



University
of Vermont

Extension
Maple

College of Agriculture and Life Sciences

VERMONT *Maple* SUGAR MAKERS' ASSOCIATION

2025 VERMONT MAPLE CONFERENCE WEEK

Welcome to Vermont's Maple Conference Week Monday, December 8 - Saturday, December 13, 2025

University of Vermont Extension and Vermont Maple Sugar Makers' Association are pleased to host the 2025 Vermont Maple Conference Week! Based on producer feedback, we continue to design our conference sessions for anyone who wants to learn about maple production - whether you are an existing sugar maker, looking to become one, a forester who works with maple producers or a forest landowner looking to lease to a producer.

We kick off conference week with the popular one day Quality School; we shift to 3 days of interactive online sessions; host VMSMA's Annual Meeting online Thursday night; board a coach bus for a full day of sugarhouse tours; and the grand finale offers a full day at Vermont State University, Randolph. All of the online and in-person sessions will be recorded, so that after the conference you can watch them on your own time.

This year, we're joined by a number of conference sponsors - Farm Credit East, CDL USA, Lapierre USA, Burch Bottle & Packaging, Dominion & Grimm, Butternut Mountain Farm, and Vermont Organic Farmers. The generous support of our sponsors and conference partners ensures we offer a successful conference and benefits VMSMA's work throughout the year! Please make sure to thank their representatives when you see them at the conference!

There are two fee levels for the conference this year - one that includes the entire conference (the online sessions, the in-person Saturday sessions and Saturday lunch), and one for just the online portions. We created these fees to be affordable for attendees, but also help us cover the cost of offering Vermont Maple Conference Week this year. We've also included a student rate for the full conference pass to encourage the next generation of sugarmakers to join us!

We're looking forward to engaging online and in-person discussions with you in December. After the conference, we'll also look forward to your feedback about what you'd like to see more of and what could use improvement.

Registration is available online through our registration site, <https://bit.ly/2025MapleConf>, or through the Vermont Maple Sugar Makers' Association website, <https://bit.ly/VTMapleConf>. If you need assistance along the way, please reach out to VMSMA staff.

"See you" at the conference, online and in-person!

Allison Hope
Executive Director
Vermont Maple Sugar Makers' Association

Mark Isselhardt
Maple Specialist
University of Vermont Extension



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HOW TO REGISTER

It's easy to register for 2025 Conference Week activities! Choose to join us for the kickoff full day Quality School on Monday; register for the NEW full day Bus Tour on Friday; join us for the online sessions only; or select a full conference pass for both the online and Saturday in-person sessions (includes lunch).

If you're a member, join us on Thursday for our Annual Meeting (online); we'll send all current VMSMA members an email with the meeting link and details.

If your registration includes the online sessions, we'll email you links to join those meetings live about a week before the conference. After that, we will email you reminders the day before each session to make sure the link is readily accessible. Be sure to review the conference schedule and save the times in your calendar!

The Full Conference Pass includes all of the online sessions AND the in-person conference on Saturday. We'll have a detailed schedule available at the check-in table on Saturday. On Saturday, remember to bring:

- Any syrup hydrometers you want tested as part of the tradeshow;
- A sample of syrup for UVM Extension's new Quality Lab;
- Any samples of pure maple products you'd like to sample and talk about with Henry Marckres (registration for these limited time slots will be available at Saturday's check-in table);
- Check or credit card to buy your 2026 Temporary Grading Kit, register for Maple Open House Weekend and purchase other VMSMA supplies.

We will record both the online and in-person sessions and we will share access to these recordings in early January using your registration email.

Questions? Reach out to Cara or Allison for assistance.

Ready to join us? Please register using the link below.

REGISTER HERE: <https://bit.ly/2025MapleConf>

CONFERENCE DATES

PRE-CONFERENCE QUALITY SCHOOL: Monday, Dec 8 at UVM Extension Office, Berlin VT,

ONLINE: Tuesday, Dec 9 – Thursday, Dec 11 (8 sessions, plus Annual Meeting)

BUS TOUR: Friday, December 12, starting and ending in Randolph

IN-PERSON: Saturday, Dec 13 at Vermont State University, Randolph VT

REGISTRATION DEADLINE

Monday, 11/24 for Quality School and the Bus Tour; Friday, 12/5 for all other registrations

COST

QUALITY SCHOOL: \$75, limited to 20 attendees (includes lunch and Quality Kit)

BUS TOUR: \$50, limited to 50 attendees (includes morning coffee/pastries and lunch)

ONLINE ONLY: \$30 for all sessions (and recordings available online)

FULL CONFERENCE PASS: \$50, includes all online sessions (and recordings available online), all Saturday in-person sessions and lunch on Saturday

STUDENT FULL CONFERENCE PASS: \$30, for currently enrolled students, includes all online sessions (and recordings available online), all Saturday in-person sessions and lunch on Saturday

QUESTIONS?

