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2021-2022 Officers:

President: Paul Ronk
 Vice President: Greg Christian
 Secretary: Tina Barton
 Treasurer: Keith Heasley



Message From Our President

This is my first letter to you all, and I must say that I am honored, excited, and humbled to serve you in this way! We have a couple of exciting opportunities

ahead of us at the West Virginia State Fair - August 12th to August 21st. This is a real chance for our association to shine.

First, we need to have volunteers to make maple cotton candy. Our cotton candy is becoming a popular novelty at the fair; people come looking for it!! Brandon Daniels will be organizing the schedule. His email address is: wvmapler@suddenlink.net.

Secondly, we plan to have the portable maple sugar shack at the fair. This will be the first time we have taken it, and it will be a great tool to educate everyone about the maple syrup process. This will also require volunteers:). Kate @kfotos@experience-learning.org will be lining up this schedule.

September 24th and 25th are the dates for the Southern Syrup Research Symposium in Morgantown. Read the enclosed details and get registered for this fantastic opportunity to grow your business.

Before the symposium, we will have a zoom meeting. Please be looking for that date and participate. It will help us get to know each other better and learn from other producers. We are in this together. and staying connected is a great benefit to all of us.

Thank you all for allowing me to serve you in this way.

God Bless,

Paul

West Virginia Maple Season Update

By Brandon Daniels

To say the 2021 maple season was difficult would be an understatement for most producers. A few producers started tapping around the middle of January and were immediately rewarded with a good run for a few days. The forecast looked good for the next several weeks, but someone forgot to tell Mother Nature. The last half of January and nearly all of February looked promising, but in most areas of the state, it stayed just a touch too cold for the sap to run regardless of what type of tubing or bucket system producers had.

After the short run in the middle of January, nearly all the state stayed frozen up until the last week of February. Over the next 2.5 weeks, with nearly perfect conditions, the sap still did not want to run. This was not just a problem in West Virginia, but this seemed to be an issue for the entire US and may have been the result of the La Niña weather pattern that started in October.

The statewide average was less than 2 lbs. per tap and about 60% to 70% of a normal crop. The sugar content stayed between .8 and 1.4 percent with the season average for the state at approximately 1.2 percent. A handful of producers in the warmest and lowest elevations were at an average crop. These producers normally struggle with temperatures being too warm many days during the season, but in the 2021 season, they had a significant number of days where the temperature was just warm enough for good runs. Once again, nearly all the state saw an early and abrupt end to the season around the 10th of March when temperatures had warmed up the first week of March and the freezing ended. Very little off flavored syrup was produced unlike the rest of the US where a lot of the crop produced was off flavored.

The 2021 season will leave many scratching their heads trying to figure out what happened. Most never experienced a single large sap run even when conditions were “ideal”, and it was one of the strangest phenomenon I can remember in over 30 years of producing maple syrup. Most producers produced some of all 3 grades of syrup while a few of the producers that kept producing into the extended warm up in March produced some Extra Dark maple syrup. The colder temperatures during most of the season produced lighter syrup than normal. A few producers in the southwestern part of the state were devastated with an ice storm at the end of February. The ice was so bad in some areas it ended their season. If the ice storm wasn't bad enough, within less than 2 weeks, there was bad flooding in the same areas that had received the ice.

West Virginia Maple at the State Fair

By Cindy Martel, Future Generation University

After a one-year hiatus, the State Fair of West Virginia is back for 2021 and West Virginia maple syrup will be there! Taking place August 12-21, be sure to check out these opportunities:

- Visit the new West Virginia maple syrup mobile unit-see Kate and others as the unit provides education and materials at the fair in its debut!
- Check out the Country Store in the Gus R. Douglass Agriculture Annex-the Association will be manning its cotton candy machine and providing maple aroma throughout the building; Brandon Daniels is leading the effort to schedule and provide cotton candy for sale. He's still looking for candy spinners---gate passes available to volunteers for this Association fundraiser. Contact him at (304) 575-7266 or wvmapler@suddenlink.net. Several Association members have also consigned their maple products for sale at the fair through the WV Department of Agriculture
- If you are at the fair on Monday August 16th, check out the Savory Maple Contest in the West Virginia Building starting at 4PM as contestants prepare their favorite main or side dish using West Virginia maple syrup.

Other News & Notes.....

Congratulations to Jean Smith (retired Marketing & Development Director at the WV Department of Agriculture) on her induction into the West Virginia Agriculture and Forestry Hall of Fame. Many will remember Jeanie during the Association's formation as she provided leadership and guidance as a "true initiator of the West Virginia local food movement", and West Virginia maple syrup. She will be enshrined in a ceremony on July 24th at Jackson's Mill.

Summary of the WVMSPA Annual Meeting, May 22, 2021

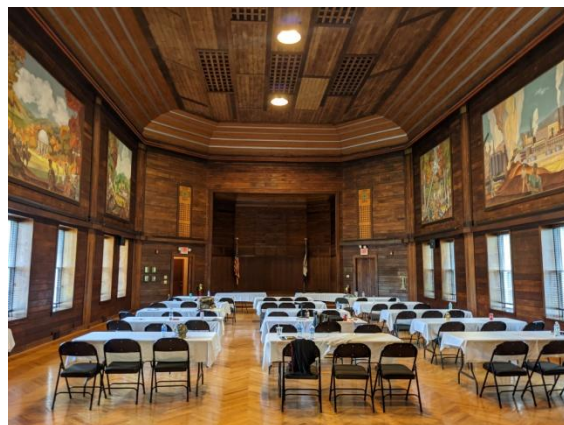
By Tina Barton, based on Minutes taken by Rachel Adams



Then we had the 2021 Syrup Season Reports – all people in attendance gave a quick report on how their season went, improvements, hardships, etc. Some had trouble because of the Arctic Vortex in February. I know I did! For personal reasons, I had to shut down a week too

The meeting was held at the West Virginia Building at WVU Jackson's Mill in Weston. It was a beautiful building inside and out.

