

Beginning Farmer Resource Guide
For Frederick, Howard, & Montgomery Counties
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General Resources

University of Maryland Extension

University of Maryland Extension is the state-wide, non-formal education system within the College of Agriculture and Natural Resources. Agriculture and Food Systems Educators are available to provide technical and educational assistance to farmers.

- ~ [Frederick County](#)
330 Montevue Lane, Frederick, MD 21702
Main Number: 301-600-1588
Ag Educator: Mark Townsend, mtownsen@umd.edu, 301-600-3578

- ~ [Howard County](#)
Ascend One Building, 8930 Stanford Blvd, Suite 25, Columbia, MD 21045
Main Number: 410-313-2712
Ag Educator: Nathan Glenn, [nglenn@umd.edu](mailto:n Glenn@umd.edu), 410-313-2707

- ~ [Montgomery County](#)
18410 Muncaster Road, Derwood, MD 20855
Main Number: 301-590-9638
Ag Educator: Kelly Nichols, kellyn@umd.edu, 301-590-2807

- ~ [University of Maryland Extension Agriculture and Food Systems Website](#) - Learn more about University of Maryland Extension's programs and find resources for crop and livestock enterprises.

- ~ *Did you know that University of Maryland Extension also provides programming in natural resources, family and consumer sciences, and 4-H youth development? Check out our [main website](#) for more information!*

Beginning Farmer Resources

- ~ [University of Maryland Extension Beginning Farmer Success Website](#) - This website includes information on various farm enterprises, the Beginning Farmer Guide Book, business planning resources, marketing, and permits and licenses.
- ~ [Interactive Beginning Farmer Guidebook](#) - This online, self-paced course walks through the Beginning Farmer Guidebook. To access the course, visit campus.extension.org. Search for “Maryland Farmer”. Select the Maryland Beginning Farmer Guidebook course. You will need to create a free account to access the course.
- ~ [University of Maryland Extension Entrepreneurial Coaching](#) - An opportunity to meet with a trained, impartial coach that can be a sounding board for your ideas, provide resources and contacts, and help sharpen your focus on reaching your business goals.
- ~ [New Farmer FAQ Website](#) - Includes information on registering a business, financial resources, certifications, and product sale regulations.
- ~ [U.S. Department of Agriculture New Farmers Website](#)
- ~ [Future Harvest - Beginning Farmer Training Program](#) – This 12-month training experience combines classroom curriculum with hands-on learning.

Business Planning

- ~ [University of Maryland Extension Beginning Farmer Success Program](#) - This website provides resources for beginning farmers. The [Farm Business Planning Workbook](#) is a workbook to develop a business plan.
- ~ [University of Maryland Extension Ag Marketing](#) - This website provides information about marketing ag products.

Custom Operators

- ~ The Frederick County Extension website has a list of customer operators and equipment dealers in the area on our [county Agriculture and Food Systems webpage](#); scroll down to the Ag Frequently Asked Questions heading.
- ~ The Howard County Soil Conservation District has a list of custom operators in the area on their [website](#). Click on “Contractors List” under the Links heading. The list of those who do seeding and pasture work starts at the bottom of page 3.

Financial Resources

- ~ Local banks may provide lending and financial services for farmers.
- ~ [Maryland Agricultural & Resource-Based Industry Development Corporation \(MARBIDCO\)](#) - MARBICO is a quasi-public economic development organization that helps Maryland's farm, forestry, and seafood businesses achieve sustainability and profitability. They offer loan and grant programs for farmers and rural business owners, land preservation programs, partnerships with commercial lenders, and business resources and planning tools for rural entrepreneurs.
- ~ [Horizon Farm Credit](#) - Horizon Farm Credit is an agricultural lending cooperative. They offer farm, home, and land loans, as well as crop insurance. Farm Credit also has a Beginning Farmer Program and an AgBiz Masters Program for young and beginning farmers.
- ~ [Northeast Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education \(SARE\)](#) - Has several grant opportunities for established farms.
- ~ [U.S. Department of Agriculture Farm Service Agency \(FSA\)](#) - The Farm Service Agency (FSA) is a branch of the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA). FSA handles the government cost-share and price support programs, as well as low-interest loans. Disaster programs for drought, freeze, and hail are also handled by FSA.
- ~ [U.S. Department of Agriculture Grants and Loans website](#) - includes information for beginning farmers
- ~ Visit the following county websites for county-specific information.
 - o [Frederick County Office of Economic Development](#) (See bottom of the page under Agriculture Incentives.)
 - o [Howard County Office of Economic Development](#)
 - o [Montgomery County Office of Agriculture](#)

Forest Stewardship Plans

These plans are written by the Maryland Department of Natural Resources (DNR). They allow the landowner to maximize the wildlife, timber, recreation, aesthetic value, and other benefits of the woodland while preserving the woodland for future generations. A list of county offices is located on the [DNR Forest Service contact website](#).

