



THE UNIVERSITY OF VERMONT

# EXTENSION QUARTERLY

DECEMBER 2019



## WOODCHIPS: AN INNOVATIVE SOLUTION IN GRAZING

Winter feeding of grazing cattle in cold, humid climates like the Northeast can lead to loss of soil, water quality degradation, and damage to pastures. With climate change resulting in muddier springs and falls, farmers are looking for solutions that are cost effective for protecting both environment and pastures. **Joshua Faulkner**, UVM Extension Research Assistant Professor and Farming and Climate Change Program Coordinator, offers an innovative option.

Faulkner introduced Vermont to its first woodchip heavy-use area in 2016. Designed for use on small to medium farms, the woodchip system reduces pasture damage, increases comfort and performance of cows, and keeps dirty water out of streams and waterways. Faulkner's research shows that this results in up to a 50% reduction in water runoff. The water that does run off is cleaner, too.

There are now six systems in Vermont and New Hampshire with more on the way. Farmers report comfortable animals, reduced wastewater production versus concrete, and reduced implementation costs. These results led the Natural Resources Conservation Service and the Vermont Agency of Agriculture to include woodchip pads in their list of conservation practices that are eligible for financial assistance.



Learn more at [go.uvm.edu/livestockwoodchipuse](https://go.uvm.edu/livestockwoodchipuse).



# RESETTLED REFUGEE FARMERS ADOPT COVER CROPPING

Farmers, no matter what language they speak or what their prior experience has been, have the potential and desire to adopt new ways of becoming better land stewards. **Ben Waterman** has seen this first-hand as UVM Extension's Beginning Farmer, Land Access and New American Farmer Program Coordinator.

During fall 2018, in partnership with the Association of Africans Living in Vermont, Waterman taught six New American farmer business owners in the Burlington area how to add cover crops to their fields. With Waterman's technical assistance, Janine Ndagijimana's African Eggplant Farm and the Burundian Farmers Group quickly adopted the practice on two acres (a large portion of which exists in environmentally sensitive floodplain).

This acreage represents close to a 100% increase in cover cropped land, bringing their ratio of production land to cover cropped land to an impressive 1:1. Setting aside this much land for cover cropping demonstrates an investment in and commitment to the soil they farm. It's especially notable due to the challenges New American farmers face gaining long-term access to fertile and productive land. A year later, the two businesses have maintained that 1:1 ratio and continue to balance their short-term economic needs with longer term goals of protecting environmental and soil health.

For more information: <http://go.uvm.edu/newamericanfarmer>

Right: Janine Ndagijimana

**100%**  
INCREASE IN  
COVER CROP  
ACREAGE



## 4-H PROVIDES BUILDING "BLOX" FOR SUCCESS

Andrew Dutil has been passionate about "Roblox," an online community where users create and collectively play games, since age eight. Now a senior studying computer science and programming at Burlington Technical Center (BTC), Andrew turned that passion into a unique learning opportunity.

Through partnership between BTC, UVM Extension's 4-H Program and his sending school, Andrew developed an after-school Roblox class. With team mentoring and guidance, he created four 90-minute lessons to teach younger students how to code, design and build robots in the system. The course received high marks from its participants: "If this were at my school, it would be the best class I ever took!"

Andrew lives his life navigating the complexities of autism, and has had difficulty sharing what he loves and excels at with others. With the support of his schools and the opportunity 4-H provided, Andrew found success in this program and discovered a talent for teaching others. "It was a big responsibility to commit to 4-H to run an after-school program," Andrew notes. The experience taught him how to manage long-term projects, design lessons, and work with younger students. "Andrew learned to be a leader, to overcome his fears, to realize the joy of sharing his knowledge, as well as how to make new friends," adds his mom, Ann.



**6,512**

young people participated  
in UVM Extension youth  
programs in 2019

Below: Andrew (left) and his students



This collaborative approach to creating learning experiences is what 4-H is all about. By tapping into a young person's passion, connecting them with positive role models, and using existing structures and resources, 4-H creates safe, supportive and developmentally appropriate environments where all youth can succeed in building key life and job skills. As Andrew put it: "the whole team, together we made it happen."

For more information: <http://go.uvm.edu/youth>

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