



INSIDE THIS ISSUE:

Maple Madness 2025	1
WVMSPA Annual Maple Products Competition	2
WVMSPA Annual Meeting 2025	3
Hello Abby and Goodbye Mike	3
Growing Roots: Future Generations University Inspires Youth and Maple Producers in Appalachia	4
"Mr. Maple" Moves On	5
WVMSPA 2024 Annual Meeting Recap	6
Making Maple Work in the Southern Tier	7
Sugar Makers Love That Cold	8
2024 NAMSC Annual Meeting	9
The Maple World North of the Border	10
Ohio Maple Bootcamp	10
WVMSPA Membership Application 2025	11

Maple Madness 2025

We all want to make quality maple products, and we all want to do it the right way and ensure that we are making safe products. Most of us know what that means in reference to maple syrup, but what about when we get into value-added maple products? What can and can't we do to assure quality and compliance when we branch out to selling value-added maple products? What are the requirements for the state of West Virginia and beyond for these products?



Building on the success of last year's value-added maple products workshop, Future Generations University will be offering a workshop on value-added product development and regulatory guidance. The WVMSPA and Future Generations have been working with the West Virginia Department of Agriculture to clarify the requirements. Two workshops planned for our Maple Madness day of educational programming, Friday April 25th, that will help to assure quality and compliance for your new maple endeavors.

10:00-3:30 (Including lunch)- Guidance on value-added product development including rules and regulations for farmers markets and retail locations. This extended workshop will cover how to obtain process authority for value-added products, which rules must be followed for compliance based on sales location, labeling requirements, and manufacturing kitchen needs. This workshop is not exclusive to maple, but will include maple products. Invite your jam, pickle, and jelly making friends! Free for members of the WVMSPA, \$10 for non-members to cover

lunch. Email Heather at heather.harper@future.edu to register!

3:45-4:15- Regulatory guidance specific for infused syrups. With infused syrup falling under cottage foods in most cases, this simplifies the process for producers. Learn exactly what the process and rule is during this discussion and question session.

We all know that the weather can be assured

Madness. So why not round out our maple madness day with a presentation on the effects of a changing climate on maple syrup making?

4:30-5:30 – Is the weather driving you nuts? Join Les Ober, Ohio State Extensions University's Mr. Maple for a presentation on our changing weather patterns and what it means for maple syrup producers. If you have been tuned into The Maple News you know that Les Ober, has written a series on climate and maple. 🍁

West Virginia Maple Syrup Producers Annual Maple Products Competition

To be held in conjunction with the WVMSPA Annual Meeting, Weston WV

Categories:

- Maple Syrup (by Color grade)
- Maple sugar (made from maple syrup only)
- Maple Spread (used to be called Maple Cream but need to stop calling it that because sounds like a milk product)
(made from maple syrup only)
- Maple confections (where maple syrup is a dominant flavor)
- Maple Infused (Maple syrup that has been infused with ingredients like cinnamon sticks, coffee beans, etc.)

Awards:

will be given for the first 3 places in each category and for each color grade of maple syrup. Photos of category winners will be submitted for publication to the WVDA Market Bulletin.

Contest rules:

1. Entrants must be members in good standing of the West Virginia Maple Syrup Producers Association (WVMSPA). Not a member? Entries will be accepted upon receipt of your 2024 membership application or online at https://members.wvmspa.org/?page_id=53.
2. All entries must be turned in by 9:00 AM the day of the meeting.
3. Can't participate in the Annual Meeting but still want to participate in the contest. Entries can

be mailed to Paul Ronk, Association President, scheduled to arrive prior to Thursday, April 24th. WVMSPA is not responsible for entries that are delayed or damaged. Paul's mailing address is: 725 Whispering Pines, Alum Creek, WV 25003.

