

Agritourism directory promotion, hay bale maze, Gaviota Coast plan...



California Agritourism News August 2016 from the University of California Small Farm Program

Greetings!

Here's what's in this issue:

- www.calagtour.org update and marketing plan
- Help plan upcoming regional workshops?
- Heirloom tomato maze uses hay bales
- Santa Barbara Gaviota Coast Plan
- UC research shows marketing effectiveness
- Useful resources

Thanks for reading and being part of California agritourism! Please let us know what's going on in your county or region, or on your farm or ranch, to share in the next issue.

Penny Leff, UC Small Farm Program Agritourism Coordinator

Announcing the NEW www.calagtour.org



With funding from the USDA Farmers' Market Promotion Program, we are about to launch a targeted social media marketing campaign to promote use of our University of California Agritourism Directory by potential visitors to California farms and ranches. We would like to include your agritourism operation or events in this promotion.

We are excited about www.calagtour.org's new, mobile friendly look. Users can now search for agritourism opportunities on their smart phones by California region, by county, or by activities offered. They can also easily browse upcoming events including festivals, tours, classes and farm dinners.

Every month, thousands of people look for farms and ranches to visit and farm events to attend. Listing your operation on the widely-seen UC Directory will help them find YOU. Please join us! It's all free.



If you are a working California farmer or rancher operating an agritourism business or organizing agritourism events, we invite you to complete the [directory application](#) or the [event listing form](#) online (remember to upload a picture too). If you're already a member, please check your listing and send us any changes (and a picture) using the [update form](#).

We look forward to helping promote your business!



Help plan upcoming agritourism workshop in your region?

The UC Small Farm Program will be working with UC Cooperative Extension and other partners to facilitate four day-long regional agritourism workshops in Winter 2016 - 2017. The purpose of the workshops is to share experiences and

promote collaboration among agritourism operators, tourism professionals, county staff and officials, and others involved in California agritourism.

The workshops will be held in Santa Rosa, Woodland, Modesto and Riverside, and will each include participants from counties surrounding these cities. If you are interested in being part of a planning or advisory team for workshops in any of these regions, please contact Penny at 530-752-7779 or paleff@ucdavis.edu. Thanks in advance for your participation!

New this fall: An Heirloom Tomato Maze in Vacaville

You might have heard of hay bale mazes or hay bale gardening. You're probably familiar with the public's fascination with heirloom tomatoes and the recent interest in urban farming.



Sameer Tyagi has put all these elements together into a new kind of agritourism operation on his half acre at [Soul Food Farm](#) in Vacaville. Tyagi laid out hay bales to create a maze, and planted heirloom tomatoes, squash and other crops directly into the bales, using a system that composts the hay to create an ideal above-ground growing medium for the plants. As the tomatoes grow, Tyagi will invite the public to enjoy the maze and perhaps pick tomatoes at the same time, for a fee.

Meanwhile, he is also offering regular [weekly workshops](#) teaching gardeners and small-scale growers how to create their own straw bale gardens.

[...read more about the hay bale tomato maze](#)



Community collaboration: Sierra Valley Art & Ag Trail

On Oct. 1, the art and agriculture communities of Plumas and Sierra Counties are inviting the public to spend a day enjoying the history, culture and bounty of Sierra Valley. Guests will visit market farms, working ranches and a pumpkin patch, view the Sierra Valley Barn Quilts, and enjoy the wares of artists creating with wood, paint, glass, ceramic, metal, fiber and more. Activities include artist demonstrations and tours of agricultural and historic sites.

Learn more: <https://www.facebook.com/SierraValleyArtAgTrail/>

Santa Barbara's Gaviota Coast Plan report by Lisa Bodrogi, Cuvée Connections

Citizens concerned with the long term management of our working landscapes, agriculture, and coastal resources should tune in to the Planning Commission hearings on the Gaviota Coast Plan.



Adoption of the Gaviota Coast Plan will have far-reaching implications for generations to come which makes the review and approval process critically important. ... [Read full report by Lisa Bodrogi](#)

UC research reveals effective marketing strategies

Information Source/Marketing Tool	AGRITOURISM OPERATIONS		VISITORS
	% used	% rating very effective	% used
Word of mouth	98	64	44
Website	95	42	38
Feature story	85	37	11
Direct mail or email	74	35	9
Referrals from other businesses	92	32	7
Facebook and/or Twitter	85	26	22

University of California researchers recently partnered with researchers from Colorado State University to conduct both a survey of agritourism operators and a survey of agritourism visitors. We compared the travel information sources used

by these visitors with the marketing tools used by the agritourism operations.

Operators rated word-of-mouth and websites as their most effective marketing tools AND which were also the most popular information sources for the visitors. However, operators appear to have overrated the effectiveness of what they considered their next three most effective tools--feature story, direct mail or email, and referrals from other businesses; the visitors' usage rates for these information sources were low.

Conversely, operators seem to have underrated the effectiveness of Facebook and Twitter-which ranked as the visitors' third most frequently used sources. These results suggest that agritourism operators need to adjust their marketing toolkits a bit--by focusing more on Facebook and Twitter and minimizing feature stories, direct mail and referrals from other businesses.

- *Shermain Hardesty, UC Small Farm Program Extension Economist*

Some useful resources...

- Handouts, presentations and notes from the recent [Agritourism Intensive classes](#) held in Modesto, Redding and Quincy.
- [Marketing Regional Farms and Wineries: A Guide for California Agricultural Marketing Groups](#) - published online in November 2015 by the UC Small Farm Program.
- [Farm-Based Education Network](#) - A free international member network established to strengthen and support the work of educators, farmers and community leaders providing access and experiences of all kinds on productive working farms.
- [Farm Stay U.S.](#) -The website of the U.S. Farm Stay Association, promoting farm and ranch stays in the United States and providing resources for farm stay operators and visitors.
- [Hipcamp Landshare](#) - rural accommodations marketing site - If you are legally permitted to offer camping, cabins, or any kind of farm stay or guest ranch on your land, these San Francisco based folks may be good marketing partners.
- [Integrating Safety into Agritourism](#) - This website contains a variety of walk-throughs, checklists, signs and other resources to help owners identify and fix health and safety hazards.
- [AgritourismReady website](#) - Created by Ohio State University Extension: A One Stop Shop for preparing your emergency management



plan

- **North American Farm Direct Marketing Association** (NAFDMA) - a membership based trade association dedicated to providing endless peer-to-peer learning opportunities, connections and resources, for farmers who are passionate about the business of agritourism and farm direct marketing.
 - **UC Small Farm Program Agritourism** - research reports, factsheets and guides, handouts and presentations from workshops, articles and current projects
 - **World Wide Opportunities on Organic Farms** (WWOOF US) - linking visitors with organic farmers for educational exchange
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