



Fall & Winter
2024 | 2025

NEWS *from* THE BERRY CENTER

LETTER FROM MARY BERRY



*Mary Berry with her father, Wendell Berry.
Photo courtesy of the Berry family.*

RURAL AMERICA IS DAMAGED and suffering because the so-called policy, I believe my uncle John Berry might have called it “the design,” since the middle of the 20th century has been to abandon the actual country and its people to the free market and Ezra Taft Benson’s decree, “Get Big or Get Out.” Rural America is a colony that belongs to corporations; it is a colonial economy. This is the history of agriculture in this country.

Late one night in 1907 my great-grandfather rode out of the driveway at the farm we have always called the Home Place to go to Louisville and watch his tobacco crop be sold. Before bed that evening his son, my grandfather, remembered that the family, gathered around the stove warming themselves before bed, spoke of what might be done with extra money after their debts were paid. My great-grandfather came home without a dime after the crop had paid its transportation to market and the commission on its sale. There was nothing left. My family has lived under the influence of that story ever since. My grandfather would tell us, “I thought then if I can do something about this I will.” And he did. John Berry, Sr., a lawyer and a farmer, was essential to the revival of The Burley Tobacco Growers Co-operative Association, the program which had been mostly dormant for two decades and was reorganized under the New Deal in 1940. The Co-op administered the program in Burley-growing states from 1941-2004.

Because of The Burley Tobacco Growers Cooperative for once and for a while small farmers in Kentucky and the eight state Burley belt were paid fairly for their work. Tobacco provided an economic backstop for good diversified farming. The result of that was beautiful to see.

In the mid-nineties it was clear that tobacco was seriously threatened. To save the approximately 85,000 small farms and the rural communities that they supported became the immediate concern of many people across the Commonwealth. What could replace tobacco? I think the more important question



Mary Berry talks with Mob Ford during the 1974 tobacco harvest. Photo by James Baker Hall.

“ Our dominant economy over the last century has made good farming and rural communities increasingly vulnerable. To make them anything like sustainable we must see the difference between the industrial economy of inert chemicals and economic abstractions and an authentic land economy of husbandry of the living world.”

should have been, what would replace The Burley Tobacco Growers Co-op? My grandfather helped make the protection of good, family farmers federal law. He thought that the principles of the Tobacco Program could work for anything farmers could produce. In my father’s lifetime this possibility has lived and died.

It has been twenty years since the federal program for Burley tobacco ended. According to the 2022 census we have 69,425 farms left in Kentucky. Since 2004, we have lost approximately 15,000 farms, generations of farmers, and to use my own county of Henry as an example, every small town is dead or dying. This in spite of many well-intentioned efforts by well-meaning people and a lot of money spent.

It is important to understand what has happened here. When I started The Berry Center in 2011 it seemed to me that instead of anyone trying to understand the tobacco program it had been forgotten. And so, we have put what we have learned to use for [Our Home Place Meat](#).

We have fewer farmers in this country than we have had since 1850 when we had 31 states and 4 territories. The kind of farming and land use that we must have will take people who know how to use land well.

Wes Jackson speaks of a correct “eyes-to-acres ratio.” To use land well requires that people look at it and care for it, know it, love it. Not too much land. This ratio differs from place to place. Is this a scientific principle? Whether or not it is—we know now that it is simply true. All we have to do is look around, that is if we know what we are looking at, to see the degraded fields, forests, barns, small towns, waterways, nature and the natural world.

Industrial agriculture, all of industrialism, from its beginning has depended on a willingness to ignore everything that does not serve the cheapest possible production to maintain the highest possible profit. The result has been the loss of people who know how to live in particular places, at home, and pass on the culture of good land use and the land. Farmers and the accompanying trades that served the farming people have been squeezed out by inflated purchases and depressed sales.

Our increasing worry and anxiety over climate change is suffering from the same industrial thinking that has caused the problem in the first place. It is a kind of passivity that has come to us all because we are far removed from the sources of what we must have to survive and can do so little for ourselves. Our problems will be solved by expert application of some



Wendell Berry talks with Owen Flood while working on the farm. Photo by James Baker Hall, 1974.

technology that is about to fix what needs to be fixed. In agriculture there are efforts, expensive efforts, to measure soil health, the health benefits of food raised in healthy soil, the ability of soil to sequester carbon, and so on. It is good to know the results of this testing. But it can only be useful to us if there are people, farmers, in place to use the data. This is the piece that is ignored. If there are no people to use the data what good is it? If the farmers we have can use the data, will it help them receive fair prices in the market place?

