

# the PRACTICAL FARMER

WINTER 2018



## The Lost Art of Cultivation

Interest in organic farming is growing, and as it grows, the need for farming knowledge from generations ago returns to the forefront.

## Honoring the Mentors

PFI horticulture farmers pay tribute to the late Chris Blanchard, and to the many mentors who have helped or inspired them.











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### ON THE COVER:

Participants in the three-day workshop with Anibal Pordomingo learned in-depth about grass-fed beef production, and got to see cows grazing at Scattergood Friends School & Farm. The event was held Nov. 1-3 near West Branch.

Attendees at the field day hosted by Ann, Eric and Calvin Franzenburg on Sept. 16 near Van Horne learn about cut flower production.





## WHAT WE DO

Practical Farmers of Iowa was founded in 1985 as an organization for farmers. We use farmer-led investigation and information sharing to help farmers practice an agriculture that benefits both the land and people.

## OUR MISSION

Practical Farmers of Iowa's mission is equipping farmers to build resilient farms and communities.

## OUR VISION

An Iowa with healthy soil, healthy food, clean air, clean water, resilient farms and vibrant communities.

## OUR VALUES

Welcoming everyone

Farmers leading the exchange of experience and knowledge

Curiosity, creativity, collaboration and community

Resilient farms now and for future generations

Stewardship of land and resources

## THE PRACTICAL FARMER

the Practical Farmer is published quarterly as a benefit of membership to help keep farmers and friends of farmers in touch with one another through informative articles on relevant farming topics, current on-farm research, upcoming events and other news of interest.

**Magazine Editor:** Tamsyn Jones

Back issues are available upon request. Unless otherwise noted, articles may be reprinted or adapted if credit is given. Clippings and notice are appreciated.



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## Focus on the Farmer

In early October, we hosted Unilever in our office; the company funds cost-share work to encourage farmers to buy from to use cover crops. We had a robust discussion about how to influence real change on the landscape. Do you focus on consumers? Farmers? Companies?

Jostein Solheim, executive vice president of the Food & Refreshment division at Unilever, remarked on a common experience. A self-professed foodie who purchases high-end, high-quality local food, he said that it's easy to live in a bubble where you assume the rest of the world is where you are with cognizance of food and farm systems. At Practical Farmers, we experience this bubble effect all the time. We talk daily with members passionate about bettering our food and farms. This disproportionately paints a picture of the progress we are making. For instance, we talk cover crops all day, every day. Yet we drive across Iowa and see that not all farmers are in this headspace and practice.

Surgeon and author Atul Gawande says there is a difference between our intended results and our actions. He argues it is important to study this gap to increase the success of achieving our goals, and that we should use data to determine how we are actually progressing. When doing this, we need to recognize that: 1) we are part of a complex system, so not in total control of the effects of our work, and 2) we are fallible and should look back at intention versus results, and constantly work to improve.

For these reasons, at our fall staff retreat, we focused on the questions: What is Practical Farmers' theory of change? How can we improve our work to get increased results?

At Practical Farmers, we focus on the farmer. Since our inception, our work – our theory of change – has been rooted in the belief that farmers effectively learn from other farmers, and that farmer-to-farmer exchange of knowledge leads to increased change on the landscape. It sounds simple. To be effective, however, this approach relies on some key elements.



At the staff retreat, each staffer shared a story and photo from his or her early years. Here is yours truly.

First, there must be direct contact with other people. That's why we arrange so many opportunities for people to talk to each other and share experiences face-to-face. Second, the contact must be with someone who is a credible resource. From 33 years of grassroots work, we know farmers find other farmers to be the most credible sources. This is why farmers lead our programming: they set our priorities and serve as the primary educators.

We indeed see results within our membership. A few of my favorites: As a result of participating in PFI, 81 percent of members feel a greater sense of community; 72 percent of farmers in our membership increased their stewardship; and 49 percent saw greater profits. Furthermore, 73 percent of PFI corn and soybean farmers use cover crops, and 91 percent of members say PFI was helpful in reaching their goals. For example, member Tim Sieren, of Keota, said: "Incorporating more legumes into my rotation lets me cut back on nitrogen fertilizer rates."

I am thrilled to report that our membership is at its highest level ever, with 3,475 members as I write this letter. However,

many facets of a sustainable agricultural system we care so deeply about as an organization – widespread use of cover crops, crop diversification, having roots in the ground year-round, eating quality food from local farmers – are still on the fringe of Iowa's farm system. How do we infect more people with curiosity and motivation, which is so intrinsic in PFI, to help them better their systems? At a recent field day, board president Mark Peterson summed this up well: "We are setting goals, and finding out what can we do that will work in our system to get us from here to there. Then, when we get there, we are not satisfied. We set a new goal."

At PFI, we are always striving to do better. At the staff retreat, we compared our performance against the community-based social marketing model outlined by Doug McKenzie in his book "Fostering Sustainable Behavior." We came up with things we are doing well, and things we want to improve. Read more about our staff retreat on page 34. Also, look for follow-up blogs on how we are using community-based social marketing strategies to change Iowa's landscape. I'd love to hear from you: How can we continue to improve?

Thanks for your partnership in this complex and ongoing quest,

*Sally Worley*



## Ron Rosmann's 10 Tips for Growing Small Grains in Iowa

A bad year for small grains spurred discussion on challenges and solutions

[“This year is one of the worst small-grain growing years I have experienced in my 45 years of growing small grains,” Dan Wilson shared earlier this summer with fellow farmers on PFI’s field crops email discussion list.](#)

Small grains love spring weather. This year, however, conditions in Iowa jumped from sub-zero temperatures and snow in mid-April – which delayed planting – to sweltering 80- and 90-degree heat in May. A deluge of rain carpeted much of the state, and unseasonably hot weather continued into June. This succession of adverse weather culminated in the perfect storm of bad conditions for small grains production, and led some farmers to muse: When was the last good year we had for small grains in Iowa – particularly oats? Can we even grow oats or other small grains successfully in today’s climate?

Ron Rosmann and several other farmers weighed in with their experiences, challenges and advice. Ron farms with his family at Rosmann Family Farm near Harlan in Shelby County, in western Iowa. The farm has been certified organic for 24 years and has had good success growing oats. “We can say that we get good, consistent yields of 80-100 bushels per acre on average,” Ron said. “We had record oats [in 2017] with 145 bushels per acre on average and 41-pound test weight.” This year, he shared later, “we only yielded 70 bushels per acre due to the awful weather. But our test weight was still 39 pounds per bushel.” While acknowledging this year’s uniquely poor conditions, he shared 10 observations he has made over the years about growing a successful small grains crop in Iowa. Other farmers added their perspective and commented on the less tangible benefits small grains confer to a cropping system.

### 1). Plant Early

“We always plant as early as we possibly can,” Ron said. Of course, it’s not easy to do every year for spring small grains like oats. “This year we managed to get some in on March 30 and 31, and the rest by April 12.”

### 2). Get the Right Seeding Rate

Ron makes sure he has a good carpet of small grains on the field to ensure a quality stand capable of suppressing weeds. “We always plant at 4 bushels or more per acre, sometimes even at five.”

### 3). Rotation, Rotation, Rotation

“Oats do better nearly always after soybeans in the rotation,” Ron said. “Whenever we go to oats after corn in the hay-corn-soy-corn-oats rotation, we lose key nitrogen to get good oats.”

### 4). Use It as a Nurse Crop

Even though Ron’s small-grain harvest has been variable the past several years, he gets an additional benefit from it: he plants oats and succotash alongside alfalfa, red clover and orchard grass. That so-called “underseeded” mix will slowly grow beneath the canopy of the fast-growing small-grain, helping to control weeds. The mix also supplies additional forage or grain for income in the same crop rotation year that will go to hay, pasture or green

manure for the following year’s crop. “We still use oats as a nurse crop to establish alfalfa seeding in our organic operation,” confirmed Kim Anderson, who farms near Brighton.

### 5). Keep Them Dry

“Oats do not like wet feet,” Ron said. “I think they are harder to grow on land that historically has been wetlands and marsh, and colder and wetter.” Wade Dooley farms near the Iowa River close to Albion, and is familiar with how flooding and wetness can affect an oat crop. He strategically chooses his fields for small grains with this in mind. “In the 80s and 90s, we had minor flooding every three years or so on bottomland. But the last 12 years, [this land] has had major flooding every single year, with one or two exceptions,” Wade said. “I’ll never plant small grains on that land, even though it’s over 50 percent of my crop acres. Small grains get planted on upland, which puts the crop at a higher risk of drought – but I usually expect the drought to come during the harvest window, which doesn’t hurt the small grains.”

### 6). Use Strategically to Combat Problem Weeds

For organic farmers especially, controlling weed populations is a high priority. Even conventional farmers struggle today with



**“You first have to figure out what your goal is and what the value of oats is to your operation.”**

– RON ROSMANN





**Above:** A view of wind-rowed oats at Rosmann Family Farm near Harlan. **Opposite:** The Rosmann family gathered in October to celebrate Ron and Maria's 40th anniversary. Top row, from left to right: Daniel Rosmann, Geneva Rosmann, Mark Rosmann, Maggie Rosmann and David Rosmann; bottom row, from left to right: Ellen Walsh-Rosmann, Ron Rosmann, Xavier Rosmann, Maria Vakulskas Rosmann and Becky Tompkins-Rosmann (holding newborn Ellie Rosmann).  
*Photo courtesy of Deb Hastert Photography*

herbicide-resistant weeds, which require an alternative strategy to control their spread throughout the field and farm. "We have one terrible 17-acre field where the rotation and soil fertility has been lacking," Ron said. "Giant ragweed is also a bad problem there. We hope to do more rotations starting with hybrid winter rye, which we are going to start using in hog and chicken feed."

### **7). Consider Switching From a Spring to a Winter Variety**

"I try to avoid spring-seeded small grains except as a nurse crop for alfalfa," shared Paul Mugge, who farms near Sutherland. "It seems like the risk is just too high any more for light test weight in oats, oat diseases due to high humidity, vomitoxin in barley, etc. I have had really good luck with fall triticale. I've only had it winter-kill here in northwest Iowa once in 15 years or so. I was really worried about our most recent brutal winter, but it did okay. The stand is a little weak, but not a disaster." A winter small-grain also takes the pressure off of early planting in the spring and lowers the soil's vulnerability to erosion and loss of organic matter because it keeps the soil covered all winter long.

### **8). Adapt to Local Variety Trial Data and Variety Availability**

"Maybe we're growing the wrong varieties, maybe the wrong species for our areas?" Wade questioned. "One of the varieties of rye I've got, I'm pretty impressed with. I've had several oat varieties I wasn't so enamored of. I feel like maybe we need to be testing more of the Illinois varieties, rather than the North Dakota or Minnesota ones. [We have] lots of heat and humidity here in Iowa, similar to Illinois." Ron and Kim both like oat varieties Shelby 427 and Deon, and their farms are located at or below I- 80 in far western and eastern Iowa, respectively.

Ron agreed that variety selection and availability of good breeding lines are key elements of success. "We quit growing just straight barley about 10 years ago, as we started to not be able to find the varieties that would yield like we used to have."

### **9. Consider a Variety of Tillage Practices**

For Ron and his family, preserving as much carbon in the soil as possible is a big goal. But he added: "I still think one year of mold-board plowing out of five or six is not such an evil thing as some people would like you to believe, if you are using cover crops and keeping the ground green most of the other years with small grains,

hay and pasture." So for those conscious of improving soil health and preventing soil erosion, rotations that incorporate small grains and cover crops can help balance out some periodic tillage in the system.

For an innovative farmer, small grains can also present opportunities to further no-till practices. Ron has been ridge-tilling his corn and soybeans since 1987 for weed control in his organic system, but he's scheming to reduce his tillage even further. "I want to experiment with less alfalfa and more annual forages after winter rye and oats that will winter-kill," Ron said. "Then I can no-till corn the following year without disturbing the soil. This would be done in a flat no-till organic situation. This is going to take some trial and error, and I hope we can find the time to do it."

### **10). Know Your Goals**

"You first have to figure out what your goal is and what the value of oats is to your operation," Ron said. If getting the most bushels per acre is your main goal, then maybe small grains aren't a viable crop for you in today's climate with the varieties we have today. But if your goal is a diverse system, non-chemical weed control and more options to till and no-till while preserving soil health, then small-grains crops may be an ideal addition to your crop rotation plan. ■



## Grow Your Own Nitrogen

How farmers are incorporating more legumes into their crop rotations

"I wish to grow my own nitrogen instead of using commercial nitrogen," says Wendell Zimmerman, who farms near Greenfield in Adair County. Echoing this sentiment, Chris Teachout, who farms near Shenandoah in Fremont County, says reducing purchased nitrogen fertilizer "would not only benefit soil health but also the bottom line of corn production." How are Wendell, Chris – and many other PFI farmers – attempting to accomplish this feat? By incorporating more legumes into their cropping systems.

Legumes form a special relationship with bacteria in the soil known as rhizobia. These bacteria fix nitrogen from the air and make it available to the legume in exchange for carbon from the host plant. This is why legumes have long had the reputation for providing nitrogen, freely abundant from the atmosphere, to cropping systems. While farmers may use different methods and strategies to "grow" this nitrogen, they all understand how legumes can benefit their systems both agronomically and economically.

### Traditional Way of Using Legumes

The traditional way farmers have reaped the benefits of legumes is with extended crop rotations. These rotations include a small-grains crop like oats, wheat, triticale or rye. Red clover or alfalfa can be frost-seeded to the small-grain in March. Or any number of legumes – like hairy vetch, berseem clover, crimson clover or cowpeas – can be seeded after small-grains harvest in July. In either case, the July small-grains harvest results in a large window of opportunity to grow a legume cover crop, also referred to as "green manure."

