Dear Forest Farming Community Members,

We are at the close of yet another successful year of growth in the Appalachian Beginning Forest Farmer Coalition and have you to thank! Our members are making waves within the forest farming community and beyond. So many exciting developments, ranging from new forest farms and farmers, to new contracts with buyers and competitive funding for innovative projects that grow capacity. There also are exciting upcoming non-timber forest product and forest farming educational programs, research projects, and a continuously expanding network of diverse stakeholders. Our collective mission to support the growth and sourcing of high-quality medicinal herbs continues to gain ground!

Of course, none of this would be possible by going it alone and this newsletter spotlights member achievements, partner successes, and the impact of the coalition on forest farmers, agroforestry advocates, and the herbal products industry. Nothing is more important or powerful than our collaboration. So as the season of Thanksgiving approaches, we would like to extend a big THANK YOU to the coalition members for your partnership, support, and teamwork. More events and developments are on their way in 2018, so stay tuned!

John Munsell  Holly Chittum
Save the Dates!

Growing and Managing Your Forest Farming Business

Date: March 23 – 25, 2018
Location: Camp Oty’Okwa - 24799 Purcell Rd, South Bloomingville, OH 43152

Join us in the beautiful Hocking Hills for a multi-day forest farming intensive hosted by Rural Action and the Appalachian Beginning Forest Farmer Coalition. The goal of this weekend-long intensive is to help participants plan for, grow, and manage their forest farming business through peer to peer learning opportunities. This event will create opportunities for participants to learn directly from successful farmers, business owners, and educators who have decades of combined experience and expertise in the natural products sector.

Featured Topics and Speakers:

- **Good Agricultural Practices** for Small Herbal Products Businesses – Jeanine Davis and Margaret Bloomquist, NCSU Extension
- **Growing and Managing Your Natural Products Business** – Maureen Burns, Herbal Sage Tea Company
- **Small-scale Farm to Market Enterprises: Perspectives and Considerations for New Producers** - Janell Baran, Blue Owl Hollow Tree Farm & Garden Emporium
- **Wholesale Production of Herbal Medicines: Perspectives and Lessons Learned** - Lonnie Galt-Theis, Equinox Botanicals
- **Film Screening and Discussion: “The Sanctity of Sanctuary”**: Paul Strauss and the Equinox Farm - Paul Strauss, Equinox Botanicals.

Forest Farming Buyer/Grower Networking and Training Event

Date: May 19 - 20, 2018
Location: Kingsport, TN (19th) and Duffield, VA (20th)

*Are you a forest farmer that wants to meet regional and national herb buyers? Or an herb company that wants to connect with growers of high quality Appalachian herbs?* Save the date for the forest farming spring buyer/grower mixer that will include a trade show, panel discussion and training on May 19th in Kingsport, TN. A forest farming field intensive will be offered on May 20th near Duffield, VA. You may choose to attend either or both days. More details and registration information will be posted on the ABFFC events calendar.
What's new with our Forest Farmers?

Appalachian Harvest Herb Hub Launch

With the arrival of fall and the support of the Appalachian Regional Commission’s Power grant, came the official launch of Appalachian Sustainable Development's (ASD) herb hub in Duffield, Virginia. The herb hub is a part of the Appalachian Harvest (AH) food hub, a 15,000 square foot aggregation center where area farmers can bring their fruits and vegetables to clean, grade, package, and ship to wholesale buyers throughout the region. AH gives growers necessary training and access to these larger markets.

In the same way, herb growers can now get assistance with proper post-harvest handling in a facility that meets food safety regulations, as well as offering handling and storage for Organic and Forest Grown Verified (FGV) herbal products. Equipment available includes a pre-wash station, a root washer, commercial dehydrator and moisture meter, as well as packaging and labeling supplies.