People are well motivated in the country and in the city to reconnect what should never have been disconnected. My father says, “We have been wrong to believe that competition invariably results in the triumph of the best. Divided, body and soul, man and woman, producer and consumer, nature and technology, city and country are thrown into competition with one another.” We could have a regional economic connection that allows everyone to prosper. Martin Luther King, Jr. thought that the right thing serves everybody. Looking back over decades of efforts to do something about this disconnect, I see

over and over that big solutions get attention when what is needed are ground-up small solutions. For instance, the big solutions often make assumptions about supply. It should go without saying that if thousands of farmers have been lost then supply will need to be built. The Burley Tobacco Growers Co-operative Association provides a model for how that might be done. Conversely, they fail to consider what we do have here. There is an abundant supply of well raised cattle within 100 miles of Louisville and yet the city gets 85 to 90% of its beef from feed lots in this country as well as others not from its surrounding countryside.

Our dominant economy over the last century has made good farming and rural communities increasingly vulnerable. **To make them anything like sustainable we must see the difference between the industrial economy of inert chemicals and economic abstractions and an authentic land economy of husbandry of the living world.**

Your friend,
—MARY BERRY, Executive Director

PROGRAM UPDATES

THE AGRARIAN CULTURE CENTER AND BOOKSTORE



On July 13th our new Youth Agrarian Literary League members gathered for a special field day on The Berry Center farm. Photos by Ben Aguilar

SINCE FOUNDING THE Agrarian Literary League in 2017, with hundreds of members from ages 15 to 98 in Henry County, Kentucky and beyond, I have had my mind on the importance of inviting the young people of our community into the agrarian conversation that we were having. Teaching our youngest neighbors how to see our rural landscape with wonder, appreciation, and pride; to encourage them to learn the language of the woods and pastures, is vital work.

On June 8th we hosted our first Kids' Arts and Letters Day on the grounds of The Berry Center. Families joined us to hear readings from Kentucky children's book authors [Jayne Moore Waldrop](#), [Mike Norris](#), and [Craig Caudill](#). Rick Thomas, instructor with The Berry Center Farm and Forest Institute, invited adults and children to take tools in hand and try out hand hewing logs taken from The Berry Center's farm. This activity paired perfectly with talk about the renovations and repairs taking place only feet away from the 234-year-old bookstore cabin and the historic methods employed in building it. Good food and fellowship, a free copy of [Tree Finder: A Manual for Identification of Trees by Their Leaves](#)

for everyone in attendance, and the invitation for children ages 4-14 to sign up for the Youth Agrarian Literary League (YALL) rounded out the day.

On July 13th our new YALL members gathered for a special field day on The Berry Center farm. While the kids ventured out into the woods with their Tree Finder identification books and built their own plant presses in order to preserve their woodland treasures, adults took part in a nature mentoring workshop with Farm and Forest director Dr. Leah Bayens.

It was a hot, joyful day full of good questions and keen observations. It was a dream realized with eager participants. I offer thanks to all who have given in support of the efforts of the Agrarian Literary League, may this good work continue for this generation of agrarians and for many generations to come. May they grow in the knowledge of their place and love for it. May they feel called to steward and advocate for their place on earth. 🍓

—VIRGINIA BERRY AGUILAR
Director, Agrarian Culture Center & Bookstore

THE ARCHIVE AT THE BERRY CENTER

HERE AT THE CENTER we are reading, teaching, and talking about Wendell Berry's brilliant work, "The Unsettling of America: Culture and Agriculture," in anticipation of the 50th anniversary of its publication in 2027. This is an excerpt.

—MICHELE GUTHRIE
Director, The Archive at The Berry Center



Public Remedies from "The Unsettling of America: Culture and Agriculture" by Wendell Berry.

*For our healing we have on our side one great force:
the power of Creation, with good care,
with kindly use, to heal itself.*

1. Withdraw confidence from the league of specialists, officials, and corporation executives who have had almost exclusive charge of the problem and who have enormously enriched and empowered themselves by making it worse.

2. As a people we must learn again to think of human energy, our energy, not as something to be saved, but as something to be used and to be enjoyed in use . . . Our strength is first of all, strength of body, . . . This strength cannot thrive except in useful, decent, satisfying, comely work.

