VERMONT Maple SUGAR MAKERS' ASSOCIATION

University of Vermont | Extension Maple College of Agriculture and Life Sciences

VERMONT'S ANNUAL MAPLE CONFERENCE

2026

VERMONT MAPLE SUGAR MAKERS'S ASSOCIATION

P.O. Box 662, Lyndonville VT, 05851
Phone: 802-227-2775
www.VermontMaple.org

We are welcoming you to Fall with this special mailing, which includes VMSMA's Fall Newsletter and our 2026 Vermont Maple Conference brochure. All in one package, you can get to know sugar makers from around the state, get a deep dive into different valves and fittings (and which are appropriate for sap and syrup contact), find a visitor sign ready to hang on your sugarhouse door, and register for our Annual Conference (more on that below)!

VERMONT'S ANNUAL MAPLE CONFERENCE

Friday, November 6 - Sunday, November 8, 2026

University of Vermont Extension and Vermont Maple Sugar Makers' Association collaborate to bring you the 2026 Vermont Maple Conference! Based on producer feedback, we continue to design conference sessions for anyone who wants to learn about maple production. Vermont's Maple Conference is for you - whether you are an existing sugar maker, looking to become one, running a hobby-sized operation or have tens of thousands of taps, a forester who works with maple producers, or a forest landowner looking to lease to a producer.

This year, we've moved the Conference to November over 3 days of activities. We continue to kick things off with the popular one day Quality School; then we shift to a full day at Vermont State University, Randolph with a tradeshow and breakout sessions; on Sunday, we board a coach bus for a full day of sugarhouse tours.

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 Economic Development Authority. 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!

We create Conference registration fees with an eye toward affordability and accessibility. Register for all three days, or just join us on Saturday for a full day of sessions. If you're a student (and not just a student of life), we're encouraging the next generation of sugar makers with our half price Saturday tickets. We look forward to seeing many of you in November. 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/2026mapleconference***, 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.

HOW TO REGISTER

It's easy to register for the 2026 Vermont Maple Conference Week! Choose to join us for any or all days, based on your interests (note that the Quality School and Bus Tour have limited space). Registration for all days includes morning coffee & pastries and lunch.

If you're registering for our Saturday activities, remember to bring:

- Any syrup and sap hydrometers you want tested as part of the tradeshow;
- A sample of syrup for UVM Extension's Quality Lab;
- 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 Saturday's Conference sessions and share access to these recordings using your registration email a few weeks after the Conference.

REGISTER HERE: https://bit.ly/2026mapleconference

CONFERENCE DATES

All activities start at or take place at Vermont State University, Randolph

QUALITY SCHOOL: Friday, November 6, 8:30am-4:30pm
FULL-DAY CONFERENCE: Saturday, November 7, 8:00am-4:30pm
BUS TOUR: Sunday, November 8, 8:30am-3:45pm

REGISTRATION DEADLINE

Monday, November 2, 2026 with room for walk-in registration on Saturday, November 7

COST

QUALITY SCHOOL: $75, limited to 25 attendees (includes lunch and Quality Kit)
BUS TOUR: $50, limited to 50 attendees (includes morning coffee/pastries and lunch)
SATURDAY CONFERENCE PASS: $40, includes all Saturday in-person sessions, tradeshow, and lunch on Saturday
STUDENT CONFERENCE PASS: $20, for currently enrolled students, includes all Saturday in-person sessions, tradeshow, and lunch on Saturday

OVERNIGHT ACCOMMODATIONS IN RANDOLPH

Planning to stay overnight during Conference Week? Attendees can make accommodations at My Place Hotel in Randolph.

HOTEL:
My Place Hotel – Randolph, Vermont
CONFERENCE RATE:
King Room @ $119/night or Double Queen @ $129
RESERVATION DEADLINE:
Thursday, October 8, 2026
BOOKING LINK WITH DISCOUNT:
https://bit.ly/2026maplehotel
We encourage attendees who need accommodations to make reservations early.

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 October 23, 2026.