Organic farmers, like Paul Mugge in northwest Iowa, have been using this system for years. Paul drills winter triticale in the fall, "chasing the combine" during soybean harvest. In the spring, he broadcasts red clover into the triticale just as it's coming out of winter dormancy. "I have never not gotten a good stand of clover [with this method]," Paul says. Following triticale harvest in the summer, the red clover's growth accelerates. "The clover will be a foot tall before freeze-up,



and I get roughly 80 pounds of nitrogen per acre for the following corn."

But this kind of cropping system isn't only for organic farmers. Dave Bangert is a conventional farmer in Lee County in far southeast Iowa. He planted winter wheat on his farm earlier this fall for the first time in over 30 years, with an eye to frost-seeding red clover next spring. "I'm looking forward to giving wheat and clover a try to get away from the corn-soybean rotation and grow some nitrogen," Dave says.

Management is key to success in such a system. Because red clover will overwinter, terminating it before the next crop is a must. Paul uses a disk and field cultivator to accomplish this, while no-till farmers like Dave will rely on timely herbicide

application. Regardless of the method, achieving complete termination is paramount to success. Otherwise, the legume cover crop could turn into a weed and compete with corn seedlings for moisture and nutrients, ultimately resulting in yield drag. To avoid potential headaches, some may consider terminating the legume in late fall or using species that won't survive the winter, like berseem clover or cowpeas (both seeded after small-grains harvest in mid-summer). When managed successfully, research has shown that a red clover cover crop can provide up to 190 pounds of nitrogen per acre to the succeeding corn crop. It's results like these that have led Bill Deen, of the University of Guelph in Ontario, to call red clover the "Cadillac of cover crops."

### New Ways to Include Legumes

Legume cover crops like clovers and vetches can only fit into crop rotations that include small grains because they need to be seeded much earlier than common fall cover crops in Iowa, like cereal rye, wheat, oats or rapeseed. Cover crop variety trials conducted in corn-soybean systems by PFI cooperators across the state from 2012–2017 confirm this. Legumes seeded in these fall trials either failed to establish or produced scant growth compared to grasses and brassicas. With little to no fall growth, it's hard to justify the cost of seeding legumes during this part of the year. This has not deterred PFI farmers from trying new and innovative ways to include legumes in their cropping systems.

A consistent theme that has emerged at the annual PFI Cooperators' Meeting in recent years is the need for non-grass cover crops (e.g., non-cereal rye) in corn production systems. This has bred creativity among our farmer ranks. Because fall-seeding of legumes doesn't work well in Iowa, PFI cooperators are trying some unconventional techniques for this part of the world. Wendell Zimmerman and Chris Teachout are seeding legumes like field peas and fava beans in the early spring before corn planting. Fred Abels, Jack Boyer, Brian Kessel and Chris Teachout are





**Above:** Dave Bangert (far left in bucket hat) is growing wheat on his farm for the first time in over 30 years to allow him to grow a red clover cover crop.

**Opposite:** Wendell Zimmerman is conducting on-farm research to explore the benefits of adding a legume cover crop to his rotation.

interseeding cowpeas to standing corn in early June. Moreover, they're planting corn in 60-inch-wide rows to accommodate the cowpeas. Growing corn in the typical 30-inch-wide rows results in too much shading for the interseeded cowpeas, and results in little to no growth. Some of these techniques are practiced in subsistence agriculture elsewhere in the world while others were once practiced in the U.S. in the early 20th century. Here in the Corn Belt, farmers are now adapting these practices to their growing season and cropping systems in an effort to fit legumes into their systems whenever they can.

During an August PFI bus trip to Western Illinois University's Organic Research Farm near Roseville, Illinois, Joel Gruver showed where research farm staff had planted popcorn in 30- and 60-inch wide rows with cowpeas seeded in the interrows. Just like PFI cooperators, Joel is trying to grow more legumes to benefit his farm's system. He considers this strategy a forward-looking one. "I think this probably puts more nitrogen into the soil for succeeding crops in the rotation rather than the crop in the current year," Joel says.

Research is bearing out Joel's suspicion. A study from Cornell University released in

**"I'm looking forward to giving wheat and clover a try to get away from the corn-soybean rotation and grow some nitrogen."** – DAVE BANGERT

2013 suggested that most of the nitrogen legumes capture from the atmosphere becomes available to plants after a legume cover crop is grown. The researchers found that much of that nitrogen is actually accessed by the cash crop grown two years after the legume cover crop. Studies of grass-legume pastures in Minnesota have also shown that while legumes do confer nitrogen to the companion grasses, this does not happen during the establishment year. Rather, this benefit emerges in the subsequent years of the pasture's life. As the residue from legume shoots and roots decomposes, the nitrogen in the residue becomes part of the organic matter in the soil. Over time, these deposits build the soil's capacity to supply nitrogen to cash crops. Findings like these have led researchers to conclude that repeated use of legume cover crops can help farmers lessen their reliance on nitrogen fertilizer.

Decreasing reliance on purchased inputs like nitrogen fertilizer has long been a priority for Practical Farmers of Iowa and our members. It's a matter of resiliency in the face of fluctuating prices – and it's a goal the founding members of PFI had squarely on their minds in the mid-1980s. Members like Dave Bangert, Wendell Zimmerman and Chris Teachout are carrying on that priority today with an added emphasis on soil health. "I hope this could become a way to reduce inputs," Chris says, referring to why he wants to fit more legumes into his cropping system. "I also hope we can accelerate soil health." To find out more about how legumes are affecting their farming systems – and to answer other farming questions – Wendell, Chris and other PFI farmers are conducting on-farm research on their innovative techniques. Stay tuned to "Practical News," our weekly email newsletter, and the PFI website for results from these studies later this winter! ■



## Honoring the Mentors

And remembering a teacher who helped and inspired many

On Sept. 6, subscribers to the “Farmer to Farmer Podcast” received their last email notification from podcast host and long-time PFI member Chris Blanchard.

The email was titled “The End of the Farmer to Farmer Podcast,” and it began with: “Today I write to share the news that the Farmer to Farmer Podcast is no more. I have grown too ill to continue its production, and I do not expect to get better.” For two-and-a-half years, Chris had been battling cancer; he died on Oct. 28.

Through his farming career, his consulting business, the Purple Pitchfork, and his podcast, Chris’ work improved farms, elevated the quality of local produce around the country – and most importantly, connected farmers with honest conversations and shared experience. In the days and weeks following his announcement, hundreds of farmers contacted Chris to thank him for his advice, encouragement and the fellowship his work provided. We never say “thank you” often enough, and sometimes never in time. In honor of Chris, I offered this space for PFI horticultural farmers to thank their mentors – or anyone they learned an important farming lesson from. And as Chris would say, “Keep the tractor running.”

To read Chris’s full message, and to listen to all episodes of the Farmer to Farmer Podcast, visit [farmertofarmerpodcast.com/episodes/end](http://farmertofarmerpodcast.com/episodes/end).



Chris Blanchard with Sally Worley in 2013.



Many people have thanked Dick Thompson, but perhaps not many horticultural farmers. In a workshop that featured Dick on weed control, I was pleasantly surprised to learn a lot from Dick that was useful to this veggie farmer. His topic was on stale beds, which I incorporated every opportunity after that. Perhaps more importantly, I learned there was often just as much to learn or inspire from the wide diversity of PFI farmers as there was in my small subgroup of vegetable farmers.

*Angela Tedesco*  
Turtle Farm  
Johnston (retired)

I spent the better part of a day with Robert Currey, of Elm Street Gardens in Sparta, Georgia.

Prior to meeting Mr. Currey, I ran my small farm with rotations on double-dug beds and got modest results. Now, feeding from the top down with his weedless gardening approach, I am able to supply greens year-round without high tunnels, hydroponics or heated beds. I just build seasonal low tunnels over sensitive crops.

*Carl Glanzman*  
Nishnabotna Naturals  
Oakland







Jordan Clasen [of Grade A Gardens] has been instrumental in helping with the start-up of Dogpatch Urban Gardens, and is always available to ask questions and troubleshoot. He is a great mentor and friend, and I appreciate all he does for the farming community.

*Jenny Quiner*  
Dogpatch Urban Gardens  
Des Moines



Irving Treadway, Karen Huff and Dana Foster, all cooks at Scattergood Friends School, are my greatest mentors. Their skill and creativity keep

my job fun, and they help me stay focused on the truly important things: building community and feeding those we love.

*Mark Quess*  
Scattergood Friends' School Farm  
West Branch



I'd like to say thanks to Susan Jutz and Kate Edwards for helping me get into the CSA world a few years

ago. Without spending a summer experiencing their operations and learning from the things they did well, I would not have had the success I had getting started. Thank you!

*Tony Thompson*  
New Family Farm  
Elkhart

Years ago, when I was in high school, Dale Halbrecht was farming organic vegetables in an intensive way a half-mile down the road – literally my neighbor. I never stopped, never asked questions – though I noticed all the work he was doing and, somewhat, how he was doing it. Farming vegetables was the furthest vision from my mind at the time. After 10 years, he eventually left and farmed on Long Island. When I started Growing Harmony Farm, I looked up his phone number and called to ask him a few questions, and ask for feedback as to how I was thinking of setting up my system.



Towards the end of my full-time farming with my CSA, Dale, out of the blue, stopped in to visit me! I introduced him to my two workers as "my mentor who I had never met before!" He thought my operation looked good and he had been observing me over the years as he came back to Iowa for family reunions.

This is a long story to say that, even at a distance, a seed had been planted within me. That when I knew I was moving back to the farm, I knew of one person who had been farming very successfully and had done it in a way that I resonated with.

*Gary T. Guthrie*  
Growing Harmony Farm  
Nevada



Tim and I remember meeting Chris [Blanchard] with his young family early on in their time in Decorah when he was first testing out the year-roundish growing concept he brought with him from Maine – his kids, now all grown, were young children, clamoring around. It was 2002 and we were visiting a couple of farms as we considered what it would take to grow our system if we went to farming full-time. That feels like light-years ago.

Other farmers for me to thank are almost too many to name. When we were getting started (way back in the mid-1990s), Angela Tedesco, Gary Guthrie, Virginia Moser, Jeff Hall, Jay Robinson, Laura Krouse, Susan Jutz, Jill Beebout and Sean Skeehan – the list goes on; I don't think I can name just one. It is the host of farmers who have been willing to share information, encourage each other, share

the journey. For me, that's where the impact has come from. It has, and continues to be, a host of teachers and mentors.

*Jan Libbey*  
One Step at a Time Gardens  
Kanawha



From my mentor, Jill Beebout, I learned several important characteristics – professionalism, lightheartedness, the ability to think bigger (or maybe more accurately, wider), hopefulness and adaptability. I've sent many "Hellllpp!" messages to Jill throughout the growing and planning seasons, and she always has a thoughtful and encouraging answer that reflects the professionalism required to run any business. It's kept me on track and helped me think big-picture when learning something new. Now I'm (hopefully) at the point where I share at least a portion of that mindset myself.

*Danelle Myer*  
One Farm  
Logan

(Continued on page 12 →)





When I started working for Andy and Melissa Dunham in 2009, I was pretty green, having worked in a community and student garden for a year or two but without much other growing experience. I remember the first day working that fall: Andy had to tell me to stop stepping in the carrot bed as he explained a task to the crew. By the time I left the farm in fall of 2012, I was able to start my own operation based largely on the knowledge and experience I had gained working for them. They even let me have my own garden during my years working there, and to start selling out of that garden in 2012.

Andy told me to join PFI, and through PFI I did the [Savings Incentive Program] and started seriously considering farming on my own. He also told me to go to the Midwest Organic Conference, where for the first time I encountered people from non-farm backgrounds who didn't own land and were making a go of it, which was a huge inspiration for me.

Andy worked for Chris Blanchard at Rock Spring Farm before he started Grinnell Heritage Farm, and I realized over the years that although I never really met Chris, I was part of a lineage of farmers that stretched back through him. Especially for those of us who do not have a family farming tradition (or that tradition has long since been lost to another place and time), it's important to pay tribute to and recognize our farming lineage. In all honesty, it has sometimes been awkward starting a farm and a CSA in the same community as my former employers, but we have learned to co-exist and collaborate with each other, and I have always felt grateful to Andy and Melissa for bringing me into farming.

*Jordan Scheibel*  
Middle Way Farm  
Grinnell

**"I realized over the years that, although I never really met Chris, I was part of a lineage of farmers that stretched back through him."**

— JORDAN SCHEIBEL



I think a thank-you from Onion Creek Farm goes to Larry Cleverly. We learned much from Larry about growing and marketing lettuce – salad spinners, mesh bags, planting and replanting. Also, he was a model for setting good prices and not selling yourself short at farmers market. Thanks, Larry!

*Lonna Nachtigal*  
Onion Creek Farm  
Ames

I'd like to acknowledge and thank Mike Salama. As an ISU extension employee, I appreciate his willingness to share information about his business and growing practices with us, how accessible he makes local food and his welcoming attitude. Thanks, Mike!

*Emily Coll*  
ISU Local Foods Program  
Boone

My number-one thank-you would go out to my fellow Gang of 5 farmers. Over the past years, we have been so thankful for their nearly limitless shared knowledge in all areas of farming, their determined willingness to help out on a project or in a crisis, and their unwavering moral support. I can't imagine our farming journey without them.

