



## Let's Grow! Hamilton County Ag News March 2026

### Message from the Ag Specialist

It is hard to think of an endeavor more closely associated with the seasons than agriculture. While the official start isn't for a few weeks, spring is definitely in the air, and not only in our fields and garden beds. Spring is a time of fresh starts and there are lots of new ag-related happenings sprouting up around Hamilton County!

2026 will see increased farmer training, community education classes, new funding and partnership opportunities, and the next chapter in regional food system work. I'm pleased to have joined the newly re-formed Food Policy Council and attended the first meeting of the year on March 2nd. This council has a history of doing important work in support of a healthy and resilient food system and is reimagining its next configuration and priorities. Stay tuned for ways to get involved as this work moves forward.

I'm also excited about a new on-farm composting opportunity, detailed below, that will fund significant infrastructure, equipment, and training for composting on area farms. This program is part of the solution to keeping food scraps out of the landfill, a win-win that helps farms turn agricultural waste like manure, brush, weeds, and crop residue into a soil amendment or business enterprise.

My final shout-out for new initiatives goes to an incredible partnership between Civic Garden Center, Cardinal Land Conservancy, and Central State University as they bring the Fast Track Farming Program to an urban green space near downtown. The 5-month training program will grow a new cohort of vegetable farmers ready to provide fresh, sustainable, healthy food to our communities.

Read on for more new programs, resources, and opportunities that are sure to get your spring growing season off to a good start!

Nicole Gunderman  
Agriculture Specialist  
Hamilton County Conservation District



Food system leaders came together on March 2, 2026 at the Greater Cincinnati Regional Food Policy Council's first meeting of the year.

## Upcoming District Events

# SUPPORTING LOCAL FARMS & STRENGTHENING LOCAL SOIL.

Hamilton County is seeking agricultural partners to expand food scrap composting in our region.



Up to \$200,000 in funding available!  
Learn more - Visit [hcresource.info/farmsurvey](https://hcresource.info/farmsurvey) or scan:



## Partnership for On-Farm Composting

This on-farm composting opportunity is presented by Hamilton County ReSource and Hamilton County Conservation District. Funding is available for infrastructure improvement, site design, compost consulting, and compost operator training.

On-farm composting allows farms to manage organic wastes such as manure, crop residue, excess yield, and brush while increasing soil fertility, improving soil structure, and decreasing erosion — with the added potential for a new revenue stream.

**Funding Available:** \$1,000,000 to partner with four farms averaging \$200,000 each. Remaining funds will support smaller-scale on-farm composting projects.

Questions? Join the **Virtual Info Session: March 16 at 12:00pm**

[Register for On-Farm Compost Info Session](#)



## Healthy Lawns, Healthy Streams

Thursday, March 19

7:00 - 8:00pm

Kennedy Heights Arts Center

Presented by Hamilton County Conservation District, this free educational program will explore low-impact lawn-care alternatives including:

- Fertilizing practices



- Soil testing
- Mowing and lawn management
- Simple ways to reduce runoff

[Register Here](#)

Program is free but registration is requested.

## Making & Using Compost Tea Fertilizer

Thursday, April 16

6:00 - 7:30pm

HCCD Training Center

2710 E Kemper Rd

Cincinnati, OH 45241

Compost tea is a liquid fertilizer made by steeping compost in water to extract beneficial microbes and nutrients. Learn how to brew your own compost tea using simple and inexpensive materials and how to apply it to boost soil health and plant productivity.



[Register Here](#)

Free, but registration requested.

## Partner Programs & Events

If you would like us to include your upcoming events in this bi-monthly newsletter, please email pertinent information and a link to:  
[nicole.gunderman@hamiltoncountyohio.gov](mailto:nicole.gunderman@hamiltoncountyohio.gov)

