

working together, always learning

the Practical Farmer

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On the cover



Dick Thompson,
Practical Farmers of Iowa
Co-Founder
(1931-2013)

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the Practical Farmer helps keep farmers and friends of farmers in touch with one another through informative articles on the latest on-farm research, demonstration and observation to help all types of farming operations become profitable while caring for the land that sustains them. Provided as a member benefit to supporters, *the Practical Farmer* also updates members on PFI programming and news.

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(Back issues are available upon request.)



LEOPOLD CENTER



Dick Thompson: Always Learning

I first heard of Dick Thompson in 1992. I was living in Washington, D.C. and having a grand time but missing the Midwest. I opened up a magazine at my office, and there was an article on sustainable agriculture, complete with a photo of Dick. There he was, smiling away, at the end of their farm's driveway, with the Thompson cows and buildings in the background.

Soon after I moved back to Iowa, farmer and author Wendell Berry spoke at the PFI winter meeting, so I went out to the Starlite Hotel in Ames to hear him. Dick was bustling around, excited to have Wendell there. I was impressed because Wendell, one of my heroes, made it clear he wasn't much for leaving home and he was there because Dick asked him to be.

When I became a member of Practical Farmers, I pored over the field day guide and even went to a couple of field days. I wasn't a farmer, but Practical Farmers of Iowa was important to me. It was filled with farmers who were making Iowa the kind of place I wanted to live. Then I read Thompson Agriculture Alternatives, the compilation of the research and observations that Dick and Sharon, and son Rex and daughter-in-law Lisa, compiled through the years. Thompson Agriculture Alternatives has a lot of data, a lot of research results, and many kernels of wisdom as well:

Dog of the Issue



Sam and Dan Beard, dairy farmers near Decorah, with their dog Wally.



Sharon and Dick Thompson receiving the Master Researcher award in February 2013 from Larry Kallem.

.....
“That's my goal: to be getting a little cloudy in the eye with age but still seeking and delighting in knowledge until the end.”
.....

► *“The ideas we have learned are to be given away. Knowledge that has been learned is not to be used as prey upon fellow mankind.”*

► *“What a farmer won't do to beat his neighbor by one bushel per acre! This kind of lifestyle is violent and exploits our own beings, our fellowman, and last but not least, we are destroying our environment.”*

► *“The structure of American agriculture is a moral issue. We must realize there is a conflict between our Christian heritage and the over-aggressive capitalism system.”*

It has been wonderful to be part of a group that had its co-founder active with it for 28 years! Dick and Sharon, Larry Kallem and so many others have always been there for Practical Farmers of Iowa while also welcoming others to step in and govern it, build it and watch it grow and change with the times.

I have a strong memory of Dick at last year's Cooperators' Meeting. He was 80 years old and as eager as ever to consider changes that might improve his farm. He was always learning. That's my goal: to be getting a little cloudy in the eye with age but still seeking and delighting in knowledge until the end.

I am glad that we gave Dick and Sharon a Master Researcher award last year at the Cooperators' Meeting – and that we were able to recognize Dick at every annual conference they attended in the seven-plus years I have been with PFI.

But we lost him so quickly! I didn't think my visit with him a week before his death was going to be my last. Sharon survives him: Dick was lucky in his choice of mates. She loved him, was his steady partner in on-farm research and in life, and she nursed him in the end. Peace to you, Sharon, during this transition to life without Dick.

So many of you are new to Practical Farmers and didn't have an opportunity to get to know Dick. On pages 12-15 we have a tribute to him. And watch for more on the Thompson research in future issues.

Working for you,

Aster Yellows in Garlic: PFI Report Confirms Widespread Infection

by Tomoko Ogawa

In 2012 an outbreak of aster yellows – a chronic, systemic plant disease – affected garlic across the Midwest, including the crops of many PFI farmers. The disease, transmitted by the alfalfa leafhopper, is very rare in garlic because, as the insect’s name suggests, it does not usually feed on garlic. Due to the early spring in 2012, however, garlic was the only green crop available when leafhoppers arrived.

Because of its rarity, many vegetable growers did not know how to identify or treat the disease – which causes leaf yellowing, poor germination and stunted bulbs, symptoms that resemble other common garlic ailments. Because of the uncertain cause, and the high cost of new garlic seed, many affected farmers saved healthy-looking bulbs to plant in fall 2012 for their 2013 garlic crop.

In spring 2013, garlic from saved bulbs germinated poorly or not at all. Although the symptoms pointed to aster yellows, farmers initially speculated that dry soils – and thus poor establishment over winter – were to blame. As the season progressed, aster yellows-like symptoms appeared in the maturing crop. Some farmers saw less than half their cloves emerge. Sally Gran, of TableTop Farm, started a discussion on PFI’s horticulture email discussion list, which revealed that many garlic growers were facing similar problems.

Rick Hartmann, of Small Potatoes Farm, suggested further investigation and proposed that PFI conduct diagnostic tests. Because garlic is a popular and valuable crop for many PFI farmers and is a favorite among CSA subscribers, market shoppers and chefs, Practical Farmers agreed to undertake an ad hoc investigation. Results are summarized here, along with feedback from participating farmers and other PFI garlic growers affected by aster yellows.

Testing

Nine PFI farms submitted garlic samples to University of Minnesota Plant Disease Clinic to test for aster yellows. Participating farmers included:

- Thomas Burkhead and Jordan Clasen, Grade A Gardens – Johnston
- Andy and Melissa Dunham, Grinnell Heritage Farm – Grinnell
- Sally Gran, TableTop Farm – Nevada

- Gary Guthrie, Growing Harmony Farm – Nevada
- Susan Jutz, ZJ Farm – Solon
- Tim Landgraf and Jan Libbey, One Step at a Time Gardens – Kanawha
- Derek Roller, Echollective – Iowa City
- Ben Saunders, Wabi Sabi Farm – Granger
- Ellen Walsh-Rosmann and Daniel Rosmann, Pin Oak Place – Harlan.

Farms submitted only garlic that appeared to have symptoms of aster yellows. Samples from eight out of nine cooperators tested

positive for the disease; only the sample from Derek Roller tested negative. Derek’s garlic crop displayed only mild symptoms in 2012 compared to many other Iowa garlic crops, so in his case, perhaps dry soil was the cause.

Garlic Crop Reports From PFI Farmers

Laura Krouse, of Abbe Hills Farm in Mount Vernon, saved her own garlic seed last year and tried to choose only big, healthy bulbs. However, in the rush of planting, she thinks some infected bulbs got stuck in the ground. The garlic came through winter with a survival rate of about 80 percent, but by early spring Laura noticed that yellowing had started on a few plants.



Jordan Clasen and Thomas Burkhead purchased about 600 pounds of garlic from a grower in

Washington state in fall 2012. The crop looked perfect all season long, with close to 95 to 100 percent germination. In early May

Garlic affected by aster yellows at TableTop Farm near Nevada.



.....
Aster yellows in garlic may be a sporadic event due to weather but we will not know until we see what happens in the next couple of years.
 – Dr. Dimitre Mollov

2013, however, they noticed some yellow streaking, cracking and dying back of the lower leaves. Applying a foliar feed had a positive effect on yellowing plants. Jordan and Thomas also noticed that plants grown in and around other cover (weeds, under trees, tall grasses) seemed to be unaffected.



Rick and Stacy Hartmann had more than 98 percent mortality with saved garlic and the opposite with newly purchased garlic. A neighbor who planted exclusively saved garlic had a near total crop loss. Rick and Stacy also noted that softneck varieties were completely destroyed before season's end in 2012, while the hardneck varieties seemed more durable and resistant to the phytoplasma – the bacteria-like organism transmitted by leafhoppers during feeding that is responsible for the disease symptoms.

Mustard Seed Community Farm, northwest of Ames, self-saved its own garlic in 2012 and planted the cloves that didn't look diseased. The garlic had a poor survival rate over the winter. Alice McGary says she and other farm workers had noticed some of the common symptoms of aster yellows in 2012 but didn't know what measures to take.



Joe Lynch and Lonna Nachtigal, of Onion Creek Farm in Ames, planted half saved garlic and half new seed stock from New York.



Though they selected the best of their own cloves to replant, germination of their saved garlic was just 10 to 20 percent. While some plants were fine, others showed disease symptoms.

Ellen Walsh-Rosmann says she will not save garlic as she lost more than 95 percent of her crop grown from saved stock. She was surprised to find out her garlic was infected because she didn't notice anything wrong last year. However, only four out of about 15 pounds that she saved from last

year came up, and even those showed aster yellows symptoms early on. She will not risk planting infected seed again so she will sell everything this year. She has already purchased some new garlic stock from California.

Gary Guthrie will be buying completely new seed stock this year. He does not want any diseased garlic left on the farm from his old stock. When he planted his seed he had no idea how it would affect germination. If Gary had known earlier about the germination factor, he says he would not have saved any seed.



Joe Monahan will also be buying all new garlic this year as last year's seed stock seemed infected. He planted exclusively saved seed last year and only 5 percent emerged this spring. He noticed some of the common symptoms of aster yellows, but didn't know any measures to take against it. Joe wonders if farmers might have to take measures to try to keep garlic from emerging early, such as by using heavy mulch to keep the ground cool.



Derek Rollers' sample was the only one that did not test positive. He will be saving his own stock and also purchasing new. Derek used 95 percent saved seed and had to cull the 5 percent of product he purchased because of aster yellows-like symptoms.



Susan Jutz is planning to use her own garlic stock following the same selection process as in 2012: She selected for large heads without visible symptoms. Although her garlic tested positive for aster yellows, she says she's going to take a chance on using her own stock again because her loss was minimal – though she may purchase a small amount of new stock as backup. Given the volume she plants and the

minimal loss she experienced this year, this plan makes the best financial sense for her.

After talking with ISU plant pathologist Mark Gleason about "the perfect storm" of factors in 2012 that allowed aster yellows to infect garlic, she is hopeful that 2012 was a fluke occurrence. Interestingly, due to a miscommunication with the farmer who did her early spring tillage in 2012, she had a beautiful crop of oats emerging at the same time as the garlic, so the leafhoppers had more food to eat. Mark suggested this was one possible reason for her minimal loss despite her garlic testing positive.

Ben Saunders is not going to save any of his garlic this year, and instead will order new stock from California. Last year he saved various softneck and hardneck garlic and also purchased new stock from Vermont. He purchased "Music," which is a hardneck variety known for consistent production, and says he began to notice aster yellows-like symptoms during the last week of May or early June 2013. He sent in a sample from his newly purchased stock, which tested positive.



Dr. Dimitre Mollov, director of the Plant Disease Clinic at University of Minnesota, says farmers need to determine whether the people they purchase garlic from have had a diagnostic test for aster yellows, since it is not a regulated pathogen. "Because this disease was only seen in Iowa and Minnesota last year, there is not enough collective experience to advise farmers whether it is safe to save seed on their own or purchase in Iowa or Minnesota," Dimitre says. "Aster yellows in garlic may be a sporadic event due to weather but we will not know until we see what happens in the next couple of years." ■

Download the full PFI report, "Aster Yellows in Garlic," at www.practicalfarmers.org/programs/Horticulture.php

Feeding Pasture-Based Cows During the “Off-Season”

by Margaret Dunn

The beauty of grass-fed, pastured beef is that the animals harvest their own feed and distribute their own manure, re-fertilizing the pasture and recycling many of the nutrients they consume. But the Iowa climate doesn't allow for grass to grow year-round. Grazing of the idyllic sun-drenched pasture can't occur for several months out of the year!

How have Practical Farmers tried to keep costs down and manage their animals during the winter? The “best” or “right” tactic depends on the farm. Conversations with farmers, speakers, researchers and educators have revealed a variety of schemes.

The solution taken by many farms is to feed hay or other stored forages from late fall through early spring, when grass finally resumes growth. This method makes sense in some situations. If the farm has more acres than cattle can graze easily, forage will mature and decline in quality, becoming inadequate to meet the needs of lactating cows or finishing steers. Meanwhile, haying or ensiling captures much of the forage quality and nutrition and provides feed for the off-season. Cows may be fed on those same pastures; wasted feed and manure combine to provide carbon and nutrients for the soil.

Gleaning: Another approach is to glean crop fields. Cornstalks actually can provide most of a mature cow's nutritional needs, particularly in a spring calving operation. During the winter, a non-lactating cow with shelter access from the wind and rain has fairly low nutritional demand. Fibrous feedstuffs both meet her nutrient needs and generate more heat when fermented in the rumen, keeping her comfortable. These “leftover” feeds are also extremely cheap.

Stockpiling forage: A third tactic is to stockpile forages and graze those during the winter. For the most part, cattle will dig through snow to find buried forage; the

snow also helps preserve forage quality. Leaving a pasture to grow following a harvest (grazing or haying) in August or September allows for a good balance of forage mass and forage quality.