*Jill Beebout*  
Blue Gate Farm  
Chariton



Jill Beebout (in the green shirt) with members of the Gang of 5, including, from left to right: Andy Dunham, Sean Skeeahan, Tammy Faux, Rob Faux, Mark Quee, Melissa Dunham and Dana Foster.



# MIDWESTERN *Fall*

For Chris Blanchard

My hips hurt  
in September, every time I walk  
across our farm. The Midwest leaves  
are turning yellow. We are all waiting  
for the reds and oranges. And you,  
you hurt in places I do not know.

I place the tips of my two forefingers on each hip, to feel  
the scrape of bone on bone. A step  
in front. One by one. Left by right. Day by day. But even  
without my hands, I know  
there is a wearing down.  
These fingertips are not the harbingers  
of this news. My mind is. I know that  
these bones will continue  
to grind against each other and these legs will no longer move  
as I want.

You know pain.  
Deep within your body, it will,  
with each and every movement,  
grab hold. A stride, a squat,  
a remembered position  
to place a small seed, a tiny transplant, that holds  
the hope, the belief that it will,  
by our care and against overwhelming odds, reach out  
in its own voice  
to fill our minds, our hands, our tables,  
our futures, our visions  
of what our farms can be.

*Adam Montri*  
Ten Hens Farm  
Bath, Michigan





# the **LOST ART** of *Cultivation*

Three farmers are bringing  
old techniques and  
technology back  
into the fold

Interest in organic farming is growing, and as it grows, the need for farming knowledge from generations ago returns to the forefront.

Few farmers can speak more to the growth of organic agriculture than Nelson Smith. Nelson has been farming organically for 21 years near Brighton in southeast Iowa. He hosted a PFI field day in July to share what he's learned over the years. When Nelson started farming organically, he shipped his organic, food-grade soybeans to Japan. "Since then, things have changed a lot and there's a lot more interest in organic," Nelson says. "Now, our soybeans go from here, down the highway and over to Washington. We went from 4,000 miles to 15." Nelson's significantly shorter transport mileage on his soybeans is a testament to the growth of organics in the U.S.

This growth has empowered others, like southwest Iowa farmers Dean Schultes and

Dustin Farnsworth, to get into the game. Dean has been farming near Dedham for the last nine years. Dustin farms near Adair, where he is in the process of transitioning some of his acres to organic and harvested his first certified organic crop this fall.

## Organic Farming Systems

Whether it's adding hay, clover or a small-grain crop to the rotation, or planting into a standing rye cover crop, organic farmers have to get creative when it comes to controlling weeds. One of the first steps for Dustin has been to expand his crop rotation. The additional crops compete with weeds and, because of their harvest times relative to the weeds' lifecycles, help lower the number of weed seeds in the soil. "The idea is that those weed seeds are

germinating and growing, and then you're cutting the weeds off during hay harvest and reducing the seed bank," Dustin says.

In a corn or soybean year, however, mechanical cultivation is the main tool for weed control. While farmers have an array of equipment options, from flame weeders to mechanical weed pullers, three main types of equipment dominate the scene: the harrow, the rotary hoe and the cultivator.

## Harrow

The first cultivation pass after planting corn or soybeans, if the weather allows, is commonly made by some type of harrow. Many times, this pass is made blind – or before the crop emerges. The idea is to rearrange the soil just above the planted

(Continued on page 17 →)





**Below:** Dustin Farnsworth cultivates beans in mid-July, near Adair. **Opposite: (Left)** Dean Schultes has been farming for nine years near Dedham. **(Right)** Nelson Smith, holding the mic, speaks to field day attendees about what his different cultivators are used for. His Treffler tine weeder can be seen in the background.









(← Continued from page 14)

seed and bring up weed roots so they dry out on the surface. Dustin, Dean and Nelson all have different types of harrows. Dean has a five-section spike-tooth harrow, which is the most aggressive of the three. These are often sold cheaply at auction, but they do require a bit more upkeep. "People who are starting out, or smaller farms, just can't afford those more expensive harrows on the market," Dean says.

Nelson, on the other hand, has had years of experience with mechanical cultivation and recently decided to purchase a Treffler tine weeder, a 30-foot machine with 324 tines. This year was Nelson's first full year using the Treffler, and he says it has changed the way he thinks about weeds. "It's an early-season machine," Nelson says. "You don't wait until your weeds are up. It won't get them out, it'll just comb them like you comb your hair." Nelson uses a rye cover crop for additional weed control and says residue management can be an issue with cultivation, but he manages the cover crop accordingly. "[The weeder] will handle a lot of residue if [the rye] is cut up into small pieces," Nelson says. "We disc up the rye – I actually disced it an extra time. If it's cut short, it's amazing what will go through there."

Dustin has a 40-foot flex-tine harrow. He wanted more tines, but something a little less aggressive than the spike-tooth, and the flex-tine harrow offered a compromise. While Dustin says it would be nice to have as many tines as Nelson's weeder, he agreed with Dean that this type of equipment would likely be too expensive for beginning farmers.

## Timing

When it comes to cultivation, timing is everything. Sometimes it's just too wet after planting and you can't even get a harrow pass in on some fields. "Wet years are an organic farmer's nightmare because you can't get out there and work on those weeds, but the weeds can still grow," Nelson says. "They love that wet year



because there's nobody coming out with a cultivator trying to kill them."

When conditions are dry enough, Dean likes to get his harrow in the field four days after planting – but his timing is very dependent on the weather. If he sees a storm system is likely on the fourth day, for instance, he'll harrow on day three. Some farmers like Nelson and Dean, can relay their cultivation regimen in detail. But Dustin says that farmers like him, who are just getting started with organic, might experiment and try different approaches to figure out what they like.

"Since then [shipping organic soybeans to Japan], things have changed a lot and there's a lot more interest in organic. Now, our soybeans go from here, down the highway and over to Washington.

We went from 4,000 miles to 15."

– Nelson Smith

## Rotary Hoes

For the most part, a rotary hoe is a rotary hoe – there aren't many differences, and they aren't that expensive. But they can effectively control some kinds of weeds, if used at the right time. Dean rotary-hoes his corn crop after it emerges, usually when it's an inch or two high. The rotary hoe breaks up any hard-packed ground and lets him hit any in-row weeds one last time. "You just have to go out and try it. If you're pulling way too many corn plants out, then obviously it's not the right time to be

doing it," Dean says. "But if you have one here and one there, that's pretty typical."

Nelson no longer uses his rotary hoe because he thinks the Treffler tine weeder does the same job, but better.

## Cultivators

"Your first pass with a cultivator is probably the most crucial," Dean says. "When I see the weeds, it's go time. I have no set height or growth stage on corn or soybeans." Dean uses a John Deere AT-40 front-mount cultivator with rolling shields and Einbock finger weeders, and usually runs this tool about three times in both corn and beans. Dustin started with a front-mount cultivator with trip shanks that he pulled out of his neighbor's fencerow. He has since upgraded and mostly runs a rear-mount cultivator with Danish tines: he likes having a high number of shanks per surface area.

The ultimate goal with cultivating isn't to kill all the weeds, but rather to keep the cash crop ahead of whatever weeds are competing with it. If you help the crop outcompete weeds for the first six to eight weeks, you may have a weedy field, but you're probably going to have nice yields. "Part of organics is the canopy – you need to get the crop up and over the weeds," Dean says. "That canopy will help you more than anything else." ■

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**Top Left:** Dustin checks the status of some of his corn. **Middle Row:** Dean's different cultivation machines from left to right: The harrow is used for blind cultivation just a few days after planting. The rotary hoe specializes in getting in-row weeds and is used once the crop is an inch or two tall. Dean's main cultivator once the crop is too big to rotary hoe. **Bottom:** Dean makes a cultivation pass in his soybeans. **Top Right:** A close-up of Nelson's Treffler tine-weeder.

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## Learn More

➔ Stay tuned to [practicalfarmers.org](https://practicalfarmers.org) for a video series later this winter on controlling weeds in organic systems.



## Feeding By-Products to Pigs

By-products help turn food and beverage waste into feed resources for pigs

Food and beverage producers, such as breweries, dairies and orchards, actively strive to repurpose their waste products. For farmers raising pigs – which are resourceful animals that can use a wide range of feed sources – taking advantage of these by-products, often available at little to no cost, can help reduce feed costs and add varied sources of nutrition to pigs' diets.

### Brewer's Grains

**B**rewer's grains, also known as brewer's waste or spent grain, are one of the by-products of the brewing process. When beer is brewed, grains are mashed with hot water to extract sugar from the grain's starch, converting the sugar to alcohol through fermentation. Left behind after this process are the residual starches, proteins and sugars that could not be extracted. These protein- and fiber-rich remains are excellent feed for all livestock. They are also the single biggest waste product of the brewing process – about 85 percent of total brewery waste. Because they are constantly being generated, breweries have an ample supply and many give their spent brewer's grains to farmers for free, or at a minimal cost. The arrangement is mutually beneficial: breweries save money on disposal costs – estimated by the Brewer's Association to be around \$43 million per year – and keep the copious waste from landfills, while farmers gain a valuable supplemental feed source.

Tom Wilson, of Nevada, has a small, diversified livestock farm with chickens and pigs. At one point, Tom sourced different by-products like brewer's grains, whey and produce from nearby breweries, farms and grocery stores. "When making connections with local breweries and grocery stores, I had to venture out to see who would be interested," Tom says. "I would try to make the process of picking up products as easy as possible [for the suppliers]. It was easier on the manager to agree to have me come to pick up products. Most of the places I reached out to were open to and interested in me picking up their by-products or produce, and they enjoyed the aspect of decreasing their waste stream."

Brewer's grains do have a potential drawback, however: their high water content. Because of all the water used in the

beer-brewing process, spent brewer's grains contain 75-80 percent water. This leaves the grains susceptible to bacteria, and they can spoil rapidly. As a result, they should be used within a few days of receiving them. Drying is an option that can extend their shelf life, but it can be costly. When fed wet or dried, and mixed with other feed sources like small grains, hay or pasture, brewer's grains are an excellent feed supplement for pigs. Brewer's grains are best as a nutritional supplement for pigs. Due to their high fiber content and low-quality protein, they are better suited for animals with lower energy needs, like gestating sows and boars.



"I feed [my pigs] apples not only to produce wholesome meat, but for the quality of life it gives the pigs. It makes them happy. Happy pigs produce good meat." – DAYNA BURTNES NGUYEN

"Brewer's grains are great for gestating sows because of the fiber content," says Dave Stender, a swine specialist with Iowa State University Extension and Outreach. "The fiber helps to keep the stomach full and keeps the sow from gaining too much. It is almost like feeding silage to a pig."

### A Brewers' Perspective

Jason Peterson, the head brewer at Alluvial Brewery in Ames, who prefers to be called Pete, says Alluvial is eagerly seeking farmers who want to use the brewery's leftover brewer's grains for animal feed. "We would love to help farmers out with a potential feed source, rather than letting our brewer's grains rot in our compost bin," Pete says. "The grains that are left after brewing are a hassle for us to maintain and manage, since it is a waste product for us, and we are looking to repurpose it." The brewery brews twice a week, and farmers picking up grains would need to be available to collect the spent grains according to a strict brewing schedule. "We plan to double our production in 2019 with a new production system," Pete says. "Right now, in a week we brew about 800 pounds of dry grains, which weigh more when wet after brewing. With the expansion, we estimate our production to reach 1,600 pounds a week. We will be producing more – which means more grains for farmers to put to a great use for their animals."

While Alluvial staff would prefer to have a farmer pick up all the spent grains at once, they realize that's not possible for many farmers. "We know some farmers won't be able to pick up our entire amount of brewer's grains," Pete says. "If we were to have 50 farmers who want to pick up 50 pounds each, we will be willing to work with them. We are looking to work with any farmer who is willing to pick up on a regular schedule so we have fewer grains going to waste."

### Feeding Whey

Whey, a dairy by-product from cheesemaking, is another valuable by-product. It is an excellent source of high-quality protein for pigs that is both highly palatable and digestible. Like wet brewer's





**Opposite:** Dayna Burtness Nguyen, of Nettle Valley Farm in Spring Grove, Minnesota, feeds her pigs gleaned apples.

**Left:** Pigs owned by Tom Wilson, of Remnant Hills Farm near Nevada, enjoy some grains and vegetables.

**Below:** Pigs at Nettle Valley Farm enjoy apples gleaned from Dayna Burtness' neighbors, as well as wild apple trees on her farm.

grains, however, its high water content means it spoils quickly, limiting the distance it can be transported. Whey is best suited for starter and grow-finish pigs – but do not feed it to lactating sows: too much liquid during lactation can reduce the sow's energy intake. "Whey is a well-balanced feed source," Dave says. "Since whey is a liquid, keep in mind the pig will need to consume more to receive an ample amount of nutrients."

### Gleaned Apples

Apples are highly palatable to all classes of pigs and are known to influence meat and flavor quality. Dayna Burtness Nguyen of Spring Grove, Minnesota, includes gleaned apples from the wild apple trees on her farm, along with apple cultivars from her neighbors, in her pigs' feed rations. "Our pigs are free-fed grain, and they forage on apples as they wish," Dayna says.

While pigs enjoy eating apples, a word of caution: apples, too, have a high water content. If allowed to freely choose how many apples to eat, pigs are likely to fill up on this fruity snack and their weight gain could slow. Instead, consider feeding ample amounts of grain along with supplemented apples to maintain the animals' weight gain. "Feeding my pigs gleaned apples does produce great quality meat," Dayna says. "I feed them apples not only to produce wholesome meat, but for the quality of life it gives the pigs. It makes them happy. Happy pigs produce good meat."