Cara Gauthier
VMSMA Membership Manager
cara@vermontmaple.org
(802) 227-2627

Allison Hope
VMSMA Executive Director
allison@vermontmaple.org
(802) 222-6132

UVM Extension helps individuals and communities put research-based knowledge to work. Issued in furtherance of Cooperative Extension work, as of May 8 and June 30, 1914, in cooperation with the United States Department of Agriculture. University of Vermont Extension, Burlington, Vermont University of Vermont Extension, and U.S. Department of Agriculture, cooperating, offer education and employment to everyone without regard to race, color, national origin, gender, religion, age, disability, political beliefs, sexual orientation, and marital or familial status. Individuals requesting a disability-related accommodation to participate in this program should contact Cara Gauthier, VMSMA Membership Manager, at 802-227-2627 by November 30, 2025.

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MONDAY, DECEMBER 8

IN PERSON

8:30am-4:30pm

Maple Syrup Quality for Sugar Makers

Sponsored by IMSI and NAMSC

Mark Isselhardt, UVM Extension Maple Specialist

Jason Lilley, UMaine Extension Assistant Professor

Location: UVM Extension Berlin Office, 327 U.S. Route 302, Suite 1, Barre

Vermont Maple is world renown for being the highest quality maple syrup on the planet. What allows our sugar makers to keep making this claim? Curiosity about how to make the best maple syrup and the science and technical tools that get us there. Join us for a full day, hands-on, in-depth session with Mark Isselhardt of UVM Extension and Jason Lilley of UMaine Extension.

Previously known as "Grading School" prior to the pandemic, this one day class is essential for sugar makers, no matter how many years you've been tapping trees. Mark and Jason will get into the science behind great and off-flavored syrup, the best measurement tools and how to use them, and will offer plenty of hands-on activities and time for discussion to refine your skills. You can find the agenda for the day on our winter conference page online.

This one-day essential session requires separate registration at \$75 per person and includes a quality kit valued at over \$95, with a new hydrometer, hydrometer cup, thermometer, off flavor kit and reference materials. Coffee, snacks and lunch will be provided.

Space is limited to 20 participants and pre-registration is required.



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- Perfect seal with minimal backflow



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- Made of polycarbonate
- Thicker wall than the Signature
- More pronounced taper angle
- Translucent for easy leak detection at the tap
- First MaxFlow barb designed for absolute leakproof performance



MAXFlow+

- Made of opaque nylon
- Built to last – a time-tested design inspired by our bestsellers
- Open tip allows sap to enter more easily, increasing yield
- Always equipped with barbs for secure fitting



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2025 VERMONT MAPLE CONFERENCE WEEK



TUESDAY, DECEMBER 9

ONLINE

9:00-10:00AM

Mapping & Planning Tools for Sugarbush Management

Lauren Cresanti, UAS Specialist, Spatial Analysis Lab, University of Vermont
Chris Lindgren, Forest Business Program Manager, University of Vermont

Explore how geospatial technologies can enhance decision-making and operations in maple sugaring. We'll begin with accessible tools and resources sugar makers can use to visualize parcels, sap line networks, and basic forest layers. Then, we'll explore how drone imagery and terrain modeling might offer a more robust, site-specific approach while supplementing traditional ground-based observations and integrating with existing spatial resources. We aim to show how this spatial information could address challenges in the field and empower more informed decision-making.

