

Area II Update



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Northern Virginia SWCD “Supports Community Gardens”



Kingsley Commons Community Garden

Area II Chairman

John Flannery

Loudoun SWCD

Area II Vice-Chairman

Will Lintner

Prince William SWCD

Northern Virginia SWCD supports community gardens in food-insecure areas of Fairfax County, providing technical support and modest funding for equipment and supplies. NVSWCD also hosts online meetings for its partner gardens so the garden managers can meet one another, brainstorm challenges together and celebrate their victories. Four of these community gardens are at community centers, two are at senior centers, one is in a subsidized housing community, and a new partner is a local Boys and Girls Club.



Baileys Community Center

Northern Virginia SWCD has created a guide to community gardening with workbook pages that covers garden team set-up to harvesting and late season cover cropping. This guide is available upon request by emailing Urban Ag Specialist Stacey Evers at stacey.evers@fairfaxcounty.gov. It will be added later this year with a Spanish-language version to a new urban ag page on NVSWCD's website.



Loudoun & Northern Virginia SWCD “Co-Host Small Farm Outreach Event”



On May 4th, Loudoun and Northern Virginia SWCDs co-hosted a small farm and minority producer outreach event at Potomac Vegetable Farm in Loudoun. Potomac Vegetable has locations in both Loudoun and Fairfax and was an ideal partner to show off high tunnel production, cover crops, crop rotations, composting systems, and more. Chris Van Vlack from LSWCD spoke about the Virginia Ag BMP and locally funded cost share opportunities for farmers, while Willie Woode from NVSWCD covered the soil test process and how to interpret soil test results.



In addition to the farmers and District staff, representatives from NRCS, Virginia State University, Loudoun Cooperative Extension, and Virginia Department of Forestry were all on hand to talk about their programs. Chris Mullins from Virginia State gave attendees a primer on best practices for high tunnel production, while Beth Sastre from Extension covered the new crop suitability map tool she helped create for farmers seeking land in the county for various ag uses.



Participants included ranged from next door neighbors to Potomac Vegetable to a visitor from Cameroon looking to take ideas back home to start an avocado operation. The event was part of the new DCR Grant Agreement requirement to host an event to target minority and non-traditional partner producers and introduce them to SWCD programs and advice. While the comparative lack of cost share offerings for fruit and vegetable producers as well as those operating on under five acres remains a roadblock, the strong attendance showed there was interest in learning from all the presenting partners.