

Debra M. Heleba

Statewide Outreach & Education Program Manager
University of Vermont Extension Community Horticulture Program
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Education and Training

Anticipated 2027 Ed.D. University of Vermont, Educational Leadership and Policy
2007 M.S. University of Vermont, Community Development & Applied Economics
Thesis: Family farm succession and the role of Extension education in New England
1989 B.A. University of Vermont, English

Professional Positions

2022- Statewide Outreach & Education Program Manager, Community Horticulture Program, University of Vermont Extension
2017-2021 Communications Specialist, USDA NIFA Northeast Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education Program
2008-2017 Outreach Professional, eOrganic Dairy Project, Northwest Crops and Soils Program, University of Vermont Extension
2007-2017 Vermont State SARE (Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education Program) Coordinator, University of Vermont Extension
1998-2008 Program Coordinator, Land Link Vermont, Center for Sustainable Agriculture, University of Vermont
1995-1999 Outreach Professional, Women's Agricultural Network, University of Vermont Extension
1993-2008 Outreach Coordinator, Center for Sustainable Agriculture, University of Vermont
1990-1993 Research Field Technician, Department of Plant and Soil Science, University of Vermont

Teaching Experience

2023- Instructor and Course Facilitator, Extension Master Gardener Program, University of Vermont
2022- Instructor and Course Facilitator, Vermont Master Composter Program, University of Vermont

Publications

Refereed Journal Articles:

- Darby, H., Halteman, P., & **Heleba, D.** (2015). Effectiveness of nutrient management plans on Vermont dairy farms. *The Journal of Extension*, 53(2), v53-2rb9.
- Formiga, A. K., Stone, A., **Heleba, D.**, McQueen, J., & Coe, M. (2014). Evaluation of the eOrganic webinar program. *The Journal of Extension*, 52(4), v52-4a5.
- Daley, C., Darby, H., Flack, S., Denney, A., & **Heleba, D.** (2013). Development of technical training and support for agricultural service providers and farmers in certified organic dairy production systems through eOrganic. *HortScience*, 48(9), S86-S87.
- Stone, A.G., Treadwell, D.D., Formiga, A.K., McQueen, J., Wander, M.M., Riddle, J., Darby, H.M. & **Heleba, D.M.** (2012). eOrganic: The organic agriculture community of practice for eXtension. *HortTechnology*, 22(5), 583-588.
- Heleba, D.**, Parsons, R., Sciabarrasi, M., & Anderson, G. (2009). New England workshops increase participant knowledge of farm transfer issues. *The Journal of Extension*, 47(2), 20.
- Heleba, D.**, Parsons, R., & Sciabarrasi, M. (2004). Minimizing farm business succession risk in New England: Delivery of transferring the farm workshops. *The Journal of Extension*, 42(6), 17.
- Nicholson, C., & **Heleba, D.** (2000). Under the blade: the conversion of agricultural landscapes. *Agricultural Systems*, 63(2), 141-143.

Book Chapters:

- Heleba, D.**, Grubinger, V., & Darby, H. (2016). On the ground: Putting agroecology to work through applied research and Extension in Vermont. In M. Méndez, C. Bacon, & R. Cohen (Eds.), *Agroecology: A transdisciplinary, participatory and action-oriented approach* (pp. 177-192). CRC Press.

Reports:

- Heleba, D.** (2021). *Northeast SARE grants portfolio review*. USDA NIFA Northeast Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education Program. Available online at: blog.uvm.edu/nesare/files/2021/10/2021NortheastSAREPortfolioReviewReport.pdf
- Grubinger, V. & **Heleba, D.** (2020). *Innovations in sustainable agriculture: 2020 Northeast SARE annual report*. USDA NIFA Northeast Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education Program. Available online at: www.sare.org/wp-content/uploads/2020annualreportFINALweb.pdf
- Beidler, E. & **Heleba, D.** (2019). *Northeast SARE grants portfolio review*. USDA NIFA Northeast Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education Program. Available online at:

blog.uvm.edu/nesare/files/2019/07/Northeast-SARE-Grants-Portfolio-Review-Report-07012019.pdf

Grubinger, V. & **Heleba, D.** (2019). *Innovations in sustainable agriculture: 2019 Northeast SARE annual report*. USDA NIFA Northeast Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education Program. Available online at: <https://northeast.sare.org/resources/2019-northeast-sare-annual-report/>

