

## **Agroforestry Network Continues to Grow with Completion of 7th Training Academy**

The MU Center for Agroforestry hosted its' 7<sup>th</sup> Agroforestry Academy from July 21-26, 2019 in Columbia, Missouri. Twenty-six highly motivated trainees from thirteen states (coast to coast – VA/DC to CA/UT) spent a very full week learning about agroforestry practices and agroforestry planning and design on campus and in the field. Seven years out the Academy has 175 graduates.

A number of “hands-on/how-to” activities were built into the schedule for 2019 including: bee keeping, tree grafting, mushroom cultivation and laying out forested silvopasture plots in existing woodlands. For the fifth year, there was a special emphasis on providing agroforestry training to US military veteran farmers. Seven military veteran farmers received scholarships. Fourteen of the twenty-six academy trainees were farmers/landowners.

In addition to a visit to the MU Horticulture and Agroforestry Research Center showcasing germplasm collections of numerous specialty crops and agroforestry practices, three different landowners were visited during the Academy demonstrating different agroforestry practices (e.g., silvopasture, alley cropping) and specialty crop options (e.g., chestnut, black walnut, pecan, oak, elderberry, pine straw).

Supported by an expert group of trainer/mentors drawn from UMCA, MU Forestry, MU Extension, USDA National Agroforestry Center, Missouri NRCS, and selected farmer educators, groups of trainees participated in an “agroforestry case study design exercise” throughout the week in order to apply what they had learned each day to their case study plan. This culminated in five individual group presentations to the entire Academy including active participation by the “case study farm landowner” at the close of the week.

A post-academy evaluation revealed that 99% of trainees rated the academy as excellent (73%) or good (26%). Trainees ranged in age from ~25 to 65+. One trainee commented *“Great job! This is a well thought out course presented by people that earnestly enjoy teaching. I really learned a lot and had a great time.”*

Stay tuned for dates and details on the 8<sup>th</sup> Agroforestry Academy to be held July 26-31, 2020.