

# the PRACTICAL FARMER

WINTER 2022



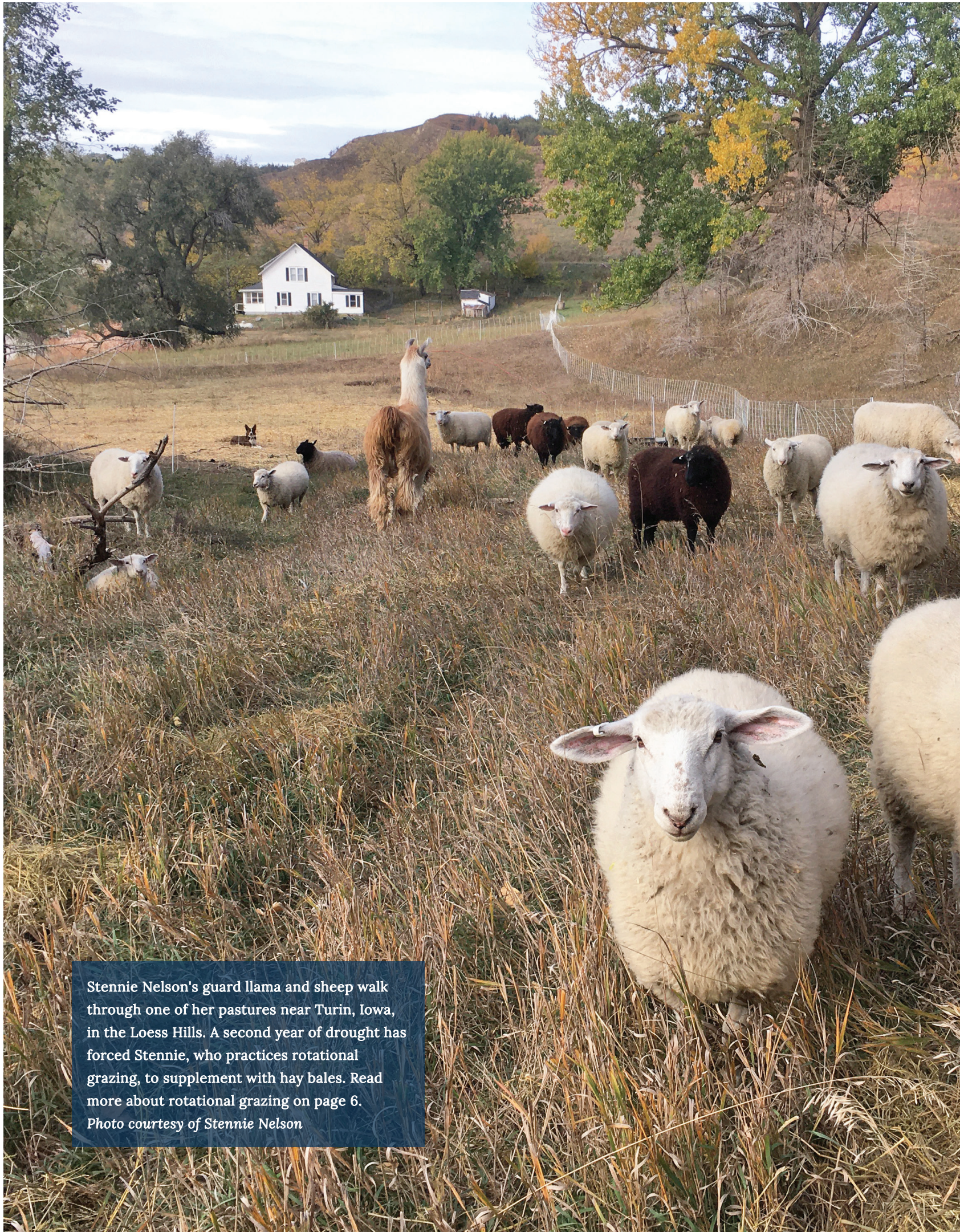
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Grazing Resilience

The Proof Is in the Soil

An Evolving  
Conservation Tradition





Stennie Nelson's guard llama and sheep walk through one of her pastures near Turin, Iowa, in the Loess Hills. A second year of drought has forced Stennie, who practices rotational grazing, to supplement with hay bales. Read more about rotational grazing on page 6. Photo courtesy of Stennie Nelson



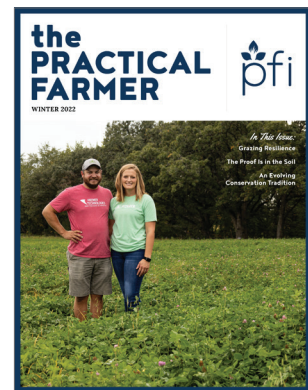


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## WHAT WE DO

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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## Expanding Our Work to Create Viable Farms

**PFI WAS FOUNDED**, in part, to help farmers reduce reliance on external inputs. Key in this journey has been the quest to reduce dependence on synthetic nitrogen. Nitrogen reduction trials were some of the first trials PFI organized, following in the footsteps of PFI co-founders Dick and Sharon Thompson.

In “Thompson Agriculture Alternatives” – a document that expresses their philosophies about farming and shares summaries of their years of on-farm research results – Dick and Sharon say, “Less nitrogen applied to the land will result in less nitrogen in the water table. Less money spent by the farmer to purchase nitrogen will mean more money in the farmer’s pocket.”

### Nitrogen Trials Then and Now

From 1988-1993, the first generation of PFI farmers explored the Thompsons’ premise in on-farm research trials comparing how low and high nitrogen rates affected yield. Over the course of the trial, cooperators saw mostly statistically equivalent corn yields between the different rates. Vic Madsen, who was part of those early trials, says, “The confidence factor was the biggest thing. This project gave us confidence to not put on 150-200 pounds of nitrogen per acre like the neighbors and most everyone else was doing. When other cooperators have similar results as you, you realize you’re not alone. We all learned we could get by with less than was popular at the time.”

Today, a new generation of PFI farmers are revisiting this question. Spurred in part by a surge in nitrogen costs, along with a scarcity of commercial nitrogen and increased cover crop use, they are motivated by the same reasons as earlier members: keeping their farms going, and stewarding the land. Read more about this new PFI fertilizer reduction trial on pages 18-23 and meet some of the farmers participating.

### Scaling Farm Viability Efforts

We’re also helping farmers reduce inputs by devoting more staff and funds to our field crops cost-share programs, which offer technical assistance and financial incentives to plant cover crops and small grains. Thanks to substantial funding we secured, our farm viability department will offer personalized support to help even more farmers achieve their goals and long-term



**Continuing Curiosity:** Vic Madsen, of Audubon, Iowa, has been working to reduce nitrogen use on his farm for decades through diverse crop rotations and data gathered from on-farm research. **(Left):** Vic presents on-farm research during a PFI field day in the early 1990s. **(Right):** Vic shows his soil conditioning experiment to David Rosmann.

viability. These efforts are part of our strategic plan goal to create healthy environments stemming from responsible land stewardship.

We’re also excited to add new cost-share programs for regenerative grazing, habitat and food safety for fruit and vegetable growers. Supporting diverse farm practices will help us achieve another strategic plan goal: thriving rural communities filled with resilient and profitable farms.

### New Faces

To successfully provide this new programming, we are investing in people and processes to get more work done and create more reasonable workloads for staff. Fortunately, funders have stepped up to help us invest in our operations department, helping us reach our strategic goal: PFI well-positioned for success, impact and growth. With this growth, you’ll notice a lot of new faces among PFI staff!

Simultaneously, PFI has not been immune to the “great resignation,” during which record numbers of people have quit their jobs; we have experienced significant turnover this past year. The good news is that people are moving on to advance career goals. The bad news is we greatly miss the talent and

personalities these people brought to PFI. Fortunately, we see many of them regularly as they continue to be partners and PFI members. We are working to get the word out about whom to contact as our programs and staff grow. When in doubt, simply contact me and I’ll route you to the person best suited to help you engage with PFI.

We also have many new faces among PFI’s membership. We have hit another high: 6,000 members. More PFI members means more curious farmers and a bigger community to learn from. As we grow, we are continuing to figure out how to retain the close-knit feel so important to PFI’s community. If you want to host a social or join our welcoming committee, please let me know.

These are exciting, busy times at PFI. Please continue to read our weekly e-newsletter, Practical News, to make the most out of your PFI membership. As we continue to expand, please reach out and let me know what you want to learn more about—programs, people, strategic plan, I’d love to talk with you more!

*Sally Worley*



# Grazing Resilience

PFI farmers are using rotational grazing to restore biodiversity and create more resilient farms



By Amos Johnson

**The grass is brown and dry – cushioned firecrackers punctuating footfalls. It is the precipice of fall, but the quiet cacophony is not the crisp crackle of autumn; rather, it's the dry crunch of another summer of drought.**

Rain has been scarce in the Loess Hills of western Iowa, and Stennie Nelson is walking her pasture near Turin, Iowa. “Last year I’d have grazed this twice by now. This year, I’m hoping I can come back through soon,” she says, sweeping her arm to indicate the steep hillside as she squints into the sun. Her sheep meander up to the fence line to greet her, languid from their rest in the shade.

They’ve been in this paddock for a week and are ready for greener pastures, but right now there aren’t any. Since moving to this farm two years ago, Stennie has been practicing rotational grazing, but this year the drought has forced her to supplement with hay bales on an old row crop and hay field. Compared to the remnant prairie surrounding it, this

**“When I think about rotational grazing, it's not just what they have access to but what they don't have access to.”**

*- Stennie Nelson*

patch of dirt is exhausted, and in the drought it just can't recover.

“I’m trying to keep this weather in perspective,” she says. “Like, how bad is it?” Stennie reaches down to scratch under the chin of her favorite ram, giving him reassurances she doesn’t have for herself. “But hearing from my neighbors,” she continues, “this is not normal. Who knows what’s normal anymore?”

