



Welcome to our Annual UVM Extension Master Gardener Conference!



From Campus to Community Research that Takes Root in Vermont Gardens

Saturday, November 22, 2025 | 9:50 a.m. to 3:05 p.m. ET

Conference Program

Today is all about you. I hope you're able to settle in, make space for yourself, and fully enjoy what our speakers have to share. Our theme—From Campus to Community: Research that Takes Root in Vermont Gardens—highlights the powerful connections between academic inquiry and the everyday places where we grow, teach, learn, and build community. We've designed today to spark curiosity and show how research can come alive in our gardens, informing real practices and strengthening the communities we serve. My hope is that what you hear today leaves you inspired, grounded, and optimistic about the ways we can share knowledge, steward our landscapes, and have fun along the way. Enjoy! Deb

Preparing for the Conference

For many of us who are used to being active in our gardens, the idea of sitting through a five-hour online conference can feel a bit overwhelming. We do have a full agenda designed to make the most of our learning time, but we also want you to take good care of yourself throughout the day. Please feel free to stand, stretch, or move around during the breaks—and even during the sessions themselves. Gather your favorite “creature comforts,” whether that’s cozy slippers, a warm blanket, a cup of tea, or a knitting or craft project, so you can stay comfortable and present. And remember: if you need to step away at any point, all presentations are being recorded. You’ll have access to the recordings after the conference.

Accessing the Conference via Zoom

You have received a Zoom confirmation with the join information. If you don't see it in your inbox, please check your spam and trash folders. If you have trouble finding it, please reach out to Deb at debra.heleba@uvm.edu.

Please plan to log in early to allow for any upgrades and/or take some time before the conference starts to join a test meeting at: <https://zoom.us/test> to ensure you can log in and troubleshoot audio and video functions.

If you do not have Zoom on your device (computer, phone, tablet) please [click here](#) to install the Zoom software. For more information on how to use Zoom, they maintain a good collection of tutorials on their website. [Click here to access the tutorials](#). If you haven't used Zoom before/recently, please review the [Getting Started Guide for New Zoom Users](#).

Live Captioning

With thanks to Student Accessibility Services at UVM's Center for Academic Success, the conference is being live captioned. Live captioning provides access to spoken dialogue displayed on the screen and delivered in real-time.

Conference Recordings

Today's presentations are being recorded for viewing by conference guests – they will be provided to you soon after the conference. Resources mentioned by speakers/participants will be posted on the [conference website](#). If you have follow-up gardening questions, consider using our UVM Extension Garden Helpline at: <https://go.uvm.edu/gardenquestion>.

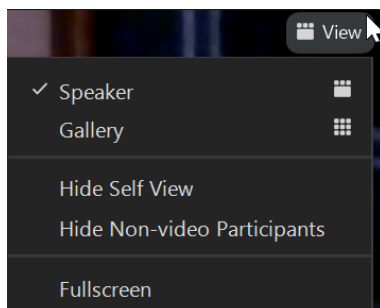
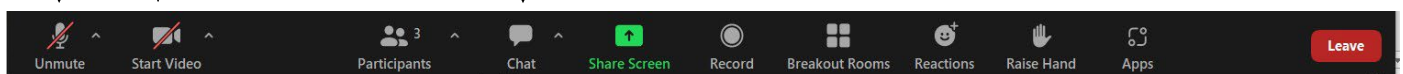
Zoom Etiquette & User Tips

For an optimal experience for everyone, there are a couple of items to keep in mind during the conference. Note that the University provides a list of behavior expectations for all events; they are listed on page 5.

1. Mute your audio. For the majority of the program, you should mute your audio when you are not speaking by making sure there is a red line through the microphone icon. Staff will help with muting if we're experiencing background noise.

2. Enable video based on your comfort. Feel free to keep your camera on or turn off especially if you need extra bandwidth to view the presentations.

3. Use Chat. We will use the Chat function to pose questions for our conference speakers, share links, and have online discussion during the conference.



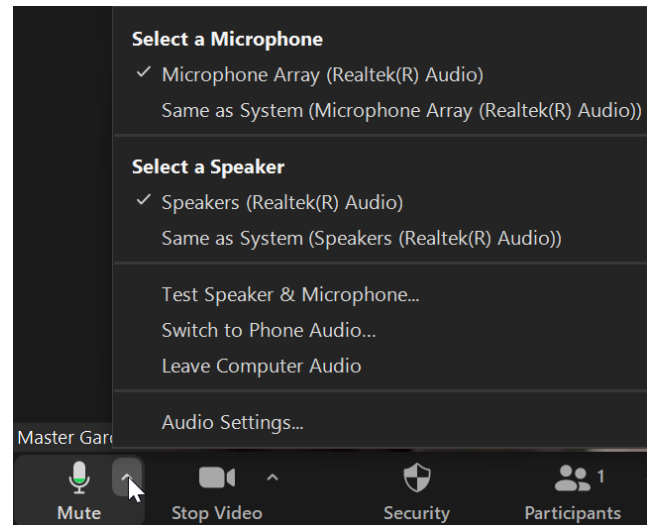
Zoom seems to default the screen View to the gallery mode that allows you to see a grid of participants. If you wish to just see the person speaking next to their slides, free feel to adjust View (located in the upper right hand of the Zoom screen) and select Speaker mode.