4. All syrup entered in the contest should be hot packed at 82.2-93.3°C (180-200°F).
5. There are no limits to the number of categories a member submits, however, only one entry is allowed within a category.
6. Syrup, sugar, spread and infused should be submitted in a clear, 8.5 oz glass or larger container. Please do not identify your entry; you will be provided an entry number at turn in.
7. Syrup must be graded by the category you wish to compete in. Grade should be indicated on the bottle you turn in.
8. For confections, provide enough product for 6 judging samples on a plain, white 6" paper plate covered with clear, plastic wrap. If whole product (i.e. pie) is submitted, please note that the Competition Team will provide sample portions on the plain, white 6" paper plate for judging.
9. All decisions of the judges are final.
10. Please refer to the North American Maple Contest Guidelines <https://mapleresearch.org/wp-content/uploads/contestjudging.pdf> for scoring criteria and score sheets for the maple syrup, sugar, cream/spread and infused entries. 🍁

WVMSPA Annual Meeting

Saturday, April 26th, St Paul Episcopal Church, Weston WV

Another year for some kind of record??

9:00 – 1:00 WVMSPA business meeting

Open remarks from the president.

1. Welcome to new members
2. WVDA/NRCS updates
3. Producer Maple season's reporting
(come prepared to tell your 2025 story)
4. Committee reports
5. New business
6. Elections

WV State maple syrup and maple products contest
(bring a sample to enter the contest)

Hydrometer testing (bring yours to have it tested)

1:30 – 2:30 Annual Banquet – Free to all WVMSPA members, and it's never too late to join!

Afternoon – Social time to hangout to and swap maple lies before heading home. 🍁

Hello Abby and Goodbye Mike

West Virginia's "Maple Mike" Rechlin is heading north and Abby van den Berg "The Maple Queen" has joined Future Generations as part of the Appalachian team. After 15 years of post-retirement work with the growing tree syrups industry in the Central Appalachians Mike's waterfront bit of paradise on Osgood Pond in the Adirondacks, and his 15 canoes, are calling him back home. This will be his last issue editing the WVMSPA newsletter and his last year of representing WVMSPA at NAMSC and IMSI meetings. "It has been a great run, meeting and working with a lot of good West Virginia Maple Producers."



Abby, whom Mark Bowers referred to as "The smartest person up there" referring to her time at the Proctor Maple Research Center will be adding the tree biology perspective to the work coming out of Future Generations, and keeping our work in Appalachia tied into the national and international tree syrups research scene. Growing up in Western Maryland, just north of Keyser WV, Abby is looking forward to applying her skills and talents to sap and syrup production issues facing you all, as well as adding her perspective to the other work of Future Generations University. 🍁

Growing Roots:

Future Generations University Inspires Youth and Maple Producers in Appalachia



Paul Ronk, (WVMSPA president) Jenny Totten and Margaret Donnan (FGU) at the Rock Branch Elementary School's Ag and Conservation days program.

In the heart of Appalachia, Future Generations University is nurturing the next generation of foresters, agriculturalists, and community leaders through innovative educational programs. By connecting youth with the rich heritage and natural resources of West Virginia, the university is cultivating a deeper appreciation for forestry, agriculture, and local culture.

At the forefront of these initiatives are Forest on the Go, Maple in the Classroom, and Sprout School—three distinct programs that spark curiosity, inspire learning, and equip educators and community members with tools to foster meaningful connections to the Appalachian environment.

Forest on the Go: Bringing Appalachia's Forests to Life

Designed for PreK-12 students, Forest on the Go offers themed educational boxes packed with

hands-on activities that meet West Virginia's College and Career Readiness Standards. Covering a variety of subjects—from literature to math to history—each box contains enough materials for up to 50 students. Through engaging lessons, students explore the Appalachian forest ecosystem and its vital role in the region's culture and economy. These boxes inspire curiosity about forestry and provide a springboard for future careers in environmental science and land stewardship.

Maple in the Classroom: Tapping into STEM and Tradition

Maple in the Classroom is a six-lesson experiential series that immerses students in the world of maple syrup production. Combining STEM education with West Virginia's cultural and historical context, the program introduces youth to the science of sap



Margaret working with Conservation days students.

flow, the art of syrup making, and the sustainable forestry practices behind it all. These lessons empower students to see the forest not only as a resource but as a connection to their heritage and a potential economic opportunity.

Sprout School: Cultivating Agricultural Leaders

Building on the USDA's Farm to School framework, Sprout School is a nine-month training program designed to connect schools with locally sourced foods and agriculture-based education. This initiative supports individuals interested in youth agriculture, local food systems, and farm-to-school activities. By equipping participants with the skills to implement these programs, Sprout School helps grow a network of agricultural leaders dedicated to fostering healthier communities and supporting local producers.

