

THE AgFS CONNECTION

Advancing Maryland Agriculture

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AGFS CONNECTION: HIGHLIGHTS AND INNOVATIONS IN MARYLAND AGRICULTURE

.....Darren Jarboe, UME, Assistant Director and Program Leader, Agriculture and Food Systems

Welcome to the AgFS Connection! This newsletter highlights the applied research and educational programs of the University of Maryland Agriculture and Food Systems Extension Program (AgFS). The AgFS winter educational programming season is winding down. The remaining programs are listed on the [Extension Events Calendar](#). Growing season programming will start in early spring.

In October, the AgFS suddenly lost long-time Extension educator Stanton Gill. He led our Ornamental Horticulture Team and was a driving force in the industry regionally and nationally. We will miss his leadership and entrepreneurial drive to serve nursery, landscape, and greenhouse growers and service providers. Our thoughts are with his family.

As Delmarva deals with highly pathogenic avian influenza (HPAI) infections, the service provided by the AgFS Poultry Team and their

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Image Credit: Edwin Remsberg

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collaborators to assist poultry growers in prevention of the disease through **biosecurity education and management**. Their efforts to serve Maryland's largest agricultural sector are appreciated.

This past year AgFS established a new statewide Urban Agriculture Program. Maryland urban farmers identified additional applied research and educational programs that would assist them in developing successful farming operations. The Maryland General Assembly funded two new Extension positions, one focused on urban farm and agribusiness management and the other on urban agriculture production. To meet these needs, Drs. Xuan Wei and Qianwen Lu were hired into these respective positions and are working with our AgFS Extension educators to serve Maryland's urban farmers.

The AgFS precision agriculture program formally started sixteen months ago when Dr. Hemendra Kumar joined us. He brings expertise in water management, sensor technologies, and other precision agriculture technologies. Dr. Bill Phillips joined the Agricultural Nutrient Management Program (ANMP) this month. In addition to his educational programming duties, he will explore the use of drone technology in gaining nutrient management planning efficiencies. Dr. Travis Ford, the new AgFS Extension educator in Caroline County, brings extensive experience in digital agriculture from the private sector. The expertise of these Extension educators will help prepare Maryland farmers and agribusinesses as digital agriculture usage continues to expand.

The ANMP joined the AgFS on September 30, 2024 and continues to provide nutrient management training and planning services for Maryland farmers. In its first year with the AgFS, the ANMP provided 1,132 farmers with nutrient management plans that covered 5,456 tracts with over 245,000 acres. Farmers can find their advisor in the **Nutrient Management Directory** to request assistance with their nutrient management plan.

The AgFS Extension educators offer Extension publications, newsletters, online resources, posters, and social media on a wide variety of topics on the **Agriculture Resources website**.

Please welcome the many new AgFS hires highlighted in the Faculty and Staff Spotlight section. These faculty and staff serve the agriculture and food systems sectors in your communities.

Best wishes for a prosperous 2025!



A chemist in white protective gloves holds a test tube in preparation for soil testing. Photo credit: Adobe Stock

LIST OF SOIL TESTING LABS

.....Neith Little, UME

For home gardeners and community gardens, the University of Maryland Extension **Home and Garden Information Center** has a very helpful **webpage on soil testing**, with a video showing you how to collect a sample, a list of testing labs, and a series of FAQs.

For professional farmers, the University of Maryland Extension Agricultural Nutrient Management Program has this **webpage on soil testing**. Their webpage has instructions for soil sampling and lists comparing **soil and growing media test labs** (see tabs at the top of the table for different kinds of tests).

Once you have determined which kind of test you need, and selected a testing lab, check that lab's website or call their main desk to get a copy of their sample submission form. They will have different forms for different soil tests. You will need to clearly label your samples and mail them to the lab with a copy of the sample submission form. Depending on the lab, you might be able to pay for the testing online, over the phone, or by check mailed with the sample.

SOIL TESTING-FAQS

.....Neith Little, Extension Agent in Urban Agriculture.
Fruit and Vegetable News, May 2024

How do I get my soil tested?

There are many different kinds of soil tests. Just like when you go to the doctor, and they can test your blood pressure or your vitamin levels or whether you have a particular kind of infection, there are many different soil properties that a lab can test.