### Challenges of Feeding By-Products

Turning waste into feed for pigs is inherently rewarding, but making it worth your while can be challenging. Figuring

**"Most of the places I reached out to were open to and interested in me picking up their by-products or produce, and they enjoyed the aspect of decreasing their waste stream."**

– TOM WILSON

out logistics, like sourcing, collecting and transporting, as well as proper rations for your animals and how to store by-products, can be complicated – especially if you don't farm near the source of those products. Liquid by-products, like whey and brewer's grains, are highly susceptible to rotting quickly. To limit health hazards, it is essential to check product quality multiple times, including when picking up these products, once they have arrived on the farm and before you feed them to pigs.

Both Dayna and Tom say that logistical issues play a major role in whether they decide to use a given by-product. "When thinking about distance, my priority is to

evaluate what I already have at my farm that I can use, like gleaned apples," Dayna says. "Next, I think about what resources are in my neighborhood that I can quickly reach and pick up. If it is more than 15 to 30 minutes away, I do not find it worthwhile to drive – although, sacrificing the distance for certain products makes more sense than for others. Cheese, for example. I would be willing to drive a longer distance to pick up cheese than I would whey."

Tom adds: "When I was picking up produce waste from the grocery stores, I had to think about what I was going to do with all the plastic the food is wrapped in. Picking up brewer's grains, I had to pick up on the scheduled days they were brewing. Now with the cooler weather, you could pick up the grain and store it up to four days before it went sour and bad. If it went bad, I would end up placing the grains in the compost, but I do not want to make trips to put products in the compost pile."

Distance is also a factor for Tom. If products are located more than 30 minutes away, he says it's not worth his while. "It worked best when I planned to travel to town to pick up products," he says. "Most of the time, I did make it work when I was going into town. When I could make it work, there were not many hurdles to go through." ■



### Learn More

➔ If you are interested in sourcing any of these products, don't hesitate to reach out to local by-product makers in your area.



## » Photos : FIELD DAYS

**1)** Guests smile and laugh at the field day near Jefferson on Sept. 13 as hosts Benji, Chris and Jerald Deal (not pictured) make jokes about who shouldn't be in charge of planting the pumpkin patch.

**2)** Alisha Bower, PFI's strategic initiatives manager, wears PFI's "Don't Farm Naked" T-shirt while a booth visitor sports a shirt featuring a riff on that theme at the Farm Progress Show on Aug. 28.

**3)** Ardyth Gillespie (left) and Ellen Anderson converse during the AgArts field day hosted by the Bakehouse family near Hastings on Aug. 25.

**4)** Eric, Ann and Calvin Franzensburg pause for a portrait during the field day they hosted at their farm on Sept. 16 near Van Horne.

**5)** A goat watches guests at the Sept. 14 field day hosted by Julie and Ryan Wheelock near Sac City, which offered hands-on practice with livestock care.

**6)** Guests listen to Kelly Clime (red shirt), of Hoof Beet Farm discuss using livestock in her vegetable gardens at her Aug. 27 field day near Dallas Center.







**1)** Jake Bigelow, center, discusses the pros and cons of one of several cattle corral setups on his farm during the Aug. 24 field he hosted with his wife, Crystal, near Winterset.

**2)** Guests at John and Janna Wesselius' Nov. 8 field day near Sioux Center get a live demo of carrot harvest performed by farm employees.

**3)** Guests enjoy time to network over boxed lunches in the field during Dennis Carney's Sept. 6 field day near Marble Rock.

**4)** Trevor Schwartz, a veterinarian with Suidae Health and Production and Lake City Veterinary Clinic, shows the crowd how to castrate a piglet while Sadie Wheelock holds the microphone at the Wheelocks' field day.

**5)** Tina Bakehouse leads participants through a storytelling workshop at the AgArts field day.

**6)** Employees of Kalona Creamery package freshly made cheese curds during the Kalona Creamery tour on Oct. 5 in Kalona.







**1)** Field day attendees watch as apples are being washed and processed into cider Deal's Orchard.

**2)** A couple of Hereford pigs trot over to the camera at Bigelow Family Farm.

**3)** Phil Forbes, supply chain director at Kalona Creamery, explains Kalona's process for sourcing, buying and selling milk during the creamery tour.

**4)** Robert Harvey (right) and a visitor to Practical Farmers' booth are deep in conversation at the Farm Progress Show.

**5)** Dean Sponheim, who operates Sponheim Seeds and Services in Nora Springs, shows attendees where a cereal rye and rapeseed cover crop was flown onto one of Dennis Carney's corn fields.







**1)** Guests learn about blueberries while touring Pheasant Run Farm during the Franzenburg family's field day on Sept. 16.

**2)** The group attending Andy Welch's field day in Grant City, Missouri, on Sept. 22 enjoys a meal together before the tour begins.

**3)** An old-fashioned carriage is a perfect place for a cat nap before guests arrive for the field day at Deal's Orchard.

**4)** Kelly Clime shows Jody Barrett how to process a broiler.

**5)** Andy Welch explains his pasture management to guests.





## Battling Stress in Rural Iowa

Iowa farmers are under stress, but with the right tools can weather the tough times

Every morning all across Iowa, farmers meet to share a cup of coffee and talk about the weather. In Shelby County – and increasingly in many other rural communities – farmers are also talking about something else: their mental well-being.

Shelby County is home to Dr. Mike Rosmann, a psychologist, farmer and PFI member. He writes a weekly agricultural behavioral health column, and is one of only a handful of psychologists in the nation to specifically focus on the needs of farmers. “When my neighbors pass around my column, they know I’m one of them,” Mike says. “I became a better psychologist because I was a farmer, and I became a better farmer because I was a psychologist. In order to be effective in providing services, we must understand the culture of farmers, ranchers and all agricultural producers.” Gayle Olson is a PFI board member who serves as assistant to the director at Iowa’s Center for Agricultural Safety and Health, based at the University of Iowa. She highlights just how atypical Mike’s neighbors are in a culture that prides itself on hard work and minding your own business. “These issues are not unique to Iowa,” Gayle says. “An increasing number of farmers all over the world are dealing with stress. Many psychologists don’t understand farmers and farming and how it’s different from any other job. Farmers’ qualities like perseverance, independence, do-it-yourself-ing and working in isolation make them good at their jobs, but also become major barriers to them seeking help. Farmers don’t talk with neighbors about their problems, period.”

### Barriers to Getting Help

The realities of farming and life in small rural communities are also often at odds with how mental health services are delivered. “The logistics of getting to an appointment can be difficult for farmers who need to stay close to the farm,” Mike says. “Maybe they could get a telecounselor but don’t have high-speed internet. Perhaps they are experiencing a crisis or high-stress



**“Farmers need to look at behavioral health as an investment in themselves. It will make them better farmers.”** – MIKE ROSMANN

situation but are unable to get in right away for an appointment.” Confidentiality can be an issue as well, Gayle adds. In smaller communities, many people know one another. Seeking help could mean revealing your problem to a neighbor. “In smaller communities there’s more of a stigma,” she says. “It’s harder to access services without all of your neighbors knowing about it. For example, you might know the receptionist at the clinic, or the doctor may have a kid that goes to school with your kid.”

In many cases, mental health services aren’t available at all. Iowa is consistently ranked among the lowest in the nation for access to mental health services – and this is especially true in rural areas. To make matters worse, a diagnosis of depression or anxiety can make it harder for farmers to obtain insurance or afford their premiums. Elected officials are taking notice: In April, Senators Joni Ernst, an Iowa Republican, and Tammy Baldwin, a Wisconsin Democrat, introduced the Farmers First Act, a bipartisan bill that would establish farm crisis hotlines and allow for providers to give up to five counseling sessions without having to file an insurance claim. It would also provide states with competitive grant

funds to establish community-based assistance, and to ensure that services are affordable and available when needed. A version of the act was included in the Senate’s version of the farm bill, while a slightly different version was passed in the House. The differences between the two versions will need to be worked out, and the revised bill will have to pass in the House and Senate before the bill becomes law.

### Consequences

A lack of mental health services for farmers and agricultural workers is a major problem because stress on the farm is so pervasive. As the farm economy has slumped over the past several years, the financial and emotional pressures facing farmers have only increased. Farm Aid, the non-profit farm advocacy group, reported that calls to its farmer support hotline in 2018 increased 30 percent over the previous year. In what other profession is one’s livelihood dependent on so many factors – extreme weather, pests, disease, equipment failure, commodity pricing – that are completely outside a person’s control? Failure can mean an almost incomprehensible loss. Losing your job is hard enough, but losing the farm that has been in your family for generations is a loss of identity.

It isn’t surprising that one survey of over 1,100 farmers showed 45 percent experienced a high level of stress, 58 percent were struggling with varying levels of anxiety and 35 percent met the clinical definition for depression. The persistent feeling of sadness or loss of interest that characterizes major depression can lead to a range of behavioral and physical symptoms. Farmers experiencing depression may stop caring for themselves and their farm, Mike explains. They may withdraw from usual activities like going to church or meeting with friends, and they may lose their hopeful perspective. He says the symptom most unique to farmers is what he calls the “lump in the throat” phenomenon, where one may feel overwhelming sadness but can’t bring him- or herself to cry or otherwise show emotion.





Vic Madsen poses by his grain drill on his organic farm near Audubon.

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**"You don't want to underestimate how personally people take failure, even if they're just in the wrong place at the wrong time. There's some ingrained strong sense of pride, which can be an asset and a burden. When we're proud of our crops, that's a positive. But when the pride keeps people from asking for help, that's a negative."** – VIC MADSEN

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At a recent PFI board meeting where members were discussing ag business cycles, Vic Madsen, of Audubon, shared a little bit about his own experience losing a farm. "I erred in the late '70s thinking the good times would last forever and made the same mistake in the '80s thinking the bad times would last forever," Vic says. "The way a person handles the hard times varies with the person. Many do just the wrong thing, like I did, by withdrawing from society. I dropped out of a couple local groups and was basically anti-social. The worst part was that I became so wrapped up in my financial problems that I ignored my young sons and wife. That, and a couple other things I did, were probably signs of depression. We're over it now and it's far enough in the past that I can talk about it, but I couldn't have talked about it five years ago. You don't want to underestimate how personally people take failure, even if they're just in the wrong place at the wrong time. There's some ingrained strong sense of pride, which can be an asset and a burden. When we're

proud of our crops, that's a positive. But when the pride keeps people from asking for help, that's a negative."

### **Coping With Stress**

Fortunately, like so many other issues on the farm, stress management is all about having the right tools. Mike advises farmers to take care of themselves by making healthy choices, spending time with the people who matter most and prioritizing the things that help them unwind, whether it's taking a day to go fishing or visiting with the grandchildren. "Following good business practices, and being proactive about the things you can control, can put you in a better position to deal with the things you don't have any control over," he says. "Farmers need to look at behavioral health as an investment in themselves. It will make them better farmers. There's evidence of a link between farmers' mental health and the health of livestock. It makes sense. If we don't take good care of ourselves, it's hard for us to manage our workload optimally."

Perhaps the easiest way to manage stress is to simply reach out to your neighbors. A mental health professional may be ideal when you're under duress, but you don't need a degree to offer hope and emotional support. Most people won't go directly to a professional, but they will talk to their family doctor, pastor or friend – and that can be incredibly therapeutic. Vic says that reaching out to other farmers who understood where he was coming from was key. "For me, the way back to sanity was finding Dick Thompson and PFI. Dick's message was opposite from the common hard-times response, which was that they – the government, lenders, landlords, input suppliers and just about everyone else – should do something. Dick's idea was that you can do things to make your farm more stable financially. To me, that difference was like a breath of fresh air." ■

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### *Learn More*

- ➔ [Learn more stress management techniques during PFI's annual conference during the session "Practical Tools for Dealing With the Stressors of Farming," on Jan. 19.](#)
- ➔ [You can read Mike Rosmann's columns at \[iowafarmertoday.com\]\(http://iowafarmertoday.com\).](#)
- ➔ [The Iowa Concern hotline has stress counselors available 24/7 who can talk online or by phone \(800-447-1985\). They also provide referrals for behavioral health counseling.](#)



## Verifying Nutritional Benefits of Grass-Fed Beef

On-farm research reveals omega content and flavor of 100% grass-fed Iowa beef

Grass-fed beef is all the rage. So much so, it can be found in every mainstream grocery store and ordered from Omaha Steaks. Nutritional claims abound – it's leaner, more nutrient-rich and contains a better balance of healthy fats than traditional grain-fed beef. Working with PFI, Bruce and Connie Carney and Dave and Meg Schmidt set out to see how their beef measures up.

**A** combined 27 ribeyes from the two farms – Carney Family Farms in Maxwell and Troublesome Creek Cattle Co. in Exira – were sent to laboratories at Iowa State University to be analyzed for fat content, flavor and tenderness. These ribeyes were from Red and Black Angus 100 percent grass-fed cattle, finished between 20 and 32 months old, with carcass weights ranging from 528 to 772 pounds. The objectives of this research project were twofold: to evaluate the use of ultrasound in determining the optimal harvest window for 100 percent grass-fed cattle, and to better understand variables in meat quality. This article explores the latter.