12:00-1:00PM

Preparation & Response to Forest Defoliation Events

Jason Lilley, University of Maine Asst. Extension Professor, Maine Sustainable Agriculture and Maple Industry Educator
Josh Halman, Forest Health Lead, Vermont Department of Forests, Parks and Recreation

How can you be more prepared and understand available resources for responding to defoliation events? Join Jason and Josh for an overview of the Forest Tent Caterpillar outbreak in Northern Maine and what Vermont sugar makers can learn from their recent experience. How did Maine first recognize and identify the issue? Which key agencies were involved and what was the process for study and response? What do we know about the effects of these types of defoliation events on your sugarbush? They'll also share some preliminary follow-up forest assessment data from this season.

5:00-6:00PM

Lead & Maple Syrup: History, Research, Recommendations

Ellie Palmer, VMSMA Sugarhouse Certification & Grants Manager
Allison Hope, VMSMA Executive Director

This summer Vermont's Agency of Agriculture, Food & Markets updated the state's lead action levels for maple syrup from 250ppb to 6ppb (or undetectable, by current testing standards). While we have no current data to indicate an issue with lead in maple, the strength of the Vermont Maple brand relies upon all producers to make the safest, most high quality syrup. What's the history and continued path forward towards this goal?

To best understand this important topic, Tim will share the history of lead in maple syrup - historical data and best practices, research and current gaps, and what the so-called "California Settlement" meant for the industry. And we'll talk about a path forward with the updated action levels and where VMSMA's Sugarhouse Certification Program and new lead testing recommendations play a lead role. (Spoiler alert: removing lead-introducing equipment is always step one and lead testing is recommended until you have completed step one.)

9:00-10:00AM

Chilling for Sap Quality

Adam Wild, Director of Cornell University's Uihlein Maple Research Forest, and Co-Director of the Cornell Maple Program

Adam shares Cornell's recent research on preserving sap quality by cooling it with glycol chillers. He'll share how chilling maple sap preserves quality, increases efficiency, and provides flexibility in processing sap into syrup. Most sap chilling in the industry is done with refrigeration tanks which can be costly and require specialists. Glycol chillers are an alternative method which provide more flexibility and the option to build your own lower-cost glycol chilling unit. Learn how to build and implement a glycol chiller into your maple operation.

12:00-1:00PM

Value-Added: What to Know When Moving Beyond Pure Maple

Ellie Palmer, VMSMA Sugarhouse Certification & Grants Manager

Are you producing value-added maple products or thinking about adding some to your product assortment? Maple nuts, maple baked goods, infused maple syrup, maple grilling sauces, and maple popcorn are often common value-add products offered by sugar makers and can help you reach more consumers. How can you add to your product line and stay in compliance with existing best practices and regulations? Join Ellie to learn what information is required on retail product labels, what state and federal regulations may apply to your business or specific products, and how to navigate them. Bring your questions and retail product labels to discuss!

5:00-6:00PM

Women in Maple

Emma Marvin, Co-Owner of Butternut Mountain Farm

Donna Young, Judd's Wayeeses Farms, Morgan, VT

Meg Emmons, Bourdon Maple Farm, Woodstock, VT

Chaska Richardson, Couching Lion Maple Sugar Farm, Huntington, VT

A 2019 UVM Survey of Northeastern Maple producers indicated that 96% of respondents were male, but perhaps we don't need a study to tell us that maple sugaring is a predominately male field. This panel brings together a variety of women in maple to share their experiences and stories, as the other 4% or more of sugar makers. How do they connect with other women in the industry, what stereotypes have they run up against, what unique perspective to they bring to their operations, and where do they focus their efforts? Learn from some amazing VMSMA members and sugar makers and bring your questions to contribute to the conversation.

9:00-10:00AM

Defoamer Residues in Maple Syrup

Dr. Nathalie Martin, Research Scientist - Maple Products Quality, Centre ACER

Mark Isselhardt, Maple Specialist/Maple Program Leader, University of Vermont Extension

We all know defoamers as important processing aids used during the maple syrup manufacturing process. They differ from food additives in that they do not end up in the finished product, except in negligible quantities, and do not require labeling. The use of defoaming agents in maple syrup evaporators is widespread across the industry, but we are currently without reliable data on the quantities used and the residues they may leave in the syrup.

When excessive foaming occurs, the maximum concentration allowed for a processing aid can easily be exceeded. Maple syrup would then theoretically no longer be considered a 100% pure product and could therefore lose the right to label maple syrup as such. Documenting the presence of such residues is crucial to evaluate if they are used appropriately as processing aids in production. Nathalie shares her important research which aims to evaluate the concentration of defoamer residues present in maple syrup produced in the largest syrup-producing states in the United States (Maine, New York, and Vermont).