The most common soil tests you might be looking for are soil fertility tests, soil contaminant tests, and soil health tests. This FAQ currently focuses on **soil fertility tests**.

An important note about soil fertility test recommendations

A soil fertility test tells you about your soil's ability to provide essential nutrients to plants. The test results will help you decide how much fertilizer or other soil amendments to apply to improve your plant's growth. If you are gardening as a hobby, you can use the fertilizer recommendations in your test results. But, if you are farming crops for sale, you will need to send your soil test results to a certified planner. This is because, in Maryland, if you are a farmer who sells \$2,500 or more of farm products, or who has 8,000 lbs. or more of livestock, you are legally required to follow a nutrient management plan written by a certified planner. More information about this regulation is available from the **Maryland Department of Agriculture Nutrient Management Program**, and the **UME Agricultural Nutrient Management Program**.

Continued on page 4

Soil Testing-FAQs continued from page 3

Do you need a soil fertility test or a growing medium analysis?

Next, to find an appropriate testing laboratory, you will need to determine whether you are growing in **soil** or a **created growing medium**. A created growing medium is considered a material that was made from at least two components which can include any organic material like compost. A created growing medium is not a soil amended with compost. Urban growers frequently call any material they grow in "soil," but when you decide what soil test to order, it is important to distinguish between naturally-occurring mineral soils and created growing media.

Mineral soils are made of sand, silt, and clay that forms over time from the native parent material (rock). There is also some naturally occurring organic matter in the soil, typically between 1 and 5 % depending on the land-use.

Many urban growers add large amounts of compost or wood chips on top of their native soil, or grow in raised beds or containers filled with compost. When you are growing in a material that is more than 50% added organic materials ("organic" as in made of carbon-rich organic matter such as compost, peat moss, etc.), that is considered a **created growing medium** or an **organic-based growing medium**. If you have questions about telling the difference between a soil or growing medium, contact your local Extension educator for technical assistance. If you are growing in a **mineral soil**, a standard **soil fertility test** will tell you about the ability of your soil to provide nutrients to plants.

REDUCING THE RISK OF PRUSSIC ACID POISONING

..... Amanda Grev, Extension Specialist in Forage and Pasture.

Warm-season annuals can serve as a means to provide forage for livestock during the summer months when the growth of cool-season perennials is slowed. In many cases, regrowth can allow for more than one grazing or harvest to be obtained from these forages. Under certain conditions, there is potential for prussic acid accumulation in some of these warm-season annual species.

What is prussic acid?

Sorghum species like sorghum, sudangrass, sorghum-sudangrass hybrids, and johnsongrass, contain a cyanogenic compound called dhurrin. Under normal circumstances, the dhurrin is bound and non-toxic; however, if the plant tissue is injured by some sort of stressor, the plant cells can become damaged and an enzyme called emulsion can break down the dhurrin, resulting in the formation of a highly toxic hydrogen cyanide compound commonly referred to as prussic acid. Prussic acid concentrations as low as 0.1% of dry tissue is considered dangerous. Prussic acid hinders the animal's ability to transfer oxygen in the bloodstream. When a lethal dose is consumed, animals die from asphyxiation within minutes. Common symptoms prior to death include excessive salivation, difficulty breathing, staggering, convulsions, and collapsing.



Cattle grazing at the Central Maryland Research and Education Center. Image credit: Amanda Grev

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Reducing the risk of prussic acid poisoning continued from page 4

What causes prussic acid accumulation?

The greatest levels of prussic acid can be found in the leafier parts of the plant, particularly in new growth, and young growing plants contain more prussic acid than older plants. Any stress condition or injury can lead to an appreciable accumulation of prussic acid within the plant. Frost damage is one of the more common causes leading to an accumulation of prussic acid, as prussic acid is released very quickly in frozen leaves. However, other stress conditions, such as a prolonged drought or soil nutrient imbalances from excessive nitrogen fertilization and deficient phosphorus or potassium levels can also cause high levels of prussic acid accumulation.

How can prussic acid poisoning be avoided?

