



2023 VERMONT MAPLE CONFERENCE WEEK



Welcome to Vermont's Maple Conference Week
Tuesday, December 5 - Saturday, December 9

University of Vermont Extension and Vermont Maple Sugar Makers' Association are pleased to host the 2023 Vermont Maple Conference! Based on participant 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.

Last year, we solidified our ongoing plan to offer three online conference days (Wednesday – Friday) and one in-person day (Saturday) at the centrally-located Vermont Technical College (now known as Vermont State University) in Randolph. We're using the same playbook this year and you will recognize some familiar offerings, like hydrometer testing courtesy of Vermont's Agency of Agriculture, Food and Markets, as well as some new sessions on road infrastructure, climate resiliency, a county forester panel and much more.

Over the initial three days of the conference, we're offering interactive online sessions – 3 on Wednesday, 3 on Thursday and 2 on Friday. We plan to offer our usual in-person welcome messages and the popular Industry Panel in-person on Saturday at VTC, along with a larger tradeshow. The online and in-person sessions will be recorded, so that after the conference you can watch them on your own time. Sessions will be focused on our usual tracks: Maple Business Management, Regulations and Maple, Sugarbush Health, Marketing and Media, and Maple Production and Innovation.

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 Maple Conference Week this year. We're also thankful for the Vermont Agency of Agriculture, Food and Market's sponsorship of this year's conference to help offset costs.

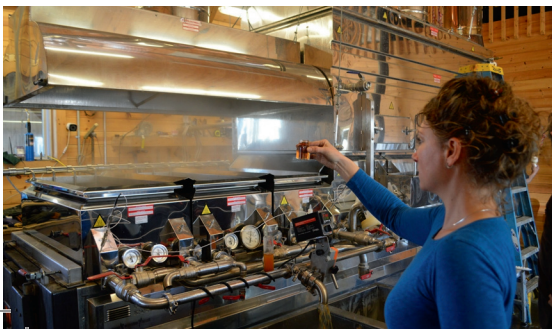
We're looking forward to engaging online and in-person discussions with you in December. After the conference, we'll also look forward to your feedback about what you'd like to see more of and what could use improvement.

Registration is available online through the Vermont Maple Sugar Makers' Association website: www.vermontmaple.org/maple-conferences. 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 the 2023 Conference! Choose to join us for the pre-conference full day Quality School, 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 your registration includes the online sessions, we'll email you links to join those meetings. We'll also email you reminders the day before each session so make sure to put them in your calendar! We'll be recording both the online and in-person sessions. You will have access to the recorded sessions once we make them available online.

The Full Conference Pass includes all of the online sessions AND the in-person conference on Saturday. We'll have a detailed schedule available on that day and you'll be able to choose which sessions you want to attend. Remember to bring your hydrometers for testing!

REGISTER HERE

Visit the registration link on the VMSMA website: www.vermontmaple.org/maple-conferences

CONFERENCE DATES

QUALITY SCHOOL: Tues, Dec 5 at UVM Extension Office, Berlin VT, 8:30am-4:30pm

ONLINE: Wed, Dec 6 – Friday, Dec 8 (8 sessions)

IN-PERSON: Sat Dec 9 at Vermont Technical College, Randolph VT

REGISTRATION DEADLINE

Mon, Nov 20 for Quality School and Mon, Dec 4 for all other registrations

COST

QUALITY SCHOOL: \$75, limited to 20 attendees

ONLINE ONLY: \$20 for all sessions (and recordings available online)

FULL CONFERENCE: \$40, includes all online sessions (and recordings available online), all Saturday in-person sessions and lunch on Saturday

QUESTIONS?

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THANK YOU



Dr. Abby van den Berg announced in June 2023 that after an extremely successful, productive and impactful +20-year career at the Proctor Maple Research Center, she will be leaving the University of Vermont to pursue other opportunities. As a Research Professor and Assistant Director of the Proctor Maple Research Center, Abby's research into the science of fall color, sustainable tapping and maple production, impacts of modern processing technology on chemistry and flavor of pure maple syrup, made significant contributions to the understanding and methods of the production of pure maple syrup. One of the hallmarks of Abby's scientific approach is the critical need to successfully communicate research results and conclusions. As a gifted presenter, Abby's work reached a truly international audience and she continues to contribute to the sustainability of the maple industry.

Dr. Timothy Perkins retired from his position of Director at the University of Vermont Proctor Maple Research Center in 2023 after a twenty-six year career that has been marked by significant contributions to the understanding and production of pure maple syrup. Beginning in 1996, Tim's time as Director will forever be associated with a period of great innovation and discovery both in the scientific and practical dimensions of the production of pure maple syrup. From inventing new devices and approaches to sap collection to overseeing the building of new research facilities and investigating issues related to sustainable, high yields, the importance of Tim's work was perhaps only overshadowed by his ability to communicate complex concepts with diverse audiences.