12:00-1:00PM

Sugarbush Management and Certification in Vermont's UVA program

Kathleen Stutzman, Forest Research Specialist. University of Vermont

Vermont is the leader of a growing US maple industry, where forest conversion to maple production has steadily risen since 2010. Forest management plans for sugarbushes enrolled in Vermont's UVA program were reviewed to provide information on their management regimes and forest condition. The role of third-party certification and timing of tapping initiation on sugarbush structure and management priorities was also investigated. This presentation will provide insights into the management needs and sustainability of forestry practices for this regionally important resource.

6:00-7:30PM

VMSMA Annual Meeting

Please join us for an online annual member meeting as part of Conference Week! We'll review last year's meeting minutes, run through some financial information and talk about our work over the past year. Bring your curiosity and your questions and join us on Thursday evening! Current VMSMA Members will automatically receive a link to join this Zoom meeting as the date approaches.

Vermont Organic Farmers can support your organic certification journey by:**Walking you through the
USDA organic standards****Setting you up with useful supports like
mentorship from seasoned organic sugar
makers and record-keeping resources****Helping you access reimbursement
for certification fees when available**

Learn more by contacting
us at **802-434-3821** or
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National Organic Program
Transition to Organic Partnership Program

2025 VERMONT MAPLE CONFERENCE WEEK

MAPLE TOUR DEC 12, 2025

TIMELINE

Leaving from My Place Hotel, Randolph Center
at 8:45am and returning at 5:45pm

Coffee & Pastries available prior to boarding the bus

Lunch will be served at Barred Woods in Belvidere

COST

\$50 per person,
includes morning pastries, coffee, & lunch

Limit of 50 Participants

REGISTER ONLINE

<https://bit.ly/2025MapleConf>

STOP 1 CHITTENDEN COUNTY



STOP 2 FRANKLIN COUNTY



PURINTON MAPLE

190 Pond Road, Huntington | purintonmaple.com

ATTRIBUTES: Supply Dealer, Multi-Generational, Tree Farm, Container Labeling, VMSMA Container Dealer

Chase Purinton moved to Vermont in 1803 settling on a hillside farm. For generations, the Purinton family produced maple syrup on their farms in Lincoln and Bristol, Vermont. Peter Purinton (descendent of Chase) fell in love with being outside and had a genuine passion for making maple syrup as he learned the process from his father Robert. In 1962, at the age of six, Peter tapped eight sugar maple trees with his older brothers. Little by little, Peter kept growing and advancing his sugaring operation.

In 1979, Peter moved to Huntington where he purchased a sugarbush from the Jaques family. Peter transformed the 10,000 bucket operation into a tubing system. With one vision in mind, Peter worked hard to maintain a maple forest that was sustainable for generations. Today, Peter and Carla Purinton tap 17,000 sugar maple trees on 350 acres of farmland.

The next generation of Purinton children includes Jennifer Purinton Randall, Brittany Purinton, Cody Purinton, Austin Purinton, son-in-law Jed Randall, grandchildren, and dogs. Today the next generation children work together with Peter and Carla to maintain the farm. The Purinton's have expanded their products offerings from only maple syrup to maple sugar, maple candy, maple cotton candy and more!

At Purinton Maple, our passion is promoting the benefits of Vermont pure maple syrup. With generations of experience, we pride ourselves in making the best maple syrup. Our passion for making maple syrup led us to help other maple producers by distributing Leader Evaporator maple equipment & supplies. Our farm is also the home to a choose & cut Christmas tree operation.

BRANON FAMILY MAPLE ORCHARDS

539 Branon Road, Fairfield | branonmaple.com

ATTRIBUTES: Organic, Sugarhouse Certification, Value-Added Products, Multi-Generational, Overnight Stays, Bird Friendly Maple, Solar, Vermont Land Trust

For the Branon family, producing pure Vermont maple syrup has been a way of life for six generations. Located in the Green Mountains of Fairfield, Tom and Cecile Branon head up the operation at Branon Family Maple Orchards. Each year, they hand-tap about 90,000 maple trees to produce the highest quality certified organic maple syrup with the help of family and friends. They keep a sample from each batch to maintain strict quality control and trace their favorites.