Most problems with prussic acid can be avoided with proper management. To reduce the potential of prussic acid poisoning, utilize the following guidelines:

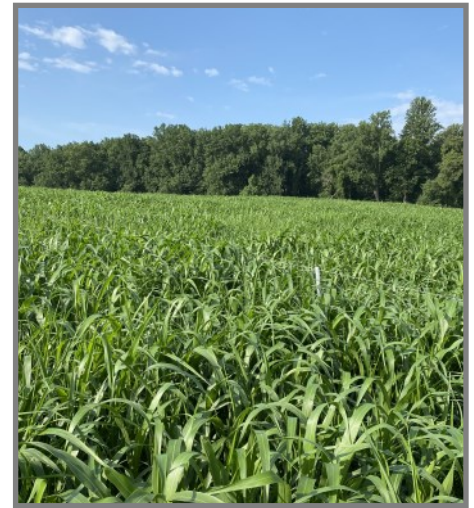
1. Select a variety that has a lower prussic acid potential.
2. Maintain proper soil fertility and avoid excessive nitrogen.
3. Do not graze on nights when frost is likely, as high levels of the toxin are produced within hours after a frost.
4. After a killing frost, wait at least 7 to 10 days before grazing or green chopping forage, as prussic acid does not begin to decline until after the leaves have dried.
5. After a non-killing frost, do not graze until the regrowth has reached a minimum of 2 feet in height or 2 weeks have passed, as the regrowth will likely contain high levels of prussic acid.
6. Utilize heavy stocking rates and rotational grazing to reduce the risk of animals selectively consuming only young growth that is high in prussic acid.
7. Test questionable forage to ensure safety before grazing or feeding.

What about harvested forages?

Proper field curing or ensiling can help reduce the potential for toxicity in harvested forages because prussic acid is volatile and some of the toxic components will dissipate as a gas during the drying or fermentation process. Forages should be ensiled for at least 3 to 4 weeks before feeding, or a minimum of 8 weeks if there was a risk of high prussic acid levels at the time of chopping. The prussic acid content in hay can be reduced by as much as 75% during the curing process, so dry hay is typically not hazardous.

Can prussic acid levels be tested?

Forages can be analyzed prior to feeding to ensure the toxic compounds have been reduced to a safe level for consumption. Because the greatest prussic acid concentrations are found in new, leafy growth and livestock generally consume leaves before stems, samples taken for prussic acid analysis should be largely comprised of leaves. Samples should be collected from several places throughout the field and kept in a sealed plastic bag to prevent the volatilization of prussic acid from the sample. Samples should be kept refrigerated and delivered to a testing laboratory as soon as possible.



A pasture growing warm season annuals at the Central Maryland Research and Education Center. Image credit: Amanda Grev

UPCOMING EVENTS

For more information about our upcoming programs. Go to go.umd.edu/CPM

Agronomy

Feb. 6, 2025

Cecil County Winter Agronomy Meeting

Feb. 11, 2025

Harford County Mid-Winter Agronomy Meeting

Feb. 19, 2025

Central Maryland Agronomy Meeting

Feb. 20, 2025

Mid-Shore Agronomy Day

Feb. 28, 2025

Queen Anne's County Agronomy Meeting

Fruit and Vegetable

Feb. 5, 2025

Eastern Shore Vegetable Growers Meeting

Feb. 13, 2025

Western Maryland Regional Fruit Meeting

Feb. 19, 2025

Bay Area Fruit School

March 23, 2025

Urban Farmer Winter Meeting

UME EVENTS

<https://extension.umd.edu/news-events/events/>

PESTICIDE CERTIFICATIONS

<https://go.umd.edu/PC>

NUTRIENT VOUCHERS

<https://go.umd.edu/ANMP-Meetings>

AGRICULTURAL NUTRIENT MANAGEMENT PROGRAM

We remain fully operational and committed to meeting your needs.

CONTACT YOUR LOCAL EXTENSION OFFICE ADVISOR BY GOING TO go.umd.edu/advisors

This institution is an equal opportunity provider.

UNIVERSITY OF MARYLAND EXTENSION

AgFS Agriculture & Food Systems

UNIVERSITY OF MARYLAND EXTENSION CELEBRATES ACHIEVEMENTS IN AGRICULTURAL NUTRIENT MANAGEMENT PROGRAM

With the annual release of the Agricultural Nutrient Management Program (ANMP) report, the program has a number of accomplishments to share. The program's focus on enhancing internal processes and expanding its reach has resulted in great progress, including key improvements like hiring new advisors, increasing data management and analysis, and delivering comprehensive training. Some of these achievements include:

- 1,132 nutrient management programs completed statewide, encompassing over 245,000 acres of farmland
- 19,578 fields receiving recommendations, including evaluations for manure and phosphorus management
- 30 meetings for Nutrient Management Voucher Training, with 851 farmers receiving training to receive or retain their voucher certification

To learn more about the ANMP, find trainings and upcoming events, and read the full annual report, visit <https://go.umd.edu/anmp>.