This area of the country already does big business in the wild-harvest and sale of forest herbs, including ginseng, goldenseal and black cohosh. What sets ASD’s herb hub apart from the conventional herbal product industry is that any plants that come through this facility all come from forest farming operations and are not simply wild-harvested. This distinction is important and it gives buyers assurance that the populations of these special, slow-growing medicinal plants are being maintained and increased over time. Forest Grown Verification (FGV) and the USDA Organic seal offers third-party certification that plants harvested have the correct ID, that a baseline population estimate is established, that propagation of plants is taking place, that safety precautions are maintained and that plants are harvested properly and at the correct time. Four forest farmers in southwest Virginia became FGV and USDA Organic certified this year and obtained cost-share funding for certification costs from ASD's Appalachian Regional Commission Power grant.
With these certifications, the farmers were able to access premium priced markets for their sustainably managed and harvested herbs. Participants in the program are members of the Appalachian Beginning Forest Farmers Coalition (ABFFC) and have had the opportunity to attend several training sessions to strengthen their skillset. Trainings have included an ABFFC-sponsored black cohosh intensive on 8/13, where Eric Burkhart of Pennsylvania State University led new and experienced growers in learning about the plant, including how to properly identify it, which can be tricky due to a number of look-alike relatives, and how to propagate it from seed and from rhizome division. Ryan Huish with University of Virginia at Wise led an interactive session on techniques for creating a voucher specimen, where participants got to try their hand at pressing, mounting and labeling a variety of plant species. Voucher specimens are an important physical record to verify ID or to provide genetic material for later study and are required by some herb buyers to be maintained.

ASD plans on continuing to expand their efforts in the upcoming year and is currently recruiting growers within a 1.5 hour drive from the Duffield, VA area. This region includes southeast Kentucky, southwest Virginia and northeast Tennessee. Interested forest farmers can learn more about the program at www.asdevelop.org/agroforestry or contact ASD agroforestry program manager, Emily Lachniet, at elachniet@asdevelop.org.
The ABFFC is Gaining Ground and Expanding Awareness of Forest Farming within the Herbal Products Industry

The American Herbal Products Association held their Sixth Annual Botanical Congress in Las Vegas on September 29th at Supply Side West 2017, a huge annual international expo for dietary supplement and herbal product raw materials sourcing and the Appalachian Beginning Forest Farmer Coalition’s Co-Director, Holly Chittum, was invited to present at the panel session titled, "Grown in America". She covered topics ranging from the importance of traceability and sustainability of sourcing forest botanicals to the roots of the formation of the ABFFC being in part in response to some of the issues surrounding forest medicinal plants in Appalachia.

As the spotlight turns to sustainable sourcing of raw herbal material, the ABFFC's role is becoming more prominent. The intentional cultivation of forest botanicals not only mitigates over-harvest of wild populations and potential product adulteration, but it ensures quality and sustained sourcing as farmers come together to meet market demands. The Forest Grown Verification Program, developed by Pennsylvania Certified Organic, is a direct response to current herbal industry needs. Benefits of verified forest crops trickle down to consumers who can be assured that their products are indeed sustainably sourced because they are forest farmed. Topics like sourcing, supply chain optimization, safety and traceability, consumer and industry trends, and more were central to this year’s Botanical Congress presentations.

The ABFFC’s multi-pronged approach makes it a valuable player in the sustainable sourcing of forest botanicals arena as the coalition pairs education and resource availability for farmers with networking and industry connections to assist in growing production capacity for high-quality Appalachian botanicals and connecting stakeholders across the supply chains. Holly presented news on the coalition’s structure, partnerships, and progress gained over the last two years. Connectivity within the herbal supply chain is an important part of the ABFFC’s mission and the invitation to participate in the AHPA congress speaks to the coalition's impact and success and in just two years!
Since its formation just two years ago, the Appalachian Beginning Forest Farmer Coalition has made a lot of progress with growing the forest farming network across the region and the nation, increasing membership, hosting a multitude of successful events, and helping to spread awareness and build interest within the herbal products industry. While forest farming has deep and established roots, the coalition's aim to bring all players in the herbal supply chain together under one roof is actively expanding impact and increasing reach and access for all. Its success is greatly due to its members' and partners' skill, knowledge, and passion for Appalachia's treasured botanicals and the success of these first two years proves that we are stronger together! ABFFC is working hard to spread awareness of forest farming. We have had great success bringing recognition to our region and many are now looking to Appalachia with new interest. Check out these articles featuring the ABFFC and forest farming in Appalachia in high profile natural products journals:

The ABFFC was featured in the Nutrition Industry Executive publication (left), full publication seen here.