You can also hide participants who are not using their video and hide yourself (from your view).

Troubleshooting Audio

If you are having trouble with your audio after you join the conference, you can click on the ^ symbol next to the mic icon to open audio settings. You can manually select the microphone and speaker and/or select “Test Speaker & Microphone...” to test your audio settings.

If you continue to have trouble with your audio, switch to phone audio to listen to the presentations. You will find those phone numbers on your Zoom confirmation email.



Conference Agenda

9:50 – 10:00 a.m.	Log in and Get Settled
10:00 – 10:10 a.m.	Welcome & Housekeeping Deb Heleba
10:10 – 10:30 a.m.	From Campus to Community Linda Prokopy
10:30 – 11:15 a.m.	Garden Season Look Back Ann Hazelrigg
11:15 a.m. – 12:00 p.m.	Research Update: Jumping Worms Maryam Nouri-Aiin
12:00 – 12:30 p.m.	Lunch Break (no need to log out of Zoom)
12:30 – 1:30 p.m.	Garden Table Talks (see page 4)
1:30 – 2:15 p.m.	Research Update: Legumes Eric Bishop von Wettberg
2:15 – 3:00 p.m.	Research Update: Seed Sovereignty Daniel Tobin
3:00 – 3:05 p.m.	Closing Remark Deb Heleba
3:05 p.m.	Adjourn

*Please note: All times are in Eastern Time (US and Canada)

Garden Table Talks

We have set up small group break-out rooms for you and fellow gardeners to have informal, roundtable-style conversations on the topics below. It's a chance to share insights, swap stories, and connect with others who care about growing community.

Table Talk Schedule

12:30 pm	Gather from Lunch Break into "Big Room"
12:40 pm	Break into Small Groups (about 5-8 people per room)
12:40 – 1:15	Conversations Feel free to use the resources and discussion prompts below if you wish.
1:15 - 1:30 p.m.	Reconvene in the "Big Room" & Report Out Share out with the larger group about key themes, discoveries, and inspirations from your garden table talk.

Composting Discussion Prompts:

- What steps have you taken to improve composting practices at your home and/or in your community? What advice would you share with other gardeners and composters? What are some ways that Vermont Master Composters and UVM Extension Master Gardeners share composting best practices with fellow Vermonters?
- Resources: <https://go.uvm.edu/compostingresources>

Forest Pests Resources & Discussion Prompts:

- Our morning presenters (Ann and Maryam) addressed some important forest pests that we also see in home and community landscapes. Which pest covered this morning felt the most urgent or relevant to your community, and why? What questions do you anticipate the public asking about these pests? How might we respond?
- Resources: <https://go.uvm.edu/invasivesresources>

Pollinator Gardens Discussion Prompts:

- What's your favorite pollinator plant? What questions do you frequently hear from the public about pollinator gardens, and how do you address them? How can volunteers model and communicate science-based pollinator gardening practices? Which practices can help pollinators beyond plant selection for which we could educate the public?
- Resources: <https://go.uvm.edu/pollinatorresources>

Wellness Gardening Discussion Prompts:

- What is your interest in wellness gardening? How might the UVM EMG program conduct programming in this area – as a volunteer and/or gardener, what education would you like to provide and receive? How might we leverage existing gardens in public locations to enhance use of and knowledge about wellness gardening?
- New Resource Area!: <https://go.uvm.edu/wellnessgardening> -- what additional resources should we include here?

Volunteerism Discussion Prompts:

- Which volunteer activities feel most meaningful or energizing to you, and why? What are the most common gardening questions or misconceptions you encounter from the public? What strategies can we make science-based information understandable and accessible?