Every county also has a [Forest Conservancy District Board](#), which provides educational activities, critical area timber harvest plan review, and private landowner outreach. County-specific websites are below.

- o Frederick County: <https://frederick.forestryboard.org/>
- o Howard County: <http://www.howardcountyforestryboard.org/>
- o Montgomery County: <https://www.mcmdforestryboard.org/>

Legal Educational Resources

- ~ The [Maryland Agriculture Law Education Initiative \(ALEI\)](#) provides information and resources regarding laws that impact Maryland Agriculture.
- ~ [So You Want to Own Rural Land in Maryland: Basic Legal Issues for All Landowners](#) – This free, online course focuses on leases, right-to-farm laws, fence lawn, estate planning, landowner liability, and more.

Looking for Land/Land Access

- ~ [Maryland FarmLink](#) - an online place for farmers to list land for sale or lease.
- ~ [Land Link Montgomery](#) is an online forum for Montgomery County farmers and landowners.

Marketing

Each county has a farm directory which consumers can use to find local products. The links to each of these farm directories are below; to be added to the list, please contact the appropriate office.

- ~ Frederick County
 - o [Homegrown Frederick](#), maintained by the Office of Economic Development
- ~ Howard County
 - o [Farm Search](#), maintained by the Economic Development Authority
 - o [HoCo Farms Connect](#), a list of farms that are offering delivery or pick up services
- ~ Montgomery County
 - o [Farm to Table website](#), maintained by the Office of Agriculture

Nutrient Management Plans

These plans are required in Maryland if your gross sales are more than \$2,500 per year or if you have more than 8,000 pounds of livestock on the farm. A nutrient management plan balances the nutrient levels in the soil with what the crop needs, and provides recommendations so that nutrients are not being over- or under-applied. For more information about nutrient management plans, visit the Maryland Department of Agriculture's [website](#). There are three ways to have a plan written for your farm:

- ~ Request a plan from a University of Maryland Extension Nutrient Management Advisor. Visit the [directory](#) to find your county's advisor.
- ~ [Become certified to write your own plan](#)
- ~ [Hire a private consultant](#) (See the Directory of Nutrient Management Consultants for Hire document under the Farmers heading in the menu on the right side of the page.)

Permits

- ~ Value-Added Products - The [Processing/Selling Value Added Products in MD fact sheet](#) (listed in the menu on the right under the Related Information heading) provides information on what permits/licenses are needed for various value-added products. The permits mentioned can be obtained from the county health department.
 - o [Frederick County Health Department - Food Control Office](#)
 - o [Howard County Health Department - Food Protection Program](#)
 - o [Montgomery County Department of Health and Human Services - Food and Facilities Licensing](#)

- ~ For questions regarding building greenhouses, buildings, etc. on your property, contact the county zoning/permitting office. Each county also has an office of agriculture or economic development which can also assist with answering zoning/permitting questions.
 - o Frederick County:
 - [Frederick County Office of Economic Development](#)
 - [Director and Business Development Manager for Agriculture](#)
 - [Frederick County Zoning Office](#)
 - o Howard County
 - [Howard County Economic Development Authority - Farm & Agriculture](#)
 - [Director of Agricultural Business Development](#)
 - [Howard County Department of Planning and Zoning](#)
 - o Montgomery County
 - [Montgomery County Office of Agriculture](#); for zoning/permitting questions, visit the [FAQs page](#) and [Find My Zoning tool](#).
 - [Montgomery County Department of Permitting Services](#)

- ~ [A Farmer's Guide to Environmental Permits](#) - This document provides explanations for common permits that farmers need, as well as a checklist on pages 20-21.

Pesticide License

This license is required when applying restricted use pesticides on your farm (includes owned and rented property). For more information on obtaining a pesticide license, visit the Maryland Department of Agriculture's [website](#).