AGRICULTURAL NUTRIENT MANAGEMENT PROGRAM
<https://go.umd.edu/anmp>
ANNUAL REPORT
 2023-2024

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UNIVERSITY OF MARYLAND EXTENSION AgFS Agriculture & Food Systems

FACULTY AND STAFF SPOTLIGHT

We are thrilled to share the appointment of our new faculty members and staff in the AgFS program! Their extensive knowledge and expertise will significantly enrich our educational offerings and research initiatives. Let us warmly welcome them to our vibrant academic community! To connect with them, please visit our online directory for contact information or reach out to your local Extension office for assistance.

Agriculture and Food System New Hires



Dr. Brittany Fletcher
Ruminant Livestock Specialist



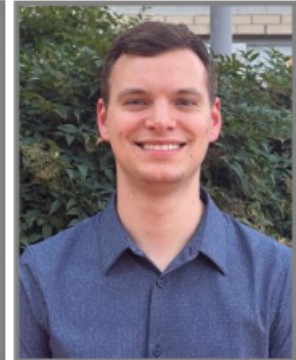
Dr. Travis Ford
Extension Educator, Caroline County Office



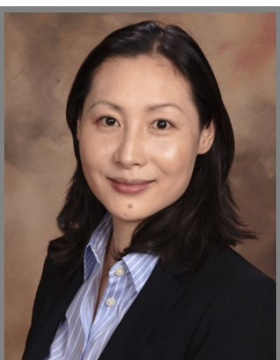
Dr. Lisa Kuder
Native Plants and Landscapes Specialist



Dr. Qianwen Lu
Urban Agriculture Production Specialist



Mr. Hayden Schug
Extension Educator, Charles County Office



Dr. Xuan Wei
Urban and Agribusiness Specialist



Dr. Veronica Yurchak
Commercial Vegetable Production Specialist

College of Agriculture and Natural Resources (AGNR) Campus Specialists Affiliated with AgFS

Dr. Sunoh Che
AGNR, Department of Animal and Avian Sciences Assistant Professor and Poultry Management Specialist

Dr. Colby Silvert
AGNR, Department Plant Science and Landscape Architecture Assistant Professor and Extension Specialist



<https://agnr.umd.edu/about/directory/>

Agricultural Nutrient Management Program New Hires

We are excited to introduce our new team members for the Agricultural Nutrient Management Program (ANMP) within the AgFS! They are all set to help you during this plan writing year. If you would like to get in touch with them, check out the ANMP online directory (<https://go.umd.edu/ANMP-Personnel>) for their contact details, or feel free to reach out to your local Extension office for any assistance. We are here to support you!



Ms. Zoe Askew
ANMP Advisor, Baltimore Co.



Ms. Marlow Dilling
ANMP Advisor, Caroline Co.



Ms. Kayla Griffith
*Nutrient Management
Faculty Specialist and ANMP
Acting Director*



Ms. Lucy Hayes
ANMP Advisor, Carroll Co.



Ms. Brooke Knauss
ANMP Advisor, Anne Arundel Co.



Dr. Bill Phillips
*Nutrient Management
Faculty Specialist*



Ms. Abby Selnick
ANMP Advisor, Montgomery Co.



Ms. Sabrina Summers
ANMP Advisor, Frederick Co.



Ms. Andrea Uphold
ANMP Advisor, Garrett Co.



Agricultural Nutrient Management Training. Image credit: D. Jarboe

UNIVERSITY OF MARYLAND EXTENSION AGRICULTURE AND FOOD SYSTEMS

PROGRAM LEADER

Darren Jarboe | jarboe@umd.edu | (301) 405-6935

Get in touch with our one of our team members at any of our convenient locations.

