



Massachusetts  
Agriculture in the Classroom



# BI-ANNUAL NEWSLETTER

Connecting Massachusetts Educators & Agriculture

Editor: Ambar Hammond

Photo Credit: Michelle Divoll

2025 Mass Ag Photo Calendar Winner



## UPCOMING EVENTS, POPULAR TOPICS, AND FUN FACTS

### COMPANION PLANTING

By Quinn Bazinet



### READ MORE

Companion planting is an increasingly popular strategy for raised bed production. The idea behind companion planting is grouping types of crops based on how compatible they are growing together. For example, a common companion planting pairing is basil and tomatoes: the basil attracts pollinators and deters certain tomato pests.

### READ MORE



- [Plants for the Winter Garden with Warren Leach](#)
- [Spring Conference](#)
- [On the Road Summer Workshop](#)

### UPCOMING WORKSHOPS

# A LETTER FROM OUR PRESIDENT

## "TEACHING TEACHERS ABOUT AGRICULTURE SINCE 1983"

By María Berríos, President of Mass Ag in the Classroom

As I look outside there is snow on the ground and I am thinking of gardens, farms, teachers.... The circle of life happens no matter what, the snow will melt, and plans will continue. Nonetheless, I am excited about MAC's plans for this year. We have an online workshop, the Spring conference is back and the 3rd annual On the Road to the Farm is in the making.

We have to thank The Grange and MDAR for their steadfast support via grants. Without them we would not be able to offer you events that allow you to take new and exciting lessons and information to the classroom. Today more than ever we want to bring to you meaningful and exciting experiences so you can be inspired, renewed, and go to your class full of hands on, minds on experiences for your students.

In order for us to continue we need your help! Spread the word about MAC, donate your time, resources and experiences. Check our website for up to date information and join us in making a difference in your classroom.

Yours in agriculture education,

María Berríos

Photo Credit: Annelie Connolly



# GRANT OPPORTUNITIES

*Mass Ag in the Classroom offers 2 rounds of grants every year*



Monson Public 2024

## MINI GRANTS

*Each year MAC funds a number of agriculture-related project proposals from teachers, schools, and farms working with schools. Grants are awarded two times a year. Deadlines are April 1st and September 1st. Most awards are between \$300 and \$500. The maximum possible award is \$1500. These have included reading programs focused on agricultural themes, projects that explore new technologies, writing and video projects, purchase of books and classroom materials such as incubators to support agricultural lessons, and more.*

### THE MARIAN HAZZARD GRANT FOR ADVANCEMENT OF POLLINATOR SYSTEMS

*The Marian B. Hazzard Mini-Grant will be awarded to a project that seeks an interdisciplinary approach to impacting Pollinator Systems. The award will be \$2000 and be selected from mini-grant applications during each cycle, if appropriate. The recipient will be expected to submit lesson plans related to the project with the final report. The recipient will receive a certificate at the completion of the project recognizing it for its achievement.*



SWIS Intermediate 2022

### MARJORIE A. COOPER GRANT FOR PROMOTION OF DAIRY TOPICS OR AGRICULTURAL CAREERS

*The Marjorie Cooper Mini-Grant will be awarded to a project that involves dairy science and/or the promotion of agricultural careers. The award will be \$2000 and be selected from mini-grant applications during each cycle, if appropriate. The recipient will be expected to submit lesson plans related to the project with the final report. The recipient will receive a certificate at the completion of the project recognizing it for its achievement.*

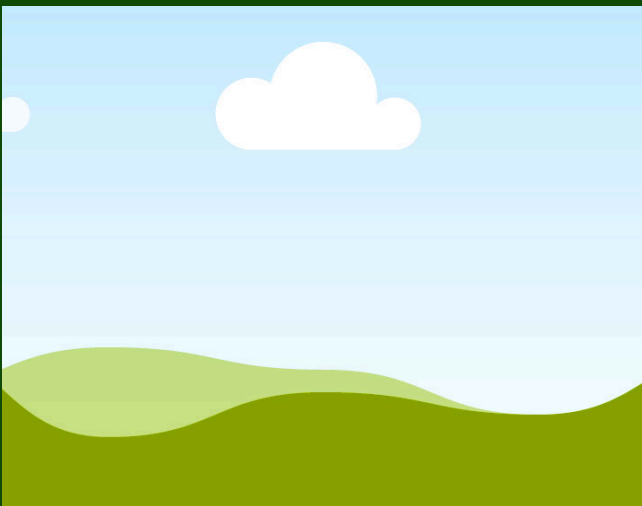




Photo Credit: Terence Donovan

## WORKSHOPS

Since 1996, Massachusetts Agriculture in the Classroom has offered more than 260 workshops on farms across the state bringing on-farm education experiences to more than 3,000 educators.