Grazing cover crops: Somewhere between gleaning crop residues and stockpiling is grazing cover crops. Oats or rye planted on crop fields in late summer or early fall will be available for grazing in the late fall or early winter. While oats will die over the winter, rye will persist and will start regrowing the next spring. So long as cover crop termination dates are adhered to and grazing is managed to prevent compaction, this represents an affordable and environmentally-friendly feed source.

PFI Grazier Feeding Strategies

The general consensus suggests that less hay means more profit: less money spent on fuel, labor and storage to produce hay, or less money spent to buy hay (which is rather costly these days). However, that's not to say stored feeds are bad.



Ray Bratsch-Prince, who farms near Ames in Story County, puts up a fair bit of hay. His 24 cows graze his pastures, about 75 acres, once in the spring; as needed he follows this up with a hay cutting. He finds the forage quality to

be quite acceptable later on. He also hays to take advantage of roadways, waterways and other marginal areas on others' property. While there's an expense of time and fuel, he's importing nutrients, and spares his own acres – allowing him to graze into the first week of December in most years. Once the grazing season really closes down, he feeds a smorgasbord of hay types, concentrating them on hillsides or other areas of low fertility.

Tom Frantzen, who runs Frantzen Farm near New Hampton in Chickasaw County with his wife Irene, also feeds hay to cows in the field, stressing the importance of recycling nutrients. His crop rotation includes corn, soybeans,



small grains and hay. Cows overwinter on fields that will be planted to corn, and are fed dry hay out of inverted tractor tires. The tires get moved around the pasture to ensure manure and nutrient distribution. While hauling bales in the back of a pickup is fast and easy, every other day he uses a mixer wagon to incorporate salt and minerals. While he doesn't relish using the extra diesel, he has improved his mineral balance and likes knowing exactly how much his cows are getting. “Very few nutrients leave the farm,” he says. “The cows are eating hay on fields that once produced hay, returning much of the fertility to the soil.” Combined with a long-term crop rotation, Tom has improved soil fertility and reduced soil erosion.



Dave and Meg Schmidt, who run Troublesome Creek Cattle Company near Exira in Audubon County, are working toward

“Kicking the Hay Habit” after reading the book (by that title) by Jim Gerrish. When weather behaves, their 30-ish head cowherd grazes pastures through the end of September, moves onto cornstalks and cover crops until early December, and then gets stockpiled forage until sometime in January. After that, dry hay is provided; lower-quality at first but increasing toward the last two months before calving, when cow nutritional needs start to increase. When feasible, cover crops are grazed in the spring as well. Last year the cows were on cornstalks much of the winter, which Dave says are “a filler that we really don't want to rely on extensively.” This year they

rented an additional pasture that has been allowed to stockpile forage, and will provide for some of the winter months. Forage tests from prior years show that the stockpiled forage is of higher quality than stored hay, at a much lower cost.



Nathan Anderson, who operates Bobolink Prairie Farm near Cherokee with his wife Sarah, also looks to minimize hay and maximize the use of his crop fields. Cover crops – rye in past years,

though this year he's adding some oats and vetch – are sown on his corn and soybean acres, and his cattle consume both the green cover crops and mature cornstalks. "While the cattle will seek out field corners and low spots where soybeans might have been missed by the combine," he says, "bean stubble is not a great feed source." Last year he kept about 50 head of mature cows, pregnant heifers and weaned calves on the fields, feeding less than two tons of additional stored hay over the course of the winter. Nathan attributes some of the success to paying a little bit extra for Elbon rye, an improved variety that "produces a bit more tonnage and is nice and hardy."

Neal Sawyer

operates Sawyer Beef near Princeton in Scott County. He uses high stocking density grazing throughout the growing season, and gleans a



neighbor's cornfields during the winter. He stresses the importance of strip-grazing the stalks – cows will first seek out any remaining grain; if given too much free rein they'll gorge on enough starch to cause acidosis. By restricting their feed access, he forces them to balance the starch with some roughage. By mid-January he has exhausted the cornfields, and the cattle move onto stockpiled forages and (when needed) supplemental hay. As a marketer of grass-finished beef, he noted



A cow feeds on snow-dusted cornstalks. Cattle will typically dig through the snow to find forage buried beneath.

that waiting to butcher any steers the following spring should be delayed until after grazing has restarted. The new grass lets them put on weight more quickly than they tend to do during the winter, and he's found better flavor and quality when the animals are on fresh forage.



Ron Dunphy, who farms near Creston in Union County, grazes a variety of pastures, both cool-season grass-legume mixtures and some native prairie. In contrast to Neal, he

keeps his stocking rates low, which allows him to let enough forage accumulate to extend grazing year-round. This past winter, following the drought, was one of the first times he's had to feed hay. Once spring came with the odd flush of warm and wet weather, he opted to cut a pasture that grew faster than the cows would graze, just in case. ■

Resources

- ▶ Stay tuned – two-year results from PFI's Winter Feed Monitoring trial will be published soon!
- ▶ Dave Schmidt uses the Mississippi State University Hay Calculator to compare his available forages with his animals' requirements: <http://msucares.com/crops/forages/fertilizer>
- ▶ Dave also recommends making a chart or calendar to determine management changes throughout a cow year. Track estrus and breeding dates, gestation trimesters, and predicted calving dates for each cow or group of cows. From that information you can determine how animals' nutritional needs might change, and anticipate when you might need extra pasture or stored feed.
- ▶ The Iowa Beef Center has published several factsheets about winter feeding: www.iowabeefcenter.org/research_factsheets.html

Landowners: Starting the Conversation with your Farmer (Farmers, you'll want to read this too!)

Farmland owners: How much do you really know about farming on your land? What are your tenants' farming goals and how willing are they to make changes? From the 2008 Iowa Farm and Rural Life Poll, 49 percent of tenants reported communicating with their landlords fewer than three times a year, and 11 percent never communicated with their landlords. The rest reported communicating more than eight times a year. However, as many as two-thirds of tenants have not discussed conservation practices with their landlords.

Here at Practical Farmers, we hear from many landowners who want to increase conservation on their farmland. If you are one of those landowners, start first with conversations with your tenants or farmer partners. You might be surprised at what you learn!

Practical Farmers has been testing a fee-for-service option that would help farmland owners work with their farmer partners to plant cover crops and more. As preparation for that work, Sarah Carlson, PFI's Midwest cover crop research coordinator, has developed some good conversation starter questions:



Barry Kusel, who farms near Manning, owns his own spraying equipment, which lets him decide when to spray.

1. Do the farmer partners own their own spraying equipment? Do they apply their own fertilizer? Pesticides?

WHEN APPLICATIONS are outsourced, the service providers hired will get to farmers' operations when they can. Farmers say: "The smaller a part of a service provider's business they are, the lower they are on the list." The result can be application at the wrong time and less success. Also, the materials being used to control weeds or diseases may be closer to "one size fits all" than site-specific.

Farmers have also commented that if they apply their own fertilizers or pesticides, they are more likely to scout and, over time, to reduce the amount used – or to use several crop protection "tools" in rotation as opposed to solely depending on one tool. They also may be more able to learn and make changes. For example: Farmers who broadcast-apply pesticides might be interested in learning how to "band" instead if their landowners want them to reduce total herbicide usage.

2. What type of tillage practices do your farmer partners use a majority of the time? What time of the year do they till?

REDUCING TILLAGE in a short rotation – like corn-corn or corn-soybean – dramatically decreases the potential for soil erosion. Iowa's Nutrient Reduction Strategy shows 90 percent less phosphorus loss (phosphorus is attached to soil) when a farmer changes from tillage to no-till or reduced tillage. Leaving the soil exposed increases loss. It's in landowners' best interests to protect their investment. Overall soil quality decreases with more tillage due to greater erosion potential and the physical disturbance to soil aggregates with more tillage.

If your tenant is using organically certified or certifiable practices, a certain amount of tillage or soil disturbance may be



Jeff DeWall (pictured here) does not use anhydrous as a nitrogen source because of landowner Helen Gunderson's environmental concerns.

necessary to control weeds. But, again, ask about the number of tools the farmer partner uses to manage weeds, pests and diseases. Tools can include: timing of tillage, cover crops, crop rotation length and crop types, ridge tillage, disease and pest resilient hybrids or varieties, to name a few. Using many tools increases resilience and lessens dependence on one strategy. Also knowing the length of the rotation is important. Rotation length can affect the amount of tillage needed to protect cash crops. Ask if the rotation includes a mix of row crops and pasture-sod-building crops. The less time for sod-building crops in the rotation, the greater the soil exposure and potential for erosion.

3. Do your farming partners use chemicals and / or non-chemical pest management practices? Do they use genetically modified or non-genetically modified corn? Soybeans? Alfalfa?

WEEDS AND PESTS can become resistant to overuse of crop protection tools. You may decide that farmers using chemicals or biotechnology to protect cash crops may be too dependent on a narrow set of tools. Landowners interested in knowing more about which seeds and crop protection their tenants are using should ask more about how many strategies or tools are being used to control pests. It may be more difficult for your farmer partners

to comply with your wishes for increased conservation if fewer tools are currently being used. Maybe suggest one change per year, so that your farmer partners can learn new management skills and how to incorporate other tools successfully.

4. Do your farming partners plant other cash crops besides corn and soybeans? Have they ever planted a cover crop?

THE MORE PLANTS beyond corn and soybeans, the more diversity we will have on the landscape. If your tenants have additional land where they plant crops other than corn or soybeans, they may be more willing to try cover crops or a more diverse rotation (both **in-field practices**) on your farm as well. **Edge-of-field practices** are also important to help reduce soil erosion and add diversity. Examples include grassed waterways, buffers and land in the Conservation Reserve Program. They should be on the farm where needed.

5. How many years will your farming partners be farming?

FARMERS thinking about retirement, of course, are less likely to change their systems. The "old dog, new tricks" problem.

6. How many landlords do your farmer partners have? How many total acres do they farm in addition to yours?

THE MORE FARMS your farmer partner works, the busier the farmer is – especially if those farms are spread over a long driving distance. The more acres and landlord relationships the farmer is managing, the better your communication needs to be in order to begin changes you want to see on your farm with that farmer partner over time.

Finally, there are some questions to ask yourself:

- How much income do you need to derive from the operation?
- How much are you willing to spend annually to maintain your asset?



Francis Blake raises poultry, hogs, dairy cattle and bison near Waukon and uses longer crop rotations.

- What are your farmer partners' biggest concerns when you have conversations? (crop production, soil erosion, tiling, marketing crop, storage, etc)

With Practical Farmers' help, Helen Gunderson held a good conversation this summer with two of her Pochahontas County farmer partners – Denny Flaherty and Jeff DeWall – and learned that they were more conservation-minded than she had originally thought. "In the past, I had told them that I would be more comfortable with a moderate rental rate if I knew they were moving toward using more environmentally-friendly practices," Helens says. "I had been looking for a way

Ask about the number of tools the farmer uses to manage weeds, pests and diseases. Using many tools increases resilience and lessens dependence on one strategy.

to have a serious conversation with them about changes." Practical Farmers provided that opportunity when Helen participated in PFI's test of its fee-for-service project, Practical Ag Services.

In preparation for the meeting, Helen emailed Denny and Jeff a list of questions, including:

1. What were some of your fathers' or grandfathers' common practices that you would never do again because you have learned they are not environmentally sound?
2. What are some environmentally-friendly practices that you have tried but that you have found do not fit well into your farming system?
3. In what ways have you experimented (or are willing to experiment) with: lengthening or changing crop rotations? cover crops? using composted manure? decreasing use of synthetic fertilizers and pesticides? attracting more pollinators? increasing organic matter and microbial activity in the soil and soil health?

Helen made it clear she wasn't giving Denny and Jeff a writing assignment; she was just trying to set the groundwork for their upcoming discussion with Sarah Carlson about using different practices on her land. Through their conversation, Helen learned that Denny and Jeff already did less tillage, reduced their chemical use, and did not use anhydrous as the nitrogen source because they knew of her interest in conservation. Which brings up another good question landowners should ask: In what ways has your farming partner changed practices because of your conservation focus?

"Until we met this summer, I had no clue that avoiding anhydrous use was much more expensive for my tenants," Helen reports. "I realized, as I listened to their conversation, how wise my tenants are." This fall, Denny and Jeff are planting cover crops, and they will plant 70 acres of alfalfa in 2015. ■

Farmland owners and their farming partners: We welcome your input on this article and additional questions. Please send them to erica@practicalfarmers.org.

Landowners: If you might be interested in a PFI consultation with your farmer partner, contact Erica Andorf: erica@practicalfarmers.org or (515) 232-5661.