3. We must see again, as I think the founders of our government saw, that the most appropriate governmental powers are negative—those, that is, that protect the small and weak from the great and powerful, not those by which the government becomes the profligate, ineffectual parent of the small and weak after it has permitted the great and powerful to make them helpless. The governmental power that can be used most effectively to assure an equitable distribution of property . . . is that of taxation. The small can survive only if the great are restrained. And there is nothing undemocratic or anti-libertarian about restraining them. To assume that ordinary citizens can compete successfully with people of wealth and with corporations, as our government presently tends to do, is simply to abandon the ordinary citizens. Restraint by taxation is the smallest, most obvious, simplest and cheapest answer. This is not my idea. It is Thomas Jefferson's.

4. There should be a system of production and price controls that would tend to adjust production both to need and to the carrying capacities of farms.

5. Every town and city should be required to operate an organic waste depot where sewage, garbage, waste paper and the like would be composted and given or sold at cost to farmers.

6. We should encourage the greatest possible technological and genetic diversity in conformation to local need, as opposed to the present dangerous uniformity in both categories. This diversity should be the primary goal of the land-grant schools.

7. De-specialize the interests of colleges of agriculture. Shift their loyalty from "agribusiness" and industry back to the farmers.

8. We must address ourselves seriously, and not a little fearfully, to the problem of human scale. What is it? How do we stay within it? What sort of technology enhances our humanity? What sort reduces it? The reason is simply that we cannot live except within limits, and these limits are of many kinds: spatial, material, moral, spiritual. The world has room for many people who are content to live as humans, but only for a relative few intent upon living as giants or as gods.

9. Having exploited "relativism" until, as a people we have no deeply believed reasons for doing anything, we must now ask ourselves if there is not after all an absolute good by which we must measure ourselves and for which we must work.

We have been wrong to believe that competition invariably results in the triumph of the best. Divided, body and soul, man and woman, producer and consumer, nature and technology, city and country, are thrown into competition with one another. And none of these competitions is ever resolved in the triumph of one competitor, but only in the exhaustion of both. (Berry, p.223) 🍓

Wendell Berry, "Margins: Public Remedies," *The Unsettling of America: Culture and Agriculture*. San Francisco : Sierra Club Books, 1977, pp. 218-222.

OUR HOME PLACE MEAT



Farmers and school nutritionists collaborated at the Farm to School Meet and Greet on August 13th at the Agrarian Culture Center located on The Berry Center's New Castle campus.

IT SEEMS LIKE I BLINKED and 2024 is already ending. School ended. Summer flashed before my eyes. School started. Cattle harvests for 2025 were planned. And The Berry Center is headed full force into fall programming and events.

To kick off the fall schedule, [Our Home Place Meat](#) (OHPM) hosted a Farm to School meet and greet for Henry County and Trimble County School Nutrition Departments and local farmers. The USDA offers grants to school systems to purchase locally grown foods for school cafeterias. This event was an opportunity to match faces with names and allow the attendees to have an open dialogue about offerings, requirements, and logistics. With around 20 people in attendance, it was a promising event that will hopefully open a few doors for local farmers.

Beyond the annual OHPM farmer meeting, the next event for our program is the return of [Beef Bash](#). This year, Beef Bash will be held Saturday, October 12 from 4:30pm-7:30pm at The Berry Center. The chef lineup is set with three of the 2023 chefs returning and we added three more to the mix. Tickets are on sale now and can be purchased online. It will be an amazing experience, rain or shine (and boy did it rain last year?!). I hope to see you there to celebrate Our Home Place Meat and Henry County Farmers. 🍴

—BETH DOUGLAS, Director, Our Home Place Meat



A volunteer helped Chef Alison Settle plate her dish during the 2023 Beef Bash.

HERE ARE A FEW RESTAURANTS WHERE YOU CAN FIND OHPM :

Red Hog, Louisville, KY

Limewater Bistro, Frankfort, KY

The Wrigley Taproom, Corbin, KY

Bardstown Bourbon Company, Bardstown, KY

Honeywood, Lexington, KY

The Bristol, Louisville, KY

Brooklyn and the Butcher, New Albany, KY



THE BERRY CENTER FARM & FOREST INSTITUTE



This summer, the Farm & Forest Institute and The Bookstore at The Berry Center teamed up for a Summer Field Day as a part of the first Youth Agrarian Literary League. Twenty-two kiddos and 11 adults came out to TBC Farm for a morning of farm and forest exploration and leaf press building. We had a grand time identifying trees, collecting leaves for the presses, talking about the health of waterways, and trekking through the fields. Photos by Ben Aguilar

YEAR IN REVIEW

AGRICULTURAL EDUCATION has always been a mainstay of The Berry Center's work. Our most recent initiative is the [Farm and Forest Institute](#), which is open to farmers and community members alike. Since launching the Institute one year ago, we have welcomed over 300 people to four field days and 32 courses. With 250 participants hailing from Kentucky and with others from across the country, we are fulfilling our commitment to serving the land and people of the Commonwealth and elsewhere. In collaboration with TBC's Agrarian Cultural Center, we even launched an annual Youth Agrarian Literary League (Y'ALL) field day at the farm!