Each session offers an in-depth educational overview of one aspect of agriculture with related hands-on activities that helped teachers take agriculture back to their classrooms. Each workshop also includes a farm tour and the opportunity to meet the farmer and learn about work that goes on at the farm. Ten professional development points are offered to teachers for each of the workshops, when they take what they learn back to the classroom and carry out an activity with their students and then send a report.

We plan to continue virtual workshops of 1-1.5 hours, FREE.

When appropriate, we will have outdoor farm based on site workshops with opportunity for 10 PDP's.

Photo Credit: Karina Laurentis



Photo Credit: Kyle Medeiros



### Plants for the Winter Garden

February 25, 2025 via zoom  
Join award winning landscape designer Warren Leach to learn to improve home & school gardens in the winter



### Spring Conference

April 12, 2025  
Join for a day of learning and networking. [Click here](#) to sign up and learn more.



### On the Road Again

Summer, 2025  
Stay tuned for more information. Visit a variety of Massachusetts Farms for tours and education

# UPCOMING MAC EVENTS

## PLANTS FOR THE WINTER GARDEN

Interested in having a more appealing winter garden? Award winning landscape designer Warren Leach from Tranquil Lake Nursery is hosting a presentation focused on improving home and school gardens for the winter.

### WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW

- Tuesday, February 25, 2025
- Via Zoom from 6-7PM
- Contact:  
massaginclassroom@gmail.com  
ATTN: Maria Berrios

**EMAIL TODAY!**

 [www.aginclassroom.org/](http://www.aginclassroom.org/)

 [MassAg in the Classroom](#)



# UPCOMING MAC EVENTS

2025

# SPRING CONFERENCE

Growing Minds Through  
Mass Ag in the Classroom

## SAMPLE WORKSHOPS

- Raised Gardens
- Garden Accessibility
- Four Square Gardening
- Cows & Genetics
- Agriculture & Food Systems in MA
- Hydroponic Gardening
- Earn PDP's

## INFO

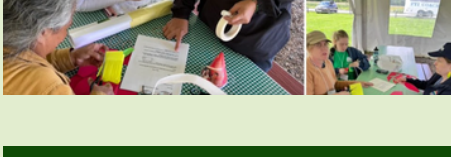
- 📅 April 12, 2025
- 🕒 8:30am – 3:30pm
- 📍 Auburn High School, MA
- 💰 Cost: \$50



21 AUGUST, 2024

# ON THE ROAD TO THE FARM

(SUMMER 2025-INFO COMING SOON!)



## STONE FIELD FARM

On Wednesday, August 21, 2024 bright and early we got ready to start a day on the farm. This year we had a coach bus! It was comfortable and our driver was fantastic. The weather was just right. We had a meet and greet on our first farm Stone Field Farm in Acton, MA. The Executive Director ? and Alisa Ciolffi, Communications and Outreach Manager welcomed us and explained the farm's mission and operations: they "are a regional food systems organization working at the intersection of farming, food waste, and food access." Here volunteers procure, sort, pack and distribute surplus food to food pantries, and other organizations in need, also known as gleaning. We learned about gleaning and discussed how impactful this concept would be for our students and the community. We helped sort through 750 pounds of carrots and Hakurrai turnips.

## GAINING GROUND

From there we rode the bus to Concord, MA and went to Gaining Ground. We were welcomed by Avery Indermaur who talked to us about the history and workings of the farm. This grows "organic produce for hunger relief with help from volunteers of all ages and abilities, who work and learn in our fields". We toured the greenhouses and fields. Our conversation then turned to talk about how climate change is impacting crop growth and farmer adaptability to these changes.

On the road, we talked about how we could include these concepts into our current curriculum and started thinking of lesson ideas. Many giveaways were won and distributed.