Mark Your Calendars for "Well Grounded" Join Us January 23-25, 2014

Our farming journey starts with the soil under our feet, and Iowa is blessed with some of the world's best. We may be "well grounded," but the steps we take too often let this solid foundation slip away. Come see how practical people build their farms, families and communities – and plant the deep roots (and routes) that will allow future generations to thrive.

The 2014 Practical Farmers Annual Conference will continue last year's focus on building soils through cover crops and extended rotations. It will examine permaculture and grazing systems. It will showcase profitable vegetable systems, biodiversity on farms, nonfarmers who are building partnerships with farmers, and much more.

Keynote Address

"True Wealth: How Iowa Can Once Again Revolutionize Agriculture"

RICARDO SALVADOR, director and senior scientist, Food and Environment Program, Union of Concerned Scientists



Ricardo Salvador

As senior scientist and director of the Food and Environment Program at Union of Concerned Scientists (UCS) in Washington, D.C., Ricardo Salvador works with citizens, scientists, economists and politicians to transition our current food system into one that grows healthy food using sustainable practices. Before coming to UCS, Dr. Salvador served as a program officer for Food, Health, and Wellbeing with the W.K. Kellogg Foundation. In this capacity, he was responsible for conceptualizing and managing the foundation's food systems programming. He partnered with colleagues to create programs that addressed the connections among food and health, environment, economic development, sovereignty and social justice.

Prior to his stint at the W.K. Kellogg Foundation, Dr. Salvador was an associate professor of agronomy at Iowa State University (ISU). While at ISU, he taught the first course in sustainable agriculture at a land-grant university, which was distributed nationally via satellite beginning in 1989. At ISU he conducted some of the initial academic research on the "community supported agriculture" model of agriculture. He worked with other faculty to develop the nation's first Sustainable Agriculture graduate program

in 2000; Dr. Salvador served as the program's first chair.

In this keynote, he will reveal how Iowa's people and land are assets and capital that can be used wisely to build a better future. The first century of "modern agriculture"

has produced an abundance of learning that can inform the best approaches to this most American of tasks. The keys: understanding that agriculture is about more than farming and business; and understanding clearly the human prospect on planet Earth.

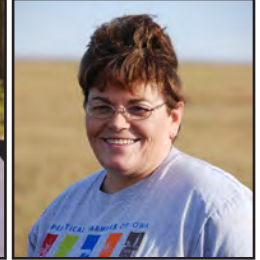
PFI Potluck Party

A FREE event to catch up with old friends and meet new. Please bring food or beverages to share, along with lawn chairs. **Please note:** There are limited outlets for crockpots. Practical Farmers will provide bratwurst, buns, sauerkraut, water and tableware. Thank you to Agri-Cultured Foods and Ni-man Ranch for donating food. Potluck Party Hosts will be Donna Prizgintas and LaVon Griffieon. The potluck will be at CPMI Event Center, 2321 North Loop Drive in Ames (just a few blocks from Best Western Hotel).

WANTED: Posters

Member posters are a tradition at our Annual Conference! Bring a poster about anything that will interest members – share your farm, your research and demonstration projects, your lessons learned. No proprietary products, please.

Mark Shepard



Irene Frantzen

Business Meeting

Join us at 4:45 p.m. on Friday for the latest on Practical Farmers' programming, finances, staffing and more (before the Keynote Address at 5:30 p.m.)

Two Short Courses

JAN. 23, 1-7 PM. AND JAN. 24, 8-11:30 A.M., OAKWOOD ROAD CHURCH, AMES

1). Achieve the Triple Bottom Line with Holistic Management

Learn to clarify your values, develop a holistic goal and achieve a better quality of life through better decision-making. This class will teach about ecological processes and the tools available for management, and you'll learn about different decision-making methods.

Taught by **Ann Adams**, director of Education for Holistic Management International; **Margaret Smith**, a Holistic Management trainer, farmer and value-added extension specialist with Iowa State University; and **Tom and Irene Frantzen**, who practice HM at Frantzen Family Farms near New Hampton.

2). Restoration Agriculture 101

In this short course, Mark Shepard will cover keyline design, agroforestry, fruit and nut polyculture, silvopasture, alley-cropping, and other erosion-eliminating and soil-building production methods. Mark will also talk about evaluating your site and what to look for when purchasing or developing a farm.

Mark Shepard is CEO of Forest Agriculture Enterprises and founder of the Restoration Agriculture Institute. He also runs New Forest Farm, a 106-acre perennial agricultural forest.

Friday Workshops

Rethinking Your Farm in Cover Crops

Learn about cover crop species and how adding them to your farm can improve soil health and the bottom line. Gabe Brown will share his experiences adding multi-species cover crops to his row crop and grazing system. Gabe operates Brown's Ranch, a 5,400-acre operation near Bismarck, N.D. The Brown family practices Holistic Management, zero-till cropping systems, mob grazing, polyculture cover crops and polyculture cash crop rotations.

High Stock-Density Grazing

Hear how Neil Dennis manages his pastures and the changes and progress he's made on his farm as a result of applying Holistic Management principles. Neil and his wife, Barbara, operate Sunnybrae Farm in Wowota, Saskatchewan, where they manage brood cows and more than 800 stocker cattle on about 1,000 acres with stocking densities up to 1.8 million pounds per acre.



Neil Dennis



Sandor Katz

Taking Your High Tunnel to the Next Level

Learn techniques you can use to fine-tune your system. Join Adam Montri as he dives into long-term soil health and fertility; advanced crop scheduling and spacing; irrigation options and application amounts; and marketing winter produce. Adam operates Ten Hens Farm in Bath, Mich., with his wife and daughters.

Grow Farm Family Incomes, Retain Family Harmony

Learn how the families at James Ranch of Durango, Colo., stack separate, independently owned business enterprises (beef cattle, artisan farmstead cheese, vegetables, landscaping trees, pastured poultry, farm tours and an on-farm restaurant), allowing three generations to generate five farm family incomes.



Jake Wederberg
(Pressing Oilseed Crops)

WANTED: Silent Auction Donations

The silent auction brings in useful funds for our Next Generation work. Please donate baked goods, farm-raised products, hand-crafted items, books, farm supplies or anything else you think would fit.

Breakfast Meetings

Join us for a FREE Saturday morning breakfast and stimulating discussion on a variety of topics. Look for a list of topics in the Annual Conference brochure.

Saturday Workshops

- *Tricks of the Trade: Grazing to Improve Soil and Forage Quality*
- *Raising Dough: Financing Your Farm Business*
- *Are You Making Money in Your High Tunnel?*
- *The Iowa Nutrient Reduction Strategy: Cover Crops, Prairie Strips and More*
- *Telling Your Farm Story to Make a Difference*
- *Practical Oat Production 101*
- *Three Profitable Practices in a Three-Crop System*
- *Efficient and Effective Family Meetings*
- *Growing Potatoes: From Source to Store*
- *The Iowa Nutrient Reduction Strategy: Wetlands and Buffers*
- *Pressing Oilseed Crops for Fuel and Feed*
- *Over the Fence: Discussing Spray Drift With Neighbors*
- *Beginners Talk With Experts: Livestock Business Planning*
- *Equipment Innovations for High-Stock Density Grazing*
- *Estate Planning for the Farm*
- *The Iowa Nutrient Reduction Strategy: Conservation District Commissioners' Experiences*
- *Weathering the Weather*
- *Growing Organic Oilseed Crops*
- *Institutional Sales: Partnering with College Dining Services*

The Art of Fermentation

Find out how simple it is to make your own kimchi, kefir and other fermented delicacies. Learn about the healing qualities and nutritional importance of live-culture ferments, and empower yourself with simple fermentation techniques. Taught by "fermentation revivalist" Sandor Katz, an author, teacher and avid advocate for fermented food.

Researchers' Experiences: The Iowa Nutrient Reduction Strategy

IN PARTNERSHIP WITH IOWA LEARNING FARMS

Learn how you can use the information in this document to make on-farm changes. This moderated discussion will feature researchers with extensive experience in nutrient reduction strategies: Mark Rasmussen, director of the Leopold Center for Sustainable Agriculture; Tom Kaspar, plant physiologist at the USDA-ARS National Soil Tilth Laboratory; Bill Crumpton, environmental science associate professor at ISU; Barb Stewart, state agronomist for the Natural Resources Conservation Service; and Matt Helmers, associate professor in Agriculture and Biosystems Engineering at ISU.

In the Black: Eight Years of Vegetable Budgets

In this session, Laura Frerichs will detail her meticulous methods for farm budgeting and record-keeping. She will share detailed budgets for the first eight years of her farm business. Laura and her husband, Adam Cullip, farm 7 acres of certified organic vegetables and herbs on a 40-acre farm near Hutchinson, Minn., supplying a 150-member CSA and selling to local retailers, restaurants and at the Mill City Farmers Market in Minneapolis. ■

Laura Frerichs



Dan Wilson
(Practical Oat Production)



Cheryl Hopkins
(Beginners Talk With Experts)

PFI Says Goodbye to Its Co-Founder Dick Thompson

by Jean Caspers-Simmet

Friends remembered Boone farmer and master researcher Dick Thompson on Aug. 21 as a guiding light for Practical Farmers of Iowa, the organization he co-founded in 1985. Thompson died Aug. 17 of bone cancer.

Thompson and his wife, Sharon, hosted more than 41,000 visitors and conducted more than 52 research projects on their farm since 1987. On-farm research is at the heart of Practical Farmers of Iowa and since the organization's inception, Thompson led the way. He and Sharon were recognized as Master Researchers of Practical Farmers in 2013, and Thompson last presented his research results at the 2013 PFI Annual Conference.

The Thompsons farmed with their son Rex on a diverse 300-acre crop and livestock farm. The couple started farming in 1958 with high inputs of purchased fertilizer, herbicides and insecticides that were required with their continuous corn program. In 1968, they changed back to a corn-soybeans-corn-oats-hay rotation. Among their most well-known studies was a comparison of labor and management return for their five-year rotation, which they showed to be continuously more profitable than the return for corn-soybean rotations in Boone County from 1988 to 2012. The research results are available at www.practicalfarmers.org.

Thompson's family made an arrangement for his casket that illustrated his diverse farming operation of hogs, cattle, corn, soybeans, oats and hay.

He is survived by Sharon; three sons: Roger and wife Barb, Rex and wife Lisa, all of Boone, and Ryan and wife Duanna of Ogden; a daughter Renae VanZee of Ankeny; 11 grandchildren; and nine great-grandchildren.

Ron Rosmann, who farms with his family near Harlan, first met Thompson in 1982. Rosmann and a carload of neighboring farmers stopped first at an Arcadia organic farmer's field day. The farmer was using a product called Wonderlife, a humus product mined in Texas. Rosmann said that even though he was impressed with the farmer's crops and his rotations, he was not impressed with the sales pitch from the Wonderlife people.

"Then we went to Dick's," Rosmann said. "He of course was not selling anything. He was asking questions. He was asking them in a scientific approach which meant randomized and replicated side-by-side comparisons. He immediately said he did not have the answers but he was starting to ask the right questions. This impressed me a great deal. He had an open mind."

Thompson was Rosmann's mentor for ridge-till without herbicides.

"He always had time to talk to me when I had questions or concerns no matter what the time of day was," Rosmann said. "I think perhaps what I admired the most about him was his humility and recognition that

Mother Nature was really doing the 'heavy lifting'. He was just enabling and assisting and cooperating with nature as an ally not as an adversary. We will all miss his wisdom and his keen mind."

Tom Frantzen, who farms near Alta Vista with his wife, Irene, and son, James, said he never met anyone more dedicated to the well-being of farmers and rural communities than Thompson.

"He lived his entire life that way," Tom said. "One time I asked Dick what his hobbies were. He got a strange look on his face and said, 'PFI.' He was totally dedicated. I heard Dick say recently that farmers will have to figure out what they want more, a neighbor, or the neighbor's land. Do we want consolidation to the point that we have nobody left, or do we want people living in our communities?"

Thompson was a great listener, Tom said.

"He knew how to work with a lot of different people in different situations," Tom said. "We had people with really strong differences of opinion on the PFI board, and he knew how to handle that well."

Irene Frantzen wrote these lines about Thompson in the sympathy card she and Tom gave to Sharon Thompson: "A thinker and a doer, a leader and a listener, Dick was totally dedicated to farming and rural communities. Being genuinely humble and courageous, he was a fine example to us all. His innovations and visions made a difference in all our lives. None of us would be where we are at today, if not for his selfless guidance and compassion. We will truly miss our dear friend and cherish our many memories, as we continue to carry on our PFI mission."

Irene referred to Thompson, who generally wore bib overalls and a red shirt with a notebook in his pocket, as the godfather of PFI.

(Continued on next page) 

“We don't just grow crops, we grow people.”



▲ Above: Dick and Sharon entertain a crop of children attending PFI Camp.