Grubinger, V. & **Heleba, D.** (2018). *Innovations in sustainable agriculture: 2018 Northeast SARE annual report*. USDA NIFA Northeast Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education Program. Available online at: <https://northeast.sare.org/resources/2018-northeast-sare-annual-report/>

Grubinger, V. & **Heleba, D.** (2017). *Innovations in sustainable agriculture: 2017 Northeast SARE annual report*. USDA NIFA Northeast Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education Program. Available online at: <https://northeast.sare.org/resources/2017-northeast-sare-annual-report/>

Press Releases and News Articles:

Heleba, D. (2024, May 15). *Screening garden soils for lead*. University of Vermont Extension. <https://www.uvm.edu/news/extension/screening-garden-soils-lead>.

Heleba, D. (2024, April 2). *Extension helpline provides free gardening information*. University of Vermont Extension. <https://www.uvm.edu/news/extension/extension-helpline-provides-free-gardening-information>.

Heleba, D. (2024, March 14). *Pruning your fruit trees: It's not too late*. University of Vermont Extension. <https://www.uvm.edu/news/extension/pruning-your-fruit-trees-its-not-too-late>.

Heleba, D. (2023, July 21). *Rescuing food gardens after floodwaters recede*. University of Vermont Extension. <https://www.uvm.edu/news/extension/rescuing-food-gardens-after-floodwaters-recede>.

Heleba, D. (2023, July 19). *Managing flood damage in landscape gardens*. University of Vermont Extension. <https://www.uvm.edu/news/extension/managing-flood-damage-landscape-gardens>.

Heleba, D. (2023, July 19). *Helping lawns recover after flooding and rain*. University of Vermont Extension. <https://www.uvm.edu/news/extension/helping-lawns-recover-after-flooding-and-rain>.

Brefo, E., von Wettberg, E. & **Heleba, D.** (2023, June 1). *The green peas of spring: Overwintering snap peas as a cover crop and early season vegetable*. Maine Organic Farmers and Gardeners Association. <https://www.mofga.org/resources/peas/overwintering-peas/>.

Selected Other Publications:

Darby, H., Burke, C., Calderwood, L., Harwood, H., **Heleba, D.** & Sanders, J. (2015). *Under cover: Integrating cover crops into silage corn systems*. University of Vermont Extension.

Higby, A., Levine, S., Parsons, R. & Norder, B. (2006). *A legal guide to the business of farming in Vermont* (**D. Heleba**, Ed.). University of Vermont Center for Sustainable Agriculture.

Heleba, D., Major, D. & Snow, B. (2002). *Keeping farmland working in Vermont: A lease agreements guide for landowners and farmers*. University of Vermont Center for Sustainable Agriculture.

Media Appearances

Duarte, N. & **Heleba, D.**, interview by Sophia Thomas, “Experts recommend leaving leaves on yard for winter,” WCAX CBS, November 7, 2024.

Hazelrigg, A. & **Heleba, D.**, interview by Melissa Cooney, “UVM gardening experts offer spring planting advice,” WCAX CBS, March 19, 2024.

Budrow, C., **Heleba, D.**, & Mirro, J., interview by Mikaela Lefrak, “How to love your houseplants so they survive all winter long,” Vermont Edition, 88.5 Vermont Public, Jan. 24, 2024.

Carter, P., Duarte, N. & **Heleba, D.**, interview by Fran Stoddard, “How to Become a Master Composter,” Across the Fence, WCAX CBS, August 18, 2022.

Heleba, D., interview by Fran Stoddard, “UVM Master Gardeners,” Across the Fence, WCAX CBS, June 6, 2022.

Selected Conference Presentations

“Women on the Land,” Changing Lands, Changing Hands: A National Conference on Farm and Ranch Access, Tenure, and Transfer, June 13-15, 2017.

Invited Poster Presentations

Hazelrigg, A., Maia, G., Chouinard, L. & **Heleba, D.** (2022). *Pivoting the volunteer UVM Extension Master Gardener Helpline to an online platform during COVID-19*. National Plant Diagnostic Network Annual Conference, April 26-30, 2022.

Heleba, D., Chase, L., Holtzman, B., Parker, J., Becot, F. & Inwood, S. (2018). *Social sustainability on the farm*. Our Farms, Our Future Conference, April 3-5, 2018.