The meeting opened with a welcome by Then-President Keith Heasley, followed by the approval of agenda.



early, or I would have done better than ever because the weather turned around in early March. Kris Marsh was glad he didn't bother expanding as he planned because his take was disappointing. Similarly, other farmers like the Darnalls and Brandon Daniels had about 2/3 of their regular take because of the vortex. On the other hand, Mark Bowers said he had the best year ever, with good runs of 2% syrup and is talking of hiring students to help. Mark Kimble bumped his tap holes after the vortex and had another great run! The Future Generations folks spoke about experimenting with walnut syrup, and research is underway to determine the best tapping guidelines for walnut. A status update will be given at the Southern Syrup Research Symposium in September.

Updates From WVDA

- Deputy Commissioner Joe Hatten of the WVDA spoke about issues affecting our membership. He visited Future Generations and saw the mobile sugar shack. He and the commissioner also visited Spruce Knob Maple this year. The WVDA had three Value Added Producer Grant applications from WV Maple Producers. Food waste composting grants are a possibility for farmers. WVDA assisted FGU in applying for ARC grants. He spoke about the NASS 2020 data that was recently published.
- Mr. Hatten also recommended our members file papers at their County Assessor's office for farm census – this helps get farm tax rates on your property being utilized for maple production. He also mentioned that in Senate Bill 160, high tunnels are not considered farm structures as they are a conservation mechanism so they shouldn't be taxed.
- There are opportunities with NRCS Heritage Agriculture under EQIP: cost share for timber stand improvement and other areas are applicable to maple producers.
- WVDA now has oversight of farmer's markets. Next summer they will be hosting other state's Ag commissioners from the Southeast US. They are looking for places to visit and showcase near Canaan Valley.
- The state got 1.5 billion dollars to assist with COVID expenses, WVDA has asked for 50 million for labs to be built. This will help with food safety.

Other Updates

- State Fair will be held August 12-21 2021. We are planning to be there as an organization this year. The mobile sugar shack will be there. Brandon Daniels will schedule volunteers as usual. We will sponsor a sweet and savory maple contest.
- The Mobile Shack is DONE! Experience Learning has a contract and 5 places scheduled this summer for it to go to. In the future there will be an opportunity for collaboration with WVMSPA to determine where it is needed.
- Southern Syrup Research Symposium is happening Sept 24-25 2021 at WVU. There is a great lineup of speakers with a variety of topics to be covered – Something for everyone!

Future Generations University (FGU) Update by Luke Taylor-Ides

- FGU is working on projects with sanitation as well as tapping efficiency and flavor.
- There is an Appalachian maple syrup branding project to distribute to southern markets like through Whole Foods. Stay tuned for more information. They have questions for us: For what price would people sell their syrup wholesale to this? What interest is there for our members to participate?
- Coaching services are available. FGU can help you by looking at your syrup operation and helping to maximize your income

- WV Sugar Operations Preparedness Manual is out and put together now. It will help ease you through the state inspection process. It is available at WVMSPA.org.
- Cookbooks are published now and are available for purchase through WVMSPA.org
- A Rocket Stove design is being finalized. It can boil about 6 gal/hour and costs around \$230 to build. Design is available on FGU website.
- There will be (now “was”) a Grading workshop available June 11 in Garrett Co. Maryland, which was free. The workshop will be repeated on September 24th before the Southern Syrup Research Symposium.
- NAMSC/IMSI – Mike Rechlin of FGU – has been attending quarterly online meetings. The council is now working on strategic plan. The definition of maple syrup is to be updated. The membership voted to cover \$250 registration for next in person meeting.

WVMSPA Business

- There was a brief review of 2020 and 2019 meeting minutes wherein we discussed our money and possible option for apparel or decals for members. There was a motion to ask Cindy Martel to look into this as a membership promotion. The motion was approved.
- The Membership is presently at 44 paid members for 2021.
- The Treasurers Report was provided and approved by the membership.
- For Maple Days, the committee would like to get public figures doing 1st tappings for the publicity
- Maple syrup definition – The Association accepted the new definition and the WVMSPA is joining the petition.
- Elections – Tom Salvetti chaired the nominating committee. Now every year 2 board members retire and 2 new ones are elected for a 3-year term. New board members starting this year are Brittany Hervey-Farris and Kris Marsh. New Officers:

President – Paul Ronk

Vice President – Greg Christian

Secretary – Tina Barton

Treasurer – Keith Heasley

Upcoming Webinar and Workshop Ideas – Tubing installation, Cleaning/Sanitation, Spirits, Confections. Mike Rechlin will lead this with help from Kris Marsh, Greg Christianson, and Mark Bowers.

Affiliate memberships were discussed for non-voting members. This is especially useful during Maple Days for participants and non-maple producers.