### Education Programs:

March 14: [Managing Rainwater](#), Civic Garden Center

March 14: [Backyard Poultry](#), Winton Woods Farm

March 17: [Soil Health for Gardeners](#), Civic Garden Center

March 18: [Seed Starting](#), Turner Farm

March 21: [Fruit Tree Grafting Workshop](#), Common Orchard Project

March 21: [Grow Your Own Backyard Food](#), Gorman Heritage Farm

March 28: [Backyard Market Gardens](#), Winton Woods Farm

March 28: [Essential Garden Herbs](#), Civic Garden Center

April 8: [Summer Cut Flower Annuals](#), Turner Farm

April 15: [All Things Tomatoes](#), Turner Farm

April 17: [Plant/Seed Swap](#), Gardens at the Village Green

April 18: [Multi-species Grazing Workshop](#), Greenacres Foundation

April 23: [Container Gardening](#), Civic Garden Center

April 25: [Backyard Goats](#), Winton Woods Farm

April 25: [Tomato Talk](#), Civic Garden Center

May 2: [GrowFest! Plant Sale](#), Civic Garden Center



**CENTRAL**  
STATE UNIVERSITY

## Fast Track Farming Program

Thinking of growing and selling food? Join the Fast Track Farming Program offered by Central State University Extension and Civic Garden Center. This free program meets every Tuesday, April through September, and culminates in a certification. Topics cover the basics of vegetable production through both classroom sessions and hands-on learning. There is a focus on promoting the sale of produce, but the lessons still apply if you want to learn how to grow or expand a home/community garden. For more information and to register, contact Carter Spires, Agriculture & Natural Resources Extension Educator, at [cspires@centralstate.edu](mailto:cspires@centralstate.edu)

[Fast Track Farming Info](#)

## Educational Resources

### **New & Small Farm Conference**

**Wooster, Ohio**

**March 14, 2026**

This Ohio State Small Farm Team event aims to help new and small-scale farmers across the state develop profitable, sustainable farms through education, networking, and access to university and industry resources. Workshops will address topics such as sustainable production methods, marketing strategies, land and resource management, diversification options, and funding opportunities for farm development. Keynote speaker Michael Kilpatrick will discuss proven approaches to sustainable farm strategies for thriving in modern agriculture. Learn more and register [HERE](#).

### **Ohio Proud Food Show**

**March 31, 2026**

**Reynoldsburg, Ohio**

Are you a food service director, distributor, chef, or retailer looking for new, local products? Join the Ohio Department of Agriculture for a unique opportunity to connect and sample from Ohio's growers, food and agricultural product makers of the Ohio Proud Program. Mark your calendars and prepare to be inspired by the possibilities of local collaboration! This is a tradeshow-style event. There's no fee to attend, but your registration is requested! Find out more and register [HERE](#).

## **Southern Ohio Women in Ag Conference**

**Chillicothe, Ohio**

**April 10, 2026**

Ohio State University Extension will host the 2026 Southern Ohio Women in Agriculture Conference offering a full day of practical education, networking, and hands-on learning. This year's theme focuses on safety, wellness, and family-friendly farm practices. Participants will gain tools and strategies for staying safe in the sun, managing farm stress, choosing age-appropriate farm tasks for youth, preventing tick-borne illnesses, and much more. A delicious lunch will be provided by Carson Farm House Favorites, and attendees will have opportunities to connect with sponsors, colleagues, and peers. Find out more and register [HERE](#).

## **EcoFarm & Food Foresting Program**

**Antioch College**

**Yellow Springs, Ohio**

**July 11&12, 18&19, 25&26**

In response to the pressing challenges of rural decline and environmental degradation, we are building a new model of reciprocal engagement that showcases cultivation practices to restore soil health, promote biodiversity, and foster economic independence. Through focused institutes, participants will learn sustainable solutions from a variety of ecological farming traditions that support regenerative agrarian systems and align with Antioch's commitment to social and environmental justice. Participants will not just learn about ethical practices—they will co-create resilient, regenerative systems on our campus and in their communities. Learn more [HERE](#).

## **Our Harvest Farmer Training**

**Cincinnati, Ohio**

One way farmers grow their farms is to grow and cultivate their staff. Cultivate! Ohio Valley's farm apprentice training program educates farm staff by combining on-farm training with classes in the Sustainable Agriculture Management Certificate program at Cincinnati State Community and Technical College. Upon completing the training and 2,000 hours of onsite job experience, apprentices receive a certificate from the Ohio Apprenticeship Council. Apprentices are employees mentored by their farmers or farm managers. Learn more [HERE](#).