▼ Below: The importance of the cow according to Dick Thompson: "When the cow leaves, the rotation changes to all row crops: No need for oats or hay, less ground cover, soil erosion increases, no chores for kids, input costs increase, income decreases, off-farm work, more acres, fewer farmers, weakened family, community downgrades."

“Problems and failures are opportunities for change. We have a choice to be bitter or to let those bumps in the road make us better people.”



"He was a good godfather, unlike the one in the movies," Irene said. "Without his and Larry Kallem's groundwork and initial steps, where would any of us be today? He was our leader and he brought more than just valuable information and the how to's of randomized and replicated trials, he also gave us opportunities for farmers to network with one another through field days, cooperator meetings and the annual meeting. He cared about all of us and created this wonderful family among the

membership. PFI is truly a family of friends. Dick always said, 'focus on the practical.' He lived those words every day of his life."

"Dick Thompson was a curious, highly principled, wise, and humble man," said PFI co-founder Larry Kallem. "He was exceedingly generous with the knowledge he gained in a lifetime of on-farm research into profitable and constructive farming practices. He mentored many hundreds of people and affected the lives of thousands,

some of them in other parts of the world, as they sought to follow what he did. He changed lives for the better."

Pastor Clair Hein of Waterloo, Thompson's friend since childhood, drew from Psalm 23, the Good Shepherd, at [the August] funeral service at Central Christian Church in Boone.

(Continued on page 14) →

◀ (Continued from page 13)

“Our experience tells us that there are no quick answers or one special recipe to solve agriculture’s problems. We find ourselves asking more questions each day and hope we are asking the right questions. We will share experiences and principles and you will have to do the sorting. We would like you to consider adapting our ideas to your situation, rather than outright adopting them....”

– Dick and Sharon Thompson, *Thompson Agriculture Alternatives*



“.....
**Get along,
but don't go
along.**

– Dick
Thompson
.....”



“People ask us what brought about the changes in our lifestyle. These changes are connected with our Christian experiences....The real change started taking place in 1967, when we began learning about the Holy Spirit. This is when Dick realized that he was caught up with things, building a kingdom with sheds, silos, cement floors and more land. Enough was never enough and quick was never quick enough. We were to the place where we were looking for something better....We are led by the Spirit and walk by the Spirit. This is to be a normal, natural way of life, not something spectacular or spooky....Life has taken on a real purpose and definite direction....”

– Dick and Sharon Thompson, *Thompson Agriculture Alternatives*

“.....
**... What I admired the
most about him was his
humility and recognition
that Mother Nature was
really doing the 'heavy
lifting'. He was just
enabling and assisting and
cooperating with nature as
an ally not as an adversary.**

– Ron Rosmann”

“Not only was God his shepherd, but Dick modeled shepherding in his life,” Hein said.

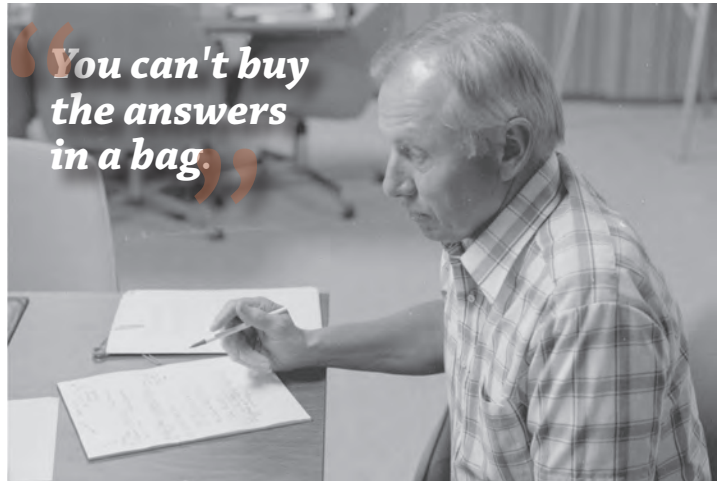
He pointed to the legacy Thompson left in sustainable agriculture. He remembered a visit from the Thompsons in the 1960s when his friend shared a vision for farming practices that would be more sustainable than those currently in use, that would be profitable yet good for the environment and the community.

“Dick continued on-farm research to verify that vision,” Hein said. “His vision to organize and launch Practical Farmers

of Iowa was a great accomplishment. PFI changed people's lives...Dick knew that God was in charge, that God was his strength and his protector,” Hein said. “Dick was fulfilled by his family whom he loved dearly. He loved the farm. He loved his cattle. To be an innovator in sustainable agriculture practices he had to incur the ridicule of others, yet Dick was confident what he was doing was what God told him to do.”

This article originally appeared in Farm News and is reprinted here with permission. ■

“Divine intervention in our lives caused all these things to fall into place. We aren’t that smart to figure all of this out on our own.”



“You can't buy the answers in a bag.”

A Man Outstanding in His Field

— A song written and performed by Rick Exner at Dick Thompson’s funeral

There is a man outstanding in his field
 After all is said and done, and the day begins to yield.
 The mist that rose above the morning dew comes back down a gritty haze
 Of gravel road and right-of-ways that’s sandpaper to the gaze and pepper to the nose.
 At every grove and silo on this road
 There are lives upon the land and a story to be told.
 A hand was played. A hand was given too.
 And so the seed was sown, and with nurture it has grown into a place to call your own,
 As sweet as homemade lemonade.
 The open hands are ready to receive
 An idea from the air—or wherever else he can retrieve.
 To understand, you simply need to see
 What the land expects of me, and of course the family
 And the key will often be, in what is there at hand.
 There is a man outstanding in his field
 After all is said and done, and the day begins to yield.
 Now where he’s kneeled, the seedling’s pushing through
 And the voice of one so dear, that only he will hear
 Just reminds him he is here outstanding in his field.



Clockwise from top left: 1). Dick stands by some of the copious on-farm research data he produced over nearly three decades. 2). Dick at a PFI board meeting. 3). Sharon and Dick stand by a display highlighting their cover crop research. 4). Dick chats with Mark Peterson and Craig Fleischman at the 2013 Cooperators' Meeting.

“Be a good listener, especially to those close to you. Be a good observer. Be slow to speak, engage your brain before opening your mouth.”

PLEASE JOIN US!

"That's the latest word. Not the last word."
 -PFI Co-Founder Dick Thompson (1931-2013)

The Latest Word: A Tribute to Dick Thompson
 By those continuing his work in sustainable agriculture

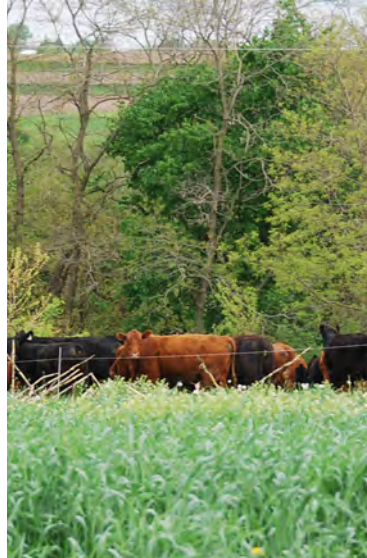
Thursday, Dec. 5, 2013 ~ Quality Inn & Suites Starlite Village ~
 2601 East 13th St. ~ Ames ~ 5 pm cocktails ~ 6 pm dinner

Tributes by:

- Maria Rosmann – Rosmann Family Farms
- Rick Hartmann – Small Potatoes Farm
- Matt Liebman – Henry Wallace Chair for Sustainable Agriculture and agronomy professor, Iowa State University
- Master Researcher award presented to Rick Exner, long-time PFI On-farm Research Coordinator

RSVP REQUIRED

Contact Lauren Zastrow at lauren@practicalfarmers.org or (515) 232-5661 by **Wednesday, Nov. 27.**



Top Row: 1). Attendees chat on the wagon ride to the crop fields at this March 28 cover crop field day near Red Oak, held in partnership with Iowa Learning Farms (photo courtesy of ILF). **2).** Cattle graze at Dan Specht's farm near McGregor. **3).** Dan Specht (left) welcomes visitors to learn about his perennial forage and marketing systems and see his grass-fed beef herd at his May 22 field day. This was Dan's final field day. He was humbled that nearly 60 people showed up to see his farm and learn about his management practices.

Middle Row: 1). Kent Swanson (holding shovel) shows attendees a soil root pit on his farm near Red Oak at the March 28 event (photo courtesy of ILF). **2).** PFI member Jeff Seago handles a soil clump with cover crop on the Gary Kregel farm near Elkader at this April 4 field day, held in partnership with Iowa Learning Farms (photo courtesy of ILF).

Bottom Row: 1). Two Brandenburg boys at Tim Landgraf and Jan Libbey's June 23 field day learn what it takes to generate their own energy at PFI's Energy Generation and Conservation demonstration, developed by Rich Schuler (left), on-farm energy consultant for PFI. **2).** Kim Alexander demonstrates proper techniques for safe, humane and quality on-farm poultry processing at his June 5 field day near Smithland.



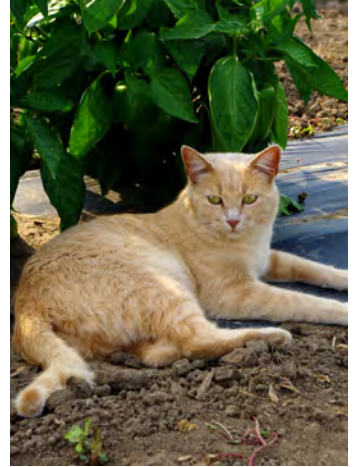


Top Row: 1). Guests at Ron Dunphy's June 25 field day, held as part of the 2013 Iowa Grazing Conference, look at a handout. **2).** A sun-lit stained glass panel illuminates the bar at Worth Brewing Co. in Northwood. **3).** Doug Lundgren (right) samples beer and converses with fellow PFI member Darwin Pierce at the Worth Brewing Co. field day on July 18, hosted by owners Peter Ausehus and Margaret Bishop.

Middle Row: 1). Jeremy Peake (left) describes pasture management and streambank restoration practices he and his wife, Jodi, have implemented to help protect a trout stream that runs through one of their fields at this June 28 field day, held with Northeast Iowa Graziers. **2).** Neal Sawyer talks to visitors at his July 11 field day near Princeton.

Left: Tom Cory and son Luke move some of their 225 ewes during a demonstration of their fencing and rotational grazing setup at their July 15 field day near Elkhart.

2013 Field Days



Top Row: 1). Guests enjoy a fresh lunch at Eric Sessions and Sara Peterson's July 21 field day near Decorah. **2).** Stacy Hartmann (at right of white box) discusses some of Small Potatoes Farm's CSA packing protocols with guests at her Aug. 3 field day. **3).** A resident cat at Scattergood Friends School finds a comfy shade shelter under a pepper plant during the Aug. 11 field day near West Branch.



Left: Cyclists enjoy a break and a healthy snack at Radiance Dairy near Fairfield on Aug. 3 along this year's RAGBRAI route.

Right: Grant Schultz examines flowering buckwheat with another guest at the Scattergood Friends School field day, hosted by Mark Quee and Dana Foster.

Below: Arlyn Kauffman (left) discusses how planting soybeans into a heavy rye cover crop helped suppress weeds at this Aug. 1 event near Weldon, held with Iowa Learning Farms (photo courtesy of ILF).





Top Row: 1). Guests prepare to take a wagon ride to see Berry Patch Farm's fields at Dean and Judy Henry's Aug. 26 field day. **2).** A large crowd showed up at Grinnell Heritage Farm on Aug. 22 to hear Andrew and Melissa Dunham discuss their farm's recordkeeping practices. **3).** Morgan Hoenig (on tractor) demonstrates a three-point tool bar and undercutter at her Sept. 4 event near Mount Pleasant.

Above: More than 50 farmers showed up Aug. 6 at PFI member Steve Berger's (far left) farm near Bloomfield to see his cover-cropped fields and learn about using cover crops to build soil health and reduce erosion. The event was held in partnership with Iowa Learning Farms. (Photo courtesy of ILF). **Above Right:** Visitors tour Kathy, Adam and Julie Hohl's Retail Barn on Sept. 4 and learn how the family created a unique agritourism business on their farm near Donnellson. **Right:** Maria Rosmann talks to guests about her on-farm store, Farm Sweet Farm, at the field day she and husband Ron (left) held Sept. 6 on their farm near Harlan.



Below: Visitors at Francis and Susan Thicke's Sept. 14 field day were able to get close to the Thickeys' dairy cows. **Below Right:** John Wesselius (right) talks about his mobile chicken coop with guests at his Sept. 10 field day near Sioux Center.