Empowering a Sustainable Future

Through these programs, Future Generations University is making significant strides in education

and community development. Forest on the Go, Maple in the Classroom, and Sprout School highlight the interconnectedness of forestry, agriculture, and culture, fostering pride and stewardship among West Virginia's youth while paving the way for sustainable economic opportunities.

Whether it's exploring the magic of Appalachian forests, learning the science of maple syrup, or transforming school cafeterias with local produce, these initiatives demonstrate the transformative power of hands-on education. Future Generations University is truly growing roots for a sustainable future—one student, one tree, and one forest at a time.

Don't miss the chance to bring these programs to your classroom or community. Spark curiosity and inspire future foresters and agricultural leaders. If you would like to participate in any of the youth education initiatives mentioned, please email sprout@future.edu to sign up today! 🍁

"Mr. Maple" Moves On

This past summer we lost a good friend of maple in West Virginia. Mark Bowers died August 3rd, 2024, after a long bout with pancreatic cancer. He fought on to the end, bottling his last bottle of maple syrup on July 31st.

Mark would talk to anybody at any time about maple syrup. He loved the process, loved the product, and loved syrup makers. Mark also loved telling folks how his dad came home one day with a truck load of secondhand sap collection and syrup making supplies and told him they were going to start tapping their trees. Some of what came in on that truck was still in use in his camp last maple season. In 2013 Mark helped establish the West Virginia maple Syrup Producers Association, rising the profile of maple syrup as an agricultural crop in the state. On July 24th, 2024, he was honored by being inducted into the West Virginia Agriculture and Forestry Hall of Fame.

We will all miss Mark's presence among us, at WVMSPA meetings, at fairs and festivals selling his



maple syrup and at any outreach or educational programs promoting maple syrup. We can best honor Mark by keeping those evaporators burning and reliving good times with stories that more often than not begin with, "Do you remember that time when Bowers ... ?" 🍁

West Virginia Maple Syrup Producers Association 2024 Annual Meeting Recap

By Cathy Hervey, Secretary

If you have never attended a WVMSPA annual meeting, mark your calendar for this year's meeting. This group offers more maple information than you could ever imagine.

Last year, the group met in Weston, WV at the St. Paul Episcopal Church. On Friday, April 19th members had the option to attend a variety of workshops free of charge. The "guru" of making maple confections, Steve Childs spent time teaching maple producers how to make sugar, candies, cream, etc.

Next, President Paul Ronk instructed the group on how to operate and properly clean the WVMSPA's cotton candy machine. I am sure there were some taste testers in that room. Kody Boone and Thomas Woods finished off the day with a presentation on "Maximizing Production and Profits on 3/16 in Appalachia". The information they shared with the group was invaluable.

On Sat. April 20th, at the same location, WVMSPA held their annual meeting with approximately 40 people in attendance. The meeting was called to order by President Paul Ronk followed by the regular business portion of the meeting.

The group's favorite part of the meeting is when producers with both large and small operations share their personal maple season reports and tips to help each other improve their operations.

Each year a banquet is held at no cost to the members. It was held at a local restaurant where the group had the absolute pleasure of meeting and experiencing Janet (Jane) Woods. She gave a presentation on Hurry Hill Farm and Maple Museum in Edinboro, PA. which is home to the 1956 Newbury Medal Award to Virginia Sorensen for the children's book *Miracle on Maple Hill*. Jan is a wealth of knowledge in the maple industry.

Dr. Mike Rechlin and President Paul Ronk presented Mark Bowers, the founder of the WV Maple Producers Association with a nomination certificate on behalf of the association to induct Mark into the WV Agriculture and Forestry Hall of Fame. Mark was honored and thankful for being nominated by his peers.



Mark Bowers induction into the WV Agriculture and Forestry Hall of Fame.