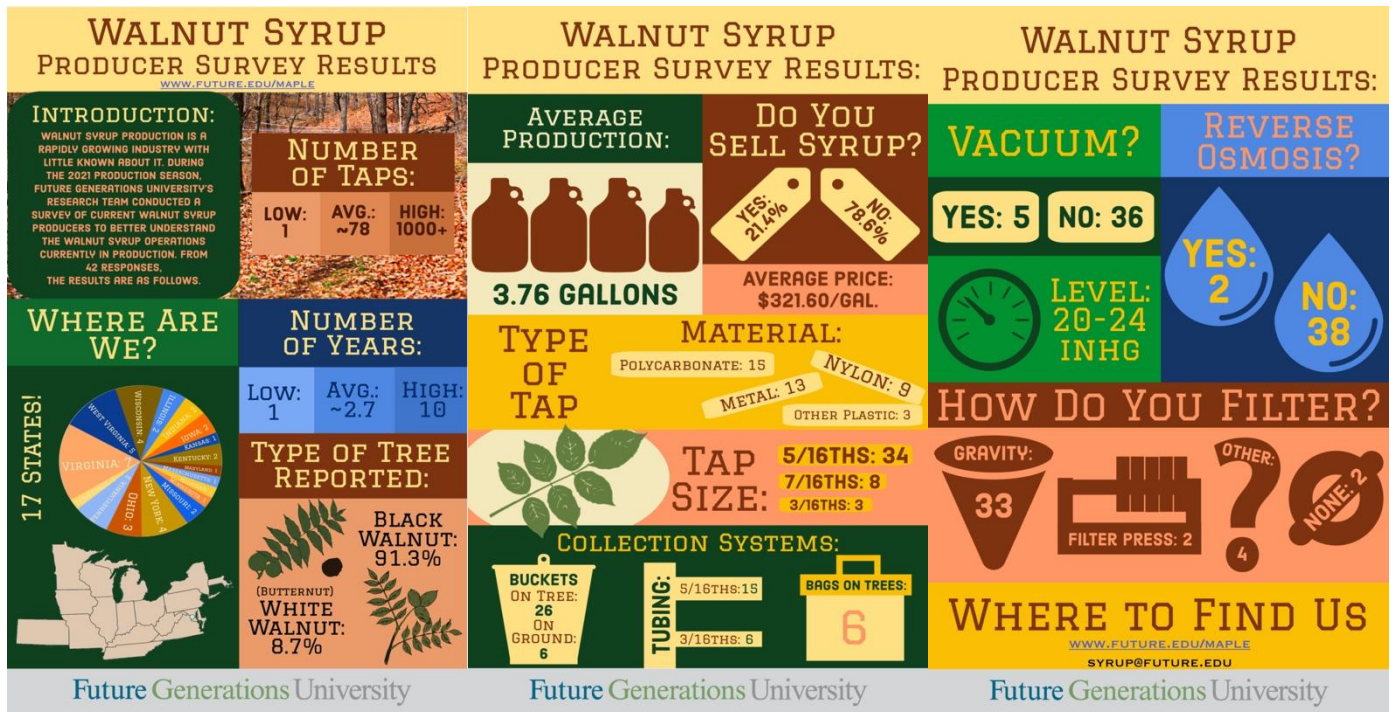
The next Maple Days are scheduled for 3rd weekends in February and March.

Walnut Syrup Industry: Where are we now?

By Kate Fotos, Future Generations University

Over the 2021 walnut sap season, Future Generations University gathered preliminary data on existing walnut syrup producers across the country. Using a google survey disseminated through the Black Walnut Syrup Producers Facebook page as well as personal contact, data on the number of taps, collection systems, syrup production, and sales was collected from forty-two participants. This data was

then compiled into three infographics, which will be on display at the Southern Syrup Research Symposium.



Southern Syrup Research Symposium – Back Again

September 24 and 25th
Morgantown West Virginia



By Mike Rechlin and Jamie Schuler

Maple Folks. Once again, this September the maple world is coming to West Virginia. In 2018 we invited our northern friends to West Virginia to see how maple syrup is made “with a southern twist.” We all learned a lot in 2018, and the enthusiasm led to more “home grown” research at WVU, Future Generations University, Ohio State, and Virginia Tech. This fall, September 24 and 25th, we’re inviting the maple world back to take stock of how far we’ve come and to plot a course to where we’re going. We’ll see some old friends like Les Ober from Ohio State Extension and Abby van den Berg from the Proctor Maple Research Center. We’ll also meet some new friends, like Joel Boutin, Maple Syrup Consultant, Quebec, Canada (it’s not too late to start brushing up on your French) and Navindra Seeram, from the University of Rhode Island.

As always, the best part of the Symposium are the discussions that take place between our maple experts and our maple producers. So, don’t miss the action and don’t miss the fun. Register at: <https://epay.wvsto.com/WVU/WVUANREvents/Default.aspx>

Symposium Schedule

Friday, September 24th

12:00 – 5:00 Vendor setup

Workshop/ Field Session (choose one) (Limited capacity)

2:00 – 5:00 **“Using maple syrup grade evaluation to improve syrup quality,”** Les Ober, OSU

2:00 – 5:00 **“Increasing sap quantity and sweetness through forest management”** Along with a tour of the WVU sugarbush. Jamie Schuler, WVU

Evening Social (TBA)

Saturday, September 25th

7:30 Registration opens (coffee and light breakfast)

8:15 Welcome and Introductions by Jamie Schuler, WVU

Featured Speakers

8:30 **“From Polar Vortex to Warming Temperatures: Making Sense of Weather Impacts on the Maple Syrup Industry.”** Aaron Wilson Ohio State University.

9:15 **“Chemistry and Biological Effects of Maple Food Products: The Path Forward”** Navindra Seeram, Univ. of Rhode Island

10:00 – 10:30 BREAK, Visit with Vendors

10:30 **“Good Flavor Factors in Maple Syrup”** Joel Boutin, Maple Syrup Consultant, Quebec, Canada.