Heating a High Tunnel With Compost Heat

by Liz Kolbe

Composting is a powerful and efficient tool for managing farm waste, quickly decomposing organic matter – from cattle carcasses to tomatoes – in only a few months. All that work generates heat, ideally a stable 145 degrees Fahrenheit. Rich Schuler, an engineer working with PFI, is trying to harness compost heat to warm a high tunnel for vegetable production season extension. Rich is building a prototype for compost heat extraction at TableTop Farm near Nevada.

The initial prototype will have the heating capacity of about 6 gallons of liquid propane (LP); the capacity is replenished as water and air are cycled and warmed by the compost. If the system operates as designed, it will significantly lower the energy use and cost of heating the high tunnel and provide high-quality compost for use on the 17-acre vegetable farm.

The Pilot Project: Soper Farms

The idea started at Soper Farms, near Emmetsburg, in 2011. Developing a strategy for farm diversification, Harn Soper wanted to reduce the farm's energy use and provide more sustainable, on-farm energy sources. Harn had all the nutrient-rich ingredients for a great composting system: manure, vegetable waste, poultry litter and cattle bedding. He and Rich envisioned a two-part energy production system using aerobic (with oxygen) and anaerobic (without oxygen) processes. The aerobic composting stage would produce heat; the heat would then be used to jump-start the anaerobic process to produce biogas. Rich built a proof-of-concept model at Soper Farms, but the energy production was immense and the compost quality was disappointing.

When the pilot project at Soper Farm concluded, Rich kept working. He learned how to make higher quality compost and experimented with compost-heat units on his patio. Soon he connected with

Sally Gran, co-owner and operator of TableTop Farm. Rich's passion for energy conservation and on-farm renewable energy production aligned well with an issue that Sally and other vegetable farmers are facing: high energy use and costs for season extension.

Seeking a More Efficient High Tunnel

To be competitive as a CSA or market farmer, you need to have saleable crops as long as possible. Practices for season extension include anything that gives a farmer more growing days: row covers, cold storage coolers, early- or late-season varieties, transplanting starts and – in the case of TableTop Farm – a heated high tunnel. The high tunnel gives TableTop a bump on the season for cucumbers and tomatoes, Sally says, and also allows the farm to do greens earlier in the spring and later into the fall.

Many assume the benefit of being the first to market with tomatoes is the price premium, but Sally sees it differently. "We usually increase the price a little for early-season produce, but the price increase alone may not justify the energy use and

expenses," she says. "Having produce earlier draws people to our stand; it helps us sell our other products and build a customer base that will last the whole season."

In addition, Sally can start her own tomatoes to transplant into the field. Though the seedlings take up little space in the high tunnel, they are high-value, she says. "Think of the income generation potential of 2,000 tomato plants – and what the loss would be if we were to lose those on a cold day!"

To prevent that loss, TableTop spent \$1,400 to install and back up a heater in its high tunnel. "Our system is not very efficient," Sally says. "We were getting up at 4:30 in the morning to change the gas line on really cold nights. It was a big money sink, but what else could we do?" Besides being labor inefficient, the heater was installed on the ceiling of the high tunnel, which facilitated rapid heat loss and resulted in high energy costs: almost \$1,200 in LP use.

Given these challenges, working with Rich was an easy decision for Sally. Not only will the aerobic compost heat extraction system help lower energy costs (and energy use) for her farm, it will help increase the quality

Bruno Fullador (right) and Eric Armbricht prepare the compost pile at TableTop Farm.



of her compost. Rich identifies three similar goals for the project: 1). To make great compost; 2). For farmers to use less fuel, and 3). To eliminate the need to turn the compost pile, instead using pump aeration. How does this system work to accomplish these goals?

From LP- to Compost-Heated High Tunnel

First, to learn how to produce high-quality compost, Rich invited Bruno Follador, a biodynamic researcher specializing in compost, to help build TableTop's first new compost pile (a blog post about the day is available on PFI's website). Good compost requires a mixture of manure, vegetable scraps or vegetation, and soil. When these elements are properly balanced, water is added until the compost pile is very moist, but not so wet it can't breathe. This balance is difficult on vegetable farms, where field scraps have an extremely high water content – think tomatoes and melons. Without proper management, a compost pile at a vegetable farm can quickly become unpleasantly putrid.

Luckily, a cattle barn a mile away can provide TableTop with bedding and manure to mix with its field waste. After the proper mix is established, the pile is covered with a compost fleece (to prevent runoff and water-logging) and cured (cooked in its own heat) for several months. Usually, the pile needs to be turned two or three times during this process to bring in additional oxygen.

But eliminating the turning is critical to the success of the compost heat extraction system at TableTop. To understand how Rich plans to bypass that critical step, let's walk through the whole system:

Materials: These are nothing fancy – you can buy everything at a hardware store, off the shelf. The only relatively uncommon item are the 275-gallon food-grade plastic totes (you can find them used on Craigslist). The structure is composed of:

- plywood
- two-by-fours
- foam board insulation
- gravel and
- copper pipes.



Construction of the compost heat extraction system. When completed, the unit will be insulated and closed, only opened to "fluff" or refresh compost.

Within that structure are:

- two blower fans
- the plastic totes
- a heat exchanger
- the compost.

The system operates by pumping air into the compost from the bottom. As the air heats inside the compost it rises to the top and moves out into the pipes. The pipes connect to a heat exchanger with the plastic totes, which are filled with water. The heat enters at the bottom of the water tote, which causes some convection within the tote. As the hot water rises to the top, it heats another set of pipes, filled with a separate water system that runs into pex tubing, under the soil of the high tunnel. The water returns to the unit to be re-heated by the system.

To maximize efficiency the system can circulate its warmed air through the compost, or it can draw air from the outside to regulate temperature and oxygen levels. The pump to draw ambient air is controlled by an oxygen sensor on the exhaust pipe coming out of the compost. The pumps and blowers are powered by a solar photovoltaic panel. The direct heating of the soil using the pex tubing, which is a common high tunnel practice, also increases the efficiency of the heat drawn from to compost compared to the ceiling-mounted furnace.

By using the blowers to move air through the compost, Rich accomplishes several goals:

- 1). He distributes the compost-generated heat throughout the pile (this is helped by the well-insulated box) allowing the compost to cure evenly.
- 2). He eliminates the need to turn the pile, though it may need occasional "fluffing."
- 3). Because the air moves the heat out of the compost, no pipes or tubes run through the compost – it is unobstructed. This makes loading and unloading the compost much easier; only a few scoops with a Bobcat rather than tedious shoveling around pipes.

Though still under construction, the heat extraction system should be ready to use when Sally moves her high tunnel over the pex tubing and plants her fall greens. Although she and Rich are both excited by the prospect of renewable energy and good compost, they recognize this is only a prototype. Says Rich: "Ideally we want to build a system that provides 80 percent of the efficiency at 20 percent of the cost of this prototype." ■

Practical Farmers' work on compost heat extraction has been funded by Soper Farms and The Ceres Foundation.

Read Liz's Aug. 1 blog post from the compost build and see more photos at practicalfarmers.org/blog/2013/tabletop-farm-compost-build-for-greenhouse-heat

Timeline of Farm Succession at Center View Farms Co. Farm

by Sally Worley

Wendy Johnson is the fourth generation of her family to work the ground at the family farm near Charles City. But her journey back to the farm was far from straightforward. Like her father, grandfather and great-grandfather before her, her story was one of migration, travel and an eventual, inevitable, calling to return to the land. In coming home, she brought full-circle a farming tradition that started nearly 100 years and three generations before in Germany.

GENERATION #1: Carl Johann and Amalie Johnson

Her father, Erwin Johnson, is a first-generation American, but the third generation of his family to farm in America. Erwin's grandparents were farm workers in Germany who packed up and moved with their son, Herbert (Erwin's dad), to the United States in 1913.

Carl and Amalie worked as itinerant farmers for 17 years in the Ida Grove area before moving to the Charles City area, renting ground and starting farming on their own. In the late 1930s, Carl was able to purchase 160 acres of his own land.

GENERATION #2: Herbert and Thelma Johnson

Erwin's father eventually took over the farm and increased its size to 400 acres. "My dad was a good farmer," Erwin says. "He worked hard, did things the right way, cared for the farm and the soils."

GENERATION #3: Erwin and Yoshiko Johnson

Currently, Erwin owns just under 1,000 acres and rents around 200 acres from two other landowners, farming a total of 1,200 acres.

Erwin was raised 2 miles from his current home. After graduating from Iowa State University with a degree in Agriculture Education, he lived in Laos for four years

working for the U.S. State Department. He met Yoshiko in Vientiane, Laos. They married and stayed overseas for six more months before coming back to Iowa.

Erwin applied and was accepted into graduate school. Driving home after touring a school, he realized he was more interested in the practice of agricultural economics than the academics of it. At the same time, Yoshiko expressed an interest in settling down, having a sense of place and starting a family.

Erwin and Yoshiko started renting land from his parents in 1973 with a fifty-fifty share arrangement. In this common rental arrangement, the landlord provides land and pays property taxes. The tenant provides labor and machinery. Costs for inputs such as seeds and chemicals are split fifty-fifty, as is the harvest or income check.

Farm transition to Erwin started naturally after he came back to farm. Erwin: "I soon learned my dad didn't have the desire to do certain things, like recordkeeping and marketing, which I loved to do and was skilled at."

In the late 1970s, Yoshiko and Erwin had their own farming operation, part of which involved renting land from his parents. Erwin: "We put the two entities (his own and his parents') into one corporation and became employees of the business." Erwin became farm manager and he, Yoshiko and his parents were the four main shareholders.

"When there were strategic planning or capital investment decisions to be made, we would sit down together, talk it over and come to an agreement." The younger generation steadily took on more responsibility. Through stock share gifting, its stock in the corporation increased and the older generation's stock decreased. Erwin's three sisters started out with non-voting shares of the corporation. In time the corporation bought out the sisters' shares at their request.

Erwin, Yoshiko and Erwin's parents all read profusely about farm succession, and the two generations established estate plans. "We created goals ahead of time: Yoshiko's and my goals, Herbert and Thelma's goals," Erwin recalls. "When we sat down to establish an estate plan, we had to figure out how to put them together. When my parents passed away, the estate plan worked exactly as we designed it. It was seamless."

Erwin and Yoshiko are majority owners of the corporation. Their daughters Amy and Wendy are small shareholders. Erwin: "Now we're getting ready to go through this again."

GENERATION #4: Wendy Johnson and Johnny Rafkin

In high school Wendy didn't have any interest in farming. "I saw how hard my dad worked, and growing up in the '80s, the future of agriculture looked grim," Wendy says.

She had the same interest in traveling as her dad, however, and after college explored different careers and places to live, including Los Angeles, San Diego and Brazil. Starting in 2002, she came back to the farm each fall to help her dad harvest. During this time, she started feeling like she "wanted something more honest" than the clothing design industry, as well as the need to feel settled and closer to her roots. She had enjoyed gardening in her L.A. backyard and recalls thinking she could be growing her own food for a job somewhere "and on a much larger scale."

Meanwhile, Erwin was thinking about retirement and needed to make some decisions about the future of the farm. He told both his daughters they had a chance to take over a "profitable, thriving business," but would need to come back before he retired. "I didn't want to shut the business down and open it up again," Erwin says.

He didn't have high hopes Amy or Wendy would come back to farm, so was pleasantly surprised when Wendy decided to.

.....
We created goals ahead of time: Yoshiko's and my goals, Herbert and Thelma's goals. When we sat down to establish an estate plan, we had to figure out how to put them together. When my parents passed away, the estate plan worked exactly as we designed it.

.....
 — Erwin Johnson
.....

Besides her other musings about the possibility of farming, the death of Wendy's grandmother, Thelma, in 2009 affected her deeply. "I started to reminisce and think about the future of the farm. All the work my great-grandfather, my grandfather and my father did would just disappear," Wendy says. "With my grandmother's passing, I discovered that continuing that was really important to me."

She made the decision to come back to rural Iowa and told Johnny (then her boyfriend, now her husband), that she wanted to come home. Born and raised in L.A., he didn't know anything about farming. She gave him a year to decide. Wendy: "At the end of that year he was ready to go."

Wendy and Johnny now live 2 miles from Erwin and Yoshiko. They started farming with Erwin on Sept. 1, 2010. Around the time Wendy expressed interest in coming back, Erwin's cousin Doug Johnson also wanted to get back into farming. He had farmed with Herbert in the late 1970s, had a natural ability with mechanics and had worked for the National Resources Conservation Service for more than 30 years.

Doug came on board Sept. 1, 2013. Wendy: "Now we have an abundance of labor but dad's still working as hard as he used to."



Wendy (left) poses next to cousin Doug, mother Yoshiko, father Erwin Johnson and the family dog, Aki, at their Charles City farm.