The Annual meeting closed with the election of officers for the 2025 season and the maple contest awards being presented. Mark your calendars for this year's meeting to be held at the same location on April 25 and April 26. 🍁



Saturday, March 15, 2025

To find your local sugar shack location & hours, go to www.wvmspa.org

Making Maple Work in the Southern Tier

In 2017, at the Southern Syrup Research Symposium it was recognized that to see the sugaring industry grow we needed a concerted research effort to study and address issues pertinent to sap and sugar production in our region. Over the ensuing years many of our regional research institutions have “stepped up to the plate” and initiated both research and extension programs to advance maple syrup making. On January 15th Abby van den Berg, of Future Generations University, convened a second meeting of the Southern Syrup Research Consortium, to provide an opportunity to share research and extension work planned for the 2025 sap flow season.

Jamie Schuler, from WVU, led off the session. In addition to Jamie’s Sugarbush class at the University, he is also completing the second year of sanitation study using 3/16 tubing sanitized with 600ppm Calcium Hypochlorite. This is work being duplicated in central West Virginia by Future Generations University. With two years data collected at 2 sites we feel we will have what we need to develop a sanitation procedure that will ensure the continuation of high sap productivity from 3/16 systems. Jamie also reported on the second year of a study of tapping below the lateral line in 3/16 systems. Although this has been shown to be effective in increasing the tapping zone on systems with a vacuum pump, the findings from Jamie’s work show it leads to greatly reduced total sap in 3/16 “natural vacuum” systems. Finally, he is this year beginning a study on the impacts of defoliation on sap sweetness.

Luke Taylor-Ide, with Future Generations, reported in continuing efforts with the West Virginia Maple Syrup Producers Association (WVMSPA) to promote Mountain State Maple Days as a statewide agritourism event. Maple days is scheduled for February 15th and March 15th of this coming year. Luke also put in a plug for the WVMSPA annual meeting, April 26th preceded by “Maple Madness” a day of seminars and educational programming to help producers increase productivity and profitability. This year Maple Madness will focus on the regulatory aspects of marketing value added Maple products, and a presentation by Les Ober, Ohio State extension, on the complexities of keeping making maple syrup in a changing environment. Luke also mentioned our statewide Maple in the Classroom

program where producers work with local schools to teach all things maple. He ended his report with research being conducted to increase productivity when tapping sycamore.

Mike Rechlin reported on progress being made to have IPA (isopropyl alcohol) registered as an approved agent for sanitizing sap lines. Abby is the one metaphorically ‘tilting at this windmill,’ at least in this round, on an initiative originating with a white paper written by Mike and Gabe Karns of Ohio State. He also updated folks on progress toward development of a 3/16 system design and operations manual. (Mike and Abby are tilting at that windmill.)

Gabe Karns, of Ohio State, talked about training they are conducting to better equip foresters to include sugaring as a land management option when working with private landowners. Related to this he discussed research Ohio State is conducting on the crop tree release management strategy to increase the volume and quality of maple sap. Ohio State is also initiating a citizen monitoring program for spotted lantern fly, an invasive forest pest known to attack maple trees. Finally, and most interestingly Gabe is using the newest technology to attack one of the oldest sugaring problems. We all know the problems squirrels cause by chewing plastic sap lines. But how many of us have actually seen them in the act? Or, how many can distinguish between a squirrel bite and a chipmunk bite? Every bite, be it squirrel or bear leaves a visible mark and some invisible DNA. Gabe is using that invisible DNA marker to positively identify the culprit. Think about it, your remedial strategy might be different if gunning for a squirrel or gunning for a bear...

Jake Nicholson, Ohio State extension maple specialist has been conducting backyard maple workshops for beginner producers, weather for home consumption or as a way of getting in the business. And, maple quality workshops.

The session ended with updates from John Duvall on activities of the Kentucky Maple Syrup producers Association, and Tom Hammett of Virginia Tech, on the Southwest Virginia Maple School. 🍁

Sugar Makers LOVE THAT COLD

If you live in the Central Appalachians or the Mid-west this winter, you may be wearing out your woolen long-johns out. It has been a cold January, and there is no letup in sight. Just as we bundle up when going out in the cold, trees have physiological mechanisms that help them survive the cold. And these adaptations play an important role when it comes to making maple syrup.