Friends and neighbors join us on farm walks, and they learn hands-on in our [low-impact forestry classes](#). Agrarians near and far connect through hybrid, low-residency offerings, such as our season-long

[Agrarian Voices Study](#) courses, which include group discussions, humanities field days, and TBC's [Agrarian Voices Lectures](#).

We believe this agrarian education addresses the difficult realities of our present economy by using what is affordable, appropriate, and ready at hand. We hope you'll join us as we head into our second year!

FALL 2024 REGISTRATION

Registration is OPEN for a variety of workshops and courses offered September - December 2024. Visit berrycenterfarmandforest.org for the full schedule and course descriptions.

1. [LOW-IMPACT FORESTRY SERIES](#)
2. [FALL AGRARIAN VOICES STUDY—“Readings in Agriculture: An Agrarian Literature Survey”](#) (The kickoff includes a special lecture by

Amish farmer and writer David Kline, and we wrap up with a special session for Kentucky Arts and Letters Day!

3. INTRODUCING: [DRAFT ANIMAL SERIES](#).

Sessions for the Winter/Spring 2025 season will be published later this season. If you have any questions about registration, please contact Shannon at shannonboyd@berrycenter.org.

THE BERRY CENTER FARM REPORT



First off, a hearty welcome to Steve Douglas! He joined the FFI team to manage The Berry Center Farm’s livestock and pasture production as well as a litany of construction projects. As a lifelong Henry County farmer with a strong business background, Steve brings to bear just the right combination of hands-on experience and pencil-it-out economics.

With Steve’s help, and thanks to the votes of confidence from generous donors, our practical rotational grazing infrastructure and forestry facilities improvements are in full swing:

1. FENCING: Phase one livestock fencing project is complete! Our pasture perimeters are secure, and our woodlands are protected from free range grazing. In phase two, we will ramp into additional permanent cross fencing.

2. CATTLE: We happily welcomed cattle back to the farm for, as Sir Albert Howard wrote (and as Wendell Berry often says), “Mother earth never attempts to farm without livestock” (*An Agricultural Testament*).

3. WATER: A local crew is installing water lines and cattle waterers across the farm.

4. BARN: A local crew will retrofit the tobacco barn for a logging shop and classroom, improved cattle handling facilities, and sawmill shed improvements.

An agrarian perspective guides this stewardship of land and resources. Before workers dug the first post hole, we consulted the farm’s historical records, Wendell Berry’s writing, and FFI forester [Rick Thomas’s](#) land-based inventory. We gathered up insight about farmers’ economic and production concerns from [Our Home Place Meat’s](#) Beth Douglas and others. Every decision bolsters our mission to advocate for farmers and land-conserving communities. The lessons we learn along the way provide educational opportunities for producers and for those who support good farming. 🍓

—SHANNON BOYD, Program Coordinator

—DR. LEAH BAYENS
Director, Berry Center Farm + Forest Institute



2014

II. TO THE NATIONAL OVERSEERS

I am away in a quiet valley,
am busy at my quiet work
in this comely small cup of country
exactly fitted to my mind,
my mind to it exactly fitted.

It is enclosed by slopes and trees,
filled full of light and air and wind,
fulfilled by time and wear and weather.
My work is gathered of air and earth,
the history of local light.

I am not going to tell you whether
or when I'm coming back. Don't wait.
Don't try to call. I have no phone.
There's not much left I want to shoot,
but I would like to shoot a drone.