Conservation and sustainability are top of mind for every decision they make, having conserved more than half of their 4,800 acres of maple forests with the Vermont Land Trust to preserve the land for future generations. Having been members with the Vermont Land Trust since 1997, when they conserved their, they also conserved over 2000 acres in Bakersfield in 2016. In addition to trees, they tap the sun to power their sugarhouses with solar panels to reduce their carbon footprint. Being certified as a "Bird Friendly Habitat" by the Vermont Audubon Society and maintaining a farm management plan with the State guarantees the birds and habitat a safe environment for balanced health.

Tom and Cecile have grown from dairy farming as their primary focus and a few thousand maple taps – collected the old-fashioned way with metal buckets and a team of work horses – to a sophisticated network of vacuum tubing and reverse osmosis machines for maximum efficiency. This is one of the many ways they have innovated to grow and preserve their family business.

In 2020, they unveiled an industry-first with "Maple to Go!", a TSA-compliant reclosable pouch, making organic maple syrup accessible for travelers and outdoor adventurers everywhere.

STOP 3

LAMOILLE
COUNTY



BARRED WOODS MAPLE

2824 VT Rte 109, Belvidere | barredwoodsmple.com

ATTRIBUTES: Value-Added Products, Usda Rsf Grant Funding, Bird Friendly Maple, Public Access, Vermont Land Trust, American Carbon Registry

Barred Woods was founded as a collaborative partnership among four friends who share a passion for Vermont, making maple syrup, and preserving our forests. Our name came to us from a chance encounter with a large barred owl while enjoying a walk through our Underhill sugarbush. She studied us from a tree stump and tolerated our questioning of "who cooks for you?". Taking this as a good omen, we named her Emma in honor of the woman who had once owned this beautiful parcel of land. Thus our company name Barred Woods Maple was born, with Emma as our matriarch.

Our sugarhouse and sugarbush are located in the Green Mountains of Northern Vermont. We strive everyday to support our rural community and the working families that live in it. Although we are a small company with less than 12 employees we are still one of the largest employers in our town. All of us share a passion for stewarding our land, for making the best tasting maple syrup available, and for ensuring our customers are always delighted with our products.

We steward 1500 acres of Hardwood Forest in Northern Vermont. We manage our land to improve the habitat for wildlife. Our land is conserved from development through the Vermont Land Trust, we partner with Vermont Audubon to manage our forest for songbird habitat, and we maximize carbon capture and sequestration and are monitored by the American Carbon Registry. All of our land is open for public access for activities such as skiing, fishing, and hiking.

STOP 4

ORANGE
COUNTY



SILLOWAY MAPLE

1303 Boudro Road, Randolph Center | sillowaymaple.com

ATTRIBUTES: Agritourism, Multi-Generational, Corn Maze, Sugarhouse Certification, Logging & Firewood, Creemees, Solar

Paul and Louise Silloway began dairy farming in Randolph Center in 1940 as young newlyweds. Soon, they began maple sugaring each spring. The operation was all on buckets at that time, requiring the entire family, and some hired help, to gather sap during each run. In 1978 the bucket system was replaced with sap lines, originally on gravity, and currently on vacuum.

All boiling is still done on a wood-fired arch. Waste wood a by-product of the logging and firewood operation on the farm is used. Firing the arch about every twenty-five minutes during boiling, keeps someone busy carrying the wood in from the woodshed even though the purchase of a reverse osmosis machine saves about 80% of the wood and labor required for boiling.

Family members have come and gone, with the sugaring operation always providing opportunity for hard work and good times together. Paul and Louise always worked in the maple sugar industry. Sons David and Stuart, and daughter Bette joined them. Current partner and manager, Paul Lambert handles the sugarwoods, tapping, and overall production. Bette oversees marketing, agritourism, and orders. Marilyn Lambert currently does all of the boiling, manages the Creemee business, and pitches in wherever needed. Everyone at often wear many hats, as there is a wide variety of work involved.

In 2014, a new sugarhouse was built, set facing the south, with a large southern exposure to accommodate seventy solar panels. Averaging throughout the year, the energy generated from the panels supplies the sugarhouse needs.

The new sugarhouse has a second story, where the sap is stored prior to boiling, and visitors can stand above the arch for a spectacular view of the boiling process. Schoolchildren spread out blankets, and enjoy sugar on snow, and old fashioned raised doughnuts with syrup.