Photo credits: Winter Caplanson/New England Food and Farm & UVM Extension

TUESDAY, DECEMBER 5

IN PERSON

8:30am-4:30pm

1 Day Syrup Quality Training

Sponsored by IMSI and NAMSC

Mark Isselhardt, UVM Extension Maple Specialist and 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 our second offering of this 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 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 so sign up today and reserve your spot!

WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 6

ONLINE

9:00-10:00AM

Barbed Spouts for Better Sap Yields

Dr. Tim Perkins, Retired Director, University of Vermont Proctor Maple Research Center

Hear from Dr. Perkins why the new barbed spouts with a curved t-fitting were created for better and faster sap yields. The curved t-fittings result in less turbulence, less friction and better flow. Dr. Perkins will explain the science behind these spouts and fittings and answer questions on how best to incorporate these into your operations for the 2024 season.

12:00-1:00PM

Small Scale Sugaring: Fundamentals 1

Mark Isselhardt, Maple Specialist, University of Vermont Extension

From tree ID, basic sugarbush management concepts, sap collection systems (gravity and vacuum), tapping guidelines, sap storage and sanitation, this session introduces all the elements needed to grow healthy trees and produce sustainable yields of sap for first time producers or small operators.

5:00-6:00PM

Consumer Attitudes About Pure Maple Syrup

Helen Maxon Thomas, Executive Director New York State Maple Producers' Association & Co-owner of Maxon Estate Farms

The New York State Maple Producers' Association, in cooperation with the NYS Department of Ag & Markets, has been conducting an ACER research project. The goal is to survey US consumer attitudes and knowledge about pure maple syrup; to test marketing strategies that can effectively reach those consumers to change their buying habit towards pure maple, and to deliver tested marketing tools that industry stakeholders in the US can begin using. The project is nearing completion and Helen's updated presentation will cover what the surveys of US customers have revealed, and the marketing messages that appear to be the most effective

THURSDAY, DECEMBER 7

ONLINE

9:00-10:00AM

Access to New Maple Marketing Assets

Trevor Lowell, Marketing & Export Lead, Vermont Agency of Agriculture, Food and Markets

Trevor will share an overview of the Agency's federal Acer funding which has supported their maple efforts in marketing (the Maple 100, identifying export markets, creating marketing materials). He'll go into detail about the marketing assets (videos, photos, and other materials) that the Agency created as part of this federal funding and how sugar makers can access these materials to market their own operations.

12:00-1:00PM

Vermont Maple Quality in the Online Marketplace: Round 2

Mark Isselhardt, Maple Specialist, University of Vermont Extension

Mark Cannella, UVM Extension Associate Professor, Farm Business Management Specialist

At our 2021 conference, Mark Isselhardt and Mark Cannella shared their first review of maple quality in the online marketplace. For their first review, they purchased 250 maple containers of pure maple syrup online in 2020 and tested for density, color grade and flavor. They have repeated this work and will share information on how many samples met the grading standards, how different testing instruments compare, the most common grading problems and some best practices to ensure high quality syrup reaches your customers. Missed the first round of this work? You can watch it here online: <https://bit.ly/maplequality>.

5:00-6:00PM

The Many Benefits of Bird-Friendly Maple

Steve Hagenbuch, Senior Conservation Biologist and Forester, Audubon Vermont

Chaska Richardson, educator in the BSD and co-owner of Couching Lion Maple Sugar Farm

Join Steve Hagenbuch and Chaska Richardson for a conversation about the benefits of Audubon Vermont's Bird-Friendly Maple program. Steve will outline program requirements and benefits, and Chaska will share her experience on the program's impact on customers, marketing, as well as exciting partnership opportunities that are available with this designation.

FRIDAY, DECEMBER 8

ONLINE

9:00-10:00AM

Maple Business Succession and Transfer Planning

Mark Cannella, UVM Extension Associate Professor, Farm Business Management Specialist

When do you as a sugar maker get to retire or stop being so involved in the day to day running of your operation? Mark Cannella has been working with sugar makers and other farmers for years on just this type of transition. This session will provide an overview of opportunities and considerations for transferring ownership and/or management of an active maple business to another party. Mark will share resources that will allow you to begin planning for an upcoming transition.