11:15 **“Proctor maple research update, with a southern twist”** Abby Van den Berg, Univ of Vermont Proctor Maple Center

12:00 LUNCH (provided)

Update on new grants (ACER)

Poster session

Visit with Vendors

Concurrent Session 1

1:30 **“Recent research related to 3/16” tubing”** Aaron Wightman, Cornell

1:30 **“Maple tapping guidelines”** Abby van den Berg, Proctor Maple Research Center

2:30 **“The shifting sweet spot of maple syrup production: climate change impacts on sugar maple sap”** Ryan Hurish, University of Virginia, Wise

3:00 **“Estimating the economic value of visits to Central Appalachian syrup makers”** Tom Hammett, Future Generations and Virginia Tech.

3:30 **“Economic impact of regional syrup industry”** Sayeed R. Mehmood, Ohio State University

Concurrent Session II

1:30 **“Hyperspectral imaging and its potential for identifying maple stands”** Jamie Schuler, WVU

2:00 **“Hybrid maple study Mansfield Ohio”** Gabriel Karns, OSU

2:30 **“Timing of tapping study at WVU”** Jamie Schuler, WVU

3:00 **“Maple marketing in a post-covid age”** Tom McCrum, South Face Farm

3:30 **“Walnut sap and syrup production enhancement”** Mike Rechlin, Future Generation University

Concurrent Session III

4:00– 6:00 Cooking Value Added Maple Products with local master maple concoctionists.

4:00 – 6:00 5,4,3,2,1 - Demonstration of an energy efficient, easy to build, backyarder evaporator based on “Rocket Stove” principles by Kate Fotos, Future Generations, along with “Backyard Sugaring Techniques” by Scott Weikert, Penn State Maple Specialist

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Ten Questions As Asked by Mark Bowers

By Tina Barton, Secretary, WVMSPA

Mark Bowers had an interesting idea: survey our members with ten simple questions, which would give us a current snapshot of our members’ operations, and the direction they think the maple industry is heading in our beautiful Mountain State. He presented the survey at the Annual Meeting on May 22, 2021, and I subsequently added it to a form on the website for an easy, stamp-free way to respond. The summary shall be presented below. If you didn’t get a chance to respond and have an interesting tidbit to contribute, we welcome your feedback, and you may be inspired to submit an article for the newsletter sometime. The survey is still live at www.wvmspa.org. Just look for it on our Useful Links Page which can be found in the menu of the Resources tab. A shortcut is on the right hand side of our home page, where it says “Syrup Handbook, Regulatory Guidelines and Other Useful Links.”

Overview

We received 17 responses from all over the state, with average tap counts from 24 to 11,000! In particular, the responses came from Blue Rock Farm (1500 taps), Country Roads Maple (400 taps), Hope’s Harvest Farm LLC (44 taps), M&S Maple Farm LLC (2000 taps), Cool Hollow Maple (5000 taps), Russ Dean (about 75 taps), Tonoloway Farm (1800 taps), Fort Warwick (300 taps), Valley Farm Inc (11,000 taps), Ronk Family Farm (250 taps), Estep Branch (600 taps), Family Roots Farm (800 taps), Bess Farm Sugar Shack (1100 taps), Grandpa Tom’s Maple Farm (190 taps), Heasley Homestead (1800 taps), Croagh Patrick (24 taps), and Gray Farms (400 taps). As you know, we are a diverse group, with some producers like myself at Croagh Patrick, only producing enough syrup for friends and family as a hobby, and major operations like the Stemples at Valley Farm.

Our farms have been producing syrup as far back as 1993 (Fort Warwick) and 1994 (Valley Farm), and some are very new like Bess Farm Sugar Shack and Russ Dean. A couple started producing in

the early 2000s, but most started within the last 7 or 8 years. Ten of the 17 producers plan to expand their operations. That's a pretty good sign of growth for the industry! The rest are staying stable. No one talked of decreasing.

Getting Into The Sticky Business

We heard many stories about getting started in the maple (and walnut syrup) business. My sister first suggested that we produce syrup because her husband's family from New England does it. I forgot about it, until my niece sent me an article about sugaring in West Virginia. Then I started taking it seriously, tried nine taps, got 3 cups of syrup, and found out about WVMSPA. I only make syrup for friends and family, but I enjoy it very much.

Don Olson and Linda Zimmer tell us that many years ago, they bought Blue Rock Farm but the daunting prospect of clearing the land and fencing it led them to think of other ways to use it. Inspired by the Nearings book on maple syrup they set about removing non-maples and thinning the remaining maples using a refractometer to find the sweetest ones to keep. That took forty years, but eventually they had a good stand of sugar maples and moved on to the process of producing syrup.

Britney from Family Roots Farm tells us that her dad, Fred, and she tapped trees for a high school project that began in her mom Cathy's kitchen. Soon they were moved to a turkey cooker outdoors. Sugaring became a family tradition for many years and they would give syrup to family and friends. In 2012 Britney and her soon to be husband started selling sweetcorn at the local Farmers Market and that is the year they began to sell at the market. They began taking maple classes in Ohio and WV and grew the maple business to a full line of maple products and maple value added products.

The Stemples of Valley Farm bought Elbert Riley's dormant sugar camp, a wood-fired evaporator and 600 buckets to get started and have grown to 11,000 taps.

Several mentioned getting started for extra income, or just for fun, or after talking to friends and other syrup producers about sugaring. As Kris Marsh of Country Roads Maple says, "That was the beginning of an expensive hobby"! Paul Ronk got started by helping friends with their operation for many years, and then was given their old evaporator, which inspired his family to branch out on their own.

