But, on the other hand, late termination reduces the efficiency of termination, which in turn increases the chances of seed shattering as the plants progress towards maturity. With every 10% reduction in the termination efficiency ranging from 100% to 50%, the population of volunteer rapeseed plants increases by 7 plants m⁻². The number of volunteer rapeseed plants observed in the succeeding corn crop increased with delay in termination timing with 0, 5 and 12 plants m⁻² for 28, 14 and 5 days before planting corn, respectively. Therefore, more effective is the termination of cover crop, lesser are the chances of emergence of volunteer plants.



Cover Crop Termination Options

Application of Gramaxone 3.0L @ 1.7 pints/A or combined application of LOW VOL 4 @ 1 pint/A and Liberty 280 SL @ 32 fl oz/A or combined application of LOW VOL 4 @ 1 pint/A and Roundup Powermax @ 32 fl oz/A is highly effective in termination of rapeseed cover crop, each of them providing a termination efficiency of 85-86% when observed 28 days after application. Along with rapeseed, Table 1 also highlights best herbicide options that could be used for termination of cereal rye and hairy vetch cover crops.

Table 1: Herbicide options for effective termination of different cover crops

Herbicide	Dose	Termination efficiency at 14 DAT	Termination efficiency at 28 DAT
Rapeseed			
Gramaxone 3.0L	1.7 pints/A	84%	86%
LOW VOL 4 + Liberty 280 SL	1 pint/A + 32 fl oz/A	82%	85%
LOW VOL 4 + Roundup Powermax	1 pint/A + 32 fl oz/A	69%	85%
Cereal rye			
Liberty 280 SL	32 fl oz/A	93%	96%
Roundup Powermax	32 fl oz/A	94%	97%
Liberty 280 SL + Roundup Powermax	32 fl oz/A + 32 fl oz/A	93%	96%
Gramaxone 3.0L	1.7 pints/A	99%	99%
Gramaxone 3.0L + Glory 4L	1.3 pints/A + 7.8 fl oz/A	96%	98%
Hairy vetch			
LOW VOL 4 + Liberty 280 SL	1 pint/A + 32 fl oz/A	91%	99%
LOW VOL 4 + Roundup Powermax	1 pint/A + 32 fl oz/A	78%	92%
Roundup Powermax + Liberty 280 SL	32 fl oz/A + 32 fl oz/A	89%	98%
Gramaxone 3.0L	1.7 pints/A	87%	92%



Entomology Update - Slugs on the Rise

Dr. Kemper Sutton, Entomology Extension Specialist, ESAREC

Slug populations are on the rise across the Eastern Shore. Sixty five slug traps were deployed at the ESAREC shortly after the big snow we had in February. There was still snow on the ground in places the following week when we did our first trap checks and we were certainly surprised when we counted 38 slugs given how cold it had been. Since then slug numbers have remained steady with a some variability, likely due to weather conditions. Based on trapping data from last year, we expect slug numbers to continue to increase through April and reach peak numbers in May. No-till fields with cover crops/or heavy corn debris are at the highest risk for slug damage.

Slugs under shingle trap



Monitoring slugs in your own field can be done easily by placing black roofing shingles (1ft2) on the ground around the edge of the field. Catching more than 10 slugs per trap will indicate high slug pressure. Effective control measures for slugs are limited. Molluscicide baits exist, but are expensive, time consuming to deploy, and need to be applied 24 hours before any precipitation occurs to be effective. Virginia Tech is currently researching the efficacy of these baits as well as how to effectively deploy them. Slug monitoring efforts will continue at the ESAREC, so look out for updates in future Stalk issues.



**FROM
THE
DESK
OF DR. SUTTON**

**become part of a community
engaged science project!**

Help Virginia Cooperative Extension Volunteers and personnel in identifying and mapping the spread of the allium leafminer, an invasive pest that poses a significant threat to allium crops, including onions, garlic, shallots, and ornamental alliums.



To get involved, go to:
<https://mastergardener.ext.vt.edu/allium-leafminer>

Contact Dr. Sutton at ksutton@vt.edu or your local extension agent (Northampton hdoughty@vt.edu; Accomack tpittman@vt.edu)

2025 Master Gardener Training at the ESAREC

The Eastern Shore of Virginia Master Gardener training program continues their coursework for Master Gardener certification at the Eastern Shore AREC. The group meets every Wednesday in our classroom to learn pertinent topics related to plant production, such as soil fertility, entomology, disease management, and similar. To learn more about the Master Gardener program, please visit: <https://www.esvmg.com/>



ESAREC is HIRING!!



Research Specialist, Sr., in Entomology (Job #532616): To provide technical support to the Entomology program at the Eastern Shore AREC. This position will focus on vegetable and oilseed insects and their management by implementing research and extension programs at the AREC and off-site as required. Position requirements include a B.S. Degree or equivalent years of training and experience. Knowledge of entomology and vegetable production systems. Working experience in scientific procedures, best management practices for maintaining crops for research trials. Experience with technical assistance of all aspects of research studies. Computer skills sufficient to handle email and office software applications. Experience or ability to perform statistical analyses of data and prepare written reports. Ability to manage program personnel. To apply visit: <https://careers.pageuppeople.com/968/cw/en-us/job/532616/research-specialist-sr>