12:00-1:00PM

Filtering: The Basics and Beyond

Mark Isselhardt, Maple Specialist, University of Vermont Extension

During the sugaring season, one of the most watched videos on the UVM Extension online channel is about filtering. Mark has updated his 2016 presentation on the "Fundamentals of Filtering Maple Syrup" and offers takeaways for any level of knowledge in this important topic.

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Vendor Tradeshow

This year, we'll offer a larger vendor tradeshow and we've built in more opportunity to visit with folks throughout the day and talk shop.

Industry Panel Discussion

The 2023 maple crop highlighted the importance of micro-climates in Vermont. One sugar maker's experience was often very different from someone just down the road as well as on the other side of the state. How are sugar makers adapting to unpredictable weather and the variations in crop that this brings?

2022/23 Maple Inspection Highlights

Tucker Diego, Agricultural Products Manager, Consumer Protection Section, Vermont Agency of Agriculture, Food and Markets

Tucker Diego shares highlights from this year's maple product retail inspections, reviews common issues, and answers your burning questions about maple regulations.

Hydrometer Testing

It's time to have your hydrometers tested! Bring your hydrometers to the in-person conference at Vermont Technical College. Drop them off in the morning and they'll be ready by the end of lunch.

Maple Syrup Tasting

Mark Isselhardt, Maple Specialist, University of Vermont Extension

There are many benefits to getting out of your own sugarhouse and tasting a variety of maple syrup in a group of your peers. You'll train your tongue to recognize the variations among syrup as well as the common off flavors. Join Mark in a group tasting session of several different grades of Vermont maple syrup and discuss what you're noticing, your preferences and how these might compare to what your tongue is used to. Good prep for the upcoming season!

Sugarhouse Certification: Get Your Documents Ready

Jason Gagne, VMSMA Board Treasurer & Education Committee Chair

Ellie Palmer, VMSMA Sugarhouse Certification Manager

Join us in this popular hands-on session to get rolling with Certification documentation! Perhaps you have a perfectly neat binder with all your SOPs, safety data sheets, sugarbush maps, and logs ready for Certification. But what if you don't? Getting started might feel overwhelming. We're here to make it easier and we have sample written documentation for almost everything! We'll have printed copies of the updated Sugarhouse Certification Checklist and all associated templates to get you started. Bring your existing documentation (or just what's in your head) and we'll have experienced sugar makers on hand to help get you ready to add new items, update current items or start from scratch!

Small Scale Sugaring: Fundamentals 2

Mark Isselhardt, Maple Specialist, University of Vermont Extension

From small reverse osmosis units, sap storage, boiling sap on single pans or small evaporators to properly grading and bottling syrup, this session is for first time producers or small operators and introduces the core elements needed to convert sap into high quality pure maple syrup.

Proctor Maple Research Update

Dr. Tim Perkins, Retired Director, University of Vermont Proctor Maple Research Center

Dr. Perkins has come back from retirement and will share results and progress from various research projects on maximizing yields and sustainability at the UVM Proctor Maple Research Center. Now's your chance to ask your burning questions about how this research can play a role in maximizing the health of your sugarbush and the efficiency of your operation.

Why Certify?

Ellie Palmer, VMSMA Sugarhouse Certification Manager

Ellie Palmer joined the VMSMA team in October to head up the Sugarhouse Certification Efforts. With a professional background in food safety and maple quality assurance, Ellie will share the importance of related best practices from tap to table. She'll review the updated Checklist and Grant Applications, highlights from this year's onsite visits and answer any questions you have about current regulations and how they relate to your maple operation.

Demystifying Organic Certification for Maple Producers

Nicole Dehne, VOF Certification Director and Nick Sibley, VOF Certification Specialist

Interested in organic certification? Nicole Dehne and Nick Sibley from Vermont Organic Farmers will lead a discussion on the requirements, process, and benefits of organic certification. Attendees will learn about the regulations related to sugarbush management, promoting biodiversity, syrup production and record keeping as well as new opportunities for sugar makers interested in transitioning to or expanding their certified organic operations. There will be copies of the organic standards available and opportunities to ask questions with organic experts.

Packaging Innovation: VMSMA Proposal for Federal Funding

Allison Hope, VMSMA Executive Director

VMSMA is planning to submit a 2024 funding proposal as part of the USDA's Acer Access and Development Program. The proposal will be centered on opportunities for maple packaging that takes into account ease of packing, sustained quality, environmental friendliness, retail shelf space, consumer feedback and ease of storage, availability from multiple suppliers and much more. What is in maple's packaging future beyond the current plastic, glass and tin options? Come discuss the latest iteration of the draft proposal and share your feedback on how to make a stronger case for funding this multi-faceted project.