The sweetness of dormant season sap varies among trees and is partly based on their genetic makeup (just like people, some trees are just sweeter than others), and is affected in complex, dynamic ways by other numerous factors, including health, size, age, and of course environmental factors. Sap sweetness is not only affected by environmental factors during the sap flow season (freeze/thaw events), but also those during previous growing seasons and autumns. For example, not surprisingly, temperatures during March were found to have a negative correlation with sap sugar concentrations - warmer temperatures during the sap flow season tend to result in lower sap sugar concentrations (Timothy Perkins, personal communication). But also variables before the season - like low moisture availability and warm temperatures in November - have been correlated with lower sap sugar concentrations the following season (Timothy Perkins, personal communication). So cold temperatures (or, warm temperatures) can play an important role in how sweet sap is.

The average sweetness of sugar maple (*Acer saccharum*) sap is generally between 2.0 and 2.5%. Maple producers in West Virginia often report sap sweetness between 1.0 to 1.5%. The biggest factor contributing to that difference is most likely the large percentage of red maple sap that's included in those observations - red maple can (but doesn't always) have lower sap sweetness relative to neighboring sugar maples. And part could be due to other differences in other factors mentioned above, like genetics, and tree health and size. But it's also possible that some could be due to cold temperatures, or the lack thereof in the central Appalachians.

Tree leaves capture the sun's energy and make sugars through the process of photosynthesis during the

warm summer months. Trees need the energy of those sugars for various physiological processes all year around. To store enough to make it through the winter, they convert the sugars to starch. Trees use these stored starch reserves as fuel for their living cells during the dormant period, when energy isn't being harvested from the sun by leaves.

So one reason why warmer temperatures in the fall or during the sap flow season have been observed to correlate with lower sap sugar concentrations could simply be that warmer temperatures during these times cause more of the tree's reserves to be consumed as fuel. The "warm temperature" side of this area is another deep tree physiology rabbit hole, which we'll save for exploring another day! On to the cold side.

First - why is there sugar in maple sap in the spring? There are many reasons maples (and some other trees) have evolved to have sugar in the sap during this short period, including helping to reestablish the column of water in the tree's transport system after the winter. But another reason may be as an adaptation to cope with freezing temperatures - a natural antifreeze.

Live cells that freeze die - ice crystals are sharp, and they break cell membranes. That's really bad for you, think frostbite, and it can be equally as bad for a tree. Because trees can't move to a warmer place to contend with below-freezing temperatures, they protect their cells instead by manufacturing their own antifreeze! Think of the old saying "slow as molasses in January." Cold molasses or syrup (for that matter) doesn't freeze solid - it gets more viscous, thicker and slower, but it does not freeze.

Now for some basic automotive engineering: When it's cold it is important to put antifreeze in your car's radiator. The colder it gets the more antifreeze you need to put in to stop the radiator from freezing. Why? Because polyethylene glycol, the active ingredient in antifreeze, lowers the freezing point of water. And, a frozen car radiator is just about as bad as frostbite or frozen live cells in a tree.

Trees use the same freeze protection strategy. Sugars

dissolved in water lowers the freezing point of that water. And in the spring, the trigger that kickstarts the tree to convert its stored starch back into sugar and load it into the sap is the fluctuation of temperatures below and above the freezing point of water. And since it's been shown that colder temperatures during the sap flow season can be associated with higher sap sugar sweetness, we can speculate that not only the number of freeze/thaw events, but also possibly the depth or length of those cold events (and the tree's need for its own antifreeze), could lead to higher

sap sap sweetness. Just another question ready and waiting for a new generation of maple scientists to answer!

So, curse at the snow you have to shovel, complain how the cold gets into your bones, don't slip on the ice, and get ready for what is hoped for will be a sweet spring. It's the next best thing to moving to Maine. 🍁

Tree insights brought to you by: the FGU Bio Duo, Mike Rechlin and Abby van den Berg

2024 Site of the Annual Meeting of the North American Maple Syrup Council (NAMSC)

The Maple Industry covers all the states of the Northeast, the Lake States and Appalachia. The West Virginia Maple Syrup Producers Association is our representative in The North American Maple Syrup Council, which represents all syrup producers. The following is a summary of NAMSC's annual meeting.