### Omega-6 and Omega-3 Fatty Acids

"One of the big things in nutrition right now is the idea of trying to balance omega-6 to omega-3 fatty acids in your diet," Dave says. "The idea is that traditional human diets were closer to a 1-to-1 ratio." In short, omega-3 fatty acids are a type of polyunsaturated fat that is excellent for health, particularly heart health. This is what's found in fish oil. Omega-6 fatty acids are critical to support our bodies, but cause inflammation if not

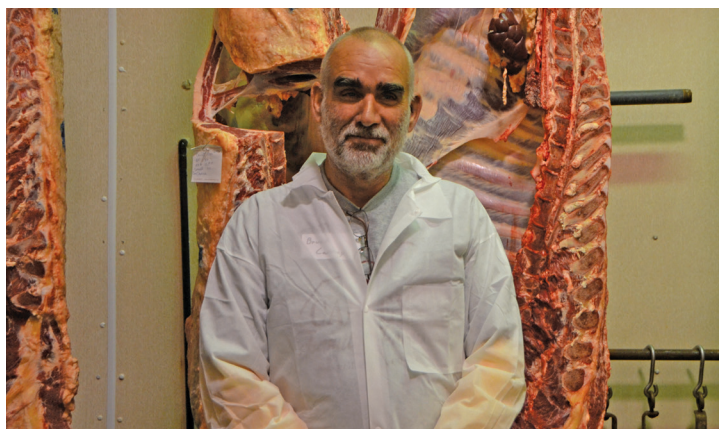
kept in balance with omega-3s. Vegetable and seed oils contain high levels of omega-6s.

The American Heart Association recommends an omega-6 to omega-3 ratio of 4-to-1. "Most Americans' diets are around 15-to-1," Dave says, "and if you eat a lot of fast and fried food, it's closer to 20-to-1." According to the AHA, this skewed ratio promotes heart disease, cancer and autoimmune diseases due to chronic inflammation. On the other hand, research by Artemis Simpopoulos, author of "The Omega Diet," and founder and president of the Center for Genetics, Nutrition and Health, found that a ratio of 2.5-to-1 reduced cancer cell proliferation – and anti-aging experts tout ratios of 2-to-1. In PFI's study, the average ratio of the 27 grass-fed ribeyes was 1.8-to-1, ranging from 1.4-to-1 to 2.2-to-1. "Grain-fed beef is about 10-to-1," Dave says. "If you're looking to adjust your diet to bring down those ratios, grass-fed beef is one way to do it." Bruce Carney adds: "Grass-fed producers are able to use these health benefits to differentiate ourselves from the conventional beef industry. We need to continue talking about the health aspect of our product."

### Tenderness

Not all grass-fed beef is created equal, and because of varying quality, it has received mixed reviews in terms of tenderness and flavor. Along with nutritional benefits, this research project also tested the ribeye's tenderness and flavor, among other variables that define a beef-eating experience. The ribeyes were subjected to the Warner-Bratzler Shear Force test, which measures the force required to cut through a piece of meat. The average force required to cut the 27 ribeyes was 6.8 pounds. The National Beef Tenderness Survey conducted by Texas A&M, which reports top loin takes 4.5 pounds (most tender), ribeyes take 5.2 pounds and top round takes 9 pounds (most tough) of force to cut through. Note that the survey consisted of primarily grain-fed beef.

Testing didn't stop there. Ribeye samples were taste-tested by a group of panelists in ISU's Food Science and Human Nutrition Department. The panelists rated the ribeyes on their juiciness, tenderness, chewiness, beef flavor and presence of other flavors in the meat. Average scores are reported in the table on the next page. It's important to note that laboratory protocols were followed to prepare meat for the taste test. This meant the grass-fed ribeyes were prepared in the same manner as grain-fed beef. Preparation plays a significant role in the eating experience of grass-fed beef – low and slow is key. Grass-fed beef is generally leaner than grain-fed beef, meaning there is less insulation in the







**Above:** Sylvie, Meg and Dave Schmidt of Troublesome Creek Cattle Co. **Opposite: (Left):** Bruce Carney poses in front of his grass-fed beef carcasses at Mingo Locker. **(Right):** A ribeye steak submitted to Iowa State University for analysis.

meat. Thus, moisture and fat will be lost if it is cooked too hot, explains Shannon Hayes, author of "The Gourmet Grassfed Cookbook." Dave agrees: "Grass-fed beef, when cooked properly, is capable of comparing more favorably in juiciness and tenderness to grain-fed beef than is indicated by the ISU results."

## Flavor

According to Stanley Fishman, author of "Tender Grassfed Meat," properly cooked grass-fed meat will have "a depth of flavor, a dense, meaty texture, [and] a good clean mouthfeel" that can't be replicated by grain-fed beef. However, a consumer unfamiliar with grass-fed beef may find these flavors objectionable. In PFI's ribeye study, the sensory evaluation shows the ribeyes had a mild beef flavor with the

**"Grass-fed beef costs more to raise and finish, but when you take the health aspect into consideration, I think you're spending money on preventative healthcare."**

— BRUCE CARNEY

detection of other flavors. The results described some of these other flavors as gamey, metallic, grassy and oxidized. Ken Prusa, a professor in ISU's Food Science and Human Nutrition Department, believes these flavors are normal in grass-fed beef. Bruce agrees and tries to educate his customers about this fact. "We help our customers realize our beef may taste more like deer or elk, which eat what's available to them at different times of the year," Bruce says. "This results in different meat flavors with varying consistency, more like wild animals."

To achieve greater consistency, he finishes his cattle on annual forages. But he adds that off-flavors are usually the result of environmental conditions. "In a drought, forage quality decreases. Consistency is harder to achieve in grass-fed versus grain-fed because feeding grain provides control," he says. "We're at the mercy of Mother Nature. As we build soil health on our farms and learn how to grow better-quality forages, these flavors will improve."

"What really matters is what our customers think," says Meg Schmidt, noting that one of their customers loves their beef because it tastes "clean." The Schmidts have yet to have a customer complain about flavor; in fact, many have become repeat customers who have told Dave and Meg that they thoroughly enjoy Troublesome Creek beef.

## Nutritional Benefits

"Grass-fed beef costs more to raise and finish, but when you take the health aspect into consideration, I think you're spending money on preventative healthcare," Bruce says. Dave explains that much of the grass-fed beef found at grocery stores is produced overseas as cheaply as possible in conditions very similar to conventional feedlots, using ration supplements that bend the assumptions about what grass-fed means. In contrast, local family-run grass-fed cattle operations typically keep their cattle grazing fresh forage in productive pastures for as much of the year as possible. A definitive test of whether an animal was truly grass-fed is the omega-6 to omega-3 fatty acid ratio of the meat. "We work hard to keep our cattle gaining weight on an all-forage diet," Dave says. "Having ISU confirm that our beef really does have the beneficial characteristics of a grass-fed ration is very gratifying." ■

ISU's Sensory Evaluation Results for Grass-Fed Ribeyes	
Juiciness	5.6
Tenderness	5.2
Chewiness	6.7
Beef Flavor	3.4
Other Flavor	4.2

### Evaluation Key:

**Juiciness:**  
1=Not Juicy, 10=Juicy  
**Tenderness:**  
1=Not Tender, 10=Tender  
**Chewiness:**  
1=Not Chewy, 10=Chewy  
**Beef Flavor:**  
1=None, 10=Intense  
**Other Flavor:**  
1=None, 10=Intense

This table shows the average score from Bruce Carney's and Dave Schmidt's 27 ribeyes.



## Who Owns the Farmland?

### Participants debate a pivotal farmland transfer question

Does it matter if who owns the farmland isn't the same as who farms it? This past summer, PFI member and author Beth Hoffman published an article in *The New Food Economy* titled, "Ninety-nine percent of America's farmers are family-owned. But only half are family farmed."

Past PFI executive director Teresa Opheim shared this article and spurred a vibrant discussion on Renewing the Countryside's Farm Transitions Discussion Group. Teresa wrote, "I think all of the farmland owned by people who are not farming is problematic." She shared an excerpt from Beth's article: "In fact, only about 2 percent of farmland in the country will be sold to people other than family members in the coming years. Instead, most land will be passed on to the next generation via wills, trusts or sale to other family members."

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"Land ownership provides the stability, the autonomy, the opportunity for long-term planning and investment, and the wealth creation potential that is central to our agricultural history." – NEIL HAMILTON

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PFI member Dayna Burtress Nguyen, a beginning farmer fortunate to own her own farmland near Spring Grove, Minnesota, quickly agreed: "One hundred percent with you, Teresa. Young farmers need to be able to purchase land – not just rent!" PFI member Hannah Breckbill, who farms near Decorah, added: "After four years of renting, I decided I wouldn't keep farming unless I

owned the land. I couldn't figure out a way to invest in the long-term health of land that I wouldn't necessarily be able to access in the long-term. Luckily, I'm still farming, thanks to community support and creative neighbors – and a lot of stubborn effort. It just seems fair: the people doing the essential work of farming should have ownership and equity in the land they are farming – or no one at all should have ownership of land."

Beth's article identifies the biggest barrier to ownership: the exorbitant cost of both land and machinery. Kathy Zeman, farmer near Nerstrand, Minnesota, reinforced this point: "Buying into any business still requires 20 percent down and collateral for the borrowed money. So unless young farmers come from wealth, that literally can't happen. They haven't spent enough years on the planet yet." One solution Kathy brainstormed was to find a way to make it legal for a community of people to own land and farm together "without getting sucked into corporate owning of land." Since the desire to own land is so ingrained in our culture, she said achieving this would require a "rewiring" of how we think about land.

Hannah Breckbill responded: "My farm just hosted a field day for Practical Farmers of Iowa at which we shared details about our worker cooperative agreement. We're still figuring it all out, but we're definitely working on rewiring how we think. We are basically

making an entity, Humble Hands Harvest LLC, that will own the land instead of us as individuals. So, for better or worse, it's corporate ownership. Each of us as individuals has equity in the company, but since we also received a number of substantial gifts from our community and families to get started, we're giving equity to 'the commons' as well. The idea is that, in a generation's time, 'the commons' will have a large share of the equity of the cooperative, so it won't be so hard for people to enter into it."

Lynn Sue Mizner, who farms near Palisade, Minnesota, replied, "My model is similar to Hannah's. There's nothing inherently wrong with a corporate non-profit model, as long as the people who work and invest benefit accordingly. I see long-term lease agreements as the key to protecting the land and the farmers. Association agreements can help prevent some of the common sources of discord."

List members discussed corporate ownership laws. Attorney Rachel Armstrong, of Farm Commons, clarified that there are no restrictions on corporate ownership of land, but that several states – including Minnesota, Iowa and a number of other Midwestern states – restrict corporate ownership of farmland. "In Minnesota, a corporation or other entity, including a farmer cooperative, cannot own farmland, with a few exceptions mostly for corporate entities that are made up entirely of family members," Rachel wrote. "A non-profit can own no more than 40 acres of farmland in most instances, and all proceeds must be used for educational purposes. Iowa's corporate farm law is less restrictive in that it allows certain authorized entities to own up to 1,500 acres of farmland."

Teresa ended the conversation by sharing an excerpt from Neil Hamilton's farm legacy letter, which is published in the book "The Future of Family Farms." Neil's primary goal for his farmland was to help a young farmer start farming. He decided the way to do this was sell the land at a fair price. Other landowners in PFI's membership have different goals for their farmland – from conservation, to keeping the land in the family, to keeping family harmony and more – that they are achieving through various strategies.

### Resources

- The Farm Transitions list is sponsored by Renewing the Countryside, Minnesota Institute for Sustainable Agriculture and Iroquois Valley Farms. To join, visit [www.renewingthecountryside.org/farm\\_transitions](http://www.renewingthecountryside.org/farm_transitions).
- Read Beth Hoffman's full article at [newfoodeconomy.org/farmland-rent-iowa-family-farm](http://newfoodeconomy.org/farmland-rent-iowa-family-farm)
- Minnesota farming statutes: [www.revisor.mn.gov/statutes/cite/500.24](http://www.revisor.mn.gov/statutes/cite/500.24)
- Iowa anti-corporate farming laws overview: [www.calt.iastate.edu/article/iowas-anti-corporate-farming-laws-general-overview](http://www.calt.iastate.edu/article/iowas-anti-corporate-farming-laws-general-overview)
- Farm Commons' flowchart on farm ownership: [www.sare.org/Learning-Center/Books/Farmers-Guide-to-Business-Structures](http://www.sare.org/Learning-Center/Books/Farmers-Guide-to-Business-Structures)





Hannah Breckbill, center with mic, speaks to attendees at the PFI field day she and farm partner Emily Fagan hosted on June 21.