Sugarbush Road Infrastructure

Shawn Messier, Owner of Mountainside Excavation LLC and VMSMA Board Member

Join Shawn for a discussion of how to build and improve your sugarbush's road infrastructure and manage for storm water. Unpredictable weather has damaged many trails and road systems in sugarbushes. How do you ensure that you are upgrading appropriately and building in resiliency for future events? How do you balance the expense in the short term while managing for long-term effectiveness?

County Forester Panel Discussion

Nancy Patch, Franklin/Grand Isle County Forester

Jared Nunery, Orleans County Forester

County Foresters in Vermont provide forest management and forest stewardship information, technical assistance, and outreach to landowners; and many of you probably know your county's forester quite well. Join Nancy, Jared and other county foresters for a discussion of emerging topics in forest health, forest management activities and your goals for the sugarbush.

Maple Equipment Manufacturers' Showcase

Join equipment manufacturers as they share a session dedicated to their favorite products and emerging technologies for your sugarbush. What's new and improved and what's tried and true from across the industry? Join us and find out!

Effective Tapping Training

Glenn Goodrich, Owner of Goodrich Maple Farm

Glenn and his team tap over 150,000 trees of their own trees; and every year, they make sure their staff is up to date on the best way to tap trees to ensure minimizing non-conductive wood and maximizing sap yield. Whether you have returning staff, new staff or your family taps your trees, it's important to offer refresher training each year. How your employees tap your trees each year can make a huge difference in sap yield and tree health. Learn from Glenn how to get folks up to speed and ready to tap!

Maple Markets

Mark Cannella, UVM Extension Associate Professor, Farm Business Management Specialist

This presentation will share results from recent maple market research projects conducted across the United States. Mark will make connections between broader market trends and how they link back to market development planning considerations for new and existing maple sellers. Participants will have the opportunity to provide input on a new market research study starting at UVM in 2024.

Healthy Maples from the Ground Up

Adam Wild, Director, Cornell University Uihlein Maple Research Forest and Co-Director, Cornell Maple Program

Managing healthy forests is important for long-term sap production. Join this presentation and learn how to gain a better understanding of the soils in your forest and related nutrient requirements. This knowledge can be an important first step for managing your sugarbush along with a greater understanding of limitations to tree growth. The Uihlein Maple Research Forest, located in Lake Placid, NY, is a 350 acre forest providing applied research and education for the maple industry. As director, Adam oversees research within their 7,000 commercial maple tap operation along with tapping and producing other tree syrups such as birch and beech. In addition to his work within the research forest, Adam provides educational workshops and training for maple producers to increase productivity and sustainability of their maple operations.

Individual Syrup Tasting with Henry

Henry Marckres, retired Chief of Vermont Consumer Protection

Who among us wouldn't like Henry's feedback on our syrup? This conference, you can book 20 minutes of one-on-one time with Henry and get his opinion. Bring a sample of syrup and your curiosity for what Henry's expert tastebuds can offer. Bring something you think exemplifies your best or your worst or offers a flavor that confuses you! You'll be able to schedule time at the registration table the day of the conference.

Update Your VMSMA Membership Profile to Maximize Exposure

Heather Winner, VMSMA Membership Manager

We know it takes time and attention to the details to make sure that your VMSMA membership information is up to date for consumers. Take 15 minutes to sit with Heather and refresh your information. Bring pictures on your phone or other device, review your social media information, hours and products offered. Work with Heather to come up with a robust description of your operation and ensure that consumers will find you. Our "find a sugar maker" map is used by tens of thousands of interested consumers every year, so set aside some time during the conference to make sure you stand out!

		Room 1	Room 2	Room 3	Room 4
Judd Hall	8:00am-4:30pm	Tradeshow			
	9:00-9:30am	Welcome: Mark Isselhardt, UVM Extension and Allison Hope, VMSMA			
	9:30-10:15am	Guest Speaker: Climate Resilience & Adaptation with Alexandra Kosiba, Assistant Professor of Forestry, UVM Extension			
I	10:30-11:30am	4 Concurrent Sessions			
Dining Hall	11:45am-12:45pm	Lunch			
II	1:15-2:15pm	4 Concurrent Sessions			
III	2:30-3:30pm	4 Concurrent Sessions			
IV	3:30-4:30pm	4 Concurrent Sessions			



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A decorative banner with a light yellow background. On the left, there are three overlapping maple leaf silhouettes in a darker yellow color. On the right, there are three vertical stripes of the same darker yellow color. The text "2023 VERMONT MAPLE CONFERENCE WEEK" is centered in a bold, dark yellow, sans-serif font.

2023 VERMONT MAPLE CONFERENCE WEEK



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 Heather Winner at 802-917-2032 by November 30, 2023.