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-FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE-

**PCO Announces Free Educational Workshops for  
First Annual Pennsylvania Organic FarmFest**

Poultry, high tunnels, home canning, cover crops, soil health, weed identification... these are just a few of the workshops that will be offered at this year's First Annual Pennsylvania Organic FarmFest on Saturday, August 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> at the Centre County Grange Fair Grounds in Centre Hall.

Pennsylvania Certified Organic has planned some informative educational workshops, delivered by a wide range of engaging presenters from several Pennsylvania agricultural organizations. Marcus Cullen of Envinity Inc., and Mary Carol Friar with Penns Valley Conservation Association get the FarmFest off to a great start on Friday August 3<sup>rd</sup> in a workshop on producing year-round in your own greenhouse. Growing vegetables and fruits nearly year round is possible with renewable energy in your own mini-high tunnel. Learn how to install and operate your high tunnel with solar thermal or waste heat through a guided mini-tunnel construction process.

On Saturday August 4<sup>th</sup> get ready for a full slate of workshops on sustainable living. Steve Smelter with Nature's Best Organic Feeds leads a workshop discussing the basics of small-scale and backyard organic poultry production. Organic farmers, gardeners, and anyone who's ever considered raising between 1 & 1000 egg laying-hens will enjoy this presentation about raising and feeding organic hens and discussing the dollars and cents of backyard poultry production.

Josh Lambert & Katherine Watt of PASA's Sustainability School will offer ways to make your growing season last longer with a hands-on workshop that will teach you how to build cold frames for your home garden using reused window frames and pre-cut pieces. Participants of this workshop will be entered into a drawing to win the completed cold frame.

Josh will also conduct a home canning workshop, where he will teach you how to make and preserve the best tasting jellies, jams, butters, and sauces right out of your garden and kitchen! Learn about the equipment you need, food canning safety, and canning basics.

Boosting your garden's pest immunity is always a hot topic. Learn how to use mixed plantings to improve pest management with John Tooker of Penn State University. Growers can benefit from natural processes that help manage their crops. John will discuss PSU research that aims to harness natural processes and genetic diversity to improve resistance of crops to diseases and insect pests.

Nitrogen from legume cover crops is a key part of organic farming. Join Penn State's Meagan Schipanski in an interactive session on estimating how much nitrogen your legume cover crops might be providing. Discuss management factors that can influence legume nitrogen fixation rates, and take a look at legume root nodules and discuss what we know about legume inoculation.

Clair Keene, Eli Snyder, and Kelly Patches with Penn State will teach you the skills needed to identify weeds in your farm fields or garden beds and provide an overview of the management tactics to successfully control problematic weeds using organic techniques. Their session *In the Weeds: Identifying and Managing Problem Weeds* proves to be an informative hand-on learning experience. Be sure to bring samples of weeds from your garden for identification.

They say 99% of the insects you find in your fields are the good guys. Mary Barbercheck, a Penn State entomologist, discusses natural bio-control and the power of predators in a workshop on conserving beneficial insects on the farm and garden. Natural enemies, or "the good guys," can be found in almost all crop areas, working around the clock to protect crops from insect pests and slugs. Learn about the natural enemies of pests and the practices you can use to preserve them and their benefits.

Finally, we get to the foundation of all farms and gardens: the soil. Lindsey Brielle with The Rodale Institute asks the question what does "healthy soil" really mean? Come spend time with the Rodale Institute's soil research staff and learn more about what's REALLY going on under your feet (and all around your plants' roots). You'll also play around worm compost and get an up-close look into the world of microbes. So be ready have a good time and take home some new ideas and techniques to make your plants happier and healthier than ever before.

Also on Saturday, Enterprise Management Consulting (EMC) from Temple University's Fox School of Business will provide complimentary business consultation sessions to business owners, growers, nonprofit managers, and anyone who would like business insight. They can offer insight on business models, developing a business plan, customer engagement, or developing a social media strategy. To make the most of your session, contact Fox ahead of time by emailing Becca Zinn at [rzinn@temple.edu](mailto:rzinn@temple.edu).

The educational opportunities at this year's First Annual Pennsylvania Organic FarmFest promise to be engaging and you'll learn first hand from some of

Pennsylvania's best practitioners. So come learn and celebrate the bounty and beauty of sustainable lifestyles that promote harmony with the good earth. And don't forget, an energetic line up of local musicians and artists, children's activities, and a special farmers market are some of the other events planned for the First Annual Organic FarmFest. Admission is free and camping is available.

Sponsorship and exhibitor opportunities are available. Interested businesses and organizations are encouraged to contact PCO at 814-422-0251 for details on showcasing your organization to a large and diverse audience of participants from around Pennsylvania.

### **Free Workshops**

#### **Friday**

4:30-6:30pm *Produce Year-round In Your Own Greenhouse*

#### **Saturday**

10:00-10:30am *Take Cover: Selecting and Managing Cover Crops*

10:30-11:15am *Building and Using Cold Frames*

11:00-11:30am *Boosting Your Gardens Immunity*

11:30am-12:30pm *Soil Conservation w/the Rodale Institute*

12:00-1pm *Chickens in Your Backyard: The Basics of Small Scale Organic Poultry Production*

1:00-2:00pm *Home Canning Basics: Fruits and Jams*

1:00-3:00pm *Produce Year-round In Your Greenhouse*

1:30-2:30pm *In the Weeds: Identifying and Managing Problem Weeds*

3:00-4:00pm *You Can Get Good Help: Beneficial Insects in Your Garden*

Pennsylvania Certified Organic is a non-profit organization that educates and certifies organic growers and handlers in Pennsylvania and the surrounding region. PCO certifies more than 500 farming and food production operations, including produce, field crops, herbs, wild crops, dairy products, poultry products, value-added products, livestock, mushrooms, maple, snack foods, coffee, tea, cosmetics, and more.

To learn more about PCO or to apply for organic certification, call 814-422-0251 or visit our website at [www.paorganic.org](http://www.paorganic.org).