Two producers talked about the opportunities with Walnut Syrup. At Tonolway Farm, they started making maple syrup on a flat pan sitting on cinder blocks in their yard. They caught the bug for sugaring and learned that they can make syrup from black walnut trees too. Now they have over 1200 black walnut trees tapped. At Bess Farm, Elton Bowers made syrup as a teenager in a 40 gallon iron kettle in late 40s. June two years ago, he heard of someone looking to find a walnut syrup producer for \$100 a gallon, offering to supply equipment to be paid for with syrup. He went it alone and is selling all he can produce at \$300 a jug.

My favorite stories are the ones with family history. Bob Sheets of Fort Warwick started with his father and then built his own sugar house after his father's passing. Michael Gray of Gray Farms mentioned learning from his father, who did some sugaring when Michael was a young boy. He got it from remembering his grandfather, father and neighbors doing it when he was young. He grew up in Ohio on a dairy farm. A lot of the Farmers would make it, probably because it was the slow time of year for them.

Nitty Gritty Equipment Talk

When we asked about the evaporator equipment, the answers were as varied as the farms are!

- Ancient small brothers "Lightning" three and a half by twelve ft. Eventually adding RO , vacuum pump and filtering pan.
- 2X8 raised flue evaporator with steam hood & preheater as well as same side reverse flow & auto draw off all from SmokyLake and CDL 250 hobby RO Divided Pan with Wood Fired Arch
- CDL raised flue, oil fired
- Propane evaporator
- 2x6 drop flue evaporator with a wood fire. No reverse osmosis.
- Flat baffled pan.
- Wood fired 2 x 6
- CDL. Traditional wood Evaporator
- Leader 2x6 pan with a Sunrise hood, use RO and boil over a fire that we use compressed wooden bricks. We use a Leader filter press before going into our Sunrise canner where we bottle it.
- Boiling in pan (for 1100 taps!). Have a CDL evaporator on order to install before next season.
- 2x8 Corsair drop flu by Smoky Lake
- 3' x 12' CDL oil-fired evaporator, 500 gph CDL RO
- Single burner gas cooker that hooks up to our natural gas outside, boiling in a kettle.
- Started with a flat pan in the yard. Now we have a 2x6 CDL raised flue and use RO
- Now have an 12 year old oil fired 5x12 Leader hybrid evaporator.

How Far Does Appalachian Syrup Go?

We were curious how far our syrups travel. The short answer is world-wide! Ron Stemple responded, "I just got large maple leaf glass ready for Bulgaria AND Russia. I believe some sales people have taken it to Japan and China as AWP has a sales office in Shanghai." Britney Hervey Farris said, "We hosted the Nuttfield Scholars at our farm and sugar shack. We gave them each either a maple sugar or maple syrup to take back to their respected countries: Ireland, Australia, Brazil, the Netherlands, and New Zealand. We have regular customers in England and Scotland. We also have a military friend who we send to at Military Bases all over the world." The other answers we got indicate our liquid gold goes all over the US from East to West, including Hawaii, in addition to England, Scotland, Spain, Poland, Switzerland, Nepal, and Australia.

Hind-sight is 20/20 But We Still Like Forecasts

The predictions for the future of West Virginia (and Virginia) Tree Syrups were also varied, some being very optimistic, and others less so. A few are concerned about climate change and feel we are living on borrowed time in West Virginia. One response was "Going to be difficult to expand as it is expensive and labor is hard to find. Small operation that maybe just sells sap or is in a good local market might do ok but that niche is already pretty well filled by current producers. Got to capture more of the East coast and other locations." Along that vein, we heard, "I think we need to continue to get more WV maple producers. We cannot seek larger retail stores with our WV syrup until we grow the industry here in WV." One wishes "maplers and landowners could get together to put WV in the top 10 maple syrup producers." One response rang true to me: they believe there are more small producers, or homeowners that produce syrup just for themselves, than we realize. Some forward-thinking responses were, "I predict continued growth. There is a growing demand for locally produced foods"; "I think that with the growing 'Buy Local' and 'Buy Healthy' trends in consumer food, that the WV maple syrup

industry should do well”; “Agrotourism and interest in forest foods appears to be growing in our area (Highland County, VA)”; “I have been pleased to see young people pursuing the craft and believe that will fuel growth in the maple industry”; “I definitely think the hobby market will see growth as people seem to be trending towards producing their own food. Hopefully the potential for West Virginia to introduce more large scale commercial production occurs as well.” Future Generations University was given praise for the growth of the industry in West Virginia, for going personally to farms to help assess viability and help farmers get started in the industry. Another remark was that the industry will continue to grow as long as we continue to educate and help each other. One answer, short and to the point, is that we have a lot of untapped resources in West Virginia.

Tales From the Bush

Now for my favorite part of this survey: we asked for favorite or interesting memories about sugaring. They ranged from serious, funny, sentimental or otherwise interesting. There are some gems!

- **Weather Woes**

Hope’s Harvest Farm: “There was an ice storm this year, and we lost two weeks of production.”

Valley Farm: “There came a heavy snow and trees had good runs. Went to leave sugar camp about 9:00 pm and barely got out and home.”

- **Critter Curmudgeons?**

Cool Hollow Maple Farm: “The Squirrel Demon: Apparently, this squirrel lived in a tree that was tapped. On a weekly basis, the squirrel would chew through the lines that touched his tree. After more than a dozen fixes, and 3 full replacements, we coated the line in epoxy. We assume he didn’t like the taste, because he left the lines alone. However, he began chewing the bark off the tree. Over the next 2 years, he chewed the bark off up about 25’. In the end, the tree died and the squirrel prevailed.”

