



VERMONT *Maple* SUGAR
MAKERS' ASSOCIATION

Welcome to Vermont's Maple Conference Week
Monday, December 9 - Saturday, December 14, 2024

University of Vermont Extension and Vermont Maple Sugar Makers' Association are pleased to host the 2024 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.

We kick off conference week with the popular one day Quality School; we layer in VMSMA's Annual Meeting online Tuesday evening; and then we're offering 3 days of interactive online sessions, and one full day at Vermont State University, Randolph. 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 new conference sponsors - Lapierre, Farm Credit East, Burch Bottle, Atlas Copco, and Dominion & Grimm as well as funding from Vermont's Agency of Agriculture, Food & Markets. We appreciate the generous support of our sponsors and conference partners; please 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 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.

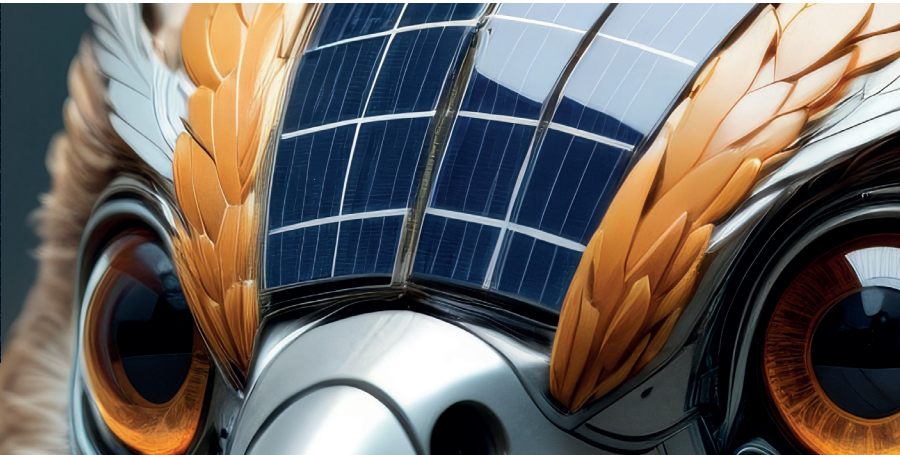
Registration is available online through the Vermont Maple Sugar Makers' Association website: www.vermontmaple.org/maple-conferences. If you need assistance along the way, please reach out to VMSMA staff.

"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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2024 VERMONT MAPLE CONFERENCE WEEK

HOW TO REGISTER

It's easy to register for the 2024 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 you're a member, join us on Tuesday for our Annual Meeting (online); we'll send you a link via 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 on that day and you'll be able to choose which sessions you want to attend. Remember to bring your syrup hydrometers for testing!

We will record both the online and in-person sessions and we will share access 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

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

CONFERENCE DATES

QUALITY SCHOOL: Monday, December 9 at UVM Extension Office, Berlin VT, 8:30am-4:30pm

ONLINE: Wednesday, December 11 – Friday, December 13 (8 sessions)

IN-PERSON: Saturday, December 14 at Vermont State University, Randolph VT

REGISTRATION DEADLINE

Monday, November 25 for Quality School and Monday, Dec 9 for all other registrations

COST

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

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

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

STUDENT FULL CONFERENCE PASS: \$25, 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, 2024.

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MONDAY, DECEMBER 9

IN PERSON

8:30am-4:30pm

Maple Syrup Quality for Sugar Makers

Sponsored by IMSI and NAMSC

With 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 so sign up today and reserve your spot!



Farm Credit East is deeply rooted in our customers' success – and Northeast agriculture. In fact, no one knows ag quite as well as Farm Credit East. So if you're looking for financing or business services for your maple operation, look to Farm Credit East. Our mission is to grow your success.

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2024 VERMONT MAPLE CONFERENCE WEEK



TUESDAY, DECEMBER 10

ONLINE

6:00-7:30PM

VMSMA Annual Meeting

Please join us for an online annual meeting as part of Conference Week! In the past, we've held a separate Annual Meeting in the summer. The Board has decided to include our Annual Meeting as part of Conference Week, when our members and maple producers are already gathering to share information. This is a business meeting that will highlight last year's minutes, current financials and the FY2025 budget, and share information about VMSMA's accomplishments in the past year. Bring your curiosity and your questions and join us on Tuesday! VMSMA Members will automatically receive a link to join this Zoom meeting as the date approaches.

WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 11

ONLINE

9:00-10:00AM

Managing Sugarbushes for Carbon and Other Ecological Values

Dr. Tony D'Amato, University of Vermont Professor, Director of Forestry Program, Director of UVM Research Forests

The role of forests as natural climate solutions given their ability to sequester and store carbon has gained increased attention over the past several years. This presentation will review some of the basics of forest carbon and how the decisions you make in your sugarbush can influence this critical forest benefit.

12:00-1:00PM

Safety in the Sugarbush

Jason Lilley, University of Maine Assistant Extension Professor, Maine Sustainable Agriculture and Maple Industry Educator

As much as we don't like to think about it, accidents and emergencies can happen at any time. Would you, your family, or your hired help know how to act quickly to reduce injury or damage during an emergency? Would they know best practices for avoiding accidents? In this talk we'll discuss key areas of risk for a sugaring operation, methods for avoiding those risks, emergency preparation, and methods for communicating with relevant parties to avoid or minimize loss. Sugarmakers of all sizes will leave this session with tangible next steps for emergency preparedness and safety protocols that will contribute to your operation's long-term success.

5:00-6:00PM

Tales & Tools, Planning & Analysis for Sap Businesses

Chris Lindgren, Forest Business Program Manager, University of Vermont Extension

Interested in tapping into business opportunities in the woods? UVM Extension has developed financial tools and technical guidance to help you make decisions about maple sap business ventures. They are partnering with forest landowners and current or prospective producers to pilot economic assessment tools, develop business opportunities, and evaluate potential impacts of the carbon economy on sugarbushes and maple businesses. Join Chris in this session to learn from case studies of UVM Extension's Sap Business Promotion project and new tools that support Sap Business development.

THURSDAY, DECEMBER 12

ONLINE

9:00-10:00AM

Mold in Maple

Dr. Seanna Annis, University of Maine Associate Professor of Mycology, Associate Extension Professor and Plant Pathology Specialist

Many of the organisms that cause food safety problems are fungi. While the cells of fungi are killed when you boil them, the spores can be heat resistant and aren't killed by boiling. Updated science shows us that the age-old practice of "skim and reheat" is not safe because some molds produce mycotoxins that can be harmful to consumers. This presentation will offer a deeper dive into research conducted at UMaine that includes identification of fungi in maple syrup samples and the potential effects on syrup quality and safety, as well as an overview of bottling studies to reduce maple syrup contamination and ensure syrup safety.

12:00-1:00PM

Not So Sweet Ticks Are Lurking in Vermont's Sugarbushes

Dr. Cheryl Sullivan, Research Assistant Professor, Department of Agriculture, Landscape and Environment, University of Vermont

The segment of the population most at risk of contracting one of the several diseases transmitted by deer ticks are those who frequent the woods and fields where ticks occur. Sugarmakers are prime targets! Researchers at the University of Vermont are currently assessing the distribution and abundance of ticks in Vermont sugarbushes. This session will cover tick ID, their life cycles, the disease-causing pathogens they carry, bite prevention tips, research results and more.

5:00-6:00PM

Maintaining Sap Quality Prior to Processing

Dr. Catherine Monserrate, Research Support Specialist, Maple Program, Cornell University

Proper harvest and post harvest care of maple sap is key to producing quality and safe products. Maple sap spoilage can appear as off-flavors, off-odors, cloudy appearance, or development of a viscous, string-like texture known as ropy, depending on the microorganisms present. Sap spoilage can be reduced with sanitation and proper storage conditions. This session will cover sanitizers appropriate for use in maple sap collection and storage techniques to reduce spoilage.

FRIDAY, DECEMBER 13

ONLINE

9:00-10:00AM

Tapping on Vermont's State Lands

Becca Washburn, Director of Lands Administration & Recreation, Vermont Department of Forests, Parks & Recreation & David Mance, Owner of Mance Family Farm and VMSMA Board Member, Future of Vermont Agriculture Commissioner

The cost of forest land in Vermont can be a barrier to getting started in the maple industry. Learn more about the possibility of tapping trees on state-owned land. The Vermont Department of Forests, Parks and Recreation has been working closely with the Vermont Maple Sugar Makers Association to make additional state land under the jurisdiction of the Department available under license agreement to sugar makers for maple sugaring. In cooperation with the Association, they have developed an application process along with tapping guidelines and license requirements. There are currently eight licenses for sugaring operations on state lands, totaling 850 acres and 30,117 taps.