Neutraceuticals World, a magazine centered around herbs, botanicals, and other dietary supplements featured an article about the ABFFC and its mission to assist forest farmers and connect stakeholders (Below right). Check out their full article here.

Co-director of the ABFFC, Holly Chittum, was interviewed for a Nutra Ingredients USA article titled, Forest Farming Seen as a Sustainable Alternative to Wildcrafting. She detailed the beginnings of the ABFFC and explained what the coalition hopes to do in the future. Bringing every stakeholder in the supply chain together to understand the needs from all sides of the industry is critical in making progress.

The ABFFC is excited to spread the word about forest farming to the readers of these highly respected natural products industry journals. Keeping up the momentum!
Appalachian Voices, an environmentally focused publication located in Boone, North Carolina featured a lengthy article about the ABFFC titled, "Cultivating Forest Medicinals, Creating a Healthy Economy". The article highlights ABFFC partners Jeanine Davis and Eric Burkhart for their extensive work in the field of Appalachian medicinal herbs. They also shine the spotlight on the successes of Pennsylvania Certified Organic's Forest Grown Verification Program (FGV) and Appalachian Sustainable Development's recently launched Herb Hub.

The Appalachian Beginning Forest Farmer Coalition is gaining recognition across the region as its partners continue to champion the cause of sustainability and forest farming of Appalachia's valuable botanicals. Forward-thinking herbal companies like Mountain Rose Herbs based in Eugene, Oregon are raising the price point for farmers who are going the extra mile to have their crops Forest Grown Verified. Labels like this allow consumers to make more informed decisions about how their herbs are sourced and can have a big impact on increasing awareness of at-risk botanicals that are being over-harvested in the wild.

Forest farmers Michelle Pridgen and Cynthia Taylor worked together with ABFFC advisory board member, Katie Trozzo to harvest, clean, and dry 50 pounds of black cohosh that had been PCO Forest Grown Verified for Mountain Rose Herbs. Opportunities that boost supply transparency like the FGV program open up access to premium markets where consumers are willing to pay more for sustainably sourced products. Providing the necessary equipment that farmers need, as seen with the Appalachian Harvest Herb Hub, helps farmers move their product without having to "go it alone". When matched with a higher price point as provided by Mountain Rose Herbs, it becomes clear that forest farming can be a real business and it can sustain communities across Appalachia.

As Appalachian Voices writes, "Cultivating Forest Medicinals, Creating a Healthy Economy". While the industry is shifting towards sustainability and transparency, it looks like forest farming as a livelihood might just pay off.
Forest Farmer Stories:
Eliana's Garden

More than a year has passed since we last visited Jeremy and Stesha Warren at Eliana's Garden. At that time, this young family was busy creating beds and planting seeds, Stesha with their two-year-old daughter on her back and Jeremy with their four-year-old son at his side, emulating his father with his plastic rake as he "chopped and pulled" the leaves aside.

Since then, the family has moved to their newly built home on the farm and is working at a whirlwind pace, increasing both the number and diversity of non-timber forest products on their land including lion's mane and oyster mushroom totems, various pawpaw cultivars, and forest medicinals. Next year is looking even busier as they're leasing an additional 200 acres and plan to expand. "We're going to be including more animals in our farm rotations. We're looking at ducks and maybe some rotationally grazed cows," said Jeremy. "Trying to make a more integrative approach," Stesha added. "The ABFFC has been very helpful in giving us good ideas and connections to work with that."

Their passion doesn't stop at forest farming. Both Jeremy and Stesha are educators at heart and will soon be teaching agroforestry classes at a local community college that is revamping their horticulture program. Their community is showing growing interest in forest farming and the Warrens are hoping to eventually use their land as a demonstration site and learning center. The couple has been actively attending ABFFC events and they are also learning by doing. Summer flooding wiped out many of their mushroom totems and their three-year-old ginseng beds were seeded in too thickly. Rather than seeing set-backs, they're adapting. Stesha plans to sell excess ginseng as potted plants and will also use it for tinctures!