Croagh Patrick: “For my first two years, I used soda bottles to catch sap from short tubes. I now use regular buckets, but back then, we drilled holes in the bottle caps to put the tubes through. I tapped in early January and produced some syrup, but I wanted to return to Maryland for a few weeks and come back later near the end of February. My neighbor promised to collect and cook sap for me while I was gone. He did collect a lot of sap, and pulled an all nighter cooking it. The funniest story from him was that for some reason he went out to the bush and found several bottles were unattached from their lids/tubes. This happened a couple times. Either we had a very thirsty raccoon, or he forgot to reattach the bottles after collecting the sap and was telling me a tall tale!”

- **Eye Opener:**

Tonoloway Farm: “When we first started, we were excited about making more maple syrup but our woods are mostly black walnut. At first we were frustrated that we didn't have more maple trees, until we learned that in the old days they used to tap walnut, sycamore, birch, box elder, and all kinds of sweet trees. Now we've diversified into making all kinds of tree syrups.”

- **Sweet Times With Family and Friends:**

Blue Rock Maple: “Celebrating with friends and roasting a trout in the coals of the evaporator.”

Country Roads Maple: "Enjoying the solitude of working in quiet snow covered woods, and having the company of friends & family in a warm sugar house while boiling."

Heasley Homestead: "So many of my friends have asked to help that we hold a "Tapping Weekend" to start the season. Half a dozen friends come over to help tap and enjoy good food and drink later."

Gray Farms: "Just enjoy sitting around and visiting with family and friends that stop by."

Fort Warwick: "My favorite memories would be listening to my father explain the process to radio astronomers from the Green Bank Observatory in the early 60's and now listening to my sons do the same thing as we host visitors during the WV Maple Days."

Family Roots Farm: "Favorite memory was Britney drinking sap water out of the Igloo 5 gallon cooler so she didn't waste any sap water, when she was in High School. Currently watching Grady and Mylah drink out of the tap and when in the sugarshack eat little sugar nuggets we save from the sugar machine."

- **Fire is Dangerous!**

Ronk Family Farm: "Burnt my pants the first year!"

Family Roots: "During a maple breakfast served in the sugarshack during our Mountain State Maple Days, we were all doing our part to demonstrate how syrup is made. While everyone was enjoying breakfast all of a sudden we heard one of our guests yelling 'Fred, Fred!' and here the fire door on the evaporator blew open and flames were shooting out. No one was hurt and all the guests were laughing about it but we all smelled like we had sat around the campfire. Note: One guest wore her fur coat to the breakfast to keep warm....she said no worries either."

Grandpa Tom's Maple Farm: "Scorched my pan for the first time with a homeschool group visiting. Lesson learned."

The Saga Continues

We want to thank everyone who contributed to this article! I certainly had fun compiling the answers, and am grateful to Mark Bowers for taking the initiative to come up with the survey. The survey is still on the website, as said before, on the Useful Links Page. Feel free to send more input. We can include more stories in future newsletters!

This Newsletter is Published by North Mountain Press

FutureGenerationsUniversity
Future.Edu

WVMSPA New Members Welcome

by Mark Bowers with a Postscript from Tina Barton

Dr. Mike Rechlin suggested I contact the new members to the Association. We want to welcome them aboard and let them contribute to the newsletter. Thanks Mike! I enjoy meeting and talking to Maple Producers and especially West Virginia Producers.

Scott Bright : Makes Maple Syrup near Burlington, WV. Has 300 taps now, but could expand. Scott discovered that the squirrels do not damage his green tubing, they chew his blue tubing a lot which requires many repairs. He wondered if any other producers using green tubing to collect sap may have experienced the same.

Wesley Deadrick : Taps trees near Mt. Storm then hauls the sap to his home in Morgantown to process into Maple Syrup. His trees are very old and large and after doing some research found out that they were tapped in the 40s,50s and 60s by the Cosner Family.

Jacob Rittberg: A New Jersey transplant taps trees near Shinnston, WV. He plans on expanding on the 50 acre tract of Maple Trees he owns. He is working with the Maple Field Specialist from Future Generations, Kate Fotos.

Robert (Bob) Sheets: Produces Syrup near Greenbank, WV, He is a retired teacher, got started making syrup helping his Grandfather and Father, and now his sons help him make syrup. They are mainly a bucket operation.

Richard McLaughlin: He is located near the Cass, WV area, one of the many Pocahontas County producers. We have not had a chance to get any stories from him.

P.S. From Tina

Since receiving the above, we got another new member! Keith Bibbee: Is a beginner starting from scratch, from Point Pleasant, WV. If this works out, he'll be a hobbyist producing syrup for himself and friends and family, not for sale. He was brought up eating pancakes with a popular pancake syrup. He didn't know there was anything else. He was probably about 30 when he realized his syrup is not "real maple syrup". Then he tried the real thing and... WOW! He didn't care how expensive it was, he was never going to use cheap pancake syrup again. Now retired, he has been researching maple production, watching videos and attending seminars. He has surveyed his forest and expects to have 12 taps to start with in 2022. He hopes to make 2 gallons of syrup next year.

We wish our new members a very warm welcome, and good tapping weather next year!

The Sap Mobile Hits the road!

By Kate Fotos, Future Generations University

At long last, the mobile sugar shack, fondly called the "Sap Mobile," is hitting the road. Its inaugural show will be at the 2021 State Fair, August 12-24, in Lewisburg, WV. We are excited to finally be able to show off all of the hard work that has gone into this amazing educational tool. Please feel free to stop by the sugar shack anytime! We would love to have real producers share their knowledge and become part of the experience for the fair goers. If



you would like to be more involved with the sugar shack, please email kfotos@experience-learning.org.