Russ Wischover has faced a similar problem. Standing in the midst of verdant pasture, he explains that when he bought his farm in Bedford, Iowa, a large portion of it had been in the federal Conservation Reserve Program for years. “It had been rested to

death,” he says. “There was bare ground.” He couldn’t find any useful advice about how to restore the land until he read about rotational grazing.

He started moving his cows back and forth across the land, grazing hard and then letting it rest. Results weren’t quick in coming. “After about three years, I was just to the point of saying ‘this is all bullshit.’” Russ was ready to concede failure when he stumbled upon a lone clump of switchgrass – the first warm-season perennial he’d seen on the former CRP ground. “I was like ‘Hallelujah! Something’s working!’”

After seeing that initial clump, more started appearing. He reaches out, excitedly naming all the grass species within arm’s reach. “I started seeing big bluestem, then Indian grass. Now I’ve got eastern gamagrass all of a sudden, 10 years in.”

## Mimicking Mother Nature

Rotational grazing is not a new concept. In fact, it’s how grasslands coevolved to thrive with the once-vast migrating herds of bison, antelope and elk that roamed the Plains for thousands of years. Pushed by the seasons, and by management from various Native American nations, the herds would graze an area hard and then move on, not returning for another year.

Andy Welch, a farmer from Sheridan, Missouri, says the goal of managed rotational grazing is to replicate that system. “We ought to look to mimic Mother Nature on how to solve any of our problems,” he says. In contrast with continuously grazed



**(Left):** Stennie Nelson's sheep graze in one of her pastures near Turin, Iowa, in the Loess Hills. A second year of drought has forced Stennie, who practices rotational grazing, to supplement with hay bales. **(Opposite):** From left to right: Stennie Nelson, Russ Wischover and Andy Welch.





pastures, which account for 80% of Midwest pastures, farmers practicing rotational grazing play an active role in determining where their livestock eat at any given time. “When I think about rotational grazing, it’s not just what they have access to,” Stennie says, “but what they don’t have access to. It’s about keeping them out of places so they can’t take that second bite on a plant.”

Russ says that’s the key. “The best thing you can do is give the plants time to recover.” Letting plants rest speeds their regrowth while improving forage quality and quantity. Rotational grazing can also increase the amount of forage harvested by as much as 2 tons of dry matter per acre, according to the Natural Resources Conservation Service. Because plants can grow taller in these systems, they are able to harvest enough sunlight to keep growing while storing surplus energy for later. That typically starts in earnest when plants reach 6 to 8 inches tall. After grazing, the plants use this stored energy to regrow more quickly and repeat the process.

Because livestock have a taste for fresh, new leaves, plants can’t store surplus energy in continuously grazed pastures. As soon as they start regrowing, the animal returns for a tasty second bite, forcing the plant to use up its reserves. This stress limits the speed at which a plant can regrow, or can weaken the plant until it dies. Few species of palatable plants thrive in these conditions. Over time, low-producing, unpalatable and undesirable plants come to dominate.

### Grazing and Conservation

Letting pastures rest, and especially changing the seasonal timing and paddock shape for grazing, also encourages plant diversity. As Russ saw on his old CRP ground, rotationally grazing his cattle helped spread manure uniformly and stimulated the dormant warm-season prairie seed bank. “We don’t need to buy seed,”

**“I started seeing big bluestem, then Indian gass. Now I’ve got eastern gamagrass all of a sudden, 10 years in.”**

*- Russ Wischover*

Andy says. “The soil is full of seed. We just have to manage it to give it a chance to express itself.”

The same process helps eliminate unwanted pasture plants. Andy says he manages brush on some of his land by intentionally overgrazing it, rotating goats through to browse the scrub down and then coming back again just as it’s all resprouting. Stennie works with the Iowa Department of Natural Resources to do similar work on the public land surrounding her farm. Her sheep graze back the brush and brome that invade and compete with the native grasses and forbs.

“I worked in conservation, and that’s been a big mindset of mine,” she says. “Can I use sheep as a grazing tool for land like this to help manage prairie? Can grazing and conservation work together?”

The NRCS and the Audubon Society both say yes. They highlight the positive impact rotational grazing has on plant life as a way to revive grassland bird populations. As the plant diversity in an ecosystem returns, diverse creatures come back as well. Walking through the tall grasses of the DNR prairie adjacent to her land, Stennie says she hopes to revive similar biodiversity on her land. “It goes beyond just wildlife, but to building back the diversity of plants and all the insects.”

### Practical and Intangible Motivations

Even though this grazing season is not going to plan, the diversity Stennie is

fostering through rotational grazing will help her pastures become more resilient to future droughts. As the climate warms, weather patterns change – but a resilient system can help plants, animals and people to adapt. Rotational grazing is difficult work – hauling fencing over rough terrain, puzzling through water supply problems, the learning curve of trying to mimic Mother Nature. But for the farmers who are doing it, the intangible rewards are as meaningful as the practical benefits.

“You go out and you move livestock, and you see that they have plenty to eat and they’re happy to see you,” Andy says, lowering his voice reverently. “You hear the sound of grazing. I just really enjoy that.”

“The reward is that eastern gamagrass,” Russ says. “Ten years and it just showed up because evidently I’m doing something right.”

Perched on top of a hill, Stennie stands flanked by stages of restoration. On one side lies bare ground where the DNR recently removed stands of invasive cedar trees. The other is covered in prairie her sheep grazed earlier in the season. It sprang up from the seedbank when cedars were removed years before. Stennie looks down at the old field in front of her. The sheep may be eating hay now, but they’re still doing restoration work, bringing back fertility with their manure.

It was a hike to get here, but Stennie persisted, pointing out wildflowers as she climbed, excited to see new ones blooming. “That’s part of what I love about rotational grazing,” she says. “I really do get to walk every inch of the land and get to know the pockets of it. I mean, to have remnant prairie in my backyard? This is why I came back to Iowa.” ■





# *with Natasha Hegmann*

## **of Turkey River Farm & Greenhouse**

Natasha Hegmann and Pete Kerns are using PFI's new Farm Business Coaching program to examine their goals and focus their 7-year-old farm business.

By Jacqueline Venner Senske

**JVS: Tell me about your farming journey so far.**

**NH:** I started working for Laura Krouse at Abbe Hills Farm as a high school student in 2005. After a season there, I couldn't imagine doing other work; it was so fulfilling, interesting and engaging. I worked for Laura for several more seasons and then went to college at St. Olaf in Northfield, Minnesota. While there, I started a farm with fellow students. After graduation, I worked with FoodCorps in Montana to teach kids about agriculture and nutrition, and worked to get more local food into schools for a couple of years.

I met Peter through FoodCorps. Pete moved to Portland, Oregon, to start a new job in 2014, but when his parents both became ill, he left his job to care for them. Faced with a lot happening in our lives, Pete and I decided to get married and pursue our dream of farming.

We formed a relationship with a non-profit around Elkader that owns land to see if we would be a good fit as their next farm caretakers, and it turned out to be an exciting match. We started our first season in 2015 with three main enterprises: vegetables for market and a small CSA, heritage-breed hogs on pasture and maple syrup. Between 2015 and now, there have been a couple of big turning points.

When we first started, we were driving two hours south to Iowa City to deliver nine CSA shares every week, plus selling at three farmers markets in Clayton County. That was a lot! The next year, we streamlined a bit, and by the third year, we shifted to all local CSA shares and just one farmers market. That was more manageable, and by being at just one market, we were making way more money. Doing less actually made more money and left us with more time and energy.

The next big change was dropping maple syrup in 2019. Sugaring was fun, but it took a lot of time and energy and was not profitable. Our son Joe was born in September that year, and on Jan. 1, 2020, we closed on a local greenhouse business to have indoor growing space, add a complimentary enterprise of ornamental plants and create a retail outlet. When the pandemic happened in 2020, we had to stop going to farmers market and have not gone back. A lot of those customers have transitioned to CSA shares, and we feel really confident with that program.

This year, 2022, has been another big turning point. At seven years into the business, we are starting to look more forward with what we're doing. We've done the hustle, and now we have more space to look at what our bigger goals are and how to get on the path to pursuing those. The Farm Business Coaching program has been perfectly timed to help us explore those questions.

**JVS: Tell me about your PFI involvement.**

**NH:** I joined PFI when I started working for Laura Krouse and attended my first PFI event in 2005. Laura hosted a field day and often took her employees to field days. Susan Jutz and Laura Krouse were great mentors.

When Pete and I were in Montana and wanted to start a farm, we knew that coming back home to Iowa was the place to do it because we wanted to be part of this community of farmers teaching farmers. PFI made it feel possible to farm here.

Once we moved back, we applied for the Savings Incentive Program our first year. This provided the framework for us to start our business plan, and the savings match gave us the capital to invest in our first high tunnel. We have done a couple of field days, did a Cooperators' Program trial, presented a farminar and have attended other field days. We also do the grower meetups in the spring and try to be as involved as possible.

**JVS: What led you to apply to PFI's Farm Business Coaching program?**

**NH:** We heard about the program and were talking with PFI staff about our challenges, and it sounded like the program was a great fit. It was perfect timing. We shared what help we needed and PFI was simultaneously trying to provide resources for farmers who had a different set of needs than those who





are just starting out. We were at a place where we were ready to dig into the business questions.

**JVS: What are your key takeaways so far?**

**NH:** Doing less – pulling in and focusing on fewer things – has the potential to increase profitability and make our lives more balanced. Pete and I are both generalists interested in a lot of things, but now more than ever, we need to focus, pare down and be wise with our time so we don't burn out.