"We're building something that will yield for a long time after we stop putting our energy into it, for our kids as well," said Jeremy. "It's really hard to get started in farming. I've seen so many young couples try to get started in farming and take a little bit more of a traditional route, and the work is hard...those 90 degree days during the summer - folks just burn out. It's been a beautiful thing to get started the way we have and I think if it hadn't been for forest farming, we would have had a hard time getting started period."

To hear the full interview, click this link to go to Soundcloud.
In June of 2016, Clay County, West Virginia experienced a flooding event. As the top soil washed away from John and Kat Stapleford’s bottom land, they watched their field crops perish, and had trouble growing anything after the flood waters receded. It was amidst these challenging circumstances that they gained a new perspective and looked towards their forested land as a potential source of income.

The majority of their 178 acre property had previously been selectively harvested for timber, an activity that left the land damaged in places, but also allowed for canopy openings. As they began exploring their woodlands, they discovered it held many of Appalachia's most cherished botanicals: ramps, goldenseal, ginseng, black and blue cohosh, as well as a variety of forest mushrooms. The devastating flood enabled them to discover higher ground and all its treasures, and their background and experience in commercial farming gave them the confidence and perspective to pursue cultivation of a different kind: forest farming.

Being new to this type of farming required plenty of research. Kat was up to the task and combed the internet for resources and information. It was at this point that she found the Appalachian Beginning Forest Farmer Coalition and discovered that forest farming already had deep and practiced roots, not to mention an expanding network of similarly minded folks in neighboring states. Kat joined the ABFFC Facebook group and made great use of the multitude of video resources housed on the ABFFC website.

The challenges that lie ahead will require a strong network. The Staplefords have already experienced theft on their property and are having trouble sourcing seed. They're looking at Pennsylvania Certified Organic’s Forest Grown Verification Program as a potential solution to the question of who will buy their roots down the road, as local dealers control the market. “Root buyers want quantity,” said Kat. “We don't want to be a part of that.”

As Kat learns more and thinks about the future of her forest farm, she hopes others in her community will learn to adopt a similar outlook. “Here within Clay County, or central West Virginia, one of the big things we don't have is jobs. We're job poor but land rich,” she said. “We have rich soil that produces beautiful medicinal herbs and plants that can be cultivated and I want to make sure that people are aware that this is available to them.” Kat says that forest farming these plants will save dwindling wild populations from over-harvest and also empower landowners to be part of a new, more stable supply chain that they can count on year after year.

While Kat and John have prepared their medicinal plant beds beneath the thinning autumn canopy, they're also aiming to plant seeds of change among their community. Coal has come and gone, and people need a new source of income to turn to. The Staplefords have first-hand experience with adaptation after the flood forced them to look to the hills for farming opportunities. They hope to make their forest farm a model for other community members to learn from and emulate. It could mean a fresh start for Clay County, West Virginia.
Introducing Our Newest ABFFC Advisory Board Member!
Bevin Clare, President of the American Herbalist Guild

Bevin Clare, M.S., R.H., CNS, is a clinical herbalist and nutritionist and an Associate Professor and Program Manager of the Post-Master’s Certificate in Clinical Herbalism at the Maryland University of Integrative Health. She holds a MSc in Infectious Disease from the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine, serves on as an adjunct Assistant Professor at the Massachusetts College of Pharmacy and is an Adjunct Associate Professor at the New York Chiropractic College. Bevin has studied herbal medicine around the world and blends her knowledge of traditional uses of plants with modern science and contemporary healthcare strategies as a consultant and educator. Bevin is the president of the American Herbalists Guild, the largest body of professional clinical herbalists in the US. She is founder of the Herbal Clinic for All program, providing cost-free herbal medicine healthcare since 2007 and is a board member of the United Plant Savers, a group working to protect at-risk medicinal plants in North America. You can find Bevin’s musing on a variety of Clinical Herbalism topics, including infectious disease, at www.bevinclare.com. She resides on a beautiful piece of earth in Maryland with her family.