2025 VERMONT MAPLE CONFERENCE WEEK

UVM EXTENSION + VERMONT MAPLE SUGAR MAKERS' ASSOCIATION

Vendor Tradeshow

We'll be joined by a variety of vendors, from equipment manufacturers to lending institutions and research organizations. You'll have opportunities to engage with our tradeshow vendors throughout the entire day.

Hydrometer Testing

Dwight Brunnette, Vermont Agency of Agriculture, Food & Markets, Weights & Measures Section

It's time to have your hydrometers tested and make sure your tools are ready for the 2026 season! Bring your syrup hydrometers to the in-person conference at Vermont Technical College. Drop them off with Dwight in the morning and they'll be ready by the end of lunch.

Guest Speaker

Ihsan Shawki Akili, PhD Fellow, Food Systems Research Institute, University of Vermont

The industry takes pride in highlighting the benefits of maple in terms of nutritional value and we need to make sure our marketing claims are appropriately researched. Our Guest Speaker will share current published research that compares the nutritional value of maple syrup to other sweeteners. He'll highlight the opportunities and challenges of how we market maple syrup as our preferred sweetener, when it's compared to options in the marketplace and separate fact from fiction.

(Is Maple Syrup the Next Sweetener Substitute? Comparing the Potential Opportunities and Challenges of Maple Syrup Compared to other Common Sweeteners; Akili, Miko, Shafer, Hagedorn-Hatfield, Warren, Kraft, Tou, Isselhardt, Skinner; Journal of Agriculture and Food Research; February 2025)

Industry Panel Discussion

This ever-popular panel discussion of industry leaders will share information and thoughts on the upcoming sugaring season, industry trends and more (moderated by Mark Isselhardt, UVM Extension Maple Specialist).

Agency Insights: Maple Product and Maple Processor Inspections

Tucker Diego, Director of Food Safety & Consumer Protection, Vermont Agency of Agriculture, Food & Markets

Learn how the Agency of Agriculture conducts inspections to ensure maple products meet the standards of the Vermont Maple laws and regulations. Tucker Diego will share highlights from this year's maple product retail inspections, trends over the last few years, information on how Vermont's maple labeling rules apply to different types of products, Vermont's Dealer and Processor licenses and the rollout of the Agency's new inspection program for those entities. Bring your burning questions about maple regulations, be prepared to hear some new information, and join a discussion about the regulatory standards that help maintain the integrity of pure Vermont maple syrup.

Climate Adaptive Tapping Practices: Does the Timing of Taphole Installation Impact Sustainability?

Brendan Haynes, Masters' Student, University of Vermont

As maple productions grow in size and the arrival of the maple season trends earlier than in past generations, the modern maple producer is forced to consider tapping much earlier in the dormant season. Previous research has investigated the impacts this practice has on production yield within a season, however, it has been unclear how systematic taphole injury in maple may differ depending on when tapholes are installed in dormancy. This research investigates these differences and their impact on our current understanding of sustainable tree health and yield.

Basics of Tubing System Installation

Wade Bosley, Facility Coordinator and Head Sugar Maker, Proctor Maple Research Center, University of Vermont

Thinking about giving tubing a try or needing to train new woods crew? Join Wade as he covers all the basics of tubing from fittings, layout and installation. You'll have a chance to try your hand at using the associated tools and materials in our "indoor sugarbush".

The ANR Atlas: How to Use Publicly Available Mapping Programs to Map Your Sugarbush and Create Trail and Infrastructure Maps

David Wilcox, Watershed Forester, Vermont Department of Forests, Parks & Recreation

David will introduce producers to the Agency of Natural Resources' Atlas and show you how to make a parcel map of your sugarbush. He'll lead you through the steps of you to use a cellphone app to pull up these maps to edit and refer back to them in the field.

Visaed Employees in the Sugarbush

Read Miller, Owner, Dwight Miller Orchards, Dummerston VT

Many larger producers hire employees to help run various parts of their operations. And for several years, it's been harder and harder to hire reliable employees. Many ski areas, fruit orchards, and dairy operations in Vermont are well-versed in hiring Visaed employees to fill the gap. Join us for a conversation with Read to hear how this process works in his orchard and sugarbush and how it might work for you.