Cover bottom photos credit: Winter Caplanson, New England Food & Farm | All other photos: UVM Extension

MEMBER OF THE VERMONT MAPLE SUGAR MAKERS' ASSOCIATION

2026

Conference Schedule

	TIME	ROOM 1	ROOM 2	ROOM 3	ROOM 4
JUDD HALL	8:00am-4:45pm	**TRADESHOW**			
JUDD HALL	8:30-8:40am	**WELCOME** Mark Isselhardt, *UVM Extension and Allison Hope, VMSMA*			
	8:40-8:50am	**OPENING REMARKS** Sarah Waring, *Executive Director of Northern Border Regional Commission*			
	8:50-9:20am	**GUEST SPEAKER** Dr. Abby van den Berg, *President of the van den Berg Institute for Maple Science and Education & Research Professor at Future Generations University*			
I	9:30-10:30am	**BREAKOUT SESSIONS**			
II	10:45-11:45pm	**BREAKOUT SESSIONS**			
DINING HALL	12:00-1:00pm	**LUNCH**			
JUDD HALL	1:15-2:00pm	ANNUAL MAPLE AWARDS, PRESENTED BY JACOB POWSNER, VMSMA BOARD MEMBER			
III	2:30-3:30pm	**BREAKOUT SESSIONS**			
JUDD HALL	3:45-4:45pm	**ASK A PRODUCER PANEL** (based on questions submitted by attendees throughout the day)			

MAPLE SYRUP QUALITY FOR SUGAR MAKERS

Sponsored by IMSI and NAMSC

With Mark Isselhardt, UVM Extension Maple Specialist/Maple Program Leader and Jason Lilley, UMaine Extension Assistant Professor

Location: Vermont State University, Green 224 & 228 Classrooms, Randolph
Time: 8:30am-4:30pm

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.

This one day class, known as "Grading School" prior to the pandemic, 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.

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, thermometer, off flavor kit and reference materials. Coffee, snacks and lunch will be provided.

Space is limited to 25 participants and pre-registration is required. Find the agenda for the day on our website: **https://bit.ly/2026qualityschool.**

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SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 7 IN-PERSON

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

It's time to have your hydrometers tested and make sure your tools are ready for the 2027 season! Bring your sap and syrup hydrometers to the in-person conference at Vermont Technical College. Drop them off with folks from the State's Metrology Lab team in the morning and they'll be ready by the end of lunch.

OPENING REMARKS

Sarah Waring, Executive Director of Northern Border Regional Commission and former USDA official and Executive Director of the Center for an Agricultural Economy

GUEST SPEAKER

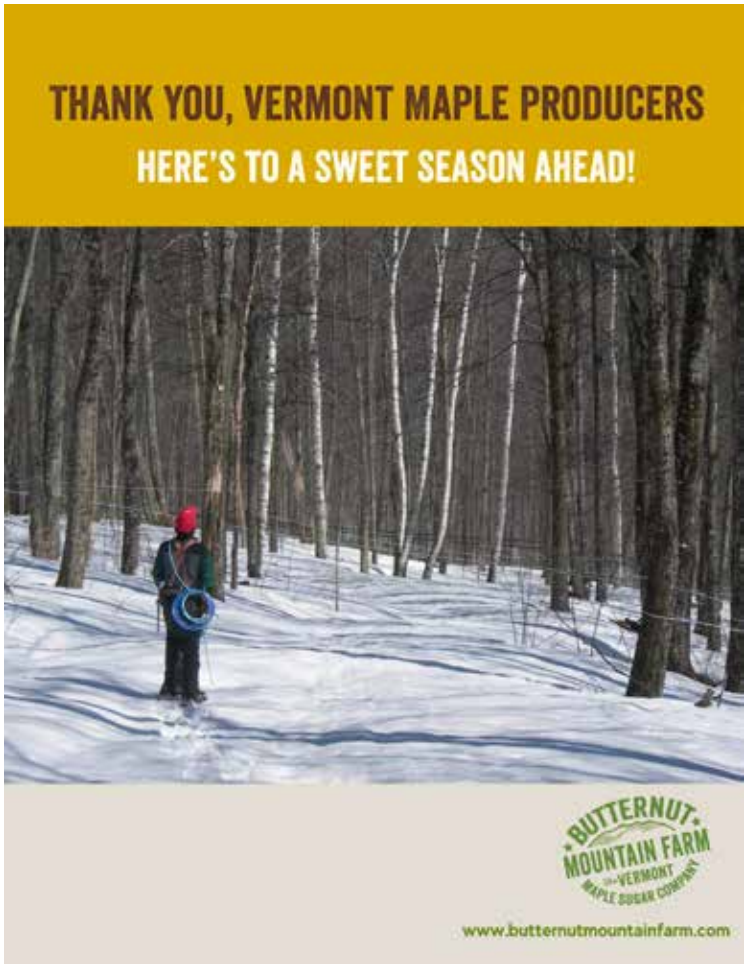
Dr. Abby van den Berg, President of the van den Berg Institute for Maple Science and Education & Research Professor at Future Generations University