Registering a Farm Business

- ~ [Maryland Business Portal](#)

- ~ The Maryland Department of Assessments and Taxation has forms on their [website](#), under the Create or Start a Business in Maryland heading. These forms can be mailed or emailed to the Department.

Small Farm and Urban Agriculture Program

This program is run by the Maryland Department of Agriculture. This program provides small and urban farmers with assistance, and includes the small acreage cover crop program. For information, visit the Maryland Department of Agriculture's [website](#).

Soil & Water Conservation Technical and Financial Assistance

The U.S. Department of Agriculture's Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS) and County Soil Conservation District (SCD) Offices provide technical assistance with implementing soil and water conservation practices on the farm. Example practices include cover crops, no-till, manure storages, grass waterways, roof runoff structures, and stream buffers. NRCS may also have financial cost-share programs available for some of these practices. Below is the contact information for local offices.

- ~ [Maryland NRCS Website](#)

- ~ Frederick County NRCS & SCD Offices
92 Thomas Johnson Drive, Suite 230, Frederick
301-695-2803 ext. 3
[Frederick & Catoclin SCD Website](#)

- ~ Howard County NRCS & SCD Offices
14735 Frederick Road, Cooksville
410-313-0680
[Howard County SCD Website](#)

- ~ Montgomery County NRCS & SCD Offices
18410 Muncaster Road, Derwood
301-590-2855
[Montgomery County SCD Website](#)

Soil Sampling

- ~ [Directions for taking soil samples.](#)
- ~ [A list of soil testing labs in the region.](#)
- ~ Soil Probe Use - The county Extension Office may have soil probes that are available on loan. To inquire about borrowing a soil probe, contact the county Extension Office:
 - o Frederick County: 301-600-3576
 - o Howard County: 301-375-0260
 - o Montgomery County: 301-590-2807

Soils Information

- ~ [SoilWeb](#) – This online, interactive tool enables you to see the soil series and characteristics at a specific location.

Value Added Products/On-Farm Processing

- ~ Value-Added Products - The [Processing/Selling Value Added Products in MD fact sheet](#) (listed in the menu on the right under the Related Information heading) provides information on what

permits/licenses are needed for various value-added products. The permits mentioned can be obtained from the county health department.

- o [Frederick County Health Department - Food Control Office](#)
- o [Howard County Health Department - Food Protection Program](#)
- o [Montgomery County Department of Health and Human Services - Food and Facilities Licensing](#)

~ The Maryland Department of Health provides information on the following:

- o [On-Farm Processing](#)
- o [Maryland Cottage Food Businesses](#)

~ The Maryland Agriculture Law Education Initiative has free regulatory decision tree resources (in hard copy and online formats) to help growers understand and identify the laws that affect the production of value-added products. To receive access, sign up at <https://go.umd.edu/SpecialtyCropDecisionTree>.

Crop/Livestock-Specific Resources

Cattle

~ [UMD Beef Short Courses](#) - A three part educational course that offers participation in workshops. Fees may apply for some sessions.

- ~ [PSU Raising Beef Cattle](#) - (Penn State University) Beef Production and Management
- ~ [USDA Cattle and Beef Market](#) - Understanding trends and trade of cattle

Christmas Trees

- ~ [Christmas Tree Production](#) (Penn State)
- ~ [UME Christmas Tree Enterprise Fact Sheet and Budget](#) (Scroll down to the Christmas Tree heading.)
- ~ [Nutrient Management Recommendations](#) (University of Maryland)
- ~ [Maryland Department of Natural Resources Forest Conservation and Management Program](#) - Forests that are managed properly may be eligible for a reduced tax rate. Land used to grow Christmas trees is eligible if the trees will be cut at harvest.

Cover Crops

- ~ [Growing Cover Crops Profitably](#) (Free version online, and hard copies available for purchase.)