All of these licenses are operated according to the Guidelines and Licensing Requirements for Tapping and Collecting Sap from Maple Trees on Department of Forests, Parks and Recreation Lands (December 2019). This presentation with Oliver and Dave will talk about updates to the current guidelines as well as field experience with tapping on state lands.

12:00-1:00PM

Vermont Maple Quality in the Online Marketplace: Round 3

Dr. Emmanuel Abah, Post-Doctoral Research Associate, Food Systems Research Center, University of Vermont

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. Their team has repeated this work and Emmanuel 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 previous presentations of this work? You can watch the round one presentation online here: <https://bit.ly/maplequality> and round two here: <https://bit.ly/maplequality2>.



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SATURDAY, DECEMBER 14

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.

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).

Vermont Maple Through the Agency Lens

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

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 a new inspection program for those entities. Bring your burning questions about maple regulations and be prepared to hear some new information!

Hydrometer Testing

Dwight Brunette, 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 2025 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.

Sugarhouse Certification and Food Safety: Get Your Documents Ready

Jason Gagne, VMSMA Board Treasurer & Education Committee Chair

Arnie Piper, VMSMA Board Member

Ellie Palmer, VMSMA Sugarhouse Certification & Grants Manager

Allen Freund, VMSMA Contracted Certifier

As sugar makers, regulations require that you follow certain food safety regulations and have documentation about your practices and policies. Our Certification Program helps you get there! Perhaps you have a perfectly neat and up-to-date binder with all your SOPs, safety data sheets, sugarbush maps, and logs ready to meet these requirements. But what if you don't? Getting started might feel overwhelming and we're here to make it easier. We'll have printed and online versions of the updated Sugarhouse Certification Checklist and all associated templates to get you started (and take home with you to finish). Bring your existing documentation (or just what's in your head) and we'll have experts on hand to help get you ready to add new items, update current items or start from scratch!

Maple Syrup Flavor Discussion & 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. We feel so strongly about this topic, that we've decided to make this a conference-wide group session at the end of the day. We'll come together with Mark to taste 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!

Yields from One vs Two Taps on High Vacuum

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

As vacuum levels have gotten higher, the question of at what tree diameter maple producers should add a second tap arises. A six-year study at UVM Proctor Maple Research Center reveals the expected increase in sugar yields from adding a second tap in maple trees at various tree diameters under high vacuum conditions.

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Food Safety Basics in the Sugarhouse

Ellie Palmer, VMSMA Sugarhouse Certification Manager

Ellie Palmer joined the VMSMA team in October 2023 to head up the Sugarhouse Certification & Grant Program efforts. With a professional background in food science, food safety, and maple quality assurance, Ellie will share the importance of related best practices from tap to table. She'll do a deep dive on a variety of food safety topics from mold and allergens, to appropriate equipment and cleaning protocols. VMSMA's food safety goals align well with those noted in the North American Maple Syrup Producers Manual (3rd edition), "Developing a supportive and proactive attitude toward food safety makes the job of being a food producer easier and helps ensure the safety of consumers and the good reputation of the entire maple industry." Bring your questions and your curiosity about the current food safety regulations and how they impact maple production.

Exploring Opportunities for Buying and Selling Sap

Mark Cannella, UVM Extension Associate Professor, Farm Business Director

This session will highlight ways that buying and selling sap can contribute to an existing maple business or become the basis to establish a sap-only business enterprise. UVM resources and research findings from producer surveys, financial analysis, labor tracking and legal planning will be reviewed and discussed, with plenty of time to answer your questions.

An Historical Analysis of Maple Crop Failure

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

Maple crop failures occur periodically at the individual, local, state and regional levels. Such failures are due to a wide range of conditions. Incorporating the possibility of crop failure and how to reduce the impact is an important part of planning and managing a maple operation.