—WENDELL BERRY, *Another Day: Sabbath Poems, 2013-2023*.
Counterpoint, 2024



SCHEDULE OF ACTIVITIES

October 3	Agrarian Voices Lecture Series: David Kline
October 4-6	Woodland Tools and their Applications
October 12	Beef Bash
October 19-20	Introduction to Chainsaw Safety and Directional Felling (women's only)
October 26	Logs to Lumber
November 2-3	Introduction to Chainsaw Safety and Directional Felling
November 9	Kentucky Arts and Letters Day
November 16-17	Advanced Tree Felling
November 21	Agrarian Voices Lecture Series: Alan Guebert
November 23-24	Introduction to Mule Teamster Skills
December 7	Woodland Management for Wildlife Habitat
December 14-15	Introduction to Mule Teamster Skills
December 21-22	Introduction to Draft Cattle Skills
January 24-26	Fourth Annual Hog Killing Workshop presented by Hand Hewn Farm

Please note that registration is required for many of our events. Go here for more information:

www.berrycenter.org | www.berrycenterfarmandforest.org | www.ourhomeplacemeat.com
www.berrycenterbookstore.com | www.facebook.com/TheBerryCenter

JOIN THE BERRY CENTER

BECOME A MEMBER OF THE BERRY CENTER & HELP US PUT WENDELL BERRY'S WRITINGS INTO ACTION. YOUR MEMBERSHIP SUPPORTS HEALTHY FOOD & FARMING.



ALREADY A MEMBER? Support our work by making a one-time gift or by giving the gift of membership to a loved one. You can donate by returning this form and a check to The Berry Center P.O. Box 582 New Castle, KY 40050. Or donate securely online at:

www.berrycenter.org/donate

All members will receive the printed Berry Center summer journal, electronic seasonal newsletters, and 10% off at The Berry Center Bookstore. Port William Circle Members contributing an annual donation of \$1,000 or more will also receive a signed broadside by Wendell Berry.

For more information, please contact Latara Appleby, Director of Advancement at lataraappleby@berrycenter.org or (502) 845-9200

I WOULD LIKE TO MAKE A GIFT OF:

\$25 \$50 \$100 \$250 \$500 \$1,000 Other \$ _____

CONTRIBUTE MY GIFT TO: Joining or Renewing my membership Gifting a membership

NAME

THIS DONATION IS ANONYMOUS: YES OR NO

ADDRESS

CITY

STATE/PROVINCE

ZIP

EMAIL

PHONE

For gifted memberships please provide: Tribute's name, address, and occasion.

TRIBUTE NAME AND OCCASION

TRIBUTE ADDRESS

Sustaining members create a reliable stream of support, which helps us focus more on programming and less on fundraising.

DONATION FREQUENCY: Annual Monthly One-time

PAYMENT METHOD: Check (payable to The Berry Center) Visa Mastercard Discover AmEx

NAME ON CARD

CARD NO.

EXPIRATION DATE

CVV2





THE BERRY CENTER

111 S. Main Street
P.O. Box 582
New Castle, KY 40050

Name
Street Address
City, State, Zip

THE BERRY CENTER STAFF

MARY BERRY, Executive Director
VIRGINIA BERRY AGUILAR,
Director, Agrarian Culture Center & Bookstore at The Berry Center
BETH DOUGLAS, Director, Our Home Place Meat
MICHELE GUTHRIE, Archivist, Archive at The Berry Center
BEN AGUILAR, Director of Operations
LATARA APPLEBY, Director of Advancement and Communications
DARRA SMITH, Office Manager, CFO
SAM BROWN, Sales, Our Home Place Meat
EMILY WADE, The Bookstore At The Berry Center

THE BERRY CENTER FARM AND FOREST INSTITUTE

LEAH BAYENS, Ph.D, Director, TBC Farm and Forest Institute
RICK THOMAS, Draft Animal Educator and Master Logger
SHANNON BOYD, Program Coordinator

THE BERRY CENTER
111 S. Main Street
P.O. Box 582
New Castle, KY 40050
Ph: 502-845-9200
info@berrycenter.org
www.berrycenter.org

**AGRARIAN CULTURE CENTER &
BOOKSTORE AT THE BERRY CENTER**
129 S. Main Street | P.O. Box 582
New Castle, KY 40050
Ph: 502-743-1820
bookstore@berrycenter.org
www.berrycenterbookstore.com

OUR BOARD OF DIRECTORS

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

Maggie Keith, Chair
Mary Berry, Vice-Chair
Bonnie Cecil, Secretary
Jacob Rosenbaum, Treasurer

MEMBERS AT-LARGE

Katherine Dalton Boyer
John Logan Brent
Christina Lee Brown
Lori Collins-Hall
Steven Douglas
Michael Trager-Kusman
Lois Mateus

OUR HOME PLACE MEAT

45 S. Main Street
P.O. Box 582
New Castle, KY 40050
502-845-9200
info@ourhomeplacemeat.com
www.ourhomeplacemeat.com