Maple Syrup Quality Testing Lab

Mark Isselhardt, Maple Specialist, Maple Program Leader, University of Vermont Extension

Joanna Haas, Maple Quality Specialist, University of Vermont Extension

University of Vermont Extension has launched a new project to support maple producers in Vermont. The Maple Syrup Quality Testing Lab seeks to provide impartial, third-party assessments for maple syrup quality. Samples are testing to see if they meet Grade A standards in the four key elements of: Color, Clarity, Density and Flavor. This talk will cover how to prepare samples for testing, how the testing is done and provide summary data on syrup that has come through the lab so far as well as opportunities for technical assistance available to determine the cause of any defects.

Advanced Maple Sensory Class

Ellie Palmer, Sugarhouse Certification & Grants Manager, Vermont Maple Sugar Makers' Association

When you taste your maple syrup are there familiar flavors that you can't quite put your finger on? This advanced maple sensory session will discuss common flavor notes in each of the 4 grade A classes (delicate, rich, robust, strong). We'll use reference samples of other foods to orient participants to aromas and flavors common in maple and then taste syrup samples with those representative flavors. This session will help you expand your vocabulary of common flavor notes in maple to help you describe your syrup to potential customers.

Exploring Interest in Conservation Programs that Make Your Maple Operation More Sustainable: A Discussion

Kelsey Jennings, PhD Student, Dayer Lab of Human Dimensions, Virginia Tech

Would you like to share your thoughts on how to improve a program that promotes sustainable forestry practices while benefitting maple producers? The National Audubon Society is looking to expand their Bird-Friendly Maple program to new sugar bushes. Before they do this, researchers from Virginia Tech want to hear from producers who are not currently involved in the program about their thoughts on the Bird-Friendly Maple program. We would like to know: What aspects of this program would interest you? What factors would encourage or discourage you from participating? If this program became a formal third-party certification, would that be appealing or a deterrent to you? We welcome your feedback and insights! As a thank you for your time, a small gift will be provided to all participants.

My Life in Maple

Henry Marckres, retired Chief of Vermont Consumer Protection, Vermont Agency of Agriculture, Food & Markets

Henry Marckres will share some of his experiences over a 30+ year career in maple. His stories are educational, entertaining and offer a one-of-a-kind look into the world of maple, past and present. Now retired, the one time Vermont Agency of Agriculture, Food and Markets (VAAFM) Consumer Protection Chief and resident maple expert, Henry was inducted into the North American Maple Hall of Fame by the North American Maple Syrup Council in 2016 and has been recognized around the maple world for his many contributions to maple, earning him the nickname "King of Maple."

Insights into Organic Certification & Production

Nicole Dehne, Certification Director, Vermont Organic Farmers

Join a panel of experienced organic maple producers as they share practical insights on meeting the requirements of the USDA National Organic Program. From managing forest health to record keeping, this session will explore the key regulatory considerations unique to organic maple production. Panelists will discuss common certification challenges, offer strategies for meeting record keeping requirements, and answer questions from participants. Whether you're a new or seasoned maple producer, this workshop will provide valuable, real-world guidance for navigating the organic maple standards.

Evidence of the Advancement of the Sugaring Season

Dr. Tim Rademacher, Scientific Director, Proctor Maple Research Center, University of Vermont

Key dates of the sugaring season, such as tapping dates, the first sap run, the first boil, and the season's end, have long been assumed to have advanced over the past century. However, this assumption has not been shown using data. This talk presents robust, multi-scale evidence confirming that these shifts are not just anecdotal but widespread and systematic across many maple sugaring regions. Drawing on long-term datasets and producer records, we present evidence indicating that changing seasonal cues are driving earlier sap flow without significantly altering the window for maple sugaring. The implications for maple sugarmakers are profound, requiring adaptive strategies to sustain this iconic industry in a continuously changing climate.

Using Current Research to Set Prices and Understand Consumer Demand

Mark Cannella, Associate Professor, Farm Business Director, University of Vermont Extension

Good marketing plans include a combination of understanding demand and setting prices for products. Are you a price maker or price taker? This session will provide a mix of maple market research results and an overview of price setting strategies used by small business owners.