An enduring question I'm continuing to explore through this program is the intersection of our values and our business. For example, the first five years we didn't increase our prices because we wanted the food to be accessible to everyone. But now we recognize we can't do that at our own expense. Through this program, we've been willing to question some of the assumptions we've made based on our values in a productive way.

**JVS: Has anything surprised you or changed your perspective about your business?**

**NH:** One thing, which also feels hopeful, is that there are simple tools to help us use data to make decisions. We've been trying

to use data but have felt like some business decisions are purely opportunistic.

Our financial records felt impenetrable. But when you have a professional to help you interpret your data, you see that you actually have the tools you need to make informed decisions. And if you don't have it right now, they can help you see what gaps you need to fill to move forward. We kept trying to do it on our own, but it turns out we don't actually have the tools and knowledge we needed – so it's great to have an expert to guide us.

**VS: Having gone through the first phase of the program, what are excited about for Phase 2?**

**NH:** Now that the season is slowing down, we anticipate having more time for reflection. Coming out of Phase 1, we're still in kind of an uncomfortable place because we're still processing what we have learned so far.

But what I'm proud of is that before this program, I would not have been able to even think about these things or allow this degree of uncertainty during the growing season. If we hold off all business decisions until January, that really limits the space we have for those conversations.

Even though this isn't a big, concrete aha moment, I have been challenged to dig into big ideas during an already busy time. Without doing that, making real change would never be possible.

**VS: How do you anticipate your business will be affected by the program?**

**NH:** The Farm Business Coaching program allows me to step into a role as an entrepreneur with a different level of confidence than before. I feel like not just a person who grows food, but a person who has a business that brings in income for their family, manages employees and works toward things with business goals in mind. ■

*Learn More*

Learn more about the Farm Business Coaching program at [practicalfarmers.org/farm-business-coaching](https://practicalfarmers.org/farm-business-coaching).



# NAVIGATING Land Connections

By Martha McFarland

*PFI's farmland access navigators help beginning farmers looking for land*

**Securing land as a beginning farmer is more than a simple transaction; it's a process of working through what's possible and what isn't, financially and logistically, and making a host of compromises and decisions.**

After finding prospective land, for instance, the farmer must ask: Is it near the right town? Does it have the right infrastructure? If not, is it possible or feasible to install it? Are there adequate living quarters? If the land will be leased, the land seeker and landowner must find out if they share the same goals and expectations. The lease terms must then be negotiated, along with questions about tenure.

Helping guide beginning farmers through these complex contours is where Practical Farmers of Iowa's farmland access navigators come in. These individuals are part of the Farmland Access Hub, a tri-state network connecting Renewing the Countryside in Minnesota, Marbleseed (formerly known as MOSES) in Wisconsin and PFI, and their job is to support land seekers and connect them to resources. The hub also provides lease and contract reviews from a lawyer.

But finding land is only part of the process. Amber Mohr, one of PFI's four farmland access navigators who runs Forktail Farm in Avoca, Iowa, says the navigators also help farmers consider scenarios they might have overlooked. "Most of the time I work with leases rather than purchases," Amber says. "The beginning farmer is so excited, they will take anything and may not get what they need."

This eagerness can lead them to take on more debt than they should, she says, or accept subpar living conditions. Some landowners also struggle to prioritize a beginning farmer's needs. "They want someone to keep their farm and vision going, but they're not always willing to provide what's needed to sustain that – the wage or the shelter," Amber says. "There's a vulnerability there."

In her consultations with beginning farmers, Amber makes a point of describing the ways leases can be written to ensure beginning farmer investments are protected – such as by incorporating longer lease terms for livestock or a fee schedule for landowners to buy back infrastructure if a lease ends.



Amber Mohr



Carlos' chickens



Carlos Williams

## Leasing and Legal Advice

Carlos Williams is a farmer and PFI member who worked with Amber to create an LLC and a lease for his business, Williams Topsoil Poultry, based at Sundog Farm near Solon, Iowa. "I love Carlos' story," Amber says. "It's an example of a landowner and a beginning farmer working together to benefit each other." At the time Carlos decided to form the business, he had been working at Sundog Farm for many years. Today, Carmen Black owns and operates the farm, but Carlos' connection stretches back to when it was ZJ Farm and he and his mother would visit Susan Jutz, the farm's previous owner.

Carlos, who has kidney failure and requires dialysis, worked at the farm when time and his health allowed and says the farm was vital to helping him find inspiration and focus. "I couldn't work anymore," he says. "I wasn't strong enough, but little bit by little bit, things started to match up. My whole attitude



changed. I started feeling better – just the fresh air, time to think, wide open spaces. I wasn't so stressed. I wasn't thinking about death anymore, I was thinking about growing things."

In 2020, mindful of his doctor's advice to eat more protein – and curious about how chickens could be used to improve the soil – Carlos decided to experiment with raising some chickens at Sundog Farm, selling them to Sundog Farm CSA customers in 2021 and 2022. As Carlos worked to establish his business, he and Carmen met with Amber several times to work through details of the lease and his LLC.

Carmen had used the Iowa land access navigators in previous years to create a lease for neighboring pastures and recommended the program to Carlos. "I recognized how helpful it is to talk through things with them and have someone ask questions you haven't thought about," Carmen says.

Though the program's legal document review service, Carlos was also able to get expert advice on how to set up his lease. Because the chickens would be moved throughout the farm to help improve the soil, the lease included several important components. First, it stipulated that Carlos would pay rent for days of pasture use rather than a specific number of acres rented. Second, because the enterprise was designed to improve the soil, the lease included payments to Carlos for the service.

Finally, because most small to midsize chicken operations are minimally profitable, Carlos worked with Amber to structure the business so he reinvests profits to grow and sustain it, and to invest in capital like a low-lying chicken tractor and electric fencing. "If I can feed my community and my family and break even, that makes me feel really good," Carlos says. "People who shop with me know that they're buying quality birds, sharing what I do for my health and theirs." This is his gift to his family and customers.

The ability to raise his own food also has added meaning for Carlos. Because land ownership was systematically denied to Black people for generations, those who want to farm today face additional hurdles to accessing land. With the weight of that history, watching his granddaughter connect with the land he's farming at Sundog Farm has special importance. "She's going to become a farmer," he says with a laugh. "I can't stop her."



Hannah Breckbill

Photo courtesy of Rory Photography

## Creative Networking to Make Land Connections

Hannah Breckbill, of Humble Hands Harvest in Decorah, Iowa, is another PFI farmland access navigator. She says many beginning farmers she and other navigators work with are specialty crop farmers who usually don't need much land. "That's an interesting conundrum on the Iowa landscape given the way things are parceled off," she says. "When people are looking for ten to hundreds of acres, the capital needed is overwhelming. My take is always, 'What's the creative way around this?'"

Hannah focuses on the community network and the potential for tapping into non-traditional access to capital. "I get people thinking, 'Who are my networks? What are my accesses to resources? Who could come into this with me some way?'"

Creative networking with other PFI members led beginning farmer Bailey Lutz to connect with Deborah Jacobi of Middle Bear Bluffs Farm northeast of Decorah. Bailey, who uses the pronoun they, grew up in the suburban landscape of Brooklyn Park, Minnesota, and says they didn't feel a strong connection to place growing up.

Coming to Iowa's Driftless Region in 2018 changed that. "I was mesmerized," Bailey says. "This is where I'm meant to be." Since then, Bailey has lived and farmed in several places looking for the right home for their goat grazing business, Hollyhock Land & Livestock. Deborah's farm, with its mix of woods, pasture and land in the Conservation Reserve Program, looks to be that perfect place.

Deborah's parents purchased the farm as part of a partnership in 1979 and formed its current LLC structure 20 years later. While Deborah works for a Minnesota-based non-profit and does not farm, she describes how its sense of peace grounded and anchored her. Deborah and Bailey are now in the beginning stages of writing a lease that will be mutually beneficial.

For instance, they want the lease to recognize that Deborah's land will benefit from having Bailey's goats graze invasive species, and that Bailey will benefit from having a secure base for their goat herd. To that end, the pair are working with PFI to identify goals and clarify expectations.

Ultimately, as Deborah says, "We are interested and open to discovering the possibilities and what a long-term vision for this farm could be." ■



### The PFI Network of Navigators

The PFI network includes four land navigators: Amber Mohr, of Fork Tail Farm in Avoca, Iowa; Hannah Breckbill of Humble Hands Harvest in Decorah, Iowa; Monika Owczarski of Sweet Tooth Farm in Des Moines, Iowa; and most recently, Joe Klingelhutz, who owns Joe's Bees, LLC in Iowa City, Iowa.

Sometimes, it's just a phone call to help aspiring farmers get started. Other navigators have regular check-ins with a beginning farmer about goals and steps toward accessing land.



# 2022 FIELD DAY Season

**As we wrap up the 2022 field day season,** we'd like to give a big "thank you" to the farmers and landowners who opened their farms and shared their practices, challenges and ideas. From June 6 to October 8, over 1,800 people attended 40 PFI field days, visiting 36 different Iowa counties, and reached Minnesota and Illinois.

As we look back over the photos, we're already excited for next year!