## VERRILL FARM

From Concord we then left to Verrill Farm, where lunch awaited and Mr. Verrill himself delighted us with stories on how his family farm developed and the issues of then and issues in farming of today. Our afternoon was focused on the topic of pollinators, Beecology, and a Nose for Nectar Activity. Teachers had time to meet and discuss their lesson ideas. We finished the farm tour giving away books on pollination, climate change, farming, and bees. On the way back to our cars we were tired but excited and full of new ideas, lessons, and books that could be used right at the beginning of school.

Our participants' feedback expressed loving the workshop format, information, and the awesome experience of being in a farm and having first hand experience with farmers' work and their ability to adapt.



# COMPANION PLANTING

## A SIMPLE GUIDE

By Quinn Bazinet

### >>> THE WHY

Companion planting is an increasingly popular strategy for raised bed production. The idea behind companion planting is grouping types of crops based on how compatible they are growing together. For example, a common companion planting pairing is basil and tomatoes: the basil attracts pollinators and deters certain tomato pests. At the same time, basil and tomato plants have opposite growth habits (basil being short and bushy while tomatoes are taller and skinnier) and aren't likely to crowd each other out, making them convenient to plant together.

### >>> INTERACTIONS

While companion planting is often the subject of traditional folklore or hearsay, scientists and growers have discovered a host of positive interactions and practical growing synergies. It's important to vet the information you receive on companion planting, as well as keep a measured expectation of benefits. There are a few rules that can help inform your companion planting strategy, and enable you to evaluate the information you may come across online.



### >>> COMPANION GROUPS

- Most plant interactions are positive, with a few notable exceptions. For example, black walnut is known to secrete a chemical that inhibits other plants growing near its roots. There are a handful of other known antagonisms, but by and large plants do not actively harm their fellows.
- There are multiple types of synergies between crops, including (but not limited to) shade regulation, pollinator attraction, pest deterrence, and improved soil fertility. Look out for what each bed lacks or needs to determine which combinations will be best for your raised beds.
- Diversity is the best companion planting policy; every crop group consumes a different nutrient profile. If you plant as many different crop groups in an area as you can, you can distribute risk of crop failure while keeping the soil nutrient levels relatively even across the board.
- If your system is large enough, you can instead group similar plants and rotate which bed they are planted in every year. This should have a similar effect as the more dense and diverse plantings when it comes to nutrient depletion, but you will lose out on the pest control benefits of mixed plantings.

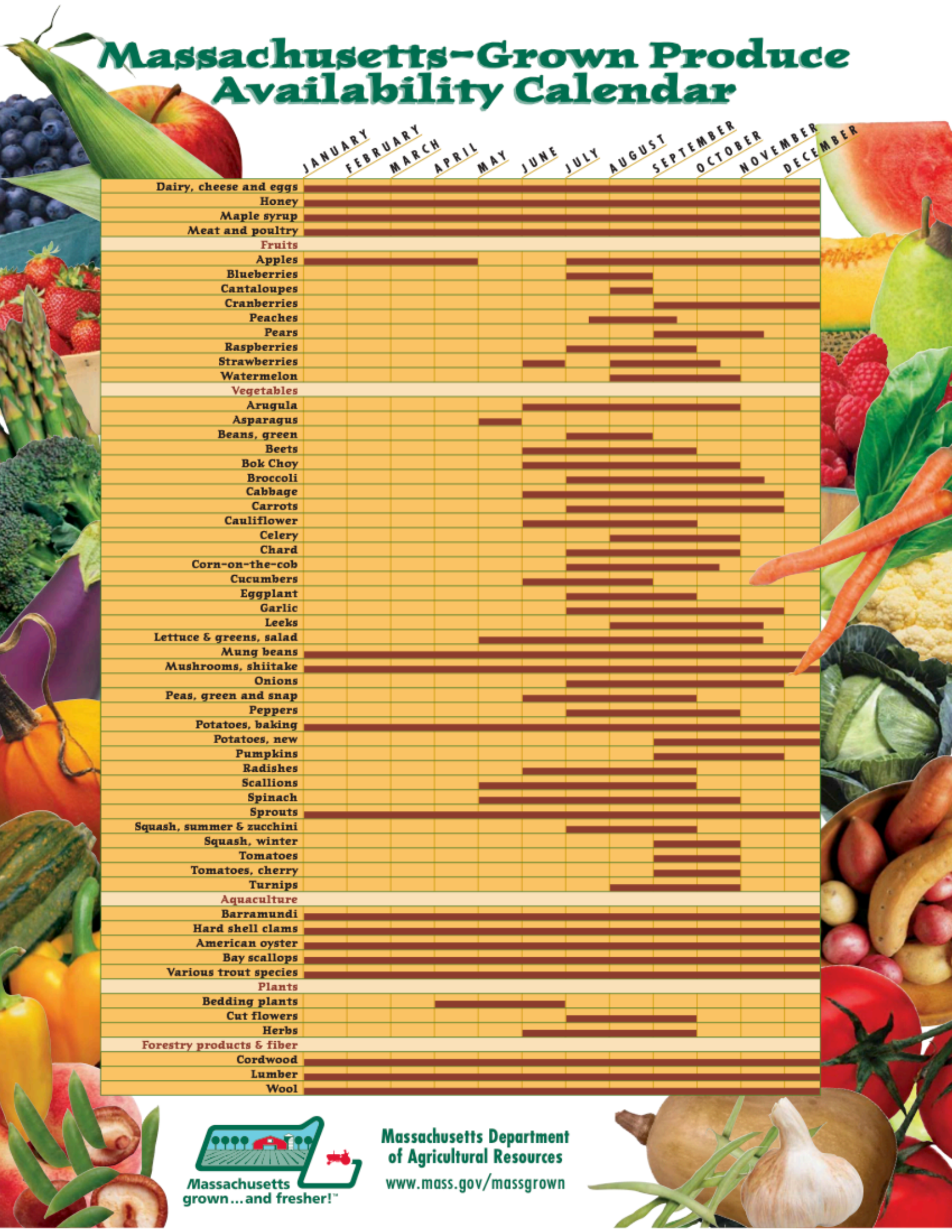
There are too many potential companion groupings to outline here, but the online Old Farmer's Almanac has an excellent online guide that can be found here: <https://www.almanac.com/companion-planting-guide-vegetables>