*"If we want to have new farmers, we need landowners who are going to get out of the way and sell their land. Chris has a wonderful operation he's going to step into with Ray and his mom. He didn't have any land he owned himself, so I sold my 60 acres to him. We have a 15-year land contract, with a balloon payment at the end. There is a provision in the contract that if, after a certain number of years of payment, he wants to build a house where my family's farmhouse used to be, we will survey off a 5-acre portion and give him title to it so he owns that free and clear. Under a land contract, you don't really own any of it until you pay off the entire land contract.*

*"Could I have gotten more for my family farmland? Sure, I could have started a bidding war and made Chris pay more. I could have sold it to a wealthy individual as an investment. But money isn't everything. I have never regretted selling. I never think 'how could I sell my heritage?' If I felt the urge to see my heritage, I would go down to Hamilton Prairie [the land Neil donated to the Adams County Conservation Board in 2005]. It is one of my favorite places to walk.*

*"At some point, I might run out of money and wish I had sold that farm for more. I hope that doesn't happen, but if it does, I won't have anyone to blame but myself. Adams County needs young farmers owning a piece of land more than it needs people who used to live there hanging on to farmland pretending they're still farmers. As John Baker of the Beginning Farmer Center says: 'You don't own a farm; you own a piece of farmland. It stopped being a farm when your family left it.' A farm is a family, a piece of land, a business, an entity. People need to recognize that.*

*"Historically, this nation's preference was not for tenancy but to convert tenants into owners. In the 1940s, tenancy was almost seen as an evil. There was the ladder you moved up from being a hired employee, to tenant, to being an owner. Ownership was the goal for a lot of reasons. For security. For wealth creation. For stewardship. Not many people would choose to always be a tenant if they could own the land.*

*"Many people seem to feel different about tenancy today, as if ownership was not really an important issue. Now people say things like, 'Why*

*would you tie all your money up in land, you should own machinery, let others own the land.' But land tenure issues – who owns the land, how it is farmed and by whom, and who has access to it – are critical for agriculture but also for a healthy, sustainable food system.*

*"Land ownership provides the stability, the autonomy, the opportunity for long-term planning and investment, and the wealth creation potential that is central to our agricultural history. Farmers who own their land have more security and autonomy. They don't deal with landlords coming and saying, 'Well, you've been renting this land for 40 years, now I am going to put this on the market, so find something else to do.' There's also the idea that 'the footsteps of the owner are the best fertilizer': owners will make the investment in the land long-term, planning the future in conservation. 'Farming a piece like it's rented ground' has some truth to it. That doesn't mean that owners can't abuse the land or have short-term economic challenges, but if people are there on short-term rent, there is no reason you would assume they are going to take care of it like they own it. You don't go wash your rental car before you take it back.*

*"How different would the state look if all the people who owned the land didn't farm it and all we had were tenants? Corn would still get planted, but it has a whole helluva different social and economic impact. When farmers who own their land are profitable, the money goes back into their own farms and into their communities.*

*"Legally, can we stop nonfarmers from owning farmland? Well, no. Individuals can buy as much land as they want if they can afford it. But if farmers must be tenants, is that healthiest for the land, the future, and our communities?" ■*



## Careful Planning Helps Build Confidence

Solid record-keeping and a focus on goals have helped Morning Glory Farm grow

For Donna Warhover, a sense of community commitment and personal transformation began during her Master Gardener internship project in 2010. The project involved starting a garden with Goodwill of the Heartland's Day Habilitation Program, which seeks to meet the needs of people who face barriers to independence. When Donna witnessed the sense of calm and focus that caring for a garden instilled in participants, she was inspired to find a way to bring this feeling to many more.

In 2013 Donna and her husband, Bill, purchased a 3-acre farm on the edge of Mount Vernon. They had a vision of welcoming people to the farm, growing healthy food and sharing this bounty with their community. They started their farming business, Morning Glory Farm, by recruiting 10 people to purchase a Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) share. During the farm's first year of business, Donna and Bill both worked full-time off the farm while growing, harvesting, processing and delivering the weekly shares.

Over the next five years they would continue to grow their farm by increasing their CSA shareholders, participating in farmers markets and inviting the community to their farm. In the beginning, Donna found great success and pleasure in growing bountiful produce. But as with many beginning farmers, she faced challenges with the business side of farming. "I think the biggest barrier was having the confidence to market my farm and my products, and realizing that marketing takes a lot of time," Donna says. "The other thing I found difficult was having the confidence to price my products fairly. I don't grow commodity crops. I grow specialty crops, and they need to be priced accordingly."

### Business Planning

Donna knew she had to have a solid business foundation to reach her goals. In the fall of 2014, she decided to apply for the Savings Incentive Program through Practical Farmers of Iowa. She sought to use the program to find mentorship, build a network of peers and get help creating a business plan. Once accepted, she was paired with mentor Laura Krouse, of Abbe

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**"I think the biggest barrier was having the confidence to market my farm and my products . . . I grow specialty crops, and they need to be priced accordingly."** – DONNA WARHOVER

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Hills Farm, who also operates near Mount Vernon. Donna found Laura's knowledge and experience to be of great value, and she used these to guide her decisions when making farm plans. Donna says beginners should use "the wisdom of others at every opportunity," even when your mentor may do things in different ways from your plans.

While in the Savings Incentive Program, Donna worked on creating her business plan – a process she found to be daunting. As many other beginners have discovered, she found it hard to wrap her head around creating a plan from scratch. "I felt like

that business plan was so overwhelming," Donna recalls. But she buckled down and used the resources SIP provided to draft her plan. Now, every winter, Donna looks back at the plan she created the year before and uses that to create her new plan for the coming year. "It's so helpful to me because I can really look and see where I'm growing and where I'm struggling so I can tweak [the plan] next year," Donna says.

Having her financials in order is key for Donna to make business decisions. With her sales tracking sheet in Excel, she is able to know where her income is coming from and determine which marketing streams to expand and which ones to eliminate. For example, by tracking sales from each of her four farmers market locations, Donna can see which ones are profitable, thus helping her decide whether to return to a given market the next season. Diligent record-keeping is key: Without accurate records, she wouldn't have reliable numbers to help her make these decisions. Donna learned early on that if she didn't record the sales on her income sheet before heading out the door, it likely wouldn't get added. To ensure she's capturing an accurate picture of her farm finances, Donna has made a habit of entering records as they happen. In Donna's third year, she noticed her record-keeping system was working.







**Above:** Donna Warhover of Morning Glory Farm. *Photo courtesy of Diane Rotella* **Opposite:** A view of freshly planted fields at Morning Glory Farm.

## Employment

When Donna and Bill started Morning Glory Farm, they were both working off-farm jobs to keep a steady income and benefits. In year two of the business, Donna hired a part-time employee. "The first year was pretty hard," Donna says. "Working full-time, I didn't have enough time and energy to market and my marketing was lax because of it." As the number of CSA subscribers increased, she had to grow more produce. This expansion led to two more part-time employees during the farm's third year to help keep up with the work.

After slowly reducing her hours at her full-time job, Donna decided to make the leap to farming full-time. She looked to one of her mentors, Susan Jutz, for advice. Donna recalls how Susan looked at her and said, "no, you can't keep doing this. You can't keep working full-time and run this business." So at the end of 2015, the third year of operation, Donna made the decision to quit her off-farm job. Bill continues to work his off-farm job while helping with projects on the farm. Donna says the decision to leave the security of her job was difficult, but knowing they would continue to have Bill's income and benefits helped make the decision a little easier. Susan's advice also helped Donna see she was in

a spot where the farm couldn't grow if she kept trying to balance both jobs. "Looking back, that was the year I didn't meet my goals and I had to revamp," Donna says. "I had to do other things in order to financially make it." Donna noticed she had a steep learning curve, but with more time to create relationships and build her markets, she knew she would make her new farming career work.

## Community

One of Donna's farm goals is to see the farm grow and keep the community involved. As part of this goal, Donna aims to increase employment expenses as farm income goes up. As the farm grows, Donna knows there will be more work for her and others to accomplish – and she also knows the importance of trying to find work-life balance, and the role farm help can play. Making room on the farm for volunteers has helped Donna manage her workload while accomplishing her goal of bringing the community to the farm.

One group that visits regularly is Goodwill of the Heartland's On the Move group. Participants rotate each week and come to the farm twice a week. Volunteers help with tasks on the farm, and benefit from working with the plants and being outside

– much like the vision that got Donna started on the path to farming. "They have a list of things they know they always do, and they take care of those things on the farm every week," Donna says. "I also have other tasks that are new, like today we're going to plant seeds in the greenhouse. If [the group] has something come up and they're not able to come, holy cow, do we miss them." Last year, Donna also started working with students from Roosevelt Middle School in Cedar Rapids. Three groups, from sixth to eighth grade, come to the farm at different times over the summer as part of a school project. Donna typically breaks them into smaller groups to work on tasks and learn new skills. At the end of the day, students load extra produce to take with them for the local food bank. At the end of their project, Donna invites all to participate in a pizza party on the farm. "These are all students that come from immigrant families," Donna says. "That was really important for me in the ugly [political] climate we find ourselves in."

Careful planning and a willingness to find solutions to challenges has led Donna to create a successful farming business that is meeting her goals of raising healthy food, welcoming people to the farm and sharing the farm's bounty with others. While she doubted herself at the beginning and felt she "wasn't reputable" as a beginning farmer, she made an effort to seek out and surround herself with people who knew more than her – and she asked lots of questions. "One of the things I struggled with was feeling like my questions were stupid," Donna says. "But my mentors were patient with me and answered no matter how many times I asked." Each winter, she sits down with her farm records and applies the knowledge she gained from her mentors, and from her experience over the the past season, to evaluate what went well, what can be better and what should be done next year. This is why she now has the confidence to tell farmers market customers who question her pricing: "No, my leeks are \$2 each." ■



## Review of: “The Wizard and the Prophet”

The fact that we live in an increasingly contentious world will come as no surprise to members of PFI. We see ideas and opinions commonly used like clubs – both in the sense that they identify us with a wider group that gives legitimacy and support to its members, and that they serve as weapons to disrespect and diminish those whose ideas and opinions are different.

There are many casualties in this ugly war: the loss of civil discourse, the harm that comes to communities and nature from one-sided understandings of the world. But the worst consequence is losing our way in working out what is true and real, particularly as we face the critical problems of today. Daniel Moynahan once remarked, “you are entitled to your own opinions; you are not entitled to your own facts.”

Is there anywhere this is more evident than in the debate that rages around how we conceptualize humankind’s relationship with the natural environment? One side sees humans as clever bosses of nature, compartmentalizing and organizing it, ever increasing its fruitfulness with technological prowess. The other sees the natural world as made up of a complex web of interrelationships, with humans carrying the responsibility of living within this interlocking system. The first elevates the power of growth and the economy above all else; the second reminds us that our 7.2 billion people live on an increasingly fragile, finite Earth. Two visions, two value propositions, and a yawning chasm between them.

There is no shortage of books, papers and research to support each side – and that widen the abyss between the two. This is where Charles C. Mann’s 2018 book, “The Wizard and the Prophet,” charts a different course. As the title suggests, the book is structured around these two opposing views of people and the natural world, and it does so by profiling two individuals that represent those perspectives: Norman Borlaug (1914-2009) and William Vogt (1902-1968). Likely everyone reading this is familiar with Borlaug; Vogt, an ecologist and ornithologist is less well known. Borlaug represents the Wizards and Vogt the Prophets.

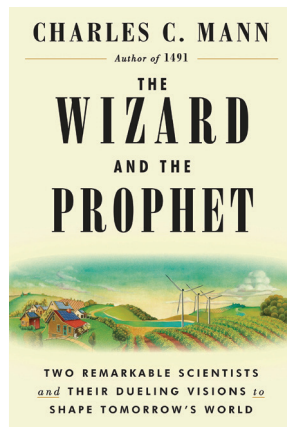
“Prophets look at the world as finite, and people as constrained by their environment. Wizards see possibilities as inexhaustible and humans as wily managers of the planet. One views growth and development as the lot and blessing of our species; [the] other regards stability and preservation as our future and our goal. Wizards regard Earth as a toolbox, its contents freely available for use; prophets think of the natural world as

embodying an overarching order that should not casually be disturbed.” (8)

Charles takes an unusual tack for literature on this topic. He does not follow the route of valorizing one position and, through that, persuading us to that point of view. Rather, you learn about how and why each man, each perspective, comes into being as you are introduced to their lives, work, ideas and values, their successes and their missteps. Charles refuses to allow us to idealize either perspective; he acquaints us with the positive and negative consequences of each.



(photo courtesy of Iowa State University)



Spoiler alert: No side comes out the winner. Each has strengths, and each has weaknesses, so Charles effectively blocks us from nestling back into our comfortable preconceptions. Not only does he play fairly with these two views, he encourages us to do the same. Good decisions come from seeing the world as it is, not as we would like it, or wish it, to be. Seeing the world as it is tasks each one of us to do the important work of sifting, weighing and questioning how and what we think.

At the end, Charles leaves us with a far more realistic and hopeful conclusion. Good answers never come from polar opposites, but from that fertile area that lies between them – perhaps where the “Wizhets” and “Propards” dwell? ■

*Gretchen Zdorkowski is a senior lecturer in the Agronomy Department at Iowa State University where she has advised students and taught classes on sustainable agriculture and food systems since 2004. She has also worked in the Office of the Wallace Chair for Sustainable Agriculture and the Graduate Program in Sustainable Agriculture at ISU. She lives in Ames with her husband Todd.*



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## Exploring PFI's Theory of Change

### PFI staff learn about Community-Based Social Marketing at fall retreat

Each fall, the staff at Practical Farmers of Iowa gathers together for a daylong working retreat. This time, we met at Walnut Woods State Park, near West Des Moines, in mid-September. The topics of these retreats vary from year to year, but two of the last three years, we have taken the opportunity to dive deeper into our roots – grassroots organizing. Our PFI founders knew the power of shared learning and relying on the experts on the ground (our farmers!) to create change. We are still using their model for change today, and it is backed up by some good research. If you want to learn more about PFI's theory of change, be sure to read Sally Worley's "Executive Director Note" on page 5.