1

**Opposite page:** Field day attendees converse as they walk to the next stop on the agenda at Yellow Table Farm. (Aug. 9, Tripoli, Iowa)

(1) Nicole Jonas and Ajay Nair answer questions about harvest timing for different varieties of specialty melons at Red Granite Farm. (Aug. 4, Boone, Iowa) (2) Marie Andre (right) and Kiterette Bugenie discuss vegetable crop production during Marie's portion of the field day at Global Greens Farm. (Sept. 25, Des Moines, Iowa)



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(1) Jenna and Adam Cook share their experience building productive beds at Clovergold Flower Farm. (Aug. 9, Newell, Iowa) (2) Nathan Anderson (right) discusses using precision data to strategically incorporate perennials like alfalfa into row crop areas. (Aug. 27, Cherokee, Iowa; in partnership with Pheasants Forever) (3) Marquis Anderson, Elizabeth Buls, DaQuan Campbell and Ellasa Horton pose for a family photo after We Arose Co-op's field day. (Aug. 17, Waterloo, Iowa) (4) Attendees gather in the gazebo at the Iowa Arboretum to hear a reading from Angela Tedesco's book, "Finding Turtle Farm." (Sept. 11, Madrid, Iowa, in partnership with Iowa Arboretum) (5) Will Cannon shows attendees his custom-built cover crop seeder; an air-seeder with shallow incorporation. (Sept. 14, Prairie City, Iowa) (6) Tim Swinton shares his experience with newly established tree care in a field being converted from row crop to silvopasture. (Oct. 8, Clemons, Iowa; in partnership with Sustainable Iowa Land Trust (SILT)) (7) All aboard! PFI staff and attendees roll home from Northfield, Minnesota, after a bus trip to learn about Tree-Range poultry. (Aug. 27) (8) The kittens feign disinterest, but listen carefully to learn about the silvopasture plans at Yellow Table Farm (Aug. 9, Tripoli, Iowa) (9) Attendees dig into lunch after learning about the research trials on Cannon Family Farm. Will is conducting trials on soil-water availability in cover vs. no-cover plots, and soybean spacing when planting green. (Sept. 14, Prairie City, Iowa) (10) The camera gets a closer view of teff at Justin and Ellen Rahn's field day. (Aug. 4, Mount Carrol, Illinois)

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(1) Sunset over the Sunflower Experience after Pheasant Run Farm's field day exploring the farm's path back to business after the 2020 derecho. In 2020, the Sunflower Experience was flattened, along with the farm's other crops, buildings and greenhouses. (Sept. 18, Van Horne, Iowa) (2) The livestock guardian dogs trot down the hill to get a closer look at the attendees during JR Jenkins' field day. (Oct. 5, Wilton, Iowa) (3) Field day host Eric Jensen shares a laugh with Alisha Sedlmayr and Jacob Hawes. (Aug. 9, Tripoli, Iowa) (4) Scott Koether (second from left) checks the progress of his organic corn crop with a few attendees. (Aug. 20, McGregor, Iowa; in partnership with Farming for Public Health) (5) Mark Schleisman set out a variety of cover crop seeds for attendees to take a closer look. (Aug. 23, Lake City, Iowa) (6) Tim Dotterer shows components of the drone he uses for seeding cover crops. (Sept. 9, Bloomfield, Iowa) (7) Doug Adams (left) and Robert Harvey (center) chat with a passerby while volunteering to talk cover crops during the Farm Progress Show. (Aug. 30, Boone, Iowa) (8) Daryl Nelson takes a few notes while hearing about the constructed wetland at M&M Farms. (Aug. 23, Lake City, Iowa) (9) Tim Swinton's goats show off their version of a concrete jungle gym. (Oct. 8, Clemons, Iowa; in partnership with SILT) (10) Susan Differding (orange T-shirt) leads the field day along a recently established row of high-density apple trees at Timeless Prairie Orchard. (Aug. 17, Winthrop, Iowa)



10



# The Proof IS IN THE SOIL



*PFI farmers are testing if they can lower nitrogen rates without hurting yield on fields with long-term soil health practices*

By Stefan Gailans

Improving soil health has been a top priority for PFI farmers since our inception. While the terms people use to refer to soil health have changed over the years, PFI members have been leading the way since the 1980s in adopting soil health-promoting practices like ridge-till, diverse crop rotations, adding grazing livestock and planting cover crops to keep living roots in the ground.

Some of the earliest on-farm research projects in PFI's Cooperators' Program focused on these topics, as well as how to apply less manure and fertilizer. Now, Practical Farmers members are leading the way once more by participating in a next-generation on-farm soil health experiment.

Practical Farmers of Iowa is heading an on-farm research project involving 20 farms across Iowa looking at whether farmers who have been investing long-term in soil health-promoting practices can reduce the amount of nitrogen fertilizer they apply to corn without sacrificing yield.

*"The results of these trials drastically improved our farms, and overall, they played an important role in building and maintaining PFI's farmer-to-farmer network."*

*– Vic Madsen*

Midwest and southeast U.S. have found that as soil health metrics like organic matter, active carbon or microbial activity improve, crops need less nitrogen fertilizer to thrive. A healthy soil is rich in nutrients; adding nitrogen fertilizer just doesn't do much good.

The results are adding heft to the Natural Resources Conservation Service's dynamic definition of soil health as "the continued capacity of soil to function as a vital living ecosystem that sustains plants, animals and humans." For farmers, the results mean that as they improve their soil's

health, they may be able to reduce the amount of fertilizer they need to get the same yields – a win for the environment and their net returns.

## History of Trialing Nitrogen

The current project got underway in fall 2021 – but it isn't the first time PFI members have tackled the question of fertilizer use on the farm. The farm crisis of the 1980s that helped usher PFI into existence forced many farmers, and early PFI members, to take a hard look at their farming practices. While some farmers survived the crisis by farming more land ("getting big"), many more could not afford to purchase or rent more acres, and were forced to "get out."

But several of PFI's early members took a middle approach: They thought that by cutting the most expensive input costs – such as nitrogen fertilizer – they could improve profit margins enough to get by. From 1988-1993, farmers participating in PFI's newly established Cooperators' Program conducted 57 trials that compared their typical high fertilizer rate with a reduced rate of their choosing. Across sites, the average difference between high and low rates was 56 units of nitrogen per acre.

In 88% of those trials (50 of the 57), the farmers involved found that applying the high rate offered no statistical advantage to corn yield – and that in most cases, they were applying more nitrogen than they needed. "We felt like we were 'on a mission from God,' to quote the iconic line from the popular 1980 movie, 'The Blues Brothers,'" says Vic Madsen, who farms near Audubon, Iowa, and participated in those early fertilizer trials.





Alec and Rachel Amundson examine how red clover is improving their soil.



Fertilizer factory! Nodules on red clover roots indicate nitrogen fixation.

“We learned that we could save money and improve our bottom lines by reducing application rates, and feel better about being stewards of the environment in doing so,” he says. “The results of these trials drastically improved our farms, and overall, they played an important role in building and maintaining PFI’s farmer-to-farmer network.”

Since those first trials in the late 1980s, more than 250 farmers have conducted nearly 1,500 research trials on their farms. Today, the Cooperators’ Program brings together a community of curious and creative farmers from across the agricultural spectrum who take a scientific approach to improving their farms.

## The Next Generation

Alec and Rachel Amundson, who farm with Rachel’s family, the Norbys, near Osage, Iowa, weren’t even born yet when the first PFI nitrogen trials got started in the late 1980s. But farming practices that focus on soil health and water quality have long been important on their family farm and in their area.

“My dad and uncles, who we now are transitioning the farm from, were some of the first ones to start things like no-tilling and strip-tilling,” Rachel says. “With other farmers in the neighborhood, they started doing cover crops and saw the benefits.” Soon after the Iowa Nutrient Reduction Strategy was released in 2013, a group in the Rock Creek Watershed, where the Amundsons farm, was the first in the state to create a watershed plan specifically tailored to addressing the goals laid out in the new strategy.

As in the 1980s, keeping the farm going is the main reason the Amundsons focus on soil health. But environmental stewardship is another key motivating factor, just as it was for the previous generation of PFI members. “As the next generation coming on, we want to continue that,” Rachel says. “Hopefully our farm can last for many generations. We like to kayak on Rock Creek. We like to boat on the Cedar River, and to us, to have those quality bodies of water around us, we know we’re making a difference with cover crops.”

Now, Rachel is a partner in Sponheim Sales and Services, a local business that strives to help farmers adopt conservation practices like cover crops, strip-till and no-till. Since becoming involved in the business, the Amundsons have begun to grow more small grains, like oats and rye, for cover crop seed, opening the door to growing a “super cover crop” – red clover.

Red clover is often planted either at the same time as oats or interseeded into a young stand of rye. After the small-grain crop is harvested in the middle of the summer, the clover takes off, capturing the full power of the summer sun – and more importantly, fixing nitrogen that can be used by the subsequent corn crop.

*(Continued on page 20 →)*



“We’re trying to learn how much nitrogen we actually get out of a clover crop like this in our system,” Alec says. “For us, nitrogen is one of the largest expenses in growing corn, behind land and seed costs. Something like [red clover] that’s actually putting nitrogen into the soil, it’s fixing nitrogen cheaper than we can buy it. The clover is just pulling it out of the atmosphere and making it available for us.”

As prices for nitrogen fertilizer started climbing over the past couple of years, and echoing questions that animated PFI farmers in the 1980s, Rachel and Alec started wondering: Could we reduce our nitrogen rate and save money? Enter PFI nitrogen trials 2.0.

## Nitrogen Trials 2.0

For this newest PFI-led fertilizer project, PFI staff recruited farmers, including the Amundsons, who have been using soil health-promoting practices for at least five years. Using a replicated strip-trial design, farmers are comparing their usual fertilizer rate with a rate that is reduced by 50 pounds of applied nitrogen per acre. If they can maintain corn yields at the reduced rate, results might spark confidence to reduce (or at least question) fertilizer rates going forward, much like what happened for the original cohort of farmers who trialed fertilizer rates.

To some degree, this project is asking: Is the ability to reduce nitrogen fertilizer without losing corn yield a simple yet robust test of soil health? The project’s premise echoes the sentiment of the idiom “the proof of the pudding is in the eating” – in a sense, it suggests that how well the crop performs with less fertilizer is a reflection of the soil’s health.

And what if the reduced rate ends up lowering corn yields and financial returns? The farmers will still have gained valuable information: They can probably be satisfied that their typical rate is the right rate for their farm. Knowing this could encourage them to adopt more soil health-promoting practices in the hope they could eventually reduce that fertilizer rate (and expense).