We are excited that Bevin is coming on board to share her knowledge from the perspective of herbalists in the US, who are an important voice within the forest medicinals supply chain!

Current Members

Dana Beegle
Jim Chamberlain
Chip Carroll
Bill Chioffi
David Brown
Edward Fletcher
Jim Hamilton
Katie Trozzo
Michael McGuffin

For more information about our Advisory Board, please visit our website.
Restoration Work on National Forest Land Gets Results

In April 2017, Rural Action was awarded funding from the National Forest Foundation (NFF) to implement a multifaceted project with the goal of helping to restore populations of American ginseng, goldenseal, and ramps on the Wayne National Forest located in southeast Ohio. 2017 marks the fourth year that funding has been awarded for this project, and efforts are beginning to bear fruit. Through this project, Rural Action has organized volunteers to assist in the collection and planting of ginseng, goldenseal, and ramp seed, in order to bolster existing populations, as well as establish new populations. Seed viability and the successful establishment of seedlings among these species is often limited by biological and ecological conditions, such as extended periods seed dormancy and stratification prior to germination, high rates of animal predation, and population density/competition contributing to high seedling mortality. The Wayne National Forest is one of the few remaining forests that have permitted harvesting of ginseng and goldenseal, making the restoration and stewardship of these populations all the more essential. This season, with the help of 14 volunteers, Rural Action collected and planted 250 ginseng seeds and approximately 130,000 ramp seeds.

A second component of the NFF project is to conduct workshops for forest landowners that promote a “Conservation through Cultivation” approach to forest management, where landowners are taught how to cultivate high-value medicinal herbs in their forest. This fall more than 80 participants from Ohio, West Virginia, and Tennessee have attended workshops to learn about producing wild-simulated ginseng in their forests.

The third goal of this project is to develop and implement a youth environmental education curriculum called “Appalachian Stewards,” which is in part, a response to the harmful stereotypes promoted by ginseng harvesting television shows, such as the History Channel’s “Appalachian Outlaws,” and National Geographic’s “Smokey Mountain Money.” Appalachian Stewards aims to bring forest herb education and hands-on planting experience to students in classrooms across Appalachian Ohio. So far Rural Action has worked with over 200 students, helping them to understand the ecology, life cycles, and conservation concerns associated with wild-harvested forest herbs, as well as to get kids into the woods where they can learn to plant herbs themselves. Students walk away with a better understanding of local forest ecology, native biodiversity, and the conservation issues facing native species. There’s nothing more fun that taking thirty kids outside to plant ginseng seed in the woods behind their school.
Expanding Forest Grown Verification and Helping to Grow the Domestic Market

Rural Action’s Sustainable Forestry Program, in partnership with United Plant Savers, is pleased to announce that they have been awarded funding through the Natural Resource Conservation Services 2017 Conservation Innovation Grant program. Over the next two years, project funds will be used to assist forest landowners in Ohio and West Virginia with forest management planning that aims to increase the production of high-value Non-Timber Forest Products (NTFP’s), such as ginseng, goldenseal, and ramps, as well as helping to develop supply chains that enhance producer profitability through Forest Grown Verification (FGV), an emerging direct marketing and sustainability branding initiative.

This project will significantly benefit forest landowners in the region by providing assistance to those who are both new to NTFP cultivation, and those who have been growing for several years and are now ready to market their products. Furthermore, this project presents an opportunity to redefine how plants with high conservation value, like ginseng and goldenseal, are sold. Rather than being aggregated and sold by a series of buyers before they are processed into finished products, by using the FGV model, growers can be connected directly with manufacturers that want their products, and thus create more streamlined domestic supply chains.

Landowners who are new to “forest-farming” can request a site visit and forest assessment to evaluate the potential for NTFP production on their property, and identify existing NTFP assets that they may already have. Landowners who have already established NTFP enterprises will have the opportunity to connect with natural products businesses who are interested in building sustainable supply chains, and purchase directly from producers in order to ensure that raw materials, such as ginseng roots, are coming from a sustainable source and are of the highest quality.