LONG-TERM IMPACTS OF TAPPING AND SAP COLLECTION ON TREE GROWTH AND HEALTH

Assessing the impact of tapping and sap collection on tree radial growth rates over the long-term is essential to understand any implications of sap harvest for maple syrup production on tree and forest health. And, as radial growth rates are the foundation for the continued availability of conductive sapwood for sap collection, quantifying any effects of tapping and sap collection on radial growth is also essential to develop and implement tapping practices that will result in optimized long-term yields. Results to date of long-term experiments to assess the impacts of tapping and sap collection on the growth and health of trees will be presented, along with their context with respect to practices to optimize long-term yields and sustainability.

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).



MULTI-OBJECTIVE SUGARBUSH MANAGEMENT:
How To Reconcile Timber Harvest, Sugaring, Carbon And Biodiversity

Dr. Tim Rademacher, Scientific Director, Proctor Maple Research Center, University of Vermont
Teaghan McAllister, PhD student, Plant Biology Department, University of Vermont

Most sugarbushes are managed for multiple objectives with sugaring being part of a larger intention. Join Tim and Teaghan as they revisit existing knowledge and report on initial data from a new forestry trial at Smokey House Center in southern Vermont that investigates the effects of different timber harvest strategies on carbon, biodiversity and sugaring yields. This experiment was set up to examine how single tree selections, group cuts and small patch cuts affect sugaring yields over time and important ecosystem processes. After the harvest, they will present initial results on biodiversity indicators.

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

Recent maple contests have seen a 70%+ rejection rate for syrup that doesn't meet the basic Grade A standards; this is a significant increase from a fairly consistent trend of a 30-40% rejection rate across the state. To offer more support and information to improve overall syrup quality, last year the University of Vermont Extension launched the Maple Syrup Quality Testing Lab. The Lab provides confidential and impartial third-party assessments for the quality of your maple syrup based on the Grade A standards for color, clarity, density, and flavor. Join Mark and Joanne to hear more about the Quality Lab and some compelling and recent research related to quality in the syrup marketplace.

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BUILDING SUGARBUSH RESILIENCY

Charlie Hancock, County Forester - Essex Office, Vermont Department of Forests, Parks & Recreation

Join Charlie for a session that explores the challenges to sugarbush management—from pests and pathogens, to changing disturbance patterns and more extreme weather. He'll share opportunities for landowners to build long-term resiliency in their sugarbush to ensure forest health and productivity in the long run.

HOW DOES SAP HARVESTING AFFECT TREE FUNCTION?
Lessons From Almost 15 years of Field Trials at the Proctor Maple Research Center

Dr. Tim Rademacher, Scientific Director, Proctor Maple Research Center, University of Vermont
Hannah McNulty, PhD student, Plant Biology Department, University of Vermont

Maple sap is mostly composed of water and sugar. While recent breakthroughs have started to unravel the pathways of water through maple trees, many questions on the exact pathways of the sugars still remain. We will summarize findings from an ongoing long-term study at the Proctor Maple Research Center investigating the effects of maple sugaring on tree function and report on new aspects of this study. Using novel isotopic techniques we hope to understand more about the sugars in maple trees and how removal through maple sugaring under gravity and high vacuum affects general tree function.

SKILL DEVELOPMENT ON BASIC TASTES

Roy Desrochers, Sensory Practice Leader, UVM Extension

Basic tastes are the only flavors detected by your tongue and include sweet, sour, bitter, salty and umami (savory). These represent the building blocks of flavor and can be present on a range of intensities. Your sense of smell detects all the aromatic compounds we associate with pure maple syrup (maple, vanilla, chocolate, baking spice, etc.). Join Roy for an engaging and lively discussion that will help you understand specific intensities of basic tastes and help determine if a sample of syrup meets Grade A standards or not.

