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Workshops Offered for Small-Scale Farming

URBANA – Soil testing, plant propagating, identifying diseases and pests, and selecting the right equipment are some of the topics that will be addressed at five workshops being offered this spring for small-scale farming operations.

“The Central Illinois Farm Beginnings (CIFB) workshops are geared toward people interested in launching a small farm business that is economically and environmentally sustainable,” said Deborah Cavanaugh-Grant, University of Illinois Extension Specialist, Small Farm and Sustainable Agriculture and CIFB co-facilitator.

Now in its fourth year, Central Illinois Farm Beginnings is a program co-sponsored by the U of I Extension and The Land Connection. The year-long program includes course work, field days and workshops and hands-on mentorships. “This year we are opening the workshops to those people that are not able to commit to the full year program,” said Terra Brockman, founder of The Land Connection and CIFB co-facilitator.

Complete information about the workshops including registration, is available at http://web.extension.uiuc.edu/smallfarm/begin_farm.html

The schedule is as follows:

Saturday, March 14, 1:00 p.m. to 4:00 p.m.

Richland Community College, Decatur

General Plant Propagation and Production for the Vegetable Grower

Topics will include: Vegetable and Flower Production (variety selection, production equipment, production volume and scheduling, containers, soil mixes, seeding, plug and bare root and transplanting); Plant Propagation (plant selection and taking cuttings) and Sales. Participants will receive transplants to include in their farming operation.

Monday, March 16, 6:30 p.m. to 9:00 p.m.

U of I Extension, Sangamon County Unit Office, Springfield

Web Marketing for Your Farm

This workshop will focus on using the Internet as a critical part of a marketing plan for small farms.

Saturday, March 28, 9:30 a.m. to 4:00 p.m.

U of I Extension, Sangamon County Unit Office, Springfield

VegScout School

This full day of instruction will consist of a series of lectures on insect, weed and disease identification followed by hands-on identification of live samples and color photos. Discussion of troubleshooting problems in organic and sustainable production systems, scouting techniques, sample collecting and record keeping will also be presented.

Saturday, May 16, 1:30 p.m. to 4:30 p.m.

Prairie Fruits Farm, Champaign

Evaluating Soil Quality and Soil Maps

This hands-on workshop will demonstrate how to collect soil samples for soil testing, and how to measure simple soil quality indicators such as soil structure, water infiltration and soil penetration resistance.

Saturday, May 23, 10:00 a.m. to 12:30 p.m.

Spence Farm, Fairbury

Equipment for Small Farmers

Marty and Kris Spence will present information on the function and use of tractors and various implements for small-scale farming, such as a bale mulcher, crop cart, tractor tiller, converted horse-drawn cultivators, and a potato planter. Safe handling and use of the implements to prevent accidents will also be covered.

There is a fee of \$30 per workshop for registrants who have not been enrolled in CIFB. To register, visit http://web.extension.uiuc.edu/smallfarm/begin_farm.html or contact Deborah Cavanaugh-Grant (217-968-5512; cvnghgrn@illinois.edu).