To take PFI's theory of change from the theoretical to the practical, we need to set organizational and program-specific goals. What is it we want to change? Applying the concepts of Community-Based Social Marketing (CBSM), developed by Doug McKenzie-Mohr, is giving us guidance



From left to right: PFI staff members Meghan Filbert, Sarah Carlson, Nick Ohde, Jason Tetrick and Steve Carlson take part in a group exercise during our 2018 fall staff retreat.

when it comes to setting goals. The day of the retreat, we spent the morning reviewing CBSM strategies, highlighting the strategies we are already using and brainstorming more ways to create change. Look for follow-up blogs on our website that will summarize our discussions! In

the afternoon, we moved from theory to practice by applying the concepts of CBSM to our strategic plan goals. We ended our day with a sense of accomplishment for all the ways we are already successfully creating change, and a sense of urgency and promise for the changes ahead. ■

## Chastity Schonhorst Joins the PFI Staff as a Bookkeeper

Chastity Schonhorst is the newest addition to the Practical Farmers of Iowa staff, joining the team in October as a bookkeeper. In this role, she will help with a variety of tasks, including recording cash transactions and bank deposits, providing documentation for invoicing, handling account reconciliations, booking travel for staff and farmers, and assisting in other areas as needed.

Chastity spent the last five years as the grants manager at a non-profit agency, where she specialized in state and federal grants, reconciliations and oversaw many subcontractors working in a variety of programs. She is excited to use her prior knowledge here at PFI.

Chastity and her husband, Stuart, live on a small farm outside of Slater. On their farm they raise cattle and free-range chickens, and also grow sweet corn and hay. While not working, Chastity enjoys spending time



with her four children – Kayla, Luke, Emma and Drake – and her dogs Zoey (a golden retriever) and Chevy (a German shepherd). She also enjoys traveling to her favorite destination – Anna Maria Island, Florida; watching her son, Drake, show cattle at the fair; shopping; and farmhouse-style decorating. ■

## Unsure When to Renew? Check Your Mailing Label

We are always looking for ways to make the membership process easier. To help you keep track of your membership status, we have started including your membership expiration date on the mailing labels of all of our printer-mailed publications – which include items such as the quarterly magazine, annual conference brochure and field day guide, among others. With this new feature, you'll be able to see your membership status several times throughout the year.

So if you're ever unsure when you need to renew, just check the mailing label on these publications: Your membership expiration date is printed at the top.

If you have other suggestions for how we can simplify the membership process, email [debra@practicalfarmers.org](mailto:debra@practicalfarmers.org). ■



# PFI Gets Some System Upgrades

A more powerful CRM and improved website will help us better serve members

## Switching to Neon's CRM

Practical Farmers of Iowa has experienced rapid growth over the last few years. Our membership has reached nearly 3,500 for the first time in our history – and our programming and budget have both expanded as we continue working to address our mission. As we grow, we remain deeply committed to serving our members, listening to your needs and helping you connect with and share your knowledge with one another. With an increase in members, staff and organizational capacity, we realized we needed to upgrade our customer relationship management system – essentially, a member database that houses your member details and history.

A CRM system lets us manage and track all activity with existing and potential members and donors. In the past, we have used our CRM for basic functions like sending mail, tracking donations and housing data. And while the system we've used for the past several years has served us well, it had several limitations that resulted in sometimes less efficient processes for staff, more cumbersome workarounds and, ultimately, gaps in our understanding of our members.

After a long and careful search, we are excited to be transitioning soon to NeonCRM. This new system will let us better understand who our members are and what they need from PFI. We will now have the ability to track survey data, event registrations, constituent information, enterprise details, donation information and constituent preferences. Neon will also make it possible for us to consolidate data we've been storing in multiple platforms into one central, easy-to-use location, thus simplifying the process for our staff.

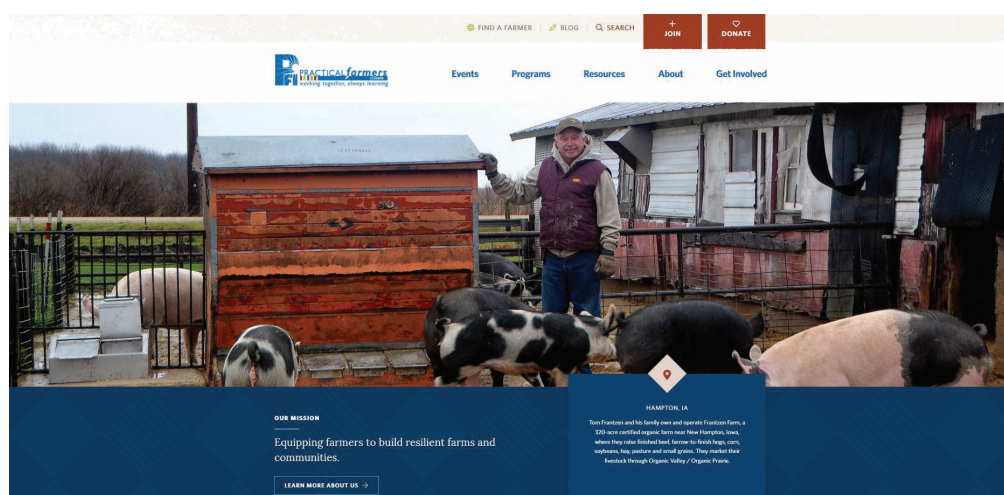
How will this switch affect members? With this change, you can expect more focused communication from the PFI office. Staff will be able to communicate a specific message to the participants of our many programs in a much more streamlined way. As a member, you will get only the information that pertains to you or that you have opted to see. It will also be easier for members to check their membership status and register for events. Neon even has the ability to turn data into simple illustrations, which will help us better visualize and tell our members' stories. We hope to have the new system in place and operational by early 2019. ■

## We launched our new website

If you've visited our website sometime in the past month, you will have noticed a new digital gateway to Practical Farmers of Iowa. After more than a year in the making, we launched our newly redesigned website at the end of November. We worked with Juicebox Interactive, a web design and branding agency based in Des Moines, on a complete overhaul and re-envisioning of our site, which is both a storehouse of information for visitors and the most important gateway to PFI for newcomers to the organization.

As we approached the redesign process, we wanted to ensure we built a new site structured with your needs in mind. We hope you'll find that our revamped website is easier to navigate and find what you're looking for; connects you more readily to our wealth of information; is optimized for mobile devices; and is fully accessible to those who are visually impaired. The new design also lets us showcase all the wonderful photos of our members and their farms (and we hope it's beautiful too!).

One new area you'll find on the site is a "Resources" section ([practicalfarmers.org/resources](http://practicalfarmers.org/resources)) where we've gathered all kinds of



information: blogs, event recaps, podcasts, videos, news, archived farminars, research reports, quarterly magazine articles and more. You can also browse the resources by topic, from business planning to grazing to small grains to weed management.

Feel free to navigate through the new website and catch up on blogs and videos, or listen to our podcast. If you're looking for something specific and aren't able to find it – or have feedback, positive or negative you'd like to share – contact Jason Tetrick at (515) 232-5661 or [jason@practicalfarmers.org](mailto:jason@practicalfarmers.org). ■



## Mark Your Calendars for 2019 Winter Farminars

The first farminar starts Tuesday, Jan. 8

After a brief hiatus for the holidays, farminars are scheduled to return in early 2019. The first farminar of the winter series will take place on Tuesday, Jan. 8 at 7 p.m. Central time, and will explore integrating prairie strips into farm fields. Farminars are live events that occur each Tuesday night from 7 – 8:30 p.m. The winter series runs through Feb. 26 and includes the following lineup of topics and speakers:

- **Installing and Maintaining Prairie Strips**  
Jan. 8 – Tim Youngquist, Seth Watkins
- **Diversifying Rations for Pastured Pigs**  
Jan. 15 – John Arbuckle
- **Electric Fence and Stockwater Systems for Permanent or Temporary Pasture**  
Jan. 22 – Galen Gerrish

- **Regenerative Grazing Technology**  
Jan. 29 – Erin Kiley, TBD
- **No-Till Vegetable Production**  
Feb. 5 – Elizabeth and Paul Kaiser
- **Ridge-Till Vegetable Production**  
Feb. 12 – Jordan Scheibel, TBD
- **Precision-Seeded Cover Crops**  
Feb. 19 – Jon Bakehouse, Michael Vittetoe
- **Proper Planning for Farmland Succession**  
Feb. 26 – Andrew Behnkendorf, TBD

Farminars are interactive, farmer-led online presentations that cover a range of row crop, livestock and horticulture issues. The series is free and easy to access: Tune in anywhere you have an internet connection; listen as a farmer or business



expert presents over a slideshow; and ask questions in real-time using a chatbox.

Full topic descriptions can be found at [practicalfarmers.org/farminars](http://practicalfarmers.org/farminars). To participate in a live farminar (or watch a recording), visit the same link and click the "Join In" button. ■

## Chestnut Growers Workshop Coming in February

Do you currently grow chestnuts, or are you interested in adding this tree crop to your farm? Save the date for Saturday, Feb. 2 and PFI's first Chestnut Growers Workshop. The event will take place from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. at the Iowa Arboretum (1875 Peach Ave.), near Madrid.

In this full-day workshop, you'll learn from Tom Wahl and Kathy Dice of Red Fern Farm, Mike Gold of The Center for Agroforestry at University of Missouri-Columbia and Roger Smith of Prairie Grove Chestnut Growers about all aspects of chestnut production and marketing. Topics will include site selection, planting and tree management, varietal recommendations, grafted versus seedling trees, harvesting and curing, marketing and financial resources.

The cost is \$10 for PFI members, or \$60 for non-members. Lunch is included with registration. To register, visit [form.jotform.com/tamsyn/pfi-chestnut-workshop](http://form.jotform.com/tamsyn/pfi-chestnut-workshop) or call (515) 232-5661. ■



## Connecting Over On-Farm Research

**Above:** Rob Stout (standing) gave the keynote talk during dinner at the 2018 Cooperators' Program meeting on Dec. 13, in Ames.



**Left:** From left to right: Scott Wedemeier, Tammy Faux, Mark Yoder and Denise O'Brien, all representing diverse farm sizes and enterprises, network during a session.



# Welcome, New Members!

## DISTRICT 1 - NORTHWEST

- Don Beneke – Pocahontas
- Bob Chaffin – Milford
- Perry Corey – Lake City
- Brian Klocke – Dedham
- Karl Palmberg – Larchwood
- Colin Schrieders – Mallard

## DISTRICT 2 - NORTH CENTRAL

- Samantha Beckman – Ames
- Marie Boyd – Hampton
- Allen Chen – Ames
- Ashley Dean – Ames
- Cole Dutter – Ames
- Roger Elmore – Gladbrook
- Lee Fishbaugh – Boone
- Bob Green – Humboldt
- Jace Hadish – Ames
- Hancock Soil and Water Conservation District, Darla Reding – Garner
- Shane Heintz – Nevada
- Laurie Henry – Nevada
- Mike Hermanson – Story City
- Hillaree and Kelly Meyer – Churdan
- (Jason) Chris Morris – Ames
- Caroline Murray – Ames
- Scott Neff – Beaman
- Paul Neher – Grundy Center
- Thanh Nguyen – Ames
- Todd Nielsen – Webster City
- Sam Ose – Williams
- Brian Ritland – Hubbard
- Ryan Roberts – Huxley
- David Scott – Muscatine
- Dean and Cindy Sponheim – Nora Springs
- Corey Strottman – Story City
- Justin Ullmann – Woden
- Linda Wegner – Story City
- Tracy Westrum – Stratford
- Ellena Wolff – Ames

## DISTRICT 3 - NORTHEAST

- Arden Auna – Dorchester
- Corey Brink – Decorah
- Sam Hilgerson – Elkader
- League of Women Voters (UMRR), Tamara Prenosil and Sue Wilson – Dubuque
- Lara Mangialardi – Strawberry Point
- Bert Strayer – Hudson
- David Tominsky – Cedar Rapids
- Audrey Tran Lam – Cedar Falls
- Mariss Waldo – Cascade

## DISTRICT 4 - SOUTHWEST

- Bronson Allred – Corydon
- Steve Baudler – Fontanelle

- James Baur – Van Meter
- Shane Bennett – Gravity
- Craig Bonnett – Bussey
- Kendall Brammer – Osceola
- Brittany Braun – Garden Grove
- Paul and Patsy Carlson – Ankeny
- Rick Chambers – Lacona
- Monty Douglas – Lenox
- Joe Dunn – Carlisle
- Edd Eshelman – Osceola
- Eric Euken – Wiota
- Doug Gleason – Audubon
- Freddie Goettsch – Hancock
- Jeff Grandfield – Lorimor
- Bryce Heitmann – Newton
- Mike Hunter – Chariton
- Iowa Interfaith Power & Light, Matt Russell – Des Moines
- Daniel Kilborn – Fontanelle
- John and Julie Kiley – Woodward
- Grant Kimberley – Ankeny
- Kevin Kuhn – Atlantic
- Daren Laffey – Runnells
- Lyle Laughery – Guthrie Center
- Roz Lehman – Pleasant Hill
- Jana Marck – Villisca
- Clayton Mitchell – Polk City
- Michael Moats – Knoxville
- Kurt and Cynthia Moffitt – Indianola
- Montgomery Soil and Water Conservation District – Red Oak
- Eric Morris – Bondurant
- Clint Moser – Leon
- Jerry and Colleen Oxley – Greenfield
- Barbara Phillips – Van Meter
- Jacob Pitzemberger – Des Moines
- Douglas Rooney and Alfonso Valenzuela-Gumucio – Carlisle
- Kyle Schomers – Harlan
- Frank and Helen Stajcar – Udell
- Jon Uitermarkt – Runnells
- Randy Van Kooten – Lynnvile
- Ramsey Van Veen – Newton
- Mark Van Wyngarden – Pella
- Arvin Vander Wilt – Pella
- Byron Vandermolen – Lynnvile
- Patrick Wall – Pleasantville
- Wayne Soil and Water Conservation District, Sherry Trower – Corydon
- Wes Zylstra – Kellogg