COUNTY OFFICES

Allegheny County

Agent: Sara Llewellyn | 301.724.3320 | sllewell@umd.edu
ANMP: currently recruiting/contact county agent

Anne Arundel County

Agent: R. David Myers | 301.226.7473 | myersrd@umd.edu
ANMP: Brooke Knauss | 301.226.7479 | bknauss@umd.edu

Baltimore County

Agent: Erika Crowl | 410.887.8090 | ecrowl@umd.edu
ANMP: Zoe Askew | 410.887.8090 | zaskew@umd.edu

Baltimore City

Agent: Neith Little | 301.226.7415 | nglittle@umd.edu
ANMP: Zoe Askew | 410.887.8090 | zaskew@umd.edu

Calvert County

ANMP: Chris Dowell | 301.868.8783 | csdowell@umd.edu

Caroline County

Agent: Travis Ford | 410.479.4030 | twford@umes.ed
ANMP: Marlow Dilling | 301.226.7735 | madylin@umd.edu

Carroll County

Agent: Bryan Butler | 410.386.2760 | bbutlers@umd.edu
ANMP: Lucy Hayes | 301.226.7650 | lhayes13@umd.edu

Cecil County

Agent: Doris Behnke | 410.996.5280 | dbehnke@umd.edu
ANMP: Sam Covington | 410.996.5280 | scoving2@umd.edu

Charles County

Agent: Hayden Schug | 301.226.7500 | hschug@umd.edu
ANMP: currently recruiting/contact county agent

Dorchester County

Agent: Emily Zobel | 410.228.8800 | ezobel@umd.edu
ANMP: currently recruiting/contact county agent

Frederick County

Agent: Mark Townsend | 301.600.3578 | mtownsen@umd.edu
ANMP: Sabrina Summers | 301.600.1594 | sabsun@umd.edu

Garrett County

Agent: Willie Lantz | wlantz@umd.edu | 301.334.6960
ANMP: Andrea Uphold | 301.334.6960 | auphold@umd.edu

Harford County

Agent: Andrew Kness | 410.638.3255 | akness@umd.edu
ANMP: Patricia Hoopes | 410.638.3255 | phoopes@umd.edu

Howard County

Agent: Nathan Glenn | 410.313-2707 | nglenn@umd.edu
ANMP: Krista Mitchell | 410.313.2709 | kistaw@umd.edu

Kent County

Agent: Dwayne Joseph | 410.778.1661 | dwaynej@umd.edu
ANMP: Sam Covington | 410.778.1661 | scoving2@umd.edu

Montgomery County

Agent: Kelly Nichols | 301.590.2807 | kellyn@umd.edu
ANMP: Abby Selnick | 301.590.2840 | aselnick@umd.edu

Prince George's County

Agent: currently recruiting
ANMP: Chris Dowell | 301.868.8783 | csdowell@umd.edu

Queen Anne's County

Agent: Jenny Rhodes | 410.758.0166 | jrhodes@umd.edu
ANMP: Jeff Moore | 410.758.0166 | jfmoore@umd.edu

Somerset County

Agent: Sarah Hirsh | 410.651.1350 | shirsh@umd.edu
ANMP: Anne-Meredith Webster | 410.651.1350 | amw99@umd.edu

St. Mary's County

Agent: Ben Beale | 301.475.4484 | bbeale@umd.edu
ANMP: Gregory Simpson | 301.475.4480 | simpsong@umd.edu

Talbot County

Agent: Shannon Dill | 410.822.1244 | sdill@umd.edu
ANMP: Sam Harrison | 410.822.1244 | sharri13@umd.edu

Washington County

Agent: Jeff Semler | 301.226.7528 | jsemler@umd.edu
ANMP: currently recruiting/contact county agent

Wicomico County

Agent: Ginny Rosenkranz | 410.749.6141 | rosnkrnz@umd.edu
Agent: Haley Sater | 410.749.6141 | hsater@umd.edu
ANMP: currently recruiting/contact county agent

Worchester County

Agent: Maegan Perdue | 301.226.7543 | mperdue@umd.edu
ANMP: currently recruiting/contact county agent