Speaker Bios

Eric Bishop von Wettberg. Dr. von Wettberg is a crop geneticist at the University of Vermont where he and his team conduct research on community plant breeding and genetics legumes, focusing on mung beans, adzuki beans, and forages. His team also studies wild relatives of crops to breed better crops, conserve crop genetic resources, and build resilience to weather extremes into agricultural systems. www.uvm.edu/cals/ale/profile/eric-bishop-von-wettberg

Ann Hazelrigg. As our favorite UVM Extension plant pathologist, Dr. Ann Hazelrigg is the faculty lead for UVM Extension's Community Horticulture programs, Pesticide Safety Education Program, and Integrated Pest Management (IPM) program. She is also the director of the Plant Diagnostic Clinic. Dr. Hazelrigg provides technical information to growers and gardeners alike around disease management. www.uvm.edu/extension/profile/ann-hazelrigg

Deb Heleba is the statewide outreach and education program manager for UVM Extension's Community Horticulture Programs where she leads the Extension Master Gardener and Vermont Master Composter programs. www.uvm.edu/mastergardener/profile/debra-deb-heleba

Maryam Nouri-Aiin. Dr. Nouri-Aiin is a Postdoctoral Associate in the Department of Agriculture, Landscape, and Environment at the University of Vermont, where she earned her Ph.D., specializing in biocontrol strategies for pheretimoid earthworms. As an entomologist and soil ecologist, her research works at the intersection of biological control, microbial ecology, and invasive species dynamics. www.uvm.edu/cals/ale/profile/maryam-nouri-aiin

Linda Prokopy is the new Dean of the University of Vermont College of Agriculture and Life Sciences. Dr. Prokopy is an interdisciplinary social scientist recognized for her work incorporating social science into the fields of agricultural conservation, agricultural adaptation to climate change, and watershed management. www.uvm.edu/cals/profile/linda-prokopy

Daniel Tobin. Dr. Tobin is a rural sociologist at UVM's Department of Community Development and Applied Economics. He has conducted research on issues related to the sociology of agriculture, development sociology, political economy of agricultural development, crop diversity conservation, and seed systems. In addition, his research focuses on how small- and medium-scale farmers respond to external influences like market forces, policy mechanisms, and environmental changes. www.uvm.edu/cals/cdae/profile/daniel-tobin

Upcoming UVM EMG Events

- **2026 UVM Extension Master Gardener Course.** Starts on Jan 23 and runs for 16 weeks until May 15; this is an online course that offers a track for volunteer certification and a non-volunteer track. Register by January 16, 2026. More info at: <https://go.uvm.edu/emgcourse>.
- **2026 Film Series.** Volunteers, stay tuned for our winter film series to be offered in late winter. Contact Deb with film ideas!

Acknowledgements & Appreciations

Thank you to this year's conference speakers: Eric Bishop von Wettberg, Ann Hazelrigg, Maryam Nouri-Aiin, Linda Prokopy, and Daniel Tobin – we appreciate the sharing of your work with us as well as conducting research of relevance to Vermont gardeners!

Thank you, Sarah Kingsley-Richards, for providing on-going tech support for the conference.

Appreciation goes to Lisa Chouinard, the glue that keeps our program together!, as well as to Ann Hazelrigg, who provides us with much support for our program.

We acknowledge the efforts of the Extension Master Gardener Chapter steering committees. Our Chapters are local volunteer-run entities that provide local connection, continuing education, and support to our volunteers. Members of the Chapter steering committees also serve as members of our state advisory committee and help guide the program. Thank you for these extra efforts, Deb Bieg, Vikki Gauvin, Heather Hamilton, Pam Kennedy, Becky Manning, Judy Mirro, Karen Patno, and Jan Sherman.

And a big thank you to our Extension Master Gardeners, Vermont Master Composters, and all the garden enthusiasts here today. It's truly a privilege to share this space with you, and a joy to work alongside you as we bring science-based gardening information to our communities.

This event and the Extension Master Gardener program is supported by the Crop Protection and Pest Management Program [grant no. 2021-70006-35509/project accession no. 1027204] from the USDA National Institute of Food and Agriculture. Any opinions, findings, conclusions, or recommendations expressed at this event are those of the speaker(s) and do not necessarily reflect the view of the U.S. Department of Agriculture.

Behavioral Expectations

By participating in this event, you agree to abide by the University of Vermont's **Our Common Ground**:

Respect. We respect each other. We listen to each other, encourage each other and care about each other. We are strengthened by our diverse perspectives.

Integrity. We value fairness, honest conduct, adherence to the facts, and sincerity.

Innovation. We want to be at the forefront of change. We believe the best way to lead is to learn from our successes and mistakes.

Openness. We encourage the open exchange of information and ideas.

Justice. We unite against all forms of injustice, including racism. We challenge injustice toward any member of our community.

Responsibility. We are responsible for our words and actions.

You may be asked to leave the conference if your behavior:

- Poses a threat to the health or safety of participants or others;
- Threatens to disrupt the offering;
- May seriously diminish the experience of others; or
- For other sufficient reason.