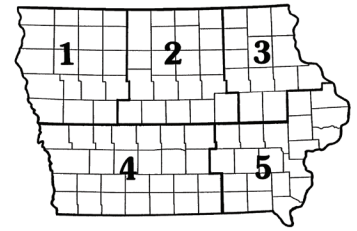
## DISTRICT 5 - SOUTHEAST

- Kirk Anderson – Clarence
- Rick and Alyssa August – Tipton
- Paul Beckman – Sperry
- Cory and Jamie Bierman – Tipton
- Jon Butler – Oskaloosa
- Rockne Cole – Iowa City
- Jerry DeBruin – Oskaloosa
- Randy DeBruin – Oskaloosa

- Rob Ewoldt – Davenport
- Kenny Fobian – Iowa City
- Ed and Mary Lou Gingerich – Parnell
- Mary Glaspie – North English
- Andrew Groenenboom – Oskaloosa
- Kenny Hoksbergen – Grinnell
- John Kielkopf – Hedrick
- Ron Kielkopf – Fremont
- Metha Klock – Iowa City
- Stan Kovar – Ladora
- Kristin Leu – Keosauqua
- Marc Pflum – Burlington
- Clairissa Zabel – Coralville

## DISTRICT 6 - OUT OF STATE

- Matt Alford – Blue Earth, MN
- Eric Brown – Arcanum, OH
- Lynn Clarkson – Cerro Gordo, IL
- David Cramer – Fostoria, OH
- Rick and Peggy Crum – Rossville, IN
- Dale Daniels – Wakema, OH
- Dave Diesch – Bloomville, OH
- Peter Dinius – Archbold, OH
- Adam Dixon – Baltimore, MD
- Julie Engel – Montague, MI
- Michael Freudenburg – Norfolk, NE
- Tim Graff – Arlington Heights, IL
- A. Jane Heim – Steward, IL
- Gloria Hentges – Jordan, MN
- Joseph Hentges – Jordan, MN
- Brian Herringshaw – Radnor, OH
- Jeff Herrold – Wanatah, IN
- Michael Hewitt – Walnut Grove, MN



- Lindsey and Naomi Johnson – Gibbon, MN
- Rick and Kathy Kaesebier – Elkhart, IL
- Kent Kraft – Sherman, IL
- Pete and Kathy Loew – Unionville, MO
- Gary Madsen – Morton, MN
- Daryn McGowan – Hayfield, MN
- Joseph Mills – Waynetown, IN
- Clint Orr – Forest, IN
- Corbin Orr – Frankfort, IN
- Thomas Peterson – Trimont, MN
- Tom Pyfferoen – Pine Island, MN
- Roeslein Alternative Energy, John Murphy – Kirksville, MO
- George Rorick – Monroeville, IN
- Art Scheele – Warren, IL
- Macius Schroeder – Renville, MN
- Carol Sherman – Lenwood, KS
- Chuck Tvedt – Byron, MN
- Curtis Tvedt – Byron, MN
- Ryan Wangen – Albert Lea, MN

## DISTRICT 7 - INTERNATIONAL

- Pedro Esquivias – Spain
- David Ince – Australia



Seth Worthington, of Sterling, Nebraska, holds one of his sons as he walks with other guests through one of Andy Welch's pastures during the field day Andy hosted on his farm near Grant City, Missouri, on Sept. 22.



# Upcoming Events: JANUARY – MID-MARCH

## JANUARY

### **JAN. 7: Webinar: Managing Stress in an Era of Ag Uncertainty | Iowa Farm Bureau**

This webinar offers strategies for behavior management that can help farmers deal with stress in order to function optimally as producers of food and renewable fuels. Dr. Mike Rosmann, a farmer and psychologist, lives on his family farm near Harlan, Iowa. He writes a weekly column called "Farm and Ranch Life" that appears in 30 farming publications, including "Iowa Farmer Today." Most of his life's work is to improve the behavioral health of agricultural producers. This webinar will give participants the opportunity to ask questions. To learn more, visit [iowafarmbureau.com/Events](http://iowafarmbureau.com/Events).

### **JAN. 10-11 and Feb. 8-9: Returning to the Farm Seminar | Beginning Farmer Center | Ames, IA**

This four-day seminar offered by the Beginning Farmer Center through Iowa State University Extension and Outreach provides an opportunity for families to begin developing a farm succession plan. The seminar will cover topics including conflict resolution, goal-setting, business analysis, estate planning, farm planning and farm management. To learn more, visit [extension.iastate.edu/news/seminar-addresses-multigenerational-farm-transitions](http://extension.iastate.edu/news/seminar-addresses-multigenerational-farm-transitions).

### **JAN. 11-13: Wisconsin School For Beginning Market Growers | Madison, WI**

This intensive three-day course aims to give students a realistic picture of what it takes to run a successful small-scale produce operation – including capital, management, labor and other resources. Topics include soil fertility, crop production, plant health and pest management, cover crops, equipment and labor considerations at different scales of operation, and marketing and economics. To learn more, visit [cias.wisc.edu/wisconsin-school-for-beginning-market-growers/](http://cias.wisc.edu/wisconsin-school-for-beginning-market-growers/)

### **JAN. 10-12: 2019 Great Plains Growers Conference | St. Joseph, MO**

This three-day conference features presentations by speakers from across the nation, and showcases information from Iowa, Kansas, Missouri and Nebraska, along with vegetable specialists and growers from those states. The trade show consists of more than 50 exhibitors with the latest seeds, supplies, equipment and grower information. Full-day workshops are offered the first day, with tracks on organic, drought, tree fruit, season extension and more offered during the second and third days. To learn more, visit [greatplainsgrowersconference.org](http://greatplainsgrowersconference.org)

### **JAN. 23: Ag Finance Boot Camp | Coralville, IA**

Farm Futures offers a one-day workshop packed with sessions presented by savvy ag finance experts and lenders. The workshop will help you boost your financial record-keeping skills for improved farm business management. To learn more, visit [farmfuturessummit.com/en/ag-finance-boot-camp.html](http://farmfuturessummit.com/en/ag-finance-boot-camp.html).

### **JAN. 28-30: No-Till on the Plains Winter Conference | Wichita, KS**

This event features day-long pre-conference workshops, and a range of conference sessions on soil biology, holistic management, crop rotations, livestock grazing and more. Conference scholarships are available to women or people of color who are working in agriculture. To learn more, visit [notill.org/events/23rd-annual-winter-conference](http://notill.org/events/23rd-annual-winter-conference).

### **JAN. 30-31: 92nd Iowa Power Farming Show | Des Moines**

The Iowa Power Farming Show – the third largest indoor farm show in the United States – will host nearly 1,952 booths spanning 7.7 acres, three buildings and seven floors across the Iowa Events Center. The event will feature the best ag has to offer, from big iron, precision ag, aerial imaging and livestock production to inputs, data management and more. To learn more, visit [iowapowershow.com](http://iowapowershow.com).

### **JAN. 31-FEB. 1: 2019 GrassWorks Grazing Conference | Wisconsin Dells, WI**

The 27th Annual GrassWorks Conference will include two full days of workshops and sessions. GrassWorks cares about best practices, about learning, about sharing and about improving grazing skills. In that spirit, this conference is held each year as a friendly, valuable and inspiring community event that helps us all become better at what we do. The conference venue is the Chula Vista Resort in Wisconsin Dells, WI. To learn more, visit [grassworks.org/events/grazing-conference](http://grassworks.org/events/grazing-conference).

## FEBRUARY

### **FEB. 4-5: 2019 Soil Health Conference | ISU Extension and Outreach | Ames**

This year's conference features a range of speakers that include farmers with experience implementing innovative approaches to building a resilient system, and well-known scientists and agronomists of national recognition in the area of soil health. To learn more, visit [register.extension.iastate.edu/soilhealth](http://register.extension.iastate.edu/soilhealth)

### **FEB. 7: Northwest Iowa Ag Outlook Conference and Trade Show | Spencer**

This free day-long seminar and trade show is geared towards farmers and agri-business professionals to give them the knowledge they need to compete

in global agriculture. The trade show features the latest in agriculture products, equipment and services. The event is free and attracts nearly 2,000 each year from a four state area. To learn more, visit [spenceriowachamber.org/agoutlook.php](http://spenceriowachamber.org/agoutlook.php)

### **FEB. 20-21: 2019 Annual Meeting and Conference | Midwest Cover Crops Council | Springfield, IL**

This annual conference brings together researchers, educators and farmers from around the region to present their perspectives on ways to make cover crops work. During this two-day conference, you will have a chance to learn, ask questions and develop the relationships that will help you succeed in your cover crop endeavors. To learn more, visit [mccc.msu.edu](http://mccc.msu.edu).

## MARCH

### **MARCH 8-9: Midwest Organic Pork Conference | Waterloo, IA**

The 2019 Midwest Organic Pork Conference is being hosted by the Iowa Organic Association, and is the first conference ever organized in the U.S. dedicated to presenting the best resources and information available to help expand opportunities for organic, specialty and niche pork production and distribution. The conference will explore topics ranging from the background and benefits of organic hog production, to organic and pasture-raised hog production, to animal health and pest management, to economic viability and more. To learn more, visit [midwestorganicporkconference.org](http://midwestorganicporkconference.org).

### **MARCH 12: Midwest Soil Health Summit | St. Peter, MN**

This event is organized by the Sustainable Farming Association of Minnesota, and will take place from 8 a.m. to 4 p.m. at Gustavus Adolphus College in St. Peter. The event will feature Dr. David Montgomery, a soil scientist, MacArthur fellow and author of books such as "Growing a Revolution," which makes the case for agriculture that is profitable, productive, cools the planet and restores life to the land. Other speakers will include farmer and soil health expert Grant Bretkreutz; Troy Daniels, state conservationist with the Natural Resources Conservation Service; Jodi DeJong-Hughes, an extension educator; Kristin Brennan, Minnesota assistant state soil scientist; Kent Solberg, SFA's livestock and grazing specialist; and more. To learn more, visit [sfa-mn.org/midwest-soil-health-summit](http://sfa-mn.org/midwest-soil-health-summit).

## For more events, visit [practicalfarmers.org](http://practicalfarmers.org)



## GROW YOUR FARM WITH PRACTICAL FARMERS. JOIN OR RENEW TODAY!

Want to join or renew online? Visit [practicalfarmers.org/get-involved/join-or-renew](http://practicalfarmers.org/get-involved/join-or-renew).

### MEMBER INFORMATION

Contact Name(s)\*: \_\_\_\_\_

Farm or Organization Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City: \_\_\_\_\_ State: \_\_\_\_\_ ZIP: \_\_\_\_\_ County: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone 1: \_\_\_\_\_ Phone 2: \_\_\_\_\_

Email 1: \_\_\_\_\_ Email 2: \_\_\_\_\_

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

### JOIN OR RENEW

#### 1. THIS ANNUAL MEMBERSHIP IS A:

- ☐ New Membership  
☐ Renewal

#### 2. I AM JOINING AT THE LEVEL OF:

- ☐ Student – \$20  
☐ Individual – \$50  
☐ Farm or Household – \$60  
☐ Organization – \$110  
☐ Lifetime Member\* – \$1,000  
\* See details at <http://bit.ly/PFI-lifetime>

#### 3. I AM JOINING OR RENEWING AS:

- ☐ An Aspiring Farmer  
☐ A Farmer or Grower  
☐ Non-Farmer

#### 4. HOW DID YOU HEAR ABOUT PFI?

\_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

### EMAIL DISCUSSION GROUP SIGN-UP

When you join our email discussion groups, you can network, build community and exchange ideas from anywhere, at any time. Sign up for as many groups as you'd like (and be sure to include your email address above)!

- ☐ Cover Crops ☐ Field Crops ☐ General ☐ Horticulture ☐ Livestock ☐ Policy

### SUSTAIN PRACTICAL FARMERS WITH AN ADDITIONAL DONATION

For the sake of the long-term health and vitality of Practical Farmers of Iowa, we ask you to consider making a donation above and beyond your membership fee. Practical Farmers of Iowa is a 501(c)3 organization. Your gift is tax deductible to the extent allowed by law.

I would like to make a one-time, tax-deductible donation to PFI in the amount of:

- ☐ \$1,000 ☐ \$500 ☐ \$250 ☐ \$100 ☐ \$50 ☐ \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Or, make a recurring monthly or quarterly donation. This will be automatically charged to your credit card on the first day of each month or quarter.

- ☐ Yes, I would like to give \$ \_\_\_\_\_ ☐ per month OR ☐ per quarter

### PAYMENT

Membership Level .....\$ \_\_\_\_\_ per year for \_\_\_\_\_ year(s) = \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Additional Donation ..... = \$ \_\_\_\_\_

TOTAL AMOUNT ..... = \$ \_\_\_\_\_

- ☐ Check or money order is enclosed (Please make payable to "Practical Farmers of Iowa.")  
☐ Credit card (Visa, MasterCard or Discover only)

Name on card \_\_\_\_\_ Number \_\_\_\_\_

Exp. Date \_\_\_\_\_ CVC# (3 digits) \_\_\_\_\_ ☐ Please automatically charge this credit card annually for membership





Non-Profit  
Organization  
U.S. Postage  
PAID  
Waterloo, IA  
Permit No. 901

## PRACTICAL FARMERS OF IOWA

1615 Golden Aspen Drive, Suite 101

Ames, IA 50010



### A Pocket Full of Greens

Ann Fitzgerald picked a pocket full of forage turnips to eat for dinner at the Anibal Pordomingo grazing workshop near West Branch on Nov. 1-3.