As your WVMSPA delegate I have had the honor, for the last 5 years, of representing West Virginia at this national meeting. The Council is made up of 17 maple syrup producer associations. Through WVMSPA's membership we all receive copies of the quarterly Maple Syrup Digest. As your delegate I attend quarterly zoom meetings and represent WV at the national meeting.

The big news coming out of the annual meeting is that, after a year of interim leadership, during which the Board conducted a national search, Theresa Baron has been selected as the new Executive Director of the Council. Theresa had been Executive Director (ED) of the Wisconsin Maple Syrup Producers Association and recently served as interim NAMSC executive director while the search process played out.

Theresa, and her husband Jon, run a maple business started 60 years ago by her parents Don and Evelyn Van Deurzen. Maple Sweet Dairy Sugarbush taps over 1,200 trees and their companion business, Maple Buzz, maintains 10 bee hives, keeping the sweet stuff flowing year round on the farm.

The Council also announced changes to their research funding to focus on issues and opportunities identified by the Council's research committee as particularly relevant to the industry. In the future NAMSC research grants, which are funded by member industries, will need to be part of a funding match and will be awarded on a rolling basis to accommodate match funding timelines.

As the new ED Theresa has a mandate to:

1. Increase engagement with member associations. It is recognized that the strength of the Council rests on membership in member associations.
2. Re-envisioning the Maple Syrup Digest and continue updating mapleresearch.org. These two avenues of outreach keep association members in the loop on national maple issues and up to date on research findings.
1. Closer engagement with NAMSC's sister organization The International Maple Syrup Institute (IMSI).

In addition to the meetings, the conference included technical sessions where research findings were presented, and a session participants could engage in a dialogue with researchers on the finer points and relevancy of their work.

Being an event in Maine the conference included a lobster and clam dinner. Although a traditional Maine event, it led to quite an uncomfortable night for this delegate, and a resolution to refrain in the future from eating anything with more than 4 legs. 🍁

The Maple World North of the Border

As the world turns it very well may end up impacting the maple industry on our side of the border. The photo below is of a syrup can filled with saw dust that was sent by the Quebec Maple Producers to legislators in their Province. In Canada many syrup producers rely on renting trees from government lands. The expansion of tapping allotments has recently been reduced as demand for hardwood lumber off those same lands has surged. Sixty-five percent of maple syrup sold in the USA comes from Canada.

At the same time talk of imposing a 25% tariff on Canadian goods could also impact our sugaring industry. Less Canadian syrup could result in expansion opportunities in the USA. Store shelves with less or more expensive maple syrup could provide new opportunities for our producers. Or it could turn customers to other alternative sweeteners, with a loss of market share for maple



One thing we can probably count on is uncertainty in this changing and integrated world. With most maple equipment manufacturers in Canada, higher import costs will most likely lead to more expensive evaporators, tubing, spouts, and more. 🍁

Ohio Maple Bootcamp

Attention new maple recruits!



Ohio State University will be hosting this year's Maple Bootcamp. The program will be held July 17th – 19th in Northeastern Ohio and will include both classroom instruction and practical training for new maple producers as well as those with years of experience.

Each day we will be visiting a different sugar camp, from small scale hobbyists to large commercial operations. The plan is to schedule educational activities that fit with each sugaring operation. We will be going over the basics of syrup making as well as new research findings that point to ways to increase production and profitability.

There is limited space in this year's camp, so register early to reserve your spot. Contact: Kathy Smith (smith.81@osu.edu) for additional details and to register for camp. 🍁

WVMSPA Membership Application 2025



Purpose

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

Membership

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

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

Name _____

Farm/sugarhouse name _____

Street address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip code _____

Phone number _____ Cell _____

Email address _____

Membership category (check one):

- ☐ West Virginia members. (With full voting rights).
- ☐ Associate and Honorary members. This category is for friends from other states who want to join our organization. (Without voting rights)

Listing preference (check one):

- ☐ I give permission for my contact information to be shared with paid members.
- ☐ I do not give my permission to share my contact information with paid members

Annual dues: \$25, includes:

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

Complete and send application with \$25 check payable to WVMSPA to:

Keith Heasley
2988 Compressor Station Rd
Bruceton Mills WV 26525



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