Beyond the State Fair, the Sap Mobile is heading to the Southern Syrup Research Symposium, September 24-25, in Morgantown, WV; just in case you needed another reason to attend! We will be running a demonstration of the Sap Mobile and the Rocket Stove from 4-6 on the 25th. Make sure you register for the conference at <https://epay.wvsto.com/WVU/WVUANREvents/Default.aspx>.

Accessing South Atlantic Markets for US Maple Syrup

By Sarah Collins-Simmons

Last Fall, Future Generations University, in partnership with Virginia Tech, Appalachian Sustainable Development, and Garrett County, MD Economic Development, was the recipient of USDA Acer Access grant funding. The grant application was submitted as a Market Development and Promotion grant in which projects should emphasize improving consumer knowledge, awareness, and understanding of the US maple syrup industry and its products through consumer promotion, including education related to maple syrup production, research, and natural resource sustainability in the maple syrup industry. Since November, the Future Generations team and their partners have been hard at work specifically gaining a more thorough understanding of the potential market opportunities and beginning to develop marketing materials for Appalachian maple syrup in the greater South Atlantic region.

The end goal of this project is to keep syrup made in the southern tier production area in the South Atlantic region (rather than sending it in bulk to New England or Canada) and make sure it is in some way labeled as produced in Appalachia. The project also aims to place regionally local syrup into larger retail chains that are not typically accessible to individual producers because of the production volume required by that type of contract. Therefore the gift stores, independent groceries, and boutique shops will still be prime market locations for syrup producers looking to sell wholesale on a small and regional scale.



Throughout the winter and spring, three initial project activities have been happening simultaneously by different members of the Future Generations team and project partners. Virginia Tech has been taking the lead on various aspects of the research into the existing maple syrup market in the South Atlantic. These activities have included designing a “store shelf canvass”, training the project team to complete the canvassing, and compiling the collected data into comprehensive reporting. Store shelf canvassing is being completed in major metro areas in the Mid-Atlantic region including in Virginia, West Virginia, North Carolina, and Washington, DC and the surrounding suburbs. Dr. Tom Hammett has also been completing a literature review and research on existing market information for maple syrup. Thus far, it has been concluded that very little maple syrup market data exists, especially for the US South. In order to

fill in the missing data points, Dr. Hammett's team has been conducting key informant interviews with store/chain managers and buyers.

With the help of a consumer survey process, the Appalachian Team at Future Generations developed a brand identity for syrup bottled and sold through the efforts of this project. The Authentic Appalachia brand has been created and the label for glass flask bottles has been finalized. They are now working with Appalachian Sustainable Development to plan product roll-out as well as developing the marketing material and distribution plan for the syrup. The project team anticipates Authentic Appalachia Pure Maple Syrup being on store shelves sometime in the fall of 2021.

Maple Syrup Marketing Research: A regional approach to seek new and expanded market opportunities.

By Tom Hammett, Blacksburg, VA

Supported by the USDA's ACER Access program "Accessing South Atlantic Markets for US Maple Syrup: educating consumers and enhancing distribution networks", Virginia Tech, Future Generations University, Appalachian Sustainable Development, and Garrett County Economic Development (Maryland) have created a three-state (Maryland, West Virginia, and Virginia) partnership to raise consumer awareness about the maple industry and expand access to markets for regionally produced maple products. Early indications are that increasing awareness will support the growth of the U.S. maple syrup industry in the South. The goal is to raise awareness of maple syrup with consumers in Southeastern markets (eastern Virginia, North and South Carolina, and further south). To develop a market and promotion plan we are conducting several market research activities, including a store shelf survey, and interviews with key informants.

Our market research seeks to identify sources of maple syrup market information. Existing data on sales and production is being summarized. That data that will be coupled with information from interviews to give us some sense of past sales levels. Marketing publications and those designed to help establish or expand maple operations will be cataloged. Marketing strategies will be developed based on data collected, interviews, and canvassing sales points. The key question is: How can we expand sales of the region, and how best to introduce maple syrup to consumers?

Probably our most helpful assessment tool has been a store shelf survey, with each store canvassed for the extent of maple syrup and maple products being offered. The project team designed a set of questions, which was tested and refined during early 2021 and we are finishing the canvass this summer. In each store the brands of pure maple syrup being sold, pricing information, container types and sizes, and label information are documented. At each location the survey includes a short visit with the store manager, or staff person to learn about their buying practices, their willingness to stock local syrup, and how they are differentiating local products. We are canvassing in Eastern Virginia (Richmond), Eastern and Central Maryland, the Washington DC area, Bristol, Virginia/Tennessee, and Central North Carolina. In each location we are canvassing several types of stores - not just chain grocery stores - such as small specialty shops and health food stores. To date over 60 stores have been canvassed. Results will be tabulated in early July and they will help us design focused marketing and promotional activities.

Our interviews with key informants engaged in selling maple syrup and food products have been helpful. Early indications are that larger supermarket chains lack awareness that maple syrup is regionally produced. Few larger chains stock local syrup, but are willing to do so if it is available in adequate and continual supplies. Local smaller venues such as health food stores, are more likely to have direct contact with local producers, and therefore stock local made syrup.

To expand markets and product awareness, the project is also encouraging the use of regionally produced maple syrup as an alternative sweetener (i.e., in baking). Using maple syrup as a sweetener in specialty baking, and coffee shops would help raise awareness for alternative uses for maple syrup.