Roy is a global sensory expert, who has over 42 years of experience providing sensory support to large and small food and beverage companies, and their suppliers. Most recently, Roy has been working with UVM Extension's Northwest Crop & Soils Program team to understand sensory quality and consumer preference issues relating to local products. He is an experienced descriptive sensory analysis panelist and instructor who has successfully trained thousands of objective tasters around the world. He is an invaluable resource with unmatched expertise!

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ASK A PRODUCER PANEL

Jason Gagne, Gagne Maple & Maple City Candy, VMSMA Board Member
Arnie Piper, Umbrella Hill Maple, VMSMA Board Member
Jim Judd, Judd's Wayeeses Farms, VMSMA Board Member
Allen Freund, Organic Certifier, VMSMA Sugarhouse Certifier, VMSMA Education Committee

The final session in this year's conference will get your questions answered and make sure you're ready for the season! Throughout the day, you'll have an opportunity to submit written questions for the Producer Panel. We'll collect all of those questions and get answers from our panelists, who have generations of experience between them. There may also be time for questions from the audience. Bring your curiosity and get ready to put the panel's knowledge to the test and make your next season even better!

LEAK CHECKING IN TUBING SYSTEMS

Joël Boutin, Maple Consultant and Teacher at the CFA of St-Anselme, QC

Leak detection isn't always easy. High vacuum, labor shortages and the desire for optimal performance make this step of our work complicated. Join Joël for a conversation that considers how to approach this task based on the specific circumstances of your operation's size and tubing, as well as the weather.

AWARD WINNING MAPLE CREAM FOR ANY SIZED OPERATION

Mike Christian, VMSMA Board Member and Owner of Village Mapleworks, Orwell VT
Kenn Hastings, VMSMA Alternate Board Member and Head Sugar Maker of Bread Loaf View Farm, Cornwall VT

Join Mike and Kenn as they share their trade secrets for making consistently amazing and award-winning maple cream. Whether you call it maple cream, maple spread or maple butter, making this great confection is about more than just picking a great tasting syrup. Learn more about picking syrup with the correct chemistry for the job, along with tips on cooking, cooling and stirring methods for the best end result. Mike and Kenn collectively make thousands of pounds of cream each year, most of it bound for VMSMA's booth at the Big E in Massachusetts. They'll have tips and tricks, whether you're making maple cream with a stand mixer in your home kitchen or with the latest commercial equipment from your favorite supplier.

SAP & SYRUP FILTRATION

Brad Gillilan, General Manager, Lapierre USA

Are you struggling with foam in the evaporator, syrup filtration, and cleaning tanks? This seminar will highlight the relationship of sap quality and how it impacts all aspects of the operation, including syrup filtration. We will also discuss the do's and don'ts while operating filtering equipment for sap and syrup of all styles that will help you meet the needs of the ever changing season.