Partnership will be key to this project’s success. Along with Rural Action, project partners include but are not limited to United Plant Savers, the Appalachian Beginning Forest Farmers Coalition, Grow Appalachia, Pennsylvania Certified Organic, Mountain Rose Herbs, and Appalachian Sustainable Development

Landowners interested in receiving assistance should contact Karam Sheban (karam@ruralaction.org) or Tanner Filyaw (tanner@ruralaction.org or 740-677-4047) with Rural Action’s Sustainable Forestry Program for more information.
Coalition Members in Action

Forest Farmer Anne Rogers teams up with Appalachian College of Pharmacy, UVA Wise, and Penn State University on a proposal to learn about black cohosh leaves

I first became interested in the forest botanical market back in 1998 when employed as a planner at Total Action Against Poverty (TAP - now Total Action for Progress) in Roanoke, VA. That year I learned the term “non-timber forest products” through reading about work at Virginia Tech and Virginia State University. Since TAP's service area included communities in the hardwood forests of the Appalachian Mountain region in which ginseng thrived along with its companions goldenseal and black cohosh, I obtained permission from TAP to write a grant proposal to the Appalachian Regional Commission requesting funds for a program to train residents of rural communities in the techniques of sustainable production of forest grown medicinal plants.

The proposed project was funded and partners included faculty at Virginia State University and Virginia Tech, along with the Craig County Rural Partnership, Appalachian Ginseng Foundation, Botanics, and West Virginia University Extension. The Wild Harvest Sector project, as it was called, offered a series of workshops at which participants received hands-on training on how to successfully grow a variety of forest botanicals. Fast forward to 2017 at the Farmers Market in Floyd, Virginia. I am selling dried passionflower vines and bottles of ArborReal Fragrance of Forest and Field and hoping that by this time in 2019 I will be offering bags of black cohosh leaf for sale too.

I became aware of the Appalachian Beginning Forest Farmer Coalition in 2016 and attended their educational programs with great enthusiasm. Especially interesting to me was the organization’s focus on a variety of forest botanicals and its effort to help forest landowners sell a range of organic certified and verified forest farmed products. As an owner of a rich stand of black cohosh, I want to sustainably manage and start farming forest botanicals on my land and the coalition provided a much needed connection to like-minded forest owners, organizations, and industry.

The experience I had with the Wild Harvest Sector project was a perfect segue into the Appalachian
Beginning Forest Farmer program and I was excited about what I was learning and who I was meeting. The connections led me to explore how I could sustainably manage my black cohosh and help source an emerging market for forest farmed botanicals. I also knew that my efforts would help the work of many that are seeking to build markets for sustainably sourced forest botanicals.

However, when I tried to begin farming my cohosh root, I discovered it was thoroughly bound in rock and could not be extracted from the ground without damaging the root. Perplexed, I decided to share my dilemma with resource partners in the coalition network.

Coalition network contacts such as Eric Burkhart from Penn State University helped point me in the right direction. In particular, we shared and discussed a recent article in Journal of Natural Products on research conducted by a team at University of Chicago led by Dr. Guido Pauli. The research found that black cohosh leaves have a set of therapeutic chemicals somewhat similar to the root. Then John Munsell from Virginia Tech and director of the ABFFC suggested I submit a grant proposal to Southern Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education's (SARE) Producer Grants program requesting funds for research on the cohosh leaf.

I considered the recommendation and saw an opportunity to help better manage my forest and contribute to a growing market and forest farming movement. Without much delay, I assembled a team of scientists and am the lead applicant on a SARE grant-funded research proposal that, if successful, will study the chemical profile of black cohosh leaf to contribute to a growing body of research looking at its use as a dietary supplement. Our team will include researchers from the Appalachian College of Pharmacy, UVA Wise, and Penn State University. Virginia Tech and Appalachian Sustainable Development are also partnering as educational resources.

The Appalachian Beginning Forest Farmer Coalition and partners at Appalachian Sustainable Development plan to disseminate the research findings to forest farmers, consumers, and the general public. The coalition will also conduct outreach to the herbal supplement market based on the findings of our research.