## Cost Savings and Environmental Benefits

Scientists have long shown that soil health-promoting practices pay off in the long run by reducing soil erosion and improving soil-water infiltration. And while the original nitrogen trial participants of the 1980s saw that improvements in water quality accompanied cost-savings, this new generation believes there’s a benefit to the climate. Cutting

“Something like [red clover] that’s actually putting nitrogen into the soil, it’s fixing nitrogen cheaper than we can buy it. The clover is just pulling it out of the atmosphere and making it available for us.”  
– Alec Amundson





back on rates of manufactured nitrogen significantly lessens the greenhouse gas emissions associated with their farms.

As Alec says, legumes “fix” or capture nitrogen from the atmosphere, converting the element into a form plants can use. Commercially produced nitrogen fertilizer mimics that process synthetically – but with a high energy toll. The Haber-Bosch process – the industrial process invented over 100 years ago to artificially fix

nitrogen – accounts for 2% of global carbon dioxide emissions. As we look to improve the resilience of our farming systems, green manure crops – like red clover – will play a big role in a truly climate-smart agriculture. See “Green Manure Crops and Nitrogen” on PFI’s YouTube channel ([youtube.com/PFIvideos](https://youtube.com/PFIvideos)) to watch a video explaining how this works.

But the short-term benefits of planting clover, and other soil health-promoting practices, may not be visible right away. If research could show short-term advantages, like saving money on nitrogen fertilizer, more farmers might be swayed to adopt soil health practices.

## Year One Results

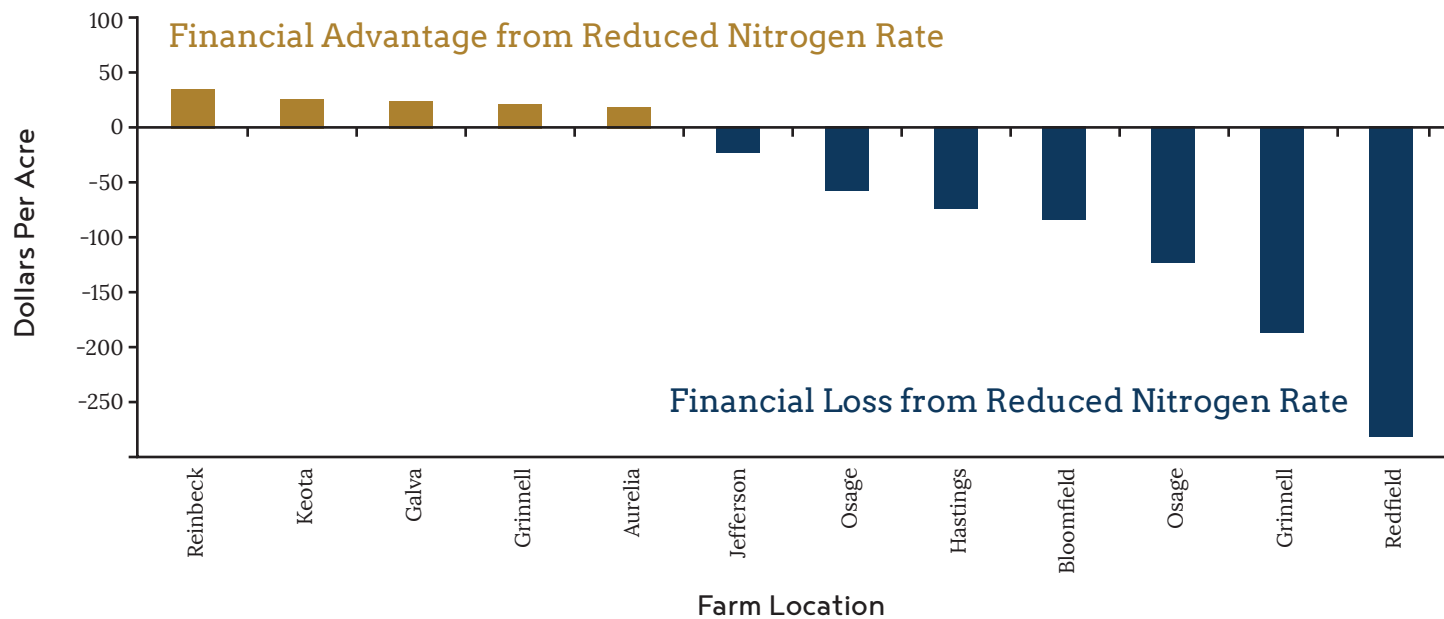
By mid-November 2022, results from 12 trials showed that in half of them, farmers found a \$25 per acre financial advantage, on average, from reducing their fertilizer rate. Other participants saw declines in both corn yield and financial returns from reducing their fertilizer rate.

Jon Bakehouse and Alec and Rachel Amundson took these results as a sign that reducing their fertilizer rate by 50 pounds per acre might have been too large of a cut from their typical rates. “Normally, we wouldn’t have even tried reducing [nitrogen] by 50 pounds,” Jon says. The research trial setting, however, made it possible for him to take risks he wouldn’t otherwise have felt comfortable with by testing that aggressive fertilizer cut in just a small area.

For Alec, the project has provided important data to back up his and Rachel’s thoughts on nitrogen application. “It was a great way to verify our thinking of how to cut fertilizer when planting corn after clover,” he says. “We learned where and how we might save money on nitrogen.”

Based on their respective results, both Jon and the Amundsons think that reducing their fertilizer rates by 20 or 30 pounds per acre would have been the sweet spot. The mixed results aren’t that surprising because all the farms involved are approaching the trial from their own unique standpoints: different typical rates, different crop rotations, different local climates and existing soil properties. In other words, everyone involved sits at a different point in their soil health journey. Some have found that they can afford to cut fertilizer rates; others have learned that they’re already applying a suitable rate or have room to improve their soil’s health – or both.

“I knew we could grow good corn with less nitrogen,” says Sam Bennett, one of the farmers to see a cost benefit from cutting nitrogen. “But knowing what happens when corn runs out of nitrogen, I habitually over-apply fertilizer. This trial helped give me the confidence to take a deeper look at what rates I’m planning to apply.” ■



Corn pays when the amount of grain produced brings a financial return greater than the costs spent to produce the corn. As of mid-November, five sites reported a financial advantage from reducing fertilizer rate to corn: Reducing their fertilizer rate reduced their production costs but didn’t harm their corn yields. Seven other sites reported financial losses from reducing their fertilizer rate: Though they reduced their fertilizer expense, corn yields and financial returns were also reduced.





# Notes from the Field

The new nitrogen project lets PFI farmers choose the fields they used soil health practices on to enroll in the study. By doing this - and letting them choose their typical and reduced nitrogen rates - the project empowers them as the scientist and, ultimately, makes the data meaningful and relevant to each of them.

**Here are a few of the PFI farmers putting their farms' soil health to the test:**

## Sam Bennett

Galva, Iowa

**Farm overview:** Corn-soybean rotation with cereal rye cover crops and either no- or strip-tillage

**Typical N rate:** 189 pounds per acre

**Reduced N rate:** 139 pounds per acre

*"I hope to see if improved soil health practices can reduce the need for inputs."*



## Jon Bakehouse

Hastings, Iowa

**Farm overview:** Corn-soybean rotation with cereal rye cover crops seeded after each corn harvest and no tillage. Cattle graze crop residue and cover crop forage from September to April.

**Typical N rate:** 151 pounds per acre

**Reduced N rate:** 95 pounds per acre

*"[This trial will] give me the confidence to either reduce nitrogen rates or be secure in the knowledge we aren't over-applying nutrients. [I also hope to discover] unexpected outcomes that kick-start thinking in new and different directions."*



## Chris Deal

Jefferson, Iowa

**Farm overview:** Corn-soybean rotation with cereal rye and winter wheat cover crops and limited tillage

**Typical N rate:** 200 pounds per acre

**Reduced N rate:** 150 pounds per acre

*"I have made a conscious effort to utilize sustainable farming practices, including no-till and cover crops and I hope to right-size the amount of nitrogen I'm using on my farm. By focusing on the amount of N that offers peak profitability, rather than peak yield, I hope to avoid the use of unnecessary fertilizer and further reduce the possibility of leaching and runoff from my farming operation."*



## Bill Frederick

Jefferson, Iowa

**Farm overview:** Corn-soybean rotation with winter wheat, turnip cover crops and no tillage. After harvest, cattle graze the crop residue and cover crop forage from October to May.

**Typical N rate:** 150 pounds per acre

**Reduced N rate:** 100 pounds per acre

*"If it works, it will greatly reduce nitrogen costs and increase profitability."*



## Alec & Rachel Amundson

Osage, Iowa

**Farm overview:** Diversified crop rotation including corn, soybeans, oats, cereal rye and red clover cover crops and no- or strip-till

**Typical N rate:** 130 pounds per acre

**Reduced N rate:** 80 pounds per acre

*"[This trial will impact our farm by] helping to fine-tune our nitrogen management."*



## Nathan Anderson

Aurelia, Iowa

**Farm overview:** Corn-soybean rotation with cereal rye cover crops, no tillage and composted cattle or turkey manure. Cattle graze crop residue and cover crop forage each winter.

**Typical N rate:** 158 pounds per acre

**Reduced N rate:** 105 pounds per acre

*"I hope my research site, combined with other farmer-cooperator sites and our collective results, can reform the narrative around nitrogen fertilization and use for the benefit of farmers and the environment."*





# Want to Get Involved?

*Sign up today!*

## Do you want to test nitrogen use on your farm?

We're looking for corn farmers in Illinois, Iowa, Minnesota, Missouri and Nebraska. Eligible fields will have at least a five-year history of soil health practices (cover crops, diverse rotations, integrated grazing, reduced tillage, etc.).