THE LATEST IN CONSUMER MARKET RESEARCH FOR MAPLE

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

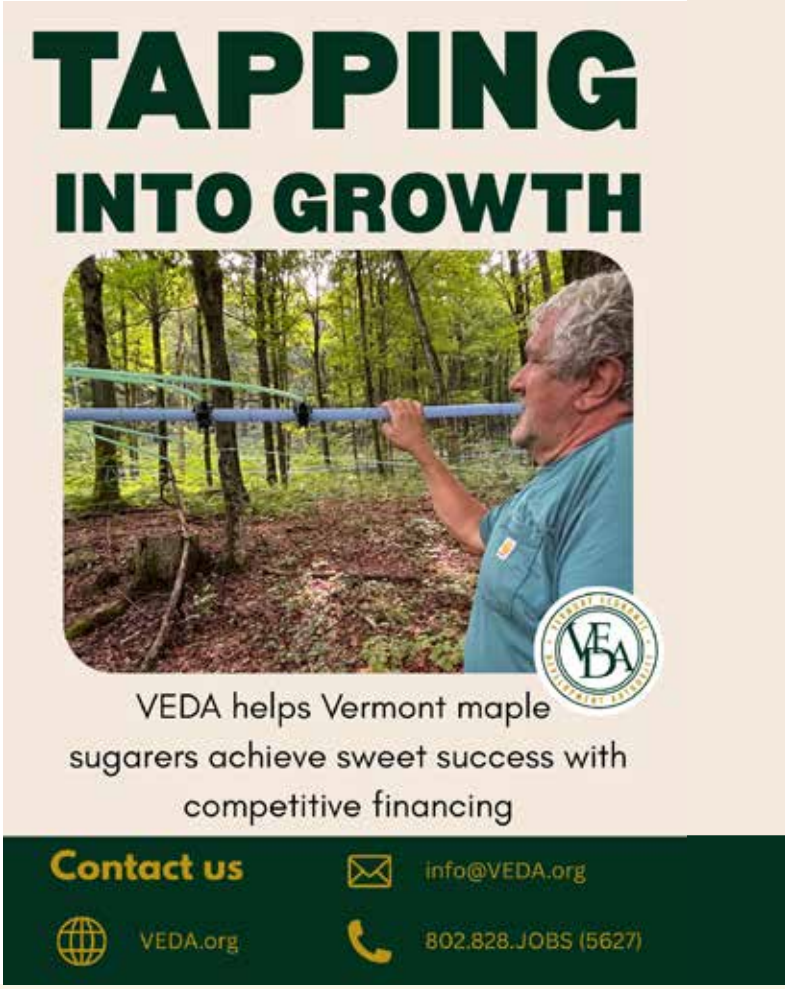
What do consumers in different regions of the U.S. want most in maple syrup products?

Learn about the most recent consumer demand research results from surveys that UVM has conducted in Vermont, Ohio, California and Texas over the past 2 years. Survey results demonstrate what products and features are most in demand, and how price point sensitivity may be different for different groups of shoppers.

DIGGING DEEPER ON YIELDS

Dr. Abby van den Berg, President of the van den Berg Institute for Maple Science and Education & Research Professor at Future Generations University

Annual yields are one of the most talked-about subjects between maple producers, and an important way we track our operations over time. Join Abby as she introduces a more equivalent way to express and compare yields between operations and over time. She'll share recent and ongoing research on sometimes under-appreciated factors that can affect overall yields, including syrup flavor and off-flavors, sanitation and sap quality, the development of nonconductive wood, and the dynamic interplay of temperature, pressure and sap sugar concentration.



VMSMA ANNUAL MAPLE AWARDS

Jacob Powsner, Baird Farm, VMSMA Board Member

Every year, the Vermont maple community has the opportunity to recognize one of its own through the VMSMA's Annual Awards - Sugar Maker of the Year, Maple Person of the Year, and the Sumner Williams Lifetime Achievement Award. Join us to honor this year's Award Winners and find out who goes above and beyond for Vermont maple? Who freely shares their knowledge, supports fellow producers, strengthens their community, or demonstrates a deep commitment to the craft and future of sugar making? And then think about who you'd like to nominate in 2027!

GRADE A OR NOT?

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

Join Henry during the tradeshow to vote in our "Grade A or Not?" conversation. Henry will have several samples for you to taste and then he'll ask you to vote on which meet the Grade A standards for flavor and which don't. We'll share the results at the end of the conference!

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 2027 events like the Maple Open House or join the Maple Meander. Take time to ensure your operation is accurately listed on our Maple Map and our various itineraries that invite consumers to explore all the corners of our state!

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!

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2026 VERMONT MAPLE CONFERENCE WEEK

MAPLE TOURS: NOV 8, 2026

TIMELINE

Leaving from VSU-Randolph Parking Lot D at 9:00am and returning at 3:45pm. Coffee & pastries available prior to boarding the bus and boxed lunches will be shared on the bus between stops.