Extension Specialist and Assistant Professor of Horticultural Cropping Systems (Job # 532664): Specific responsibilities will be to develop an innovative, nationally recognized research and extension program focused on commercial horticulture for vegetables and other potential crops for the Eastern Shore, Northern Neck, Southeast Virginia, and other parts of the Commonwealth where vegetable production is important. Large acreage vegetable crops include snap bean, potato, tomato, pumpkin, broccoli, among others. Programs should advance understanding of varieties, fumigation, irrigation, high tunnels, equipment, and introduce new crops to our state. Requirements include a Ph.D. in Horticulture, Crop Science, Agronomy or closely related field. Apply online: <https://careers.pageuppeople.com/968/cw/en-us/job/532664/assistant-professor-of-horticultural-cropping-systems>

Managing Cover Crops and Slugs for Soybean Production in Virginia

Drs. Joseph Haymaker, Mark Reiter, Kemper Sutton, Carrie Ortel, and Mrs. Helene Doughty



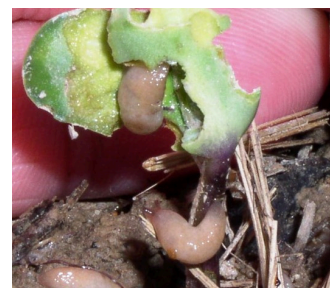
2025 Study at the ESAREC



Slug under shingle trap



Slug shingle trap



Slug damage on soybean cotyledon

Cover crops improve soil health, nutrient cycling, and water quality in Virginia's Coastal Plain. However, cover crops also create cool, moist conditions that favor slugs, which can cause severe damage to soybeans, a crop with a value of \$300 million in Virginia. Soybean seedlings are most susceptible leading to potential yield losses or replanting replanting, resulting in losses of \$50 to \$100 per acre.

At the Eastern Shore AREC, we are investigating how different grass cover crop species—cereal rye, wheat, and black oats—impact slug populations and soybean damage based on cover crop termination timing. Cover crops in this study are terminated at four different times: March 15, two weeks pre-plant (~April 15), at planting (~May 1), and two weeks post-planting (~May 15). We also included a no cover crop control that is simply no-tilled into previous crop residue. Along with assessing slug populations over time and slug damage, we are also evaluating how cover crop species and termination timing influence cover crop biomass production and nutrient accumulation, soybean nutrient uptake, and overall soybean yield.

Our goal is to develop management strategies that maximize the benefits of cover crops while minimizing slug-related risks for soybean producers. This research is made possible through funding and support from the Virginia Soybean Board and our Virginia farmers' checkoff dollars.

If you are experiencing significant slug damage and pressure on your soybeans this spring, please contact Helene Doughty at hdoughty@vt.edu.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

ARE YOU GROWING FRUITS OR VEGETABLES THIS YEAR???

Do you have a current PSA Training Certificate?

LAST CLASS - May 5 & 6 each day from 1 to 5 pm ET.

PRODUCE SAFETY ALLIANCE GROWER TRAINING REMOTE

**COST:
\$50**

INCLUDES
ALL COURSE
MATERIALS



OVERVIEW

The Food Safety Modernization Act (FSMA) Produce Safety Rule is the first federally regulated standard for growing, harvesting, packing, and holding fresh produce in an effort to reduce microbial contamination and foodborne illness outbreaks.

If you grow fruits or vegetables, attend a training for information about best practices, and regulatory requirements.



WHEN

May 5th, 2025
from 1-5 pm EST
&
May 6th, 2025
from 1-5 pm EST

* must attend both half-days of instruction for certificate

* \$50 dollars for VA & TN and \$150 for all other states

QUESTIONS?

EMAIL: LSTRAWN@VT.EDU



WHO SHOULD ATTEND

Individuals wanting to learn more about the FSMA Produce Safety Rule

Produce operations needing to satisfy the FSMA Produce Safety Rule training requirement for inspections

**REGISTER AT:
[CLICK HERE](#)**

FOR VA FARMS WHO GROW, HARVEST, PACK, AND HOLD FRUITS AND VEGETABLES

- Classes are HIGHLY discounted due to VDACS funding...
- the certificate received is good for life.
- This course fulfills the Food Safety Modernization Act Produce Safety Rule training requirement
- This is the **LAST CLASS** before the rates go up to \$200-300
- **CURRENTLY... COST IS \$50 dollars for Virginia Farms!!!**

VCE & ESAREC Contact Information

	Faculty/Staff	Title	Email	Work/Cell Phone
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VIRGINIA AGRICULTURAL EXPERIMENT STATION
**EASTERN SHORE AGRICULTURAL
 RESEARCH AND EXTENSION CENTER**
 VIRGINIA TECH.

Virginia Cooperative Extension brings the resources of Virginia's land-grant universities, Virginia Tech and Virginia State University, to the people of the commonwealth. VCE provides education through programs in Agriculture and Natural Resources, Family and Consumer Sciences, 4-H Youth Development and Community Viability.

Virginia Cooperative Extension is a partnership of Virginia Tech, Virginia State University, the U.S. Department of Agriculture, and local governments. Its programs and employment are open to all, regardless of age, color, disability, sex (including pregnancy), gender, gender identity, gender expression, national origin, political affiliation, race, religion, sexual orientation, genetic information, military status, or any other basis protected by law.

If you are a person with a disability and desire any assistive devices, services or other accommodations to participate in any activity, please contact Rachel Barnes at 757-787-1361* (*TDD number is (800) 828-1120) during business hours of 8:00 a.m. and 4:30 p.m. to discuss accommodations.

The Virginia Tech, Eastern Shore AREC is committed to supporting commercial vegetable, grain, oilseed, and fiber production throughout the Commonwealth of Virginia. Centrally located on Virginia's Eastern Shore, the center conducts basic and applied research on more than 25 agricultural crops.