What's really exciting is that as early as 2019, I may be venturing to the crest of the Blue Ridge to harvest some leaves from that beautiful stand of native black cohosh plants. I can leave the roots intact and allow them to continue to flourish in the rocks where Mother Nature thought best to plant them.

“When did Mother Nature plant them there on the mountain crest?” you might ask. A very old man who came to our Wild Harvest Sector workshop in 2000 might reply, “A fer piece back!”
Margaret Bloomquist, Research Assistant at NC State, and Craig Mauney, NC Extension Area Specialized Agent, teamed up to teach a video series featuring the sustainable harvest of yellowroot (*Xanthorhiza simplicissima*). Yellowroot is prized for its berberine and is commonly used in teas. This series features the harvest, followed by another video on washing, drying, and packaging which can add value to the product and bring in a higher price point for forest farmers.

We followed up with Margaret for another series featuring the sustainable harvest, washing, and drying of Goldenseal (*Hydrastis Canadensis*), a keynote Appalachian herb. Proper washing and drying of herbs is critical to maintaining their quality. A little bit of time invested goes a long way and is well worth it, especially with root crops that take years to grow.

Following the trail of medicinal herbs from the forest floor to the shelf led us to interview Paul Strauss, a land steward, forest farmer, and owner of Equinox Botanicals. Paul has been active in the forest farming community for decades and shared his story about his relationship to the land, the beginning of his herbal products business, and what he sees for the future of his forest and apothecary. We also speak with Lonnie Galt-Thels, Paul's protégé, and hear of her vision for the land's future.

Continuing with our advanced forest farmer stories led us to Larry Harding in Friendsville, Maryland. Larry has been growing ginseng since he was a child. He shares his story about his family’s history with this Appalachian herb and how his farm and his business in value-added production has grown since then.
We then turn the spotlight from veteran forest farmer to up-and-coming herbalist Jessie Dean, founder of the Asheville Tea Company. Jessie has a love for tea, and despite the local food movement, she couldn't find any local tea. So she decided to start her own tea company using local ingredients from community farmers. She shared her story with us and demonstrates the mixing of an herbal tea using hibiscus, yaupon, blackberry leaf, and elderberries.

We continued to film value-added production as we visited Susan Leopold’s Indian Pipe Plant Sanctuary. There we found Donna Le Pre who specializes in natural perfumes and other apothecary products. She demonstrated the harvest and creation of an elderflower hydrosol, used for both its delicate fragrance but also for respiratory enhancement.

Following *Sambucus* from flower to berry, we look at the creation of elderberry syrup with Susan Leopold, Director of United Plant Savers and Teresa Boardwine, founder of Green Comfort School of Herbal Medicine. Elderberry syrup is simple to make, and this recipe includes only a few ingredients: elderberries, water, honey, and brandy. This syrup is typically used as an immune system booster.

Where can you find these products and more? We visited the Paris Apothecary in Paris, Virginia where Susan Leopold aims to promote a new kind of herbal experience. Guests can sample a variety of different elixirs designed for particular moods. It's a fun way to engage in herbal education and might just leave you thirsty for more.

Check out more of our videos online at our Forest Farming YouTube Channel.
Looking Back at 2017...

The rolling hills of Virginia’s Blue Ridge Mountains welcomed domestic and international conference attendees to the 15th North American Agroforestry Conference this past summer. John Munsell, as the year's President of the Association for Temperate Agroforestry, had much to showcase in the region. Conference goers visited the beautiful Catawba Valley Sustainability Center, where riparian buffers and fruit and nut trees combined with carbon credits to make a model "farm of the future". Kentland Farm's well-established silvopasture systems added to the mix of agroforestry practices and Jon and Dana Beegle's Stone Root Farm provided an inside look at a diversified approach to forest farming on a family-run property. Round table discussions and poster presentations provided insights to new ideas and successful projects while local food, live music, and square dancing rounded off the three-day event with quintessential Appalachian flavor and flare.