An Overview of Optimized Sap Yield Collection Without Compromising Tree Health

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

Join the new Science Director of Proctor Maple Research Center for a session focused on the intersection of sap yield and forest health. Tim is interested in the functioning of trees and temperate forests as well as their interactions with the environment. The focal points of his research include the health and growth of maple trees, as well as their interactions with their environment and management practices. Tim has expertise in physiology, ecology, and physical geography, along with extensive experience in spatial analysis, simulations, observational studies, and manipulative experiments.

Perspectives on the U.S. Maple Markets, Economics and Policy

Mark Cannella, UVM Extension Associate Professor, Farm Business Director

This presentation will share active research at UVM that is exploring perspectives on the economics of the U.S. maple industry. UVM has been conducting interviews from 2022-2024 and will share themes about prices, demand, producer viability and market development. A core question in this research has been to explore perspectives about the need, desire or support for a collectively funded marketing effort led by U.S. producers. Mark will share information about potential governance frameworks to fund marketing and research that are being explored, themes from this ongoing research and encourage comments or questions from participants.

SATURDAY, DECEMBER 14 (CONTINUED)

IN-PERSON

Best Management Practices for Forest Biodiversity

Charlie Hancock, Franklin & Grand Isle County Forester, Vermont Department of Forests, Parks & Recreation

Mark Raishart, Addison County Forester, Vermont Department of Forests, Parks & Recreation

Dr. Tony D'Amato, University of Vermont Professor, Director of Forestry Program, Director of UVM Research Forests

VT's Dept of Forests, Parks & Recreation, UVM and VMSMA are part of a collaborative group developing practical and science-based best management practices (BMPs) to maintain and enhance forest health and ecosystem services within active sugarbushes. Join this group of experts and learn how to reduce risks associated with destructive natural disturbances and high energy weather events and the very related topic of how best to ensure water quality AND access to the sugarbush (without breaking the bank with improvements). What forest management approaches would help with sap production? What are some tried and true recommendations for growing healthy trees? Bring your questions and be prepared to leave with some ideas to improve your forest health!

Maintaining Roads and Managing Water in Your Sugarbush

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

Sugarbush roads and trails are critical for sugarbush operations and good maintenance and water management can keep them working properly, and prevent damage to your infrastructure and the environment. Learn the principles of forest road and trail design, maintenance, and stream crossing design.

Individual Syrup Tasting with Henry

Henry Marckres, retired Chief of Vermont Consumer Protection

Who among us wouldn't like Henry's feedback on our maple products? Book 20 minutes of one-on-one time with Henry and get his opinion. Bring a sample of syrup, sugar or candy that you think exemplifies your best or your worst or offers a flavor that confuses you (or bring several)! You'll be able to sign up for a specific time slot at the registration table the day of the conference (available until all time slots are filled!).

Update Your VMSMA Membership Profile & Meet Your Membership Manager

Cara Gauthier, VMSMA Membership Manager

Take the opportunity to connect with your new Membership Manager, Cara Gauthier, and renew your membership. Share your story--why you're a member--and sign up for exciting 2025 events like the Maple Open House or join the Maple Meander. Ensure your operation is accurately listed on our Maple Map, which connects you with consumers eager to find local sugar makers.

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 "Find a Sugar Maker" map each year, set aside time at the conference to make sure your listing shines!

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SATURDAY, DECEMBER 14 SCHEDULE

		Room 1	Room 2	Room 3	Room 4
Judd Hall	8:30am-4:45pm	Tradeshow			
	9:00-9:15am	Welcome: Mark Isselhardt, UVM Extension and Allison Hope, VMSMA with a few words from our Gold Sponsor, Lapierre			
	9:15-9:45am	Guest Speaker: Dr. Tim Rademacher, Science Director, Proctor Maple Research Center, UVM			
I	10:00-11:00am	4 Concurrent Sessions			
II	11:15-12:15pm	4 Concurrent Sessions			
Dining Hall	12:30-1:30pm	Lunch			
Judd Hall	1:45-2:15pm	Annual Maple Awards, presented by Jacob Powsner, VMSMA Board Member			
III	2:30-3:30pm	4 Concurrent Sessions			
Judd Hall	3:45-4:45pm	Group Flavor Tasting & Discussion with Mark Isselhardt			





Vermont Maple Sugar
Makers' Association
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