*ANMP - Agricultural Nutrient Management Program Advisor

AGFS STATE SPECIALISTS

| | | | |
|---|-------------------|--------------------|------------------|
| Agriculture Law Education Initiative (ALEI) | Christin Redding | 301.405.1293 | credd8@umd.edu |
| ANMP, Acting Program Director and Faculty Specialist: | Kayla Griffith | 301.226.7439 | kmgriffi@umd.edu |
| ANMP Program Software Technical Support Specialist: | Paul Shipley | 301.405.2563 | prs@umd.edu |
| ANMP Faculty Specialist: | Bill Phillips | 443.446.4244 x107 | billii@umd.edu |
| Commercial Horticulture Specialist: | Andrew Ristvey | 410.827.8056 x113 | aristvey@umd.edu |
| Farm Management Specialist: | Dale Johnson | 301.226.7567 | dmj@umd.edu |
| Ornamental Horticulture Pathology Specialist: | Dave Clement | 301.226.7601 | clement@umd.edu |
| LEAD Maryland Foundation | Susan Harrison | 410. 827.8056 x136 | leadmd@umd.edu |
| Northeast SARE Professional Development Program | Nevin Dawson | 301.364.4174 | ndawson@umd.edu |
| Pasture and Forage Specialist: | Amanda Grev | 301.226.7575 | agrev@umd.edu |
| Precision Agriculture Specialist: | Hemendra Kumar | 301.226.7405 | hemendra@umd.edu |
| Poultry Specialist: | Jonathan Moyle | 410.742.1178 x309 | jmoyle@umd.edu |
| Ruminant Livestock Specialist: | Brittany Fletcher | 301.226.7576 | bfletch1@umd.edu |
| Urban Farm and Agribusiness Management Specialist: | Xuan Wei | 301.226.7631 | xuanwei@umd.edu |
| Urban Agriculture Production Specialist: | Qianwen Lu | 301.226.7632 | qwenlu@umd.edu |
| Vegetable Production Specialist: | Veronica Yurchak | 410.827.8056 | vjohnso4@umd.edu |
| Viticulture and Small Fruit Specialist: | Joseph Fiola | 301.226.7579 | jfiola@umd.edu |
| Weed Management Specialist: | Kurt Vollmer | 410.827.8056 | kvollmer@umd.edu |

University of Maryland Extension Agriculture and Food Systems program offers many resources. Check them out!



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- [Ag Marketing](#)
- [Agricultural Nutrient Management Program](#)
- [Alternative Crops](#)
- [Annie's Project](#)
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- [Food Safety](#)
- [Grain Marketing](#)
- [Grapes and Fruit](#)
- [Horses](#)
- [IPMNet](#)
- [LEAD Maryland Fellowship Program](#)
- [Maryland Grain](#)

- [Maryland Vegetables](#)
- [Maryland Rural Enterprise Development Center](#)
- [Plant Diagnostic Lab](#)
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- [Vegetable & Fruit Blog](#)
- [Extensión en Español](#)
- [Maryland Horse Blog](#)
- [Maryland Risk Management Education Blog](#)



NOTICE TO BENEFICIARIES AND PROSPECTIVE BENEFICIARIES

Name of Organization: University of Maryland Extension

Name of Program: Agriculture and Food Systems

Contact Information for Program Staff: Darren Jarboe, Editor, Assistant Director and Program Leader, Agriculture and Food Systems Program, University of Maryland Extension, 1204 Symons Hall, 7998 Regents Drive, University of Maryland, College Park, MD 20742, (301) 405-6935, jarboe@umd.edu.

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Mail: United States Department of Agriculture Director, Center for Civil Rights Enforcement 1400 Independence Avenue, SW Washington, DC 20250-9410

Fax: (202) 690-7442

Email: program.intake@usda.gov

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A SPOTLIGHT ON RECENT PUBLICATIONS

Explore some of our latest peer-reviewed publications. Our dedicated faculty is diligently working to bring you the most current insights on a variety of agricultural topics, inspiring growth and innovation.

University of Maryland Extension Winter Meeting Data 2022 (FS-2022-0642)

How to Build a Low-Cost, Small-Scale Aquaponic System (EM-2023-0698)

Reducing Greenhouse Gas Emissions through Improved Manure Management (FS-2023-0689)

A Case Study: Anaerobic Digestion of Dairy Manure and Food Processing Waste with Renewable Energy, Composting and Manure Injection (FS-2023-0694)

Thornless Blackberry Cultivars Suited for the Mid-Atlantic (FS-2024-0709)

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1210 Symons Hall, 7998 Regents Drive
College Park, MD 20742