## **Grants & Other Opportunities**

### **Value-Added Producer Grants**

**Deadline: April 22**

USDA's Value-Added Producer Grants program application period is now open with the deadline of April 22nd. Step one is to register with the System for Award Management, which can take some time, so interested producers are encouraged to begin now. Find out more and apply [HERE](#).

## The Ox Shoppe

**Deadline: April, 2026**

**\$5,000**

Offering multiple small business grants each year, paired with personalized coaching and real-world support, so ideas don't stay stuck in notebooks or conversations—they turn into action.

We don't believe your past defines your future. We believe your ambition, grit, and creativity do. Our work exists to give people permission—and support—to dream big and build boldly.

Find out more and apply [HERE](#).

## National Cover Crop Survey

Farmers across the United States—whether they use cover crops, formerly used them, or have never planted covers—are invited to share their insights on cover crops in the National Cover Crop Survey being conducted by the Conservation Technology Information Center (CTIC). This is the 8th survey in the research series, which began in 2012. The anonymous survey takes about 15 minutes to complete. Farmers who complete the survey can enter a drawing to win one of three \$100 Visa gift cards. Results will help policy makers, agribusiness, commodity organizations, cover crop advocates, farmers and others understand how farmers think about cover crops and make decisions around adopting the practice. Take the survey [HERE](#).

## Farmer Bridge Assistance

USDA's Farm Service Agency (FSA) is providing \$11 billion through a one-time bridge payment to American farmers with an additional \$1 billion available for additional commodities. This assistance provides producers with a bridge in response to temporary trade market disruptions and increased production costs until the benefits of the One Big Beautiful Bill Act (OBBBA) are available. The Farmer Bridge Assistance enrollment period is open until April 17. Learn more and apply [HERE](#).



## Compost <3

A friend of mine once marveled that his wife who is a doctor, mother, volunteer, and engaged community member, only had one bumper sticker on her car and it said... **I Love Compost**. "How is this the one topic that inspires so much passion she'll proclaim it on her bumper?" he asked. For many people, compost is a very inspiring topic and practice!

Composting can be done using different methods and at varying scales, but when done properly they all convert waste material into a beneficial soil amendment. Large farms compost manure and other organic wastes. Some people keep a worm bin to turn food scraps into vermicompost. The most common practice is a backyard compost bin.

The key to a successful backyard compost is combining the right ingredients at the right ratios, and then managing it appropriately. Just like following a cooking recipe. A basic approach is to mix or layer 2-3 parts "brown" (carbon-rich materials like dead leaves or wood chips) with 1 part "green" (nitrogen-rich materials like food scraps, lawn clippings, chicken litter). Keep compost moist (like a damp sponge) and turn frequently to aerate. Cover your compost during winter and spring so it doesn't get too wet. Always be sure to check with your city or township about any compost zoning requirements. Be a good neighbor and locate your compost away from property lines and also from waterways to prevent any excess nutrients from entering our streams.

Finished compost is a wonderful addition to any garden or landscape bed, bringing organic matter, nutrients, and beneficial soil microbes that help build healthy soil and support your growing goals.

If you are ready to take composting to the next level, you might begin brewing your own compost tea fertilizer. Look for information in this newsletter to register for our upcoming Compost Tea workshop on April 15th. And who knows, maybe you'll feel inspired to get your own "I Love Compost" bumper sticker :)

[Compost Tea Program Registration](#)

# I COMPOST

## Hamilton County Conservation District

Soil and Water Conservation Districts (SWCDs) like us were established in response to the environmental devastation of the Dust Bowl in the 1930s, with the mission of promoting sustainable land management practices. These districts, which exist in almost every U.S. county, work to conserve and protect local soil, water, and natural resources through education, technical assistance, and community collaboration. In agriculture, SWCDs help farmers and landowners implement practices that prevent erosion, improve water quality, and enhance soil health, supporting long-term sustainability and resilience. Hamilton County presents unique challenges as a mostly urban county, but it also has a rich and vibrant agriculture community.

All District programs and services are offered on a nondiscriminatory basis without regard to race, color, gender, gender identity, sexual orientation, pregnancy, religion, national origin, genetic information, ancestry, age, marital/parental status, political affiliation, military service, disability, or other non-job-related criteria.

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