Future of Ginseng and Forest Botanicals Symposium

Approximately 197 people, representing all stakeholder groups, attended the United Plant Savers 3-day symposium in Morgantown, West Virginia, with the final day dedicated to the ABFFC’s forest farmers. During the conference, four flip charts were stationed in the exhibit area, with the following key topic headings: Conservation; Commerce; Policy/Management; and Cultivation. Symposium participants were asked to take notes during sessions and post questions, ideas, concerns and thoughts on the appropriate flip chart to generate a more comprehensive view of stakeholder concerns and ideas. This important feedback was in the introduction of the symposium proceedings.

United Plant Savers made a short video highlighting the work and diverse perspective of the various stakeholders, all are encourage you watch and any thoughts or insights coalition members may have are welcomed. United Plant Savers is a membership based organization and its their membership that supports their ability to be a voice for the plants. We will be building on the symposium over the next year as we work with the various stakeholders to look at policy issues and conservation measures we can implement that will ensure a future for ginseng and forest botanicals.
WNC State’s Mountain Horticultural Crop Reaseach and Extension Station partnered with the ABFFC to hold the first two successful events in Western North Carolina (WNC) this autumn! Growers, regional partners, and industry benefited from these two events, and they are looking forward to more coalition events in the area.

**Forest Farming Intensive** In partnership with Organic Growers School and Warren Wilson College, a successful weekend in September brought our coalition introductory forest farming training and our renowned instructors to WNC for the first time. Organic Growers School contributed to widen the scope of forest products to nuts, trees, and silvopasture session offerings. Warren Wilson College hosted the event which provided a beautiful learning environment and lots of hands on opportunities with forest botanicals and expert instructors.

**From Harvest to Shelf** An advanced training by ABFFC at the beautiful Montreat Conference Center near Black mountain, NC brought growers, makers, scientists, and entrepreneurs together for an intimate training on Value Added Production. Highlights of the weekend included Essential Oil Distillation, Creative Marketing, and small group discussion on regulations, identification, sustainability and more.

**Plant Yer Own Patch - An Introduction to American Ginseng Forest Farming**

Focusing primarily on woodland production of ginseng, the presentation at State College on October 14th, also touched upon the pros and cons of cultivated ginseng to provide some context. The nuances of the market, production methods, and biology were explored through a morning presentation and an afternoon forest walk. Information about Pennsylvania, United States, and International regulations was shared. Throughout the day there was an exploration of the cultural predilection that defines the ginseng market.

The afternoon walk in Stone Valley reinforced the challenges of cultivation while giving a hands-on opportunity to see growing conditions. Indicator and complimentary species were shown, including sugar maples and basswood trees. Attendees were able to see some remaining ginseng foliage and berries, while a few were even able to taste a few berries that were found. Two planting sites were explored and experienced. At the later site, a ginseng root was dug up and shown.
Local Happenings

Banjos and Botanicals

Music For a Movement

United Plant Savers and the Paris Apothecary have kicked off an ongoing series called Banjos and Botanicals with a mission of bringing Appalachian ethnobotanical knowledge to the people in an effort to raise awareness for conscientious consumerism and activism for the plants.

Their series includes music, talks, hands on classes, such as botanical illustration and medicine making, and the opportunity to taste herbal products made locally. They also teamed up with Appalachian Voices who tabled and shared their recent efforts to fight the pipeline in West Va and Virginia. They were thrilled by the amazing Anna and Elizabeth, two women who seek old lost songs and bring them back to life.

For more information on past and upcoming Banjos and Botanicals events, visit the Paris Apothecary online.

NC State University Herb Hub News

NC State's WNC Medicinal Herb Growers Club had a stellar year together learning and growing. Clear focus on post-harvest handling of aerial and roots and creative marketing was evident with our group and region - next steps for a region who can clearly grow and harvest outstanding quality medicinal herbs. Highlights included visits and intensives with Deep Woods Mushrooms, Mills River, NC; post harvesting handling and new equipment at Pangaea Plants, Lake Lure, value added and industry processing with Gaia Herbs, and visits to local seed companies in an effort to increase our local seed supply of medicinal herbs. Our once beginner growers are now hosting events and mentoring new growers in the group!