## What's Involved?

The trial involves eight treatment strips that are about 2 acres each. Four strips (~8 acres) will receive your typical fertilizer rate, and four strips (~8 acres) will receive the reduced rate. Total trial footprint: ~16 acres

## Why Participate?

- You'll receive a stipend for completing the trial.
- You'll learn more about fertilizer use in corn on your farm.
- You will contribute vital data to a broader effort by PFI and partners to gauge risk associated with reducing N fertilizer.



Reach out to PFI's senior research manager, Stefan Gailans, to sign up or learn more at [stefan.gailans@practicalfarmers.org](mailto:stefan.gailans@practicalfarmers.org).



*"Still don't see any streaking." Kevin Veenstra took weekly photos of his experiment near Grinnell, Iowa, through the growing season. By mid-August 2022, the corn that received 108 pounds of nitrogen fertilizer looked just as healthy and robust as the corn that received 158 pounds. But in the end, the higher fertilizer rate scored better yields and financial returns. Trial results often serve as a check, either confirming or refuting the eye test. "Without the trial I may have cut back nitrogen too much too soon," Kevin says.*





# An Evolving

By Vanya North

# Conservation Tradition

For generations, the Gordon family has embraced conservation practices to stay resilient. Today, they continue to expand and foster that tradition for the next generation.

**Located in rural southwestern Minnesota, just over the Iowa border, Worthington is a small town nestled up next to Lake Okabena, a name adapted from the Dakota word hokah-be-na, meaning “nesting place of the herons.” Spruce, pine and beech trees dot the landscape alongside rolling acres of farmland.**

**T**he lake, and the area’s fertile prairies, attracted immigrants seeking new land. In the early 1870s, the town of Worthington was founded by white settlers from New England and Upstate New York who established a farming community along the St. Paul and Sioux City Railroad. In the 1920s, Bill Gordon’s forebears were among those who settled around Lake Okabena seeking to establish their farming legacy.

A fourth-generation member of Gordon Farms, Bill has called Worthington home all his life – and he says a big part of that legacy is based on care of the land and a conservation ethos.

“It’s a generational tradition for us. My great-grandparents saw firsthand the effects of the Dust Bowl,” Bill says. “My grandparents didn’t want to repeat that history. I’m the fourth generation of a family farm, and we celebrated 100 years of farming in this same location in 2020. We have really practiced conservation since the beginning.”

Today, Gordon Farms includes 2,000 acres of corn and soybeans, along with about 250 acres dedicated to wetlands and buffer strips. Bill’s parents, Galen and Colleen, are part of the operation, along with Bill’s wife, Dawn, and their four children. Over the past 40 years, Gordon Farms has taken a more nuanced approach to conservation initiatives.

Using precision conservation – the science of applying the right practices in the right place, at the right time, to maximize both profitability and environmental benefits – the family is pinpointing underperforming areas of the farm and singling those out for conservation efforts.

“It’s possible to create conservation areas on-farm and be profitable,” Bill says, “though that wasn’t always the case. Here we are in the heart of the corn and soybean belt, and yet we still have wildlife. We still have wetlands and trees, and can go out to hunt, fish and enjoy the outdoors, as well as farm.”

## The Start of a Family Legacy

Gordon Farms traces its start to Bill’s great-grandparents, Will and Clara, who bought 160 acres of land near Worthington in 1920. Their son, Glen – Bill’s grandfather – was born in 1910 and continued farming on the same land. While Bill says his grandfather was “definitely a traditional farmer of corn and soybeans,” Glen nonetheless started to implement some conservation practices on the farm.

“My grandfather installed the areas with the basin ponds and stopped grazing that,” he says. “Even before all the environmental problems of the ‘30s, Granddad recognized that having some habitat was important. My

own dad, Galen, continued on with that tradition.”

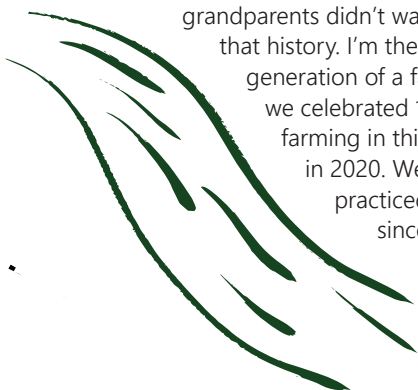
While the devastating dust storms so vividly associated with the Dust Bowl era were centered in the southern and central Great Plains, the dust storms hit parts of Minnesota as they swept across the country, reaching as far east as Washington, D.C. Minnesota farms were also hit by the historic heat and drought of the 1930s – which affected 75% of the nation and remains the worst drought in U.S. history. According to the Library of Congress, 19 states in the U.S. heartland “became a vast dust bowl” that forced many farmers to leave their parched fields in search of opportunity elsewhere.

But not Glen Gordon. “He stayed through the whole thing, even with profit all but gone,” Bill says.

The hardships of that era were caused in part by broadscale soil mismanagement. Throughout the early 20th century, farmers plowed millions of acres of drought-resistant native prairie grasses to plant wheat and other crops. When the epic drought of the 1930s came, the over-plowed farmland shriveled and blew away in the wind.

“That really made more people aware of the importance of controlling erosion and taking care of the land,” Bill says.

Galen Gordon, Bill’s father, went to school at the University of Minnesota, majoring in biology before returning to the family farm. Once back, he expanded the conservation tradition. Galen is the individual Bill credits with passing on his love of the land. Together, the family, including a young Bill, planted apple trees as a food source for





**“The conservation on our farm started with not wanting to repeat past mistakes. I want my kids to have this pristine land to grow up on and to leave this legacy of care to them.”**

— BILL GORDON



wildlife and conducted burns to re-establish more areas on the farm that could support native prairie.

“To this day, my dad is still involved with implementing conservation on the property,” Bill says. “I started farming at 10 years old, so I’ve been helping with these efforts for 35 years. We took those lessons learned from over-tilling in the past to create a better farm today.”

### **Continuing the Legacy**

As the fourth generation farming the land, Bill has embraced the task of stewarding the family farm and expanding on his family’s conservation legacy. He and his family continue to use conservation tillage on as many acres as possible, as Galen did, as well as plant trees and restore land to prairie. The family uses the principles of precision conservation to guide their conservation efforts. Bill diligently monitors annual crop yields to identify those underperforming areas that would be best suited to conservation practices.

“I don’t use any high-tech survey or sensing equipment, just my gut on lower-yield areas. It’s a method related to more precise conservation practices. I just know that by moving those areas of my land to habitat, it increases the overall health and yield of my remaining acres.”

In establishing habitat, Bill aims to follow the state’s Conservation Reserve Program standards as closely as he can. “We have a lot of areas on the farm that collect water and produce poorly,” Bill says. “We want to keep our profit margins, so we are trying to balance out which areas are consistently profitable versus those fringe areas that are profitable one year but not the next.”

The Gordon family has also donated a parcel of land to the city of Worthington through a program called Reinvest in Minnesota. Their farm sits at the top of the Okabena-Ocheda watershed, which includes both Lake Okabena and Lake Bella, 10 miles to the south. The donated parcel contains a basin with three ponds designed to catch any nutrients coming off their land and surrounding farms.

As Bill and his family look to the future, they are carrying their conservation values forward while trying to create resiliency for scenarios, like climate change, that are outside their control. “With a changing climate, we are seeing rainfall events of 3 to 5 inches, which we’ve never had before,” Bill says, noting that with so much rain at one time, “we can’t stop erosion. That’s why we are creating these buffer strips, to try and minimize future damage.”

Bill is also excited about planting more fruit trees to sustain a healthy deer population, and he and his family have plans to install three more ponds and another 5 acres of prairie strips. Their investment in habitat over the years is paying off: Bill says the family has seen the return of bald eagles and trumpeter swans, along with their cygnets.

“The conservation on our farm started with not wanting to repeat past mistakes,” Bill says. “I want my kids to have this pristine land to grow up on and leave this legacy of care to them. We are also looking to the future, to ensure that the following generations can expect the same. I’m the fourth generation on this land and with any luck, there will be a fifth, sixth or even tenth.” ■



# ON COMMON GROUND

Practical Farmers of Iowa Annual Conference  
January 19–21, 2023 | Ames, Iowa



Since our founding, the annual conference has been a keystone event for sharing knowledge, building connections and celebrating agriculture in Iowa (and good food!). As our conference grows to nearly 1,000 attendees, we are pleased to offer 60-plus sessions on a wide variety of agricultural topics, 70-plus exhibitors, locally sourced meals and a spirit of curiosity and community. We hope to see you there!

## REGISTER TODAY!



Visit our website to register online.  
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Questions? Need assistance with registration?  
Call the PFI office at (515) 232-5661.



If you received a conference brochure in the mail, complete the tear-out registration form on p. 30 and mail it to the PFI office.

## SPEAKERS, EVENTS, FOOD, AND MORE!

### KEYNOTE ADDRESS



Donna Pearson  
McClish  
Founder and CEO  
of Common Ground  
Producers and  
Growers Mobile  
Market and Mobile  
Food Hub based in  
Wichita, Kansas

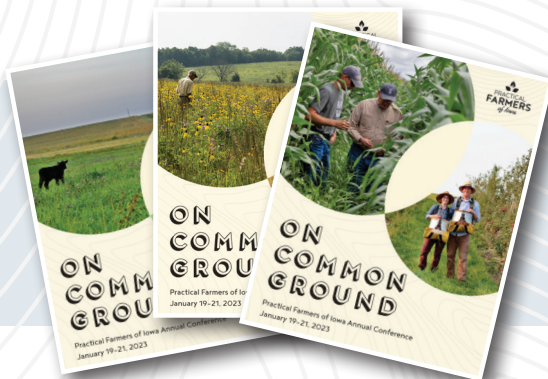
### STORYTELLING

Storytelling is back! To close out the conference on Saturday afternoon, all conference attendees will come together to hear true stories, performed live, from a selection of PFI farmers. If you enjoy bending your ear toward a lively, soberingly powerful or particularly well-narrated farmer tale, this storytelling event is for you.