Care and Maintenance of RO Membranes

Lapierre USA

The ability to preconcentrate sap and remove >80% of the water before boiling has helped producers reduce the cost of production and free up time to focus things other than boiling. Once your equipment is in place, what are the important tasks that you need to cover every day to ensure the RO runs at top performance and offers a long life for your membranes? We'll cover everything from rinsing/washing procedures, what to do with excessive mineral buildup or when fouling occurs and how to safely handle the chemicals needed for these tasks.

Effects of Summer Drought on Sap Yield and Sugar Content

Dr. Tim Rademacher, Scientific Director, Proctor Maple Research Center, University of Vermont

Summer droughts are becoming increasingly frequent and severe across the range of sugar maple, raising important questions about their impact on sap production and quality. Tim presents findings from a rainfall exclusion experiment in Quebec, where summer drought conditions were simulated over three consecutive years. This study provides the first experimental evidence directly linking summer water stress to changes in tree health, carbohydrate storage, sap volume, and sugar concentration for sugar maple. While droughted trees produced sap volumes comparable to control trees, their sap had significantly lower sugar concentrations. These results suggest that although sap yield remains surprisingly resilient under repeated and prolonged drought, sap sugar concentration may be compromised. The findings offer valuable insights for producers and forest managers, highlighting both the vulnerabilities and the resilience of maple sugaring in the face of intensifying climate extremes.

Maple contests: Entering, Judging and Why More Producers Should Participate

Henry Marckres, retired Chief of Vermont Consumer Protection, Vermont Agency of Agriculture, Food & Markets

Mark Isselhardt, Maple Specialist, Maple Program Leader, University of Vermont Extension

Maple contests are an important part of ensuring only quality products reach the marketplace. For over 100 years maple producers have submitted samples of syrup to be judged in hopes of winning recognition for their hard work and craftsmanship. Over the past few decades participation in maple contests has declined despite evidence that suggests quality issues remain. This presentation will go over what needs to be done to prepare a sample for a contest, how syrup is judged and what the results from several years of contests suggest about the state of syrup quality.

Maple Confidential

Henry Marckres, retired Chief of Vermont Consumer Protection, Vermont Agency of Agriculture, Food & Markets

Do you have an off-flavor you can't pinpoint or does your syrup, candy or cream just not taste the way you remember when you made it? Whatever the reason, Henry Marckres has 30+ years of experience tasting syrup and trying to find answers behind maple quality issues. Sign up and bring in a sample of your syrup, candy and cream for short, one-one-one sessions to taste and talk about your samples. You'll be able to sign up for a specific time slot at the check-in table on Saturday morning (available until all time slots have been claimed!).

Update Your VMSMA Membership Profile & Meet Your Membership Manager

Cara Gauthier, VMSMA Membership Manager

Take the opportunity to connect with your Membership Manager, Cara Gauthier, and renew your membership. Share your story--why you're a member--and sign up for exciting 2026 events like the Maple Open House or join the Maple Meander. With all of the recent updates to our website and how we share your information with consumers, take time to ensure your operation is accurately listed on our Maple Map.

Bring along photos of your operation and review your social media details, hours, and products offered. Cara will work with you to craft a compelling description of your business, helping you stand out to consumers. With tens of thousands of visitors using our Maple Maps each year, set aside time at the conference to make sure your listing shines!

SATURDAY, DECEMBER 14 SCHEDULE

		Room 1	Room 2	Room 3	Room 4
Judd Hall	8:00am-4:45pm	Tradeshow			
Campus Center	8:30-8:40am	Welcome: Mark Isselhardt, UVM Extension and Allison Hope, VMSMA			
	8:40-8:50am	Opening Remarks: Secretary Anson Tebbetts, Vermont Agency of Agriculture, Food & Markets			
	8:50-9:20am	Guest Speaker: Ihsan Shawki Akili, PhD Fellow, Food Systems Research Institute, UVM			
I	9:30-10:30am	4 Concurrent Sessions			
II	10:45-11:45pm	4 Concurrent Sessions			
Dining Hall	12:00-1:00pm	Lunch			
Campus Center	1:15-2:00pm	Annual Maple Awards, presented by Jacob Powsner, VMSMA Board Member			
III	2:15-3:15pm	4 Concurrent Sessions			
Judd Hall	3:30-4:30pm	4 Concurrent Sessions			





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2025 VERMONT MAPLE CONFERENCE WEEK