# Massachusetts-Grown Produce Availability Calendar

JANUARY FEBRUARY MARCH APRIL MAY JUNE JULY AUGUST SEPTEMBER OCTOBER NOVEMBER DECEMBER

	JANUARY	FEBRUARY	MARCH	APRIL	MAY	JUNE	JULY	AUGUST	SEPTEMBER	OCTOBER	NOVEMBER	DECEMBER
<b>Dairy, cheese and eggs</b>												
Honey												
Maple syrup												
<b>Meat and poultry</b>												
<b>Fruits</b>												
Apples												
Blueberries												
Cantaloupes												
Cranberries												
Peaches												
Pears												
Raspberries												
Strawberries												
Watermelon												
<b>Vegetables</b>												
Arugula												
Asparagus												
Beans, green												
Beets												
Bok Choy												
Broccoli												
Cabbage												
Carrots												
Cauliflower												
Celery												
Chard												
Corn-on-the-cob												
Cucumbers												
Eggplant												
Garlic												
Leeks												
Lettuce & greens, salad												
Mung beans												
Mushrooms, shiitake												
Onions												
Peas, green and snap												
Peppers												
Potatoes, baking												
Potatoes, new												
Pumpkins												
Radishes												
Scallions												
Spinach												
Sprouts												
Squash, summer & zucchini												
Squash, winter												
Tomatoes												
Tomatoes, cherry												
Turnips												
<b>Aquaculture</b>												
Barramundi												
Hard shell clams												
American oyster												
Bay scallops												
<b>Various trout species</b>												
<b>Plants</b>												
Bedding plants												
Cut flowers												
Herbs												
<b>Forestry products &amp; fiber</b>												
Cordwood												
Lumber												
Wool												



Massachusetts grown...and fresher!

Massachusetts Department of Agricultural Resources  
[www.mass.gov/massgrown](http://www.mass.gov/massgrown)



# FARMER INTERVIEW

## SPOTLIGHT ON FOPPEMA'S FARMS: A COMMUNITY-ROOTED SUCCESS



### FOPPEMA'S FARM

This month, we're excited to highlight Foppema Farms, a cherished gem in Massachusetts that has been nurturing both land and community since 1983. Managed by Jesse, his brother Evan, and their dedicated team, this 130-acre farm thrives on a commitment to quality, sustainability, and local support.