### PFI DINNER



+ Pickles &  
Preserves Potluck  
PFI will provide the  
main and side dishes,  
but the potluck  
contributions make  
this a truly festive  
event! See our website  
for more details.



### Want to learn more about the annual conference?

Members should have received an annual conference brochure in the mail! If you lost yours or just want an extra copy, email [debra.boekholder@practicalfarmers.org](mailto:debra.boekholder@practicalfarmers.org) or call (515) 232-5661.

You can also view all the conference sessions and extra details on our website:  
[practicalfarmers.org/annual-conference](https://practicalfarmers.org/annual-conference).



# Review of Robbin Gourley's "Bring Me Some Apples and I'll make You a Pie"

By Will Martin

I read a book called "Bring Me Some Apples and I'll Make You a Pie." It is about Edna Lewis. She grew up farming in the South and became a famous chef. The book was written by a lady named Robbin Gourley.

Here is what the book is about: A girl, Edna, picks food from her family's farm during each season of the year. Some of the food she turns into fresh treats. The rest of it she saves for winter. She is a good cook. My favorite thing she made in the book is strawberry shortbread. Edna and her family sing lots of songs. The songs are pretty nice, and not creepy. The paintings are really nice too.

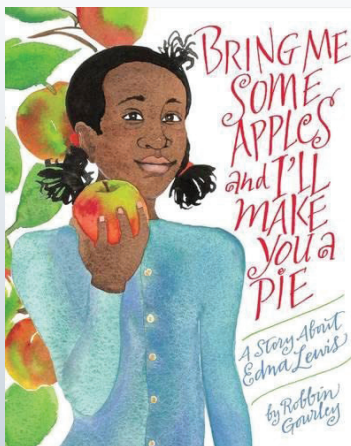
My favorite part of the book is when she gets honey because I like honey and that she and her dad were able to find the honey in the wild. One of the foods she made that was new to me is blackberry cobbler. I didn't know the word "cobbler." It sounds like a word my little sister made up.

There are five recipes in the back of the book. The first one I want to make is strawberry shortbread. I love strawberry shortbread. I like this book and want to share it with my friends and then everyone in the world.

Thank you, Practical Farmers of Iowa. ■

Will George Nelsen Martin  
Holdfast Farmstead

*Will is 7 years old and lives with his parents and little sister on 50 acres outside Mount Ayr, Iowa. They raise Kiko goats and KuneKune pigs that they use to regenerate their land and help their family and community be more resilient. Learn about the farm at [www.instagram.com/holdfast.farmstead](http://www.instagram.com/holdfast.farmstead).*



Published: 2009 (Reprinted September 2016)

48 pages

By: Robbin Gourley

Ages: 4-8

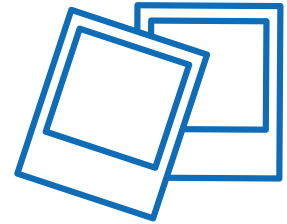
Long before the natural-food movement gained popularity, Edna Lewis championed purity of ingredients, regional cuisine, and farm-to-table eating. She was a chef when female chefs—let alone African American female chefs—were few and far between. With lyrical text and watercolor illustrations, Robbin Gourley traces the roots of Edna's appreciation for the bounties of nature through the seasons. Folk rhymes, and songs about food are sprinkled throughout the text, and five kid-friendly recipes and an author's note about Edna's life are included.



# PFI MEMBER

## Photo Album

The PFI Member Photo Album features photos submitted by PFI members from their farms. Whether you capture images of the everyday, the awe-inspiring or the curiously beautiful on your farm, send them our way and we'll work to curate them into the album.



All things old are new again. These gents are ready to swath!  
(Photo: Neil Peterson – Clover Lane Farm, Fonda, Iowa)



“Finally got to use the gate monitoring system my wife and I brought home four years ago.” (Photo: Nathan Anderson – Bobolink Prairie Farm, Aurelia, Iowa)



“Looks like money to me.” Strategically unrolling bales across the fields to spread manure and pee everywhere. (Photo: Martha McFarland – Hawkeye Buffalo Ranch, Fredericksburg, Iowa)



Twenty-five years in, growing carrots only gets more fun for the “carrot king”! (Photo: Gary Guthrie – Growing Harmony Farm, Nevada, Iowa)





Lawson and Ellie take a rest after chicken chores. (Photo: Ben & Megan Wise - Ipswich, Massachusetts)



The hens head off to lay more treasure for Willa in December 2021. (Photo: Whitney Clasen - Grade A Gardens, Earlham, Iowa)



Buckets of blooms headed to the market after a July rain. (Photo: Emma Barber - Rhubarb Botanicals, Iowa City, Iowa)



October harvest scenery. (Photo: Kellie Blair - Blair Farm, Dayton, Iowa)



Ada shows off her big find at the Berry Basket Farm near Iowa City in June. With Ada's help, Mom, Dad and Grandma picked 45 pounds. (Photo: Kate Edwards - Wild Woods Farm, Iowa City, Iowa)



Have a photo you'd like featured in the magazine?  
Email it to [liz.kolbe@practicalfarmers.org](mailto:liz.kolbe@practicalfarmers.org) or tag PFI on social media and let us know!



## Meet Our New Staff and AmeriCorps Members

New faces in the office in field crops, habitat, livestock, human resources and AmeriCorps volunteers

### Rachel Burke – AmeriCorps Member



Rachel joined the Practical Farmers of Iowa team as a Green Iowa AmeriCorps member in September 2022. During her 11-month service term, she will help with a range of projects, including assisting the communications team, testing water quality, planting trees and developing environmental education and outreach events for our community.

Rachel grew up in a suburb of Kansas City, Missouri. Her love for Iowa started in Davenport, Iowa, where she earned her bachelor's

degree in philosophy and fine art from St. Ambrose University. Rachel continued her education, and trek north, to earn her Master of Fine Arts in painting and drawing from the University of Minnesota in 2013.

Before PFI, Rachel lived in New Orleans, where she painted sets in the film and television industry. Following Hurricane Ida, Rachel made her way back to Iowa to be closer to family (and to avoid hurricanes). She looks forward to planting roots in Iowa and avoiding tornadoes. In her free time, Rachel sews, collects fabric and spends time with her husband, Jeremy, and cat, affectionately named Stinky. ■

### Erin Carpenter – AmeriCorps Member



Erin joined the Practical Farmers of Iowa team as a Green Iowa AmeriCorps member in November 2022. In this role, she assists with a variety of PFI programs in addition to GIA projects such as planting trees and testing water quality.

Erin grew up on the family farm in western Illinois, where both sets of grandparents and several extended family members also farmed. She moved to Iowa to attend Iowa State University and graduated with a Bachelor's of Landscape Architecture and a second major in environmental studies.

Following graduation, she stayed in Ames, Iowa, and worked through ISU Extension and Outreach with Iowa's Living Roadways Community Visioning Program. Erin later took up ceramics and worked as a studio potter for several years, selling her work online, in galleries and at art fairs across the Midwest. During the pandemic, she transitioned to working in the green industry for the benefit of people and the planet.

Erin lives in Marshalltown, Iowa, with her husband and three darling tuxedo ("tuxie") cats. In her spare time, she coaches taekwondo at Ames Parks & Recreation. ■

### Margaret Chamas – Livestock Viability Manager



Margaret (re)joined the PFI staff in the fall of 2022. As the livestock viability manager, she oversees cost-share and business development projects that empower farmers to raise and market livestock in environmentally and economically sustainable and viable ways.

Previously Margaret Dunn, she served as PFI's livestock coordinator from 2012-2014 following her graduation from Iowa State University with a master's degree in animal science. She grew up in New York raising hobby dairy goats, which she continues (at a much larger scale, and alongside meat goats, hair sheep, beef and dairy cattle, poultry, some equines and now even some pigs) to this day, at her farm near Kansas City, Missouri.

Margaret has held a variety of roles, including most recently managing her pasture-based livestock farm and offering targeted grazing services as a Goats On The Go affiliate.

In other positions, she served as an agriculture and natural resources county extension agent in northeast Kansas; managed the livestock portion of an agri-education and agritourism operation; and has done small-scale education, outreach and contract work on her own.

Her greatest interests are in animal (particularly ruminant) nutrition and management, and she enjoys weaving that interest into efforts to make farms more sustainable and profitable. ■



### Chelsea Ferrie – Field Crops Viability Coordinator



Chelsea joined the Practical Farmers of Iowa staff in November 2022. As a field crops viability coordinator, she assists farmers with PFI's cost-share programs related to fertilizer management.

Chelsea attended Iowa State University, receiving bachelor's degrees in agronomy and global resource systems. Her passion for agriculture and resource conservation

led her to continue her education at Iowa State with a Master

of Science in sustainable agriculture and environmental science. Her graduate research focused on updating nutrient (nitrate and phosphorus) reduction efficiencies for the best management practices listed in the Iowa Nutrient Reduction Strategy and collaborating with the Daily Erosion Project to estimate sheet and rill erosion at the watershed and field scale.

Originally from central Illinois, Chelsea now resides in Des Moines, Iowa. She enjoys traveling, being outdoors, reading, hiking and paddleboarding. ■

### Morgan Jennings – Field Crops Viability Coordinator



Morgan joined the PFI staff in November 2022 as a field crops viability coordinator. Her enthusiasm for forages makes her perfect for assisting farmers with diversified crop rotations and helping them adopt cover crops through PFI's cover crop cost-share program.