Cut Flowers

- ~ [University of Maryland Extension Commercial Horticulture website](#) - information for the nursery, greenhouse, landscape, and cut flower industries.
- ~ [North Carolina State University Extension](#) has put together a list of resources from various universities and Extension services. (If the link in the article does not work, copy and paste the title of the document and its source into a search bar to find it.)
- ~ [Maryland Cut Flower Growers Association](#) - Membership is free. They typically have a few educational meetings throughout the year.
- ~ [Association of Specialty Cut Flower Growers](#) - This is a national organization which provides resources and research results (including flower variety trials) for cut flower growers.
- ~ [Nutrient Management Recommendations](#) (University of Maryland)

Fruits

- ~ [ATTRA Organic Fruit Production](#) - From the National Center for Appropriate Technology's Sustainable Agriculture program, ATTRA provides an overview of site selection, management and economics of organic fruit production
- ~ [Michigan State University Extension's Smart Gardening](#) - Provides charts identifying soil requirements, harvest times and other best practices for common fruit trees

Goats

- ~ [Maryland Small Ruminant Page](#)
- ~ [Dairy Goat Production](#) (Penn State)

Grapes

- ~ [University of Maryland Extension's Grapes and Fruit website](#) – Includes information for Starting a Vineyard and recordings from the New Grape Grower Workshop
- ~ [Wine Grape Production Guide for Eastern North America](#)

- o Hard copies can be ordered through [Cornell University](#) or [Ag Science, Inc.](#)

Herbs

- ~ [Selection and Care of Herbs](#) (University of Maryland Extension)
- ~ [Culinary and Aromatic Herbs](#) (North Carolina State Extension)
- ~ [The Herb Society of America](#). Local chapter: [Potomac Unit](#)
- ~ Lavender resources:
 - o [Cornell University](#)
 - o [Sequim Lavender Company](#)

Horses

- ~ [University of Maryland Extension Horses website](#) - includes videos, publications, and recorded webinars on various subjects including pasture management, soil testing, and manure management. (For manure management and composting information, click on the Publications heading, and scroll down to find the Manure Management heading.)
- ~ [Horse Owner's Guide to Best Management Practices](#) (Maryland Department of Agriculture) - includes information on manure, composting, and pasture management
- ~ Poisonous Plants in Horse Pastures:
 - o [Penn State fact sheet](#)
 - o [Rutgers fact sheet](#)

Livestock (General)

- ~ [University of Maryland Extension Animal Science website](#) - Information and resources for cattle, horses, poultry, sheep and goats.

Mushrooms

- ~ [Cornell University](#)
- ~ [Penn State University](#)
- ~ [University of Maryland Resources](#) (Scroll down to the Shiitake Mushrooms heading.)

Ponds

- ~ [Pond Management Information](#)

Poultry

- ~ [Egg Inspection](#) - The Egg Inspection program is responsible for enforcement of the Maryland Egg Law enacted to provide Maryland consumers with wholesome, high quality eggs. Applications and guidelines are found in the menu on the right side of the page.
- ~ [Maryland Egg Quality Assurance Program](#) - The Maryland Egg Quality Assurance Program (MEQAP) is a voluntary program to minimize the risk of *Salmonella enteritidis* (SE)

contamination of chicken (shell) eggs and provide standards for the quality of eggs marketed under the provisions of this program.

- ~ [Poultry Registration](#) - MDA asks poultry owners to register their flocks in order to be notified of disease outbreaks (i.e. avian influenza) when they occur.
- ~ [Backyard Poultry](#) (University of Maryland Extension) - This website includes resources for flock management, housing, diseases, home processing, and preventing predation.

Pigs

- ~ [Raising Small Groups of Pigs](#) (Penn State Extension) *Note: references to nutrient management plans in this article refer to Pennsylvania-specific regulations. For Maryland nutrient management information, see the Nutrient Management section of this guide.*

Sheep

- ~ [Maryland Small Ruminant Page](#)

Small Fruits

- ~ [Small Fruit Portal](#) (Southern Maryland Agriculture Development Commission)

Vegetables

- ~ [Sample Vegetable Budgets](#) (University of Vermont)
- ~ [Vegetable Crop Budgets & Irrigation Cost Calculators](#) (University of Delaware)
- ~ [University of Maryland Extension Vegetables website](#) - Information for Maryland vegetable growers, including the Mid-Atlantic Commercial Vegetable Production Recommendation Guide
- ~ [When to Plant Vegetables in Maryland](#) - Our Home and Garden Information Center (HGIC) has a list of when to plant vegetables. While HGIC is geared towards home gardeners, you may find the site useful for finding information about vegetables.
- ~ [Plant Science Food Safety Group](#) (University of Maryland) – Information about produce and food safety laws and recommendations.