Next steps include post-pandemic engagement with consumers at sales points and through agritourism events. Surveys to assess consumer awareness of maple syrup and its uses, on-site tasting and demonstration sessions that engage shoppers, and other activities that will assess and expand consumer awareness. The team is identifying agri-tourism, food/beverage events, and trade shows in the South Atlantic region to display maple products. At the same time, a producer survey will canvass existing producers to assess their capacity and willingness to serve these new and expanded markets. The ultimate objective is to connect our maple producers to customers in a broader and more populous region. For further information and to make suggestions, please contact Tom Hammett at himal@vt.edu.

Smiling Faces at Maple Events

By Mike Rechlin and Tina Barton

Maple Quality Control and Grading Workshop (Mike Rechlin)



Mark Bowers and Ken Jorden, closer than 6 feet.

Workshop participants enjoyed getting together (closer than 6 feet) as Les led them through a series of “hands on” exercises in use of a hydrometer to determine density, color grading and the good (and bad) flavors of maple.

The program included a syrup competition, with CDL’s Mike and Cody Lynch as judges. Top honors were taken home by Ed Emerick of Emerick’s Pure Maple. Understanding the importance of density to producing quality maple syrup, participants were encouraged to bring their hydrometers to the workshop where they were checked against a standard solution.

After a year of living separately and hidden behind masks, smiling faces were the order of the day at a Maple Quality Control and Grading Workshop held June 11th in Accident, Maryland. And, it was no accident that Ohio Maple Specialist Les Ober was the featured speaker and workshop leader. Participants came from Pennsylvania, West Virginia, Virginia and Maryland, anxious to talk shop with other maple producers and hone their skills at producing top quality maple syrup.



Mike and Cody Lynch, contest Judges.



Trevor Swan, winning smile of the day

The workshop was sponsored by Future Generations University's Appalachian program and Garrett County, MD, economic development. Understanding that syrup quality is of foremost importance in marketing, the workshop was funded by the USDA Acer Access program through the grant "Accessing South Atlantic Markets for US Maple Syrup: educating consumers and enhancing distribution networks."

Miss the workshop? Don't despair. A repeat performance is scheduled for Friday September 24th at the Southern Syrup Research Symposium in Morgantown, West Virginia. Just bring your smile!

The West Virginia State Folk Festival (by Tina Barton)



Kris Marsh and Kate Fotos at the WV State Folk Festival

The West Virginia State Folk Festival was held during the third weekend of June, 2021, and at long last, we had a table to talk about maple, both "then and now." We raffled off 4 maple sugaring starter kits that included 10 drops with taps attached, filters and CDL catalogs provided by Brandon Daniels, a maple themed coloring book and Appalachian Maple Cookbook provided by Future Generations University, an instruction sheet that I wrote up, and a contact sheet. The kits were provided in hand-painted bags sewn and painted with love by me. The raffle proceeds went to the Gilmer County Historical Society who gave us space in their yard during the festival. The idea behind the raffle was to drum up more interest in the maple industry, and perhaps help someone find a new calling!

Kris Marsh of Country Roads Maple set up a fun tapping station with three maple posts so that kids of all ages could practice tapping a tree! Kate Fotos from Future Generations lent us some old wooden spiles for display to keep with the "folk theme," and also gave us some photos to display that show equipment from days gone by. A very popular photo was one of the cross section of a very old maple tree that had been tapped many times. Kate came all day Friday to give demos and history lessons, and many people came by and reminisced about how their grandpa made maple syrup.

The children had a blast with the electric drill Kris lent us that drills exactly the right distance!



Kate Fotos helping some very small children tap a maple post. This little tiny blondie was very strong!

Kris came on Friday afternoon and all day Saturday to attract even more business. Kris loves talking maple to anyone who will listen and he had a lot of friends and family in the area so it was a lively time! We didn't have syrup to sell, but we had a few people taste Tina's unfiltered but yummy golden delicious syrup. In the future, Kris hopes to have a regular presence at this and other festivals with syrup to sell, a better tapping station, a bigger tent and more equipment to show off.

It was a fun weekend and I think a successful one for West Virginia Maple!



Route 5 Just outside of Glenville. "Oh the hills, the beautiful hills, how I love the West Virginia Hills!"

West Virginia Maple Syrup Producers Association
Membership Application 2019 (revised10/2018)

Purpose:

“The purpose of the West Virginia Maple Syrup Producers Association is to promote, educate, and research the maple and other tree syrup as well as value-added syrup products throughout West Virginia.”

Membership:

“Membership is open to persons interested in maple or firms engaged in any phase of producing, processing and/or marketing maple syrup, and/or tree syrups and value-added products of maple syrup and other tree syrups.”

We invite you to join with us as we learn and promote our industry.

Name: _____

Farm/sugarhouse name: _____

Membership category (check one):

_____ West Virginia members. (With full voting rights).

_____ Associate and Honorary members. This category is for friends from other states who want to join our organization. (Without voting rights)

_____ I give permission for my contact information to be shared with paid members.

_____ I do not give my permission to share my contact information with paid members

Address:

Phone number:

cell:

Email address:

Annual dues: \$25 includes

- Maple Syrup Digest Subscription
- Biannual Newsletter
- Workshops on relevant sugaring topics
- Participation in WV annual maple weekend

Complete application and submit with your annual dues of \$25 by May 2, 2021
(make checks payable to WVMSPA)

TO: Keith Heasley, 2988 Compressor Station Rd Bruceton Mills, WV 26525

West Virginia Maple Syrup Association
2988 Compressor Station Rd
Bruceeton Mills, WV 26525