Morgan has always called Iowa home and earned her bachelor's degree in animal science and agronomy from Iowa State University. She continued her education at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln, where she

received her master's degree specializing in ruminant nutrition with a focus on evaluating cattle management for systems with limited perennial pasture.

Morgan is passionate about crop-livestock integration and is fond of her research involving spring corn residue grazing and its impacts on soil physical properties. Though being a Cornhusker was a great experience, she is loyal forever to the Cyclones.

Morgan loves to curl up with a good book and enjoys anything outdoors, but her favorite hobbies are fishing, biking and hiking. ■

### Miranda Johnson – Senior Human Resources Coordinator



Miranda joined Practical Farmers of Iowa in August 2022 as the senior human resources coordinator. Her role includes handling day-to-day human resources functions such as recruiting, onboarding, employee relations, budgeting and benefits administration, as well as planning for the future of PFI's human resources department.

Miranda brings 10-plus years of experience in human resources and aims to consistently learn and grow her expertise. She served

in AmeriCorps helping to restore a Texas state park after wildfires spread in the area. She credits this experience as a pivotal time in her life. With PFI, she has found an organization that aligns her love of nature and her HR experience.

Miranda grew up in Texas and moved to Iowa in 2013. She enjoys spending time with her husband and two sons, cooking, interior decorating, wine and live music. ■

### Grace Yi – Habitat Viability Coordinator



Grace Yi joined the Practical Farmers staff in October 2022. As the habitat viability coordinator, Grace equips farmers and landowners with technical assistance and financial resources needed to establish and maintain wildlife habitats.

Grace earned her Master of Science in sustainable agriculture and Master of Community and Regional Planning from Iowa State University. Following graduation, she worked as a conservation planner for the Warren County Soil and Water Conservation District, where she assisted farmers and landowners with a variety of conservation projects, from restoring native

prairies to designing rotational grazing systems to controlling invasive species.

Grace spent her childhood in Seoul, South Korea, and her adolescence in Hawaii. While vastly different, both worlds instilled in her an appreciation for the outdoors and steered her into a career in natural resources stewardship.

Whenever possible, Grace loves visiting her family and friends in South Korea and Hawaii, as well as travelling to new places. She also enjoys cooking, checking out new eateries, working out, writing letters and walking through prairies with her husband and golden retriever on their pheasant hunts. ■



## Please Take the PFI Member Survey!

Your responses help us understand and serve you better

Every three years, we ask all members of Practical Farmers of Iowa to complete a survey that provides staff and board members with a snapshot of our membership, and helps guide our future programming. **The information you provide us in this survey is vitally important** for remaining a member-led organization.

Whether you are a farmer or non-farmer, new or long-time member, we value your input. We will ask you questions about:

- What PFI activities you have participated in, or would like to see in the future
- If and how you have benefited from PFI programming
- Whether you farm, want to farm, own farmland or just like to support our work
- What kinds of enterprises, production practices and conservation practices are on your farm
- What your farm goals are
- In what ways PFI can help you in the future

To help ease the administrative load of this undertaking, **we're asking all members to complete this survey online.** In January 2023, the primary email address on each membership will receive an email with a link specific to that membership, requesting your input. Please check your email (including your spam folder!) to find your link to complete the survey.

If you're unable to complete this survey online, we would be happy to administer the survey over the phone. Please call the office for assistance: (515) 232-5661.

**We appreciate your effort helping to guide our farmer-led organization!** Questions about the survey? Please contact Steve Carlson at (515) 232-5661 or [steve.carlson@practicalfarmers.org](mailto:steve.carlson@practicalfarmers.org).

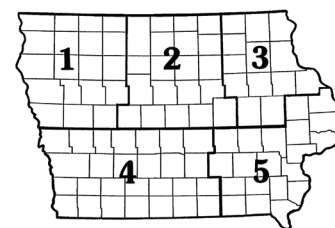


*Thank you*  
to our newest lifetime members!  
(From Aug. 12–Nov. 15, 2022)

<b>Russ &amp; Phyllis Brandes</b> – Hancock, IA	<b>Kelly &amp; Keaton Cheesewright</b> – Chrisman, IL	<b>Aaron &amp; Marisa Dahlstrom</b> – Albert City, IA	<b>Kathleen Hunt &amp; Steve Davis</b> – Port Angeles, WA
<b>Jeremy &amp; Amber Prochnow</b> – Glenwood, IA	<b>Cory, Collin &amp; Kennedy Raisbeck</b> – Bagley, WI	<b>Sharon Tinker</b> – Ankeny, IA	<b>Mary &amp; Glenn Wiedenhoft</b> – Ames, IA
<b>Ben &amp; Megan Wise</b> – Ipswich, MA	<b>Melissa Wubben</b> – Norwalk, IA	<b>Mike &amp; Kim Zabel</b> – Plainview, MN	

*Lifetime membership is open to anyone, and confers the same benefits as regular membership – without any renewal notices! Learn more about this option at [practicalfarmers.org/lifetime-membership](https://practicalfarmers.org/lifetime-membership).*





# Welcome, New Members!

## DISTRICT 1 - NORTHWEST

- Jamie Adams – Newell
- Paul Alexander – Sibley
- Terry Aukes – Larchwood
- Glenn Baker – Orange City
- Vernon Beernink – Sioux Center
- Dan Bibler – Alta
- Justin Boersma – Hospers
- John Bohnenkamp – Remsen
- Ronald Boote – Hull
- Curt Bosma – Ocheyedan
- Ron Bowman – Coon Rapids
- Carter Boyle – Danbury
- Bryan Carlson – Storm Lake
- Rusty Corderman – Newell
- Becky and Brian Davis – Lake City
- Darin Dykstra – Maurice
- Scott Ebel – Granville
- Brian Evers – Denison
- Noah Fedders – Ireton
- Dan Funke – Larchwood
- Charles Getting – Sanborn
- Jason Goodwin – Correctionville
- Darin Green – Boyden
- Bryce Groeneweg – Rock Valley
- Mike Haverhals – Rock Valley
- Eric Heiman – Westside
- Scott Herrig – Albert City
- Leland Hoekstra – Hull
- Nathan Hoekstra – Rock Valley
- Mason Hoffman – Emmetsburg
- Brice Hundling – Breda
- LB Hurley – Curlew
- David Iler – Lake City
- Randy Kaskie – Rock Valley
- Taylor Kats – Rock Valley
- Josh Kempers – Sioux Center
- Michael Klein – Hull
- David Krahling – Sioux Center
- Mark Lange – Paullina
- Larry Leslie – Auburn
- Scott Loving – Albert City
- Robert Loving – Albert City
- Curt Marco – Sibley
- Galen Mars – Orange City
- Colleen Miller – Albert City
- Mel Molitor – Ruthven
- Nathan Nieuwendorp – Inwood
- Wes Niles – Carroll
- Don Oostenink – Hull
- Chris Reischl – Manning
- Andrew Rohe – Manning
- Dan Royer – Coon Rapids

- Jeff Sandhoff – Schaller
- Jamey Schiebout – Orange City
- John Schmidt – Ocheyedan
- Nick Sennert – Linn Grove
- Gaylen Steinhoff – Smithland
- Glen Thilges – West Bend
- Todd Thilges – West Bend
- John Tiedeman – Hull
- Austin Tiefenthaler – Breda
- Chris Uhlenkamp – Breda
- Cory Uhlenkamp – Breda
- Mike Uhlenkamp – Breda
- Clint Van Beek – Hartley
- Cody Van Beek – Inwood
- Tyler Van Wyhe – Hawarden
- Jon VanderPloeg – Paullina
- Cody Ver Steeg – Inwood
- Mike Ver Steeg – Inwood
- Mark Vermeer – Sioux Center
- Rick Vetter – Westside
- Steve Vonk – Rock Valley
- Gary Walters – Sioux City
- Dale Winkowitsch – George
- Chris Wolters – Sanborn
- Myles Wurth – Marcus
- Kevin Wyhe – Hawarden
- Loren Wynia – Orange City

## DISTRICT 2 - NORTH-CENTRAL

- Scott Allen – Laurel
- Garrett Ballard – Marshalltown
- Colin Brown – Churdan
- Timothy Brown – Mason City
- Brett Burns – Marshalltown
- Susan Cira – Mason City
- Patrick Cunningham – Paton
- Corey Damman – Melbourne
- Tim Diamond – Wellsburg
- Ben Dooley – Eagle Grove
- Dean Frideres – Livermore
- Charles D. Gunn – Jefferson
- Charles W. Gunn – Jefferson
- John Handsaker – Colo
- Doug Harmon – Scarville
- Jim Harrison – Nevada
- Allen Hawe – Garner
- Kristi Holz – Jefferson
- Miranda Johnson – Ames
- Ben Johnson – Floyd
- Andy Johnson – Floyd
- Maurice Johnson – Floyd
- Derek Kienzle – Garwin
- Ray Kubik – Traer
- Dallas Kuper – Osage

- Bret Lauterbach – Gladbrook
- Heidi Leverton – Steamboat Rock
- Tim and Kristi Lindhorst – Burt
- Keith Lovrien – Clarksville
- Duane Mann – Marshalltown
- Adam Mayer – Saint Ansgar
- Craig McKibben – Rhodes
- Iowa State University, Parks Library, Matt Mick – Ames
- Will Morrow – Saint Ansgar
- Steve Moser – Nevada
- Troy Muff – New Providence
- Karl Nielsen – Grundy Center
- Kevin Olson – Lake Mills
- Carl Peterson – Ames
- Bud Petersen – Madrid
- Daryl Petty – Pilot Mound
- Keith Pitzen – Stacyville
- Elizabeth Read – Fort Dodge
- Bob Riehl – Fort Dodge
- Jeff Roberts – Hubbard
- Alison Robertson – Ames