### A DEEP COMMITMENT TO COMMUNITY

Foppema Farms has become a cornerstone for local residents, with 99% of its revenue generated from its vibrant farm stand and farmer markets. Since opening their current farm stand location in 1998 and expanding it in 2003, they have created a welcoming space where community members have come to rely on access to fresh, seasonal fruits and vegetables at reasonable prices. Jesse emphasizes the importance of supporting local patrons: "We want to provide our community with produce that's not just fresh, and full of flavor but at affordable prices."

### TRADITION MEETS SUSTAINABILITY

One of the most remarkable aspects of Foppema Farms is its steadfast adherence to time-honored farming practices. Jesse notes, "We've been doing this for generations, and we know what works." This deep-rooted knowledge allows them to maintain a sustainable approach to farming that prioritizes the health of both the land and the local ecosystem. Their commitment to traditional methods ensures that future generations will continue to enjoy the rich flavors of locally grown produce.

### LOOKING AHEAD

As Foppema Farms continues to thrive, Jesse expresses excitement about the future. It is evident that they are proud of their heritage and look forward to sharing their passion for farming with the community for many more years. With their unwavering focus on quality and community, Foppema Farms remains a model for sustainable agriculture in Massachusetts.

In conclusion, Jesse and his team at Foppema Farms exemplify what it means to be a community-oriented farm. Their dedication to providing flavorful, seasonal produce at reasonable prices is a testament to their hard work and commitment. We encourage everyone to visit their farm stand or local markets to experience the bounty of Foppema Farms firsthand!

## THE DAILY GRIND

### MEET JESSE

Jesse's day begins early, around 6:30 AM, and stretches until sunset. This dedication is evident in the quality of their crops, which include approximately 80 varieties of apples. Each variety is carefully tended to, ensuring that Foppema Farms delivers the best produce possible. Jesse and his team have honed their skills over the years, understanding precisely what it takes to cultivate fruits and vegetables that their community loves.

For more information on Foppema's Farms and their seasonal offerings, visit their website ([foppemafarms.com](http://foppemafarms.com)) or stop by their farm stand (1605 Hill Street, Northbridge) to support this local treasure!

16, FEBRUARY, 2025

ROBERTA OLES

TRANQUIL LAKE NURSERY

# WORKSHOP INTERVIEW

**MEET WARREN LEACH – & ATTEND HIS VIRTUAL WORKSHOP!**



## **BEGINNING BLOOMS**

When you first meet Warren, it is obvious that he is passionate about all plants. The Latin names for plants and trees just roll off his tongue instead of the common names more familiar to us. His passion for plants and gardening led him to pursue a degree at the University of Maine but his love of gardening developed early in his life, at the age of five, growing up on a farm in Holden, Maine. In the preface of his book, Warren recalls “My first flower garden was a border of summer-blooming annuals started from seed and planted in front of existing herbaceous perennial peonies, delphiniums, and daylilies. A fragrant lilac anchored the back of the border. I learned the skills of gardening at the nurturing hands of my mother. She instilled in me a love for both cultivated and wild landscapes and a discerning eye for seeing subtle beauty.” Warren’s eye for beauty has served him well in his choice of career, looking beyond the obvious to the more ethereal artistic appreciation for light, shadows, textures and color in all seasons of the year. Warren approaches all gardening and landscaping with the eye of an artist who sees beyond the immediate beauty to the variations possible in the future.

## **BACKGROUND AND BOOKS**

Much of Warren’s horticultural experience of over forty years was developed in the New England states where winters can be cold, harsh and long. He recalls going into the forest with his brothers to collect boughs of evergreens each winter to ring the foundation of their farmhouse in layers of green for additional insulation. It seems only natural that he would look to winter when planning his first book, encouraging readers to think about the sunlight in all seasons, suggesting you plant a variety of green shrubs and trees to act as a background for barren branches, and to think geometrically when planting in the spring with the aim of adding interest to the garden in other seasons. After reading *Plants for the Winter Garden* and enjoying the many photos, you will find yourself pausing to look at the patterns made in the snow by the shadows of branches, appreciating the various tones of evergreens, and planning ways to improve the beauty of your home or school garden to expand over all seasons in the coming years.