Parker, J., Chase, L. & **Heleba, D.** (2015). *Measuring social sustainability on farms and ranches*. National Association of Community Development Extension Professionals, May 17-20, 2015.

- Heleba, D. M.,** Parker, J., & Chase, L. (2014). *Increasing awareness and support of farm-level social sustainability through field-based trainings in Vermont*. Association for the Study of Food and Society (ASFS) and Agriculture, Food and Human Values Society (AFHVS) joint annual meeting, June 18-22, 2014.
- Parker, J., Chase, L. & **Heleba, D.** (2013). *Social sustainability and Vermont communities: Outcome measurement and programming for Extension*. Rural Sociological Society, August 6-10, 2013.
- Darby, H., **Heleba, D.**, Flack, S., & Daley, C. (2012). *Developing on-line training and national support networks on certified organic dairy production systems through eOrganic*. American Society of Agronomy Meeting. October 22, 2012.

Invited Guest Speaker

- Hazelrigg, A. & **Heleba, D.** “Connecting with Vermont Communities through UVM Extension Outreach and Communication”, University of Vermont Science Communication course CLBI 6020, Apr. 15, 2025.
- Haines, S. & **Heleba, D.** “Cells to Society Seminar: Resilience,” University of Vermont College of Agriculture and Life Sciences, virtual, Dec. 11, 2023.
- Heleba, D.** “Composting Tips to Avoid Rodents & Other Wildlife,” Vermont Agency of Agriculture Pest Management Training, Randolph Center, VT, Oct. 31, 2023.

Grants and Contracts

- Vermont Master Composter Program, Vermont Department of Environmental Conservation, \$70,000, May 2023-May 2025.
- Vermont Master Composter Program, Vermont Department of Environmental Conservation, \$35,000, May 2022-May 2023.
- Vermont Master Composter Program, Vermont Department of Environmental Conservation, \$35,000, May 2021-May 2022.
- Tradeoffs Between Soil Carbon Sequestration and Greenhouse Gas Emissions in Intensively Grazed Pastures of Northeastern US Organic Dairy Farms, National Inst Food Agriculture/NIFA/USDA, University of New Hampshire, \$15,084, October 2015-August 2019.
- Social Sustainability on the Farm: Focus on Resilience. PDP State Program. USDA Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education Program. \$134,999. September 2015-October 2017.
- Strategies to Improve the Profitability of Organic Dairy Herds in the Upper Midwest, National Inst Food Agriculture/NIFA/USDA, University of Minnesota, \$96,872, October 2012-August 2017.

Improved Organic Milk Production through the Use of the Condensed Tannin-Containing Forage Legume Birdsfoot Trefoil, US Department of Agriculture/USDA, Utah State University College, \$33,563, September 2010-August 2015.

Assessing the Needs of Vermont's Beginning Farmers, Fieldstone Foundation, \$5,000, July 2007-June 2008.

A Legal Guide to the Business of Farming in Vermont, Professional Development Program, USDA Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education Program, \$59,069, May 2004-December 2006.

Awards

Bradshaw, T., Darby, H., Hazelrigg, A., **Heleba, D.**, Kingsley-Richards, and Skinner, M. (2025). CALS Excellence in Teamwork Award, Awarded by University of Vermont College of Agriculture and Life Sciences, September 2025.

Chouinard, L. & **Heleba, D.** (2023). Ellen Rowe Community Development Award, Awarded by University of Vermont Extension, May 2023.

Professional Memberships and Licenses

2023-	American Horticulture Society
2019-2021	Association for Communication Excellence
2011-2018	National Association of County Agricultural Agents
2005-2018	Farm Transfer Network of New England (founding member)
1997-2005	National Farm Transition Network (founding member)
1996-2002	Northeast Sustainable Agriculture Working Group
1993-1995	Vermont Certified Pesticide Applicator License, Categories 10 & 1A

Service

2022-	Lawn to Lake Coalition
2022-	Vermont Organic Farmers Executive Committee
2021-	UVM Extension Community Partners Board of Directors
2019-2024	Lincoln Library, Vermont Board of Trustees
2013-2020	Patricia A. Hannaford Career Center Agriculture Advisory Board
2012-2017	Northeast Organic Farming Association of Vermont Board of Directors