As Wendy and Johnny gain experience, they are slowly taking on responsibilities. They manage the sheep flock, an old enterprise on the farm. Wendy is also marketing the farm's hay.

Differing Visions, Unified Goal

Wendy and Doug share an interest in organic and natural farming techniques, while Erwin says he has "a more industrial mentality" of what it means for a farm to be sustainable: He equates sustainability with profitability, and envisions Center View Farms Co. Farm expanding into the future. "Farming is a low-margin business over a continuum," Erwin says. "We have excess labor and need to generate more income."

Wendy's vision differs from her dad's, but she wants to integrate his vision with what she wants to see happen. "So far, soybeans and corn have been very good for this operation. At the same time, Doug and I would feel better about the farm if we changed some things."

Erwin has said that if she comes up with a budget showing how organic farming is profitable, he'll rent Wendy land – or she and Johnny can rent land elsewhere and try it on their own. But as a beginner,

Wendy says she doesn't feel confident enough to do that yet. "First I have to learn the conventional side."

Her dad has challenged her to double the farm, but she wonders if they can instead "grow profit by transitioning to organic or by diversifying into other small grains."

Wendy, Erwin and Doug are open about their differing views and working amicably to integrate them. They put together budgets for each possible enterprise. "My counsel with Wendy is, whatever you do, there has to be profit there," Erwin says. "Wendy and Doug are thinking more natural. That can be very sustainable too. As long as Wendy manages the farm so it's profitable, it's up to her how she does that."

Regardless of the eventual direction, Erwin feels optimistic about the farm's future. "With the talent we have sitting here at the table, I'm confident things are going to move in the right direction." ■

Some of Erwin's Recommended Resources:

- **Center for Financial Resources' FINPACK:**
www.cffm.umn.edu/FINPACK/
- **Iowa State University's Ag Decision Maker:**
www.extension.iastate.edu/agdm/

Food Safety Modernization Act: Comments Wanted by Nov. 15

by Drake Larsen

"I am not opposed to food safety regulations," Andy Dunham told me when we met at Grinnell Heritage Farm – which he stewards with his wife, Melissa – to discuss the new food safety rules, "but I worry that these new rules, if not more carefully thought out, will place real burdens on beginning farmers and small farms."

The Food Safety Modernization Act (FSMA) is the first major overhaul of U.S. food safety rules since 1938. FSMA covers two broad sets of rules: The Produce Rule covers farmers that grow, harvest, pack or store fruits and vegetables; the Preventative Controls Rule covers businesses that process, manufacture, pack or hold food including meat. The regulations focus on addressing food safety risks from microbial pathogen contamination.

The new legislation was signed into law in early 2011. The new rules are currently in the rulemaking stage, meaning they are turning the bill into the actual rules to be used on the ground. Under this review process, the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) is open to public comment through Nov. 15, 2013. Farmers and others affected by the bill are encouraged to learn more and submit comments.

"There are a number of issues in the proposed rules that have raised red flags," Andy says. Most glaring to him: manure and compost application restrictions; conflicts with conservation practices; restrictions on mixed crops and livestock; water use testing requirements; and costly recordkeeping.

Food safety is of the utmost importance to Grinnell Heritage Farm. "Our usage of animal manures fully complies with National Organic Program standards and allows us to effectively use on-farm sources of fertilizer," Andy says. "Not only does making our own compost and fertilizer on the farm make financial sense, it also makes environmental sense." Andy feels the draft FSMA rules conflict with organic standards governing use of manure and compost – and will render manure use impossible due to the excessive intervals that FSMA requires between application and harvest. The rules also create barriers to the use of on-farm compost.

Conservation practices are another important part of Grinnell Heritage Farm. Beetle banks, buffers, and native shrubs

and trees have been planted as part of an integrated pest management plan. Andy says that because of "this beneficial wildlife habitat . . . we are beginning to see the benefits of reduced pest pressure and, subsequently, we use fewer organically-certified pest control products."

However, the proposed rules do not clearly separate beneficial conservation from the potential for contamination from

"I am not opposed to food safety regulations, but I worry that these new rules, if not more carefully thought out, will place real burdens on beginning farmers and small farms."

– Andy Dunham

wildlife. For instance, wildlife and their droppings are to be treated like a case of grazing or manure application, whereby the harvest may be restricted for perimeter around each wildlife sighting. Unless the regulations are better defined, they may discourage the use of conservation and support for biodiversity in the future. Andy thinks he and Melissa might need to remove some conservation practices at Grinnell Heritage Farm in order to

comply. Federal cost-share through the Natural Resources Conservation Service's Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) helped pay to plant these features just a few years ago. "If implemented," Andy laments, "these federal programs will contradict each other."

"The biggest danger I see in the new rules is the costs it will place on small farms," Andy says. Based on information from the National Sustainable Agriculture Coalition, Andy estimates the new rules could cost his farm \$12,000 to \$15,000 per year to comply. Much of this cost would come as superfluous recordkeeping, which is especially complicated given the diversity of crops and staggered planting schedule on his farm.

Other costs could more directly hit the checkbook. For example, agriculture water rules in the new law could require additional testing of irrigation and pack house water. Water testing is something the Dunhams already do on their farm, but the new rules may require monthly testing of several water outlets – at an estimated cost of nearly \$100 for each sample.

These are just a few of the concerns Andy raised in his comment to the FDA on the proposed rules. In addition, Andy is asking the FDA to offer a second round of the draft rules to allow for further farmer feedback.

If these issues are applicable on your farm, the FDA would benefit from your comments to ensure the final rulings are workable for a range of farm operations. Comments are due Nov. 15, 2013. ■

Read the full set of rules at:

www.fda.gov/Food/GuidanceRegulation/FSMA/default.htm

Submit comments at the Federal eRulemaking Portal: www.regulations.gov

The National Sustainable Agriculture Coalition has done a thorough job dissecting the proposed rules. Read its take at: <http://sustainableagriculture.net/fsma>

"The Farm Crisis" – A Documentary Worth Watching by IPTV

by Mark Peterson

I volunteered with enthusiasm to review the documentary The Farm Crisis from Iowa Public Television, which originally aired in July 2013 and is available to watch (for free) online at <http://video.iptv.org/video/2365038592>. I have never undertaken a film review before (and after this review may not be allowed to again). While I have no experience with film critique, I have more experience than I care to remember with the 80s farm crisis – as I am sure many of our members do.

While I did not lose a farm, my family was subject to 20 percent interest rates. I also had family and friends who did suffer loss of business and occupations. Through it all, same as many others, I helped when I could and tried to listen when I couldn't.

With this assignment in mind I watched the movie again with a different eye. I will be the first to admit, after having watched it more than once, that I can't watch the documentary without tearing up. Narrated by NBC news reporter Harry Smith, the film features interviews with policymakers, business owners and farm families. The documentary is full of video and photographs from the 1980s and earlier – and I even recognized some of them. Original music from Iowa artist Chad Elliott is a very nice touch.

For the first time in years, I was reminded of many events and people that were instrumental in the farm crisis. The film included many interviews with farmers and their families who were affected by the farm crisis. Documenting the actual struggles of real farm families gave the whole program a personal touch, and brought back many memories.

The story of Phil and Norma Fetter, for instance, really struck me. A virus destroyed the Feters' hog operation and forced them to borrow money to keep the farm going. When markets fell and interest rates went up, they couldn't pay and were forced to default. The pressure was too much for



Phil. In the documentary, Norma recounts Phil's final days, and a plan to get help at St. Luke's Hospital in Cedar Rapids that came too late.

The documentary included opinions from many of the key figures involved. It was interesting to see the perspective of folks like Neal Harl, Gov. Terry Branstad, Father Frank Cordero, Chuck Hassebrook and so many others. Their comments helped set up and explain the whole story. Viewers are reminded of the efforts of Willie Nelson, John Cougar Mellencamp and Neal Young as song writers and musicians hosting Farm Aid concerts. I attended the third annual Farm Aid concert in Lincoln, Neb. While in general it was a party atmosphere, I felt there was still a real sense of gravity.

One memory the documentary brought back was that of the white crosses lined up on courthouse lawns. This stark image was the real deal. I think if I looked around in some tucked-away corner here in southwest Iowa, I would find some bumper stickers that say "I support AAM" (American Agriculture Movement). Since watching the film, I've found myself googling to see what happened with specific events I associate with the farm crisis.

In closing, I would recommend this documentary to anyone interested in the events of those turbulent times, or who was personally involved. I would further recommend that it be required viewing for anyone interested in starting a career in agriculture. While I wouldn't want it to discourage anyone, I would hope that aspiring farmers would be able to see what happened then, and what could potentially happen again. ■

Mark Peterson grows corn and soybeans with his wife Melanie on their farm near Stanton in southwest Iowa.

Helen Gunderson Receives New PFI Award

by Tamsyn Jones

Helen has been selected as the first recipient of the Farmland Owner Award, a new honor from PFI that recognizes non-operator landowners who are managing their land for long-term sustainability.

The award was created to call attention to the need for improved landowner partnerships with farmers, and of the vital role non-operator landowners play in shaping the agricultural landscape, rural communities and opportunities for beginning farmers.

This year's award is co-sponsored by the Women, Food and Agriculture Network and the Agricultural Law Center at Drake University.

The PFI board selected Helen – an Ames resident who owns 500 acres near Rolfe – because of her multiple efforts to manage her land for long-term sustainability.

In 2009, Helen started renting 180 acres to Betsy Dahl, the daughter of long-time neighbors in Pocahontas County, who is transitioning the land to a longer rotation of row crops and small grains.

In 2011 Helen donated 60 acres of her land along Beaver Creek in Pocahontas County – land that includes remnant native and restored prairie, as well as 10 acres of cropland – to the Iowa Natural Heritage Foundation. She maintains about 35 acres of her land in the Conservation Reserve Program, and in her will she has bequeathed land to PFI.

"I don't believe in land dynasties," Helen says. "I have felt fortunate and privileged to have inherited farmland, and the affluence that ebbs and flows with that, and I realized I'd arrived at a position where I could make a difference."

Helen says she hopes this award will inspire other landowners to become more active in managing their land.

"All of us can affect the landscape by the food choices we make," she says, "but people who own land are in a rare position to influence the future of the land."

Helen will be recognized at PFI's 2014 annual conference, Jan. 23-25 in Ames. ■

Read the full story at www.bit.ly/Wallaces_FarmlandOwnerAward_Story

Grazing Livestock in Orchards

Compiled by Erica Andorf

In August, Annie Grieshop of Melbourne, started a thread on the PFI General email discussion list extolling the idea of grazing sheep in her orchard. She said that before she grazed her sheep there, “you’d be lucky to find an apple that was fit to eat. “ The apples would be bountiful but not edible. Now Annie says she relies on her orchard-grazing sheep over applying chemicals on the trees. The topic generated several replies on both the merits and potential problems of this practice.

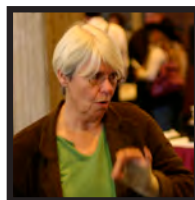
Jack Knight, an organic inspector from Luana, commented that the best system he inspected was one where the “pigs, sheep and several kinds of poultry were moved through small paddocks every three to five days in an apple orchard.” The animals also consumed mice, and flies were not a problem as they fed on each other’s manure constantly.



Andy Johnson, owner of Oneota Slopes Christmas Trees, replied that he has rotated sheep through his orchard for years. “They graze well, including leaves / branches

they can reach, and clean up the apples well too.” He did, however, recommend protecting young trees and the trunks of mature trees because, as he put it, “ewes will continuously try to eat the bark on mature trees.”

Tom Wahl, who operates Red Fern Farm with Kathy Dice near Wapello, shared a potential pitfall, saying that he has “had sheep do severe damage to newly planted trees” in his orchard, but that he thinks “4-foot-tall tree shelters, well-staked, would protect them.” He added that he has successfully grazed goats around new trees. While he said “they can climb trees with limbs less than 5 feet from the ground, and their favorite food is the leaves of fruit trees,” 5-foot-tall tree shelters are sufficient to rebuff them.



Annie Grieshop, who has a small farm near Melbourne, confirmed the possibility of tree damage from sheep, saying that “they’ve stripped the bottom

branches and eaten everything they can reach.” This isn’t a problem for her, however, as she had a bumper crop.

Rick Hartmann, who operates Small Potatoes Farm near Minburn, mentioned research he’s read by Jim Koan, who Rick says “put a guinea house in his Michigan orchard. . . . He had some problems, but was able to almost completely eliminate his plum curculio insect pest – his largest pest problem. Since then, he has introduced hogs into his orchard, too.”



Rick continued that in years past when people farmed and had fruit trees, “there were many ‘orchard breeds’ of hogs that were used for such a purpose. Hogs

were fed through a significant part of the year on windfall apples and the orchards received both fertility recycling and pest management.”