Check out Warren’s work at  
Tranquil Lake Nursery  
45 River St, Rehoboth, MA 02769

## **BIOGRAPHY**

### **MEET WARREN**

Warren Leach is an award-winning horticultural expert and landscape designer who owns Tranquil Lake Nursery in Rehoboth, MA along with his wife, Debi Hogan. He has shared his knowledge generously with others by offering courses in horticulture/landscape design at several New England colleges including the University of Rhode Island, the Brown University learning community, and Rhode Island School of Design’s continuing education programs, as well as the Arnold Arboretum. Many of his innovative landscape designs have been honored with awards from both local and national organizations. And now, he has written his first book, *Plants for the Winter Garden – Perennials, Grasses, Shrubs, and Trees to add Interest in the Cold and Snow*.

Copies of Warren’s book are available on Amazon or the Hachette Book Group website.

[WWW.FOPPEMASFARM.COM](http://WWW.FOPPEMASFARM.COM)

# FEATURED

## Lesson Plans

[Click text to visit lesson](#)



### Flower Power

Students observe the anatomical structures of flowers and explain a flower's role in plant growth and reproduction as well as their connection to our food supply. Discover how natural resources are used and conserved in agriculture (e.g., soil conservation, water conservation, water quality, and air quality) **Grades 6-8**

### Hatching Science with Classroom Chicks

Students explore how an embryo develops inside of a chicken egg over time, discuss life cycles and other natural cycles, and observe similarities and differences between parents and offspring. Use the hands-on activities in the lesson plan From Chicken Little to Chicken Big to explore the production of chicken and eggs for food and teach students about the life cycle and genetics of chickens. **Grades 3-5**



### Free Lesson Plans

Lessons, activities and manuals are developed in collaboration with partners such as the Massachusetts Department of Agriculture Resources, the Massachusetts Dairy Promotion Board and the Massachusetts Society for Promoting Agriculture. The curriculum is designed to Massachusetts standards and education frameworks.

Access thousands of free lesson plans with the link below



# MassGrown Map

Your gateway to Massachusetts farms, farmers markets, and fun ag-tivities!

Search 221 places Statewide

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- Farm Stands
- Agricultural Fairs
- Farmers' Markets
- Farm Stays (Bed & Breakfast)
- Dairy Farms
- Christmas Trees
- Greenhouses / Nurseries
- Pick Your Own
- Equine/ Riding Stables
- Maple Sugar Houses
- Honey Producers
- Livestock
- Organic Farms
- CSA Farms

# MassGrown Map

Your gateway to discover Massachusetts farms, farmers markets, flower and nursery greenhouses, and more! We will keep you up to date on seasonal crops and products grown locally across Massachusetts.

# FROM OUR PARTNERS

## Department of Elementary and Secondary Education

### Northeast Food for Schools

Do you want to learn more about whether your school cafeteria is sourcing local food from Massachusetts farmers? The Northeast Food for Schools is a USDA funded program for school nutrition programs that began last school year. Massachusetts received \$3.5 million from USDA for the Northeast Food for Schools program, to purchase local food with a focus on purchases from small and minority-owned businesses. Administered by MA Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, this funding has dramatically increased farm to school purchases across the Commonwealth. Learn more about the program and check to see if you school or district is participating in Northeast Food for Schools this Fall 2024.

### The Grange Expo

We are thrilled to present the Massachusetts Agriculture in Action Expo, a celebration of the food and fun in our vibrant agricultural community in the heart of the Bay State. Sponsored by the Massachusetts State Grange, this free event that has something to offer the whole family is a testament to our commitment to supporting and promoting the rich tapestry of agriculture that defines our great state.

April 26, 2025

Mount Wachusett Community College 10am-4pm



### March is Farm to School Month!

In celebration of Massachusetts Farm to School Month and National Farm to School Month, Massachusetts Farm to School has created a #F2SMonth webpage for ideas of how to celebrate and support farm to school in your community and in the Commonwealth. Throughout the month, Mass. Farm to School will also be bringing you stories from school nutrition professionals, farmers and food hubs, educators and students, along with ways to get involved, and more! Sign up for Mass. Farm to School's mailing list to receive the weekly #F2SMonth emails. Do you know a farm to school champion in your community? In celebration of Farm to School Month, consider nominating them for Mass. Farm to School's Kale Blazer award.

Mass AG in the Classroom

# 2025 TEACHER OF THE YEAR



**EVELYN GOLDEN**

**Agricultural Educator**

*"My mission is to make agriculture engaging, meaningful, and memorable"*