COST

$50 per person,
includes morning pastries, coffee, & lunch
Limit of 50 Participants

REGISTER ONLINE

https://bit.ly/2026mapleconference

STOP 1

CHOICE MAPLE

185 Equestrian Way, Hartford | choicemaple.com

Attributes: Multi-Generation, Certified Organic, Kosher, Online Store, Non-Contiguous Sugarwoods, 30,000+ Taps

Operated by the Nott family on a 150-acre historic dairy farm in Hartford, Choice Maple is a five-generation family sugaring operation offering certified organic and kosher maple products. The Notts tap trees from sugarwoods in Hartford, Bethel, Strafford, Barnard, and Rochester. Raymond and Marcy Nott operate Choice Maple with their son Bailey, their daughter Brooke, and with the help of their grandkids. Raymond is the fourth generation in his family to sugar on the farm and has already planted another 300 trees for his grandkids (and their grandkids) to care for in the future.

STOP 2

RICHARDSON FARM MAPLE

18 Richardson Farm Rd, Hartland | richardsonfarmmaple.com

Attributes: Certified Organic, Online Store, Audubon Bird Friendly Program, Bourbon Barrel-Aged Syrup, VMSMA Board Member, Solar, Current Use Program (UVA), Land Trust, 9,000-14,000 Taps

Richardson Family Farm is a historic, multi-generational family farm established in 1905. The century farm operates a sustainable maple sugaring business, milks a registered Jersey herd for Cabot cheese, and manufactures native split-rail fencing. Their farm and forest land is in the state's Use Value Appraisal program and is also conserved with the Upper Valley Land Trust. Reid Richardson's great grandparents, James and Lexi Richardson, moved up from Chester and purchased the farm in 1905. Grandparents Floyd and Veneita Richardson added acreage to the farm, as did their children. All generations have made maple syrup here, but it was brothers James and Gordon who really turned it into a business and tapped thousands of trees. Today they tap just under 12,000 trees and all the sap from those trees runs downhill to their sugarhouse. They use a vacuum system to collect the sap; reverse osmosis to remove water from the sap; a wood-burning, gasifying arch to cook the syrup on; and a giant array of solar panels to provide all the electricity that we need to do the job. All the components have an eye towards efficiency and reduction of labor (and, conveniently, they also reduce their carbon footprint).

STOP 3

TOP ACRES FARM

1390 Fletcher Schoolhouse Rd, South Woodstock | gmhainc.org/member/top-acres-farm/

Attributes: VMSMA Container Dealer, On-Farm Stays, On Farm Shop, National Register of Historic Places, Tube Washing Setup, Historic Preservation Grant Awardee 2018, 1,000-1,999 Taps

Top Acres Farm, known historically as the Fletcher–Fullerton Farm, consists of 85 acres of rolling pasture and woods. Developed as a farm in the early 19th century, it was in continuous agricultural use by just two families for nearly two centuries. It was listed on the National Register of Historic Places in 2004. Currently owned by Mary and Carl McCuaig, Top Acres was originally a dairy farm until 1989; the farm is now primarily producing maple syrup and baled hay.

Mary is a fourth-generation maple producer who has a deep connection to the land and family legacy. Her great grandparents, Ada and Erwin Fullerton, established and cultivated Top Acres Farm in 1901.

STOP 4

BOURDON MAPLE FARM

112 Bourdon Rd, Woodstock | bourdonmaple.com

Attributes: Agritourism, Certified Organic, VMSMA Sugarhouse Certification, Audubon Bird Friendly Program, Farm Store, Online Store, Land Trust, VMSMA Board Member, 9,000-14,000 Taps

Don Bourdon is the owner and chief operator of Bourdon Maple Farm, which started as a hobby when he and his brother were boys, collecting from 200 buckets every spring. After college, Don expanded the size of the business and eventually turned it into a 10,000 tap sugaring operation, using the latest innovations in maple technology. Don is also known globally for his work in Stanley steam car restoration and boiler-making, and he participates in Stanley tours nationally.

Meg Emmons is Bourdon's head of operations, sales and marketing, joining the team in 2012 before she started as a freshman at UVM and then joining full-time in 2016. She manages our crew and day-to-day operations in the sugarbush, working throughout the fall and winter to prep the sugarbush for spring.

The 135 acre forest itself is relatively young as Vermont experienced a rise in sheep farming in the early 1900s and was largely deforested to create pasture for grazing. Bourdon Maple Farm has encouraged forest regeneration and continues to maintain its health and longevity by implementing a sustainable forest management plan developed by a licensed state forester. Conservation through the Vermont Land Trust ensures that the land will maintain its rural integrity for generations to come.