Chris Blanchard, who operates Flying Rutabaga Works, mentioned the proposed Produce Rule under the Food Safety Modernization Act that would exclude all animals from food production areas (see *Drake Larsen’s article on pg. 24 for more details on the FSMA*). “The concern is that when grazing hogs or small ruminants under fruit trees, the manure would come in contact with the fruit that is intended for human consumption.” But he also noted that since fruit on apple trees is located several feet from the ground, there are several steps orchard owners can take to prevent this, such as avoiding harvesting windfall fruit, preventing harvest containers from directly contacting the ground and washing hands prior to harvest (among others).



This discussion is one of many that Practical Farmers members have access to through our email discussion lists. Members with different opinions come together to discuss, analyze and debate issues from all angles. If you have questions you’d like to ask the membership, or want to participate in conversations like this, join any or all of our six members-only email discussion lists: General, Cover Crops, Horticulture, Livestock, Policy, and Garden and Food. To join, send an email to erica@practicalfarmers.org or call (515) 232-5661. ■

Leave A Legacy



“Investing in a gift annuity with a worthy organization like PFI is a wonderful way to distribute our assets.

— Tom and Ruth Neuberger

There are ways to provide for your loved ones AND leave a legacy for Practical Farmers of Iowa. You can do both, and it's easy.

- *Designation of your retirement plan for PFI*
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Many such gifts can help you and your family today as well as help our mission years into the future. You can put some in place today without affecting your cash flow during your lifetime.

Want to learn more? Contact Teresa Opheim, Executive Director, (515) 232-5661 or teresa@practicalfarmers.org.

** Important: Consult with your own legal and financial advisors before making any planned gift. **

2014 Next Generation Retreat: Feb. 21-22

Save the Date for the sixth annual Next Generation Retreat, Feb. 21-22, in Cedar Falls. Join other beginning farmers for an overnight networking event. Let others know you're coming on Facebook: www.facebook.com/practicalfarmers/events.

Lodging will be at Riverview Conference Center in Cedar Falls and the activities will be held on the University of Northern Iowa campus in the new LEED-certified Center for Energy and Environmental Education building. More details coming soon. ■

"100 Days, 100 Beginners" Campaign a Success

Thanks to your help, PFI has exceeded its \$75,000 goal for the "100 Days, 100 Beginners" campaign, allowing us to serve the 1,500 beginning farmers in our network with robust programming for 2014 and beyond. More than 226 people contributed in amounts ranging from \$15 to \$10,000 – and donations are still coming in.

The successful fundraising effort will allow us to match beginners with farmer mentors and offer farminars (webinars), retreats and field days specifically tailored for them. We will also be able to continue offering a website matching landowners with beginners seeking farmland (www.findafarmer.net), as well as our Savings Incentive Program (SIP) for beginning farmers.

Matt Liebman is 2013 Spencer Award Recipient



PFI member and Iowa State University agronomy professor Matt Liebman been chosen as the 2013 recipient of the Spencer Award

for Sustainable Agriculture by the Leopold Center for Sustainable Agriculture. Matt, who holds the Henry A. Wallace Chair for Sustainable Agriculture, will receive the award at 1:30 p.m. on Dec. 5, during the meeting of the Leopold Center Advisory Board, at the ISU Alumni Center in Ames.

Matt is the first researcher to be honored with the Spencer Award, which has been presented annually since 2002. The award recognizes farmers, teachers and researchers who have made significant contributions to the ecological and economic stability of Iowa's family farms. It includes a \$1,000 cash prize from an endowment from the family of Norman and Margaretha Spencer, who farmed near Sioux City for 40 years.

Matt conducts nationally recognized cropping systems research at the ISU Marsden Farm. His Low-Input High-Diversity project has found that longer rotations with alfalfa, small grains and a red clover cover crop can result in higher yields, lower energy and chemical use, and economic returns comparable to conventional corn-soybean rotations. He also is a member of the prairie conservation strips research team at Neal Smith National Wildlife Refuge near Prairie City and a team studying sustainable cropping systems for biofuels. The Leopold Center supports all three research programs.

Earlier this year, PFI awarded Matt its 2013 Sustainable Agriculture Achievement Award to recognize his leadership in sustainable agriculture. ■

Among the larger contributors to the "100 Days, 100 Beginners" campaign was a \$5,000 donation from Grain Millers, Inc. – but without each and every one of your donations, we would not have succeeded in reaching our goal by the deadline. Thank you to everyone who contributed! ■

Liz Kolbe Joins PFI as New Horticulture and Energy Coordinator

I joined the PFI staff in earlier this summer as the new Horticulture and Energy Coordinator. I work with farmers interested in horticultural production, energy conservation and renewable energy generation.

A native of Grinnell, I grew up "in town" but loved getting dirty and bruised on her friends' farms. I received my B.A. in Environmental Science at The Colorado College where my studies encompassed the policy, philosophy, economics, ecology, chemistry and physics surrounding environmental issues in the Rocky Mountain West. Following my sophomore year I traveled to Ireland as a "Willing Worker on Organic Farms" (WWOOF) participant. In my last two years, I directed my individual research at renewable energy in the Rockies and ethanol production in Iowa. While at CC I also played basketball, club ultimate, and eagerly explored the surrounding mountain and desert landscapes.



After receiving my degree, I worked as the program coordinator for the State of the Rockies Project, an undergraduate research initiative dedicated to issues in the Rockies Region. This focus on place-based investigation helped shift my academic focus to agriculture, land use and cultural identity with landscape.

I moved eastward for graduate school, earning, my M.S. in Environmental Science with a specialization in Agroecosystem Science at The Ohio State University. For my Master's research, I combined the practice of landscape architecture with

farm planning and Geographic Information Systems (GIS) to analyze alternative future scenarios for agricultural production in northeastern Ohio.

While at OSU and based at the Ohio Agricultural Research and Development Center in Wooster, I worked with the Agroecosystems Management Program and was a National Science Foundation Graduate K-12 STEM Fellow in two local high schools. I was also a "super-volunteer" at Local Roots Market, the local food cooperative in Wooster.

In addition to exploring farm and food scenes around the country, I enjoy playing sports, scouring garage sales and thrift stores, quality films and popcorn, s'mores, novels, crosswords and trying out new hobbies (refinishing furniture, guitar, canning, etc). I feel astoundingly lucky to have landed with PFI, and look forward to helping Iowa's farmers make sustainable changes. ■

Stefan Gailans is Newest PFI Staff Addition

Having joined PFI upon my arrival in Iowa in 2006 and learning from farmers all over the state ever since, I could not be more ecstatic about joining the staff as the new Research Scientist and Cooperators' Program Coordinator and serving the members of this unique organization. I came to Ames for graduate degrees in Sustainable Agriculture and Crop Production & Physiology from Iowa State University. During my degree program I had the pleasure of connecting with several PFI growers and helped conduct on-farm research investigating alternative crops and cover crops. I am now staying in Iowa to apply what I have taken away from those experiences and to assist PFI farmers with their own on-farm research questions.

I grew up in Mequon, Wis., about 15 miles north of Milwaukee and have spent most of my life in the tri-state (Wisconsin-Illinois-Iowa) area. I own up to having a "Midwestern bias" – a bias rooted in a love of the landscape and farmscape that developed from spending time outdoors fishing and hunting with my family from an early age. It grew with an understanding of the role farms of all kinds have in affecting (both



positively and negatively) the environment. I continue to be fueled today by a passion to conserve the natural and inherent beauty of the land for the generations to come. This is why working for PFI is such a great fit – the organization's vision and the spirited members are truly an inspiration to me.

While I do spend most of my waking hours thinking about crops and agriculture, I also allow time for music, books, classic movies and keeping up with everything Iowa Public Radio has to offer. I also enjoy preparing delicious meals with friends and tinkering in my backyard garden, as well as serving on the board of directors of Wheatfield Cooperative Grocery in Ames. I now look forward to a fulfilling career with Practical Farmers of Iowa. ■

Cooperators' Meeting: Dec. 5-6, in Ames

Do you want to do research on your farm?

Then join us at this year's Cooperators' Meeting, at Quality Inn & Suites Starlite Village – 2601 East 13th St., in Ames. Hear farmers report about on-farm research trials conducted in 2013 and plan for new projects in 2014. Thursday night's dinner will also include a tribute to PFI co-founder Dick Thompson. **RSVP REQUIRED:** Contact Lauren Zastrow at lauren@practicalfarmers.org or (515) 232-5661 by **Friday, Nov. 8.**

HM Courses Coming in 2014 From PFI, LSP

Practical Farmers and the Land Stewardship Project are partnering to bring Holistic Management courses to Iowa and Minnesota in spring 2014. In addition to an Introductory HM class at the PFI Annual Conference, three more classes will be held from February through April: Financial Planning, Holistic Grazing and Biological Monitoring. Stay tuned for updates, or contact Margaret (margaret@practicalfarmers.org) or Caroline (caroline@landstewardshipproject.org) for more information. ■

Benefit PFI With a Gift of Grain

Gifts of grain directly to Practical Farmers (rather than selling the grain and making a gift from the proceeds) is one way of helping PFI – and it may provide farm operators with more significant tax savings. Contributing grain allows you to avoid the sale of the commodity as income, while the production costs may still be deductible. Reducing taxable income may provide advantages such as minimizing or eliminating your self-employment tax and reducing your adjusted gross income.

The following guidelines apply:

- **You must be a farm operator to make a gift of grain.** There is no recognized income, but the charitable deduction is limited to basis, which is ordinarily zero. Typically, your cost of raising and growing the grain can be deducted as a farm business expense.
- **Be sure the gift is grain commodities, and not a grain storage receipt.** A grain storage receipt could be considered a cash

equivalent. Practical Farmers must be able to demonstrate “control and dominion” over the gifted property. As a donor, you cannot offer Practical Farmers any guidance on when to sell the commodity.

- **Be sure to accomplish Farm Service Agency certification** before making a gift of grain if you annually certify or document bushels of production with FSA through your participation in various agricultural subsidy programs.

If you would like to proceed with a gift, fill out the Gift of Grain Notification Form (you can download it at www.practicalfarmers.org) and return it to Teresa Opheim by email at teresa@practicalfarmers.org or mail to Practical Farmers of Iowa, 600 Fifth Street, Suite 100, Ames, IA, 50010.

Practical Farmers does not offer tax or legal advice. Please consult your tax professional for advice before making a gift of grain. ■

Apply for 2014 WFAN Mentorship Program

The Women, Food and Agriculture Network is now recruiting aspiring and beginning women farmers in Iowa and Nebraska, and women farmers who wish to mentor them. The application open period starts Nov. 1 for the 2014 Harvesting Our Potential program.

On-farm mentors will be paid for providing eight- to 10-week on-farm work experiences to an aspiring woman farmer during the 2014 growing season. Off-farm mentors will provide one year of email and phone support and one visit each to the mentee and mentor farm for a beginning woman farmer during 2014.

For more information or to apply, contact info@wfan.org or call (515) 460-2477. Learn more at wfan.org/beginningfarmerproject.

PFI is a partner in WFAN's three-year grant, assisting with recruitment and evaluation. ■

CoOpportunity Health Sign-Up Now Open

The sign-up period to join Iowa's new health care cooperative, CoOpportunity Health, is now open. Coverage begins on Jan. 1, 2014, and the enrollment period runs through March 31, 2014. After that date, individuals without insurance of any kind will be subject to a tax penalty. Options are available for Iowa and Nebraska residents. For more information, visit: www.coopportunityhealth.com. ■

2013 Fall Farminar Schedule is Set

MARK YOUR CALENDARS: The 2013 fall farminar lineup has been set and will feature five FREE, Web-based learning opportunities **each Tuesday from 7 to 8:30 p.m., from Nov. 5 through Dec. 10.** Most farminars are presented by farmers, and many feature a beginning farmer learning from an experienced farmer. Farminars are live online and allow participants to ask questions of presenters in real-time.

- 1). Nov. 5 – “Crop Insurance by Written Agreement for Apple Orchards in Iowa”** – Phil Larabee, insurance agent. Phil helped his in-laws – owners of Gravert's Apple Basket Orchard near Sabula, Iowa – insure their apple crop.
- 2). Nov. 12 – “Efficient Marketing and Distribution of Local Foods”** – John Lash, Farm to Table of Austin, Texas, and Ellen Walsh Rosmann of Pin Oak Place, Harlan.
- 3). Nov. 19 – “Transplant Production Improvement Considerations”** – Chris Blanchard, Flying Rutabaga Works, Decorah.

* THANKSGIVING: SKIP A WEEK *

4). Dec. 3 – “Revenue Projections and Profit Potential of Grass-Based Livestock” – Ryan Herman, experienced grazer, and Neal and Laura Vellema, beginning farmers near Harris.

5). Dec. 10 – “Building Relationships, Building Customers” – Jordan Clasen, Grade A Gardens, Johnston, and Jody Bolluyt, Roxbury Farm, Kinderhook, N.Y.

To participate:

- Go to www.practicalfarmers.org/farminar.
- Once you click the link to connect, you can sign in as “Guest.”
- Pre-registration is not required – but if you register, you will receive reminder emails one week and one day before the farminar you have registered to attend.

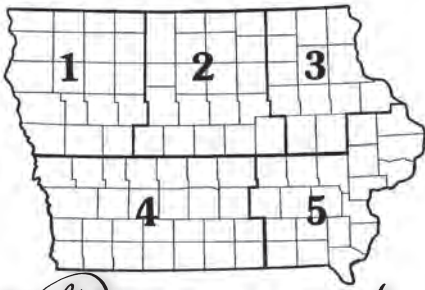
All farminars are recorded and may be viewed from this site at a later date at no cost. Free audio podcasts are also available for download. ■

CSA Mini School – Dec. 13-14, in Montour

Interested in starting a CSA or improving your current model? Join your fellow Practical Farmers for the CSA Mini-School retreat, Dec. 13-14, in Montour, Iowa.

Three successful CSA managers – Rebecca Graff of Fair Share Farm in Kearney, Mo., Tim Landgraf of One Step at a Time Gardens in Kanawha, Iowa, and Steve Pincus of Tipi Produce in Evansville, Wis. – will lead the weekend, helping participants plan and improve their farm CSAs.

Registration is required by Nov. 29. The retreat is free for PFI members, \$50 for non-members (food and lodging is provided). For more information, contact Liz Kolbe (liz@practicalfarmers.org), or call (515) 232-5661. ■



Welcome, new members!

District 1—Northwest

- Susan and Steven Quail, Spencer
- Corey Schink, Sioux City
- Brice Wenell, Albert City
- Angela Wittrock, Arcadia

District 2—North Central

- BioDiesel Central, Loren Farth, Ames
- Jacob Bolson, Hubbard
- Logan Handsaker, Ames
- Matt and Karen Koenig, Hampton
- Liz Kolbe, Ames
- Neo Mazur, Ames
- Amber Miller, Story City
- Joshua Nelson, Belmond
- Caroline Oliveira, Ames
- Ralph Rosenberg, Ames
- Billy Sammons, Churdan
- Pete Wobeter, Toledo

District 3—Northeast

- Peter Beck, Waterloo
- Darin Enderton, Plainfield
- David Hill, Holy Cross
- Stanley Mehmen, Plainfield
- Caite and Jim Palmer, Castalia
- Wade Reisdorph, Marion
- Douglas Roy, Keystone
- Jeff Seago, Elkader
- Collin Thompson, Decorah
- Ai Wen, Cedar Falls
- Eric Veach, Zwingle

District 4—Southwest

- Eric Barr, Osceola
- Dani Bice, Massena
- Beth Buscher, Minburn
- Lauren Chesmore, Knoxville
- Chase Conover, Des Moines
- Jack Davis, Adel
- Ed Jackson, Crescent
- Arlyn and Sue Kauffman, Weldon
- Don King, Pella
- Charlie Lex, Woodward

- Anna MacDonald, Des Moines
- Virginia Petersen, Johnston
- Bonnie Samuel, Urbandale
- Shenandoah Flight Service, Robert Pettis, Atlantic
- Betsy Smith, Indianola
- Don Suyeasu, Des Moines
- Chris Teachout, Shenandoah
- Stacy Ward, Prole
- Dennis Woodruff, Carlisle
- Jacob Wagoner, Clarinda
- Dylan White, Des Moines

District 5—Southeast

- David Bangert, Donnellson
- Pat and Laurie Cashman, Deep River
- Deb Draper, Eddyville
- Ryan Goddard, Letts
- Duane Hammen, Washington
- Patrick Hazell, Washington
- Nora Heinichen, Marengo
- Iowa City Summer of Solutions, Eli Shepherd, Iowa City
- Forrest Kelly, Tipton
- Kevin and Susan Kolbe, Grinnell
- Dianne Prichard, De Witt
- Diane Rosenberg, Fairfield
- Nance Utter, Columbus Junction
- Welter Seed and Honey Co., Dan Welter, Onslow
- Mike Resczenko, Oskaloosa

District 6—Out of State

- Craig Ficencr, Fort Atkinson, WI
- David James, Durango, CO
- Russell Nupnau, Skokie, IL
- Andrea Rissing, Decatur, GA

UPCOMING EVENTS – NOV. | DEC. | JAN.

Nov. 4 – Buying and Selling Local Food on www.localfood.com | Council Bluffs | 1-4 p.m. | \$10

Get hands-on training using www.localdirt.com – an online marketplace connecting local farmers and producers with local buyers of all sizes, including restaurants and local food markets. The class at Iowa Western Community College's (IWCC) Council Bluffs campus will offer technical assistance in setting up your membership and using the site for sales and purchases, invoicing, etc. For more, call (712) 325-3404, or register at www.iwcc.edu/Continuing_Education/work_related/environmental.asp

Nov. 9 – Basic Backyard Chicken Care | Chicago, IL | Angelic Organics Learning Center | 10 a.m. – 1 p.m. | \$35
Join Angelic Organics for a comprehensive workshop on best practices in backyard chicken care. Learn everything from daily needs and year-round care to relevant city regulations (applicable to Chicago and surrounding areas). For more, visit: www.learngrowconnect.org/node/4993

Nov. 12 – Cover Crop Field Day | Rich Juchem farm | Plainfield, IA | 11 a.m. – 1 p.m. | FREE | Lunch included
Join Practical Farmers to learn more about working with cover crops, why they are so important for our farms and see cover crops that were flown into a standing crop or drilled this fall. For more details, contact Erica Andorf: (515) 232-5661. (View other upcoming PFI cover crop field days at practicalfarmers.org/blog/2013/fall-2013-cover-crop-field-days-scheduled)

Nov. 16 – Seed Savers Exchange Harvest Meal | Pepperfield Project | Decorah, IA | 6 p.m. | \$50
In collaboration with Seed Savers Exchange, Pepperfield will celebrate the rich bounty of heirloom vegetables with a home-grown, several-course meal. Based on Gary Nabhan's book, "Renewing America's Food Traditions," come help celebrate the RAFT project (and the book's subtitle) by "saving and savoring the continent's most endangered foods." One or more items from each of the country's "food nations" – nearly all grown at Pepperfield from its own seed collection – and a rare-breed Narragansett turkey will make up the menu. For more, contact: (563)-382-8833, or email david.cavagnaro@gmail.com

Dec. 2 – Webinar: "Overview of Farm Legal Issues" | Farm Commons | FREE | 6 p.m.

Learn about the most pressing legal issues encountered by direct-to-consumer and organic farm operations. Beginning farmers will learn how to set up a strong farm business and established farmers will learn ways to make their business more resilient. This is the first of eight webinars Farm Commons is offering this winter on legal issues related to farming. Learn more or register at: www.farmcommons.org/webinars

Dec. 6-7 – Missouri Livestock Symposium and Trade Show | Kirksville, MO | Kirksville Middle School | FREE

This event will feature nationally known speakers on horses, beef cattle, sheep, meat goats, swine, poultry, forages and stock dogs, as well topics of interest to homeowners and landowners. There is no cost to attend and no registration required. For more, visit: www.missourilivestock.com

Dec. 10 – Crop Planning Class | Iowa Western Community College | Council Bluffs | 9:30 a.m. – Noon | \$10
Whether you are just starting out or have been growing local food for years, this crop planning workshop will

help you develop planting matrixes that support year-round availability and planning for custom sales, farmers markets and everything in between. For more, call (712) 325-3404, or register at www.iwcc.edu/Continuing_Education/work_related/environmental.asp

Dec. 17 – Webinar: "Community Supported Agriculture Legal Issues" | Farm Commons | FREE | 6 p.m.

Learn about and discuss the complex employment law, insurance, zoning and volunteer worker legal issues encountered through CSA. Farmers will learn how to move forward in addressing these concerns. This is the second in a series of webinars Farm Commons is offering this winter on legal issues related to farming. Learn more or register at: www.farmcommons.org/webinars

Jan. 10-11 – Minnesota Organic Conference and Trade Show | St. Cloud, MN

This farmer-focused conference, now entering its 13th year, offers educational sessions for vegetable and fruit growers as well as crop and livestock producers. Featured speakers will include Elaine Ingham (chief scientist with Rodale Institute), Chris Blanchard (PFI member), Charlie Johnson (award-winning organic farmer from South Dakota), John Biernbaum (horticulture professor with Michigan State University) and Miles McEvoy with the National Organic Program in Washington D.C. For more details, call (651) 201-6012 or visit: www.mda.state.mn.us/food/organic/conference.aspx

Jan. 13 – Webinar: "Hosting On-Farm Events" | Farm Commons | FREE | 6 p.m.

Make sure your farm isn't left with the short end of the stick after a well-intentioned event goes bad. From zoning compliance to guest injuries and serving prepared food, you'll work through a checklist of things a farm should address before hosting an event. This is the third in a series of webinars Farm Commons is offering this winter on legal issues related to farming. Learn more or register at: www.farmcommons.org/webinars

Jan. 14 – Farm Planning Websites and Software Workshop | Iowa Western Community College | Council Bluffs | 1-3 p.m. | \$15

Review current farm planning and software to enhance your farm business. Will be available by webinar at class time or afterwards. For more, call (712) 325-3404, or register at www.iwcc.edu/Continuing_Education/work_related/environmental.asp

Jan. 23-24 – Midwest Value-Added Agriculture Conference | Wisconsin Rapids, WI

River Country Resource Conservation and Development Council (RC&D) is excited to host this event, which attracts more than 300 individuals from Illinois, Iowa, Minnesota and Wisconsin. The conference will feature presentations designed to educate and advance farmers practicing value-added agriculture on their farms. For more, contact Melanie Baumgart at (715) 579-5013 or email melanie@rivercountryrccd.org

Jan. 28 – Webinar: "Workers and Employees" | Farm Commons | FREE | 6 p.m.

Farming is a lot of work and help is often needed. Should a farm work with volunteers, trade labor for food or hire employees? This webinar will explore the options and guide farmers through the legal considerations. Learn more or register at: www.farmcommons.org/webinars

For more events, visit practicalfarmers.org/events.php

Grow your farm with PFI. Join today!

This annual membership is a:

- New membership
- Renewal

I am joining at the level of:

- Student—\$20
- Individual—\$40
- Farm or Household—\$50
- Organization (including businesses, agencies, not-for-profit groups)—\$100
- Lifetime Member—\$1,000

My interest in joining PFI is primarily as a:

- Farmer/grower
- Non-farmer – (You will have the opportunity to expand upon this when you receive your membership information form.)

How did you hear about Practical Farmers of Iowa?

..... Each membership includes one subscription to *the Practical Farmer*.

Sustain PFI

For the long-term health and vitality of PFI, we ask you to consider making a donation above and beyond your membership fee. I would like to make a tax-deductible donation to PFI in the amount of:

- \$1,000
- \$500
- \$250
- \$100
- \$50
- \$_____

JOIN OUR GIFT OF THE MONTH CLUB

The Gift of the Month Club is an easy way to support Practical Farmers of Iowa! Send in your pledge with your credit card information, and we will automatically deduct your donation the first of each month.

YES! I would like to give _____ per month to PFI, to be automatically charged to my credit card the first of the month. (\$10 per month minimum)

Practical Farmers of Iowa is a 501(c) 3 organization. Your gift is tax deductible to the extent allowed by law.

Thank you!

Individual, Farm or Organization Name*: _____

Mailing Address: _____

Street: _____

City, State, ZIP: _____

Primary Phone (with area code): _____

Alternate Phone (with area code): _____

Email: _____

* For Farm/Household membership, please list names of persons included. For Organization membership, please list one or two contact persons.

Payment:

Total: \$_____ = \$_____ membership + \$_____ donation

- Check or money order enclosed. (Please make payable to "Practical Farmers of Iowa.")

TO PAY WITH A CREDIT CARD, PLEASE GO TO: <http://practicalfarmers.org/join-pfi.html>

Practical Farmers of Iowa

600 Fifth Street, Suite 100

Ames, IA 50010-6071



Diverse Farms

Farms that are prized for their diversity of crops and livestock their wildlife, healthy soils, innovations, beauty and productivity their connection to a rich past and a fulfilling present where individuals and families are earning a good living



Healthy Food

Wholesome food that is celebrated for its connections to local farmers to seasons, to hard work and good stewardship Communities alive with diverse connections between farmers and friends of farmers



Vibrant Communities

Places where commerce, cooperation, creativity and spirituality are thriving Places where the working landscape, the fresh air and the clean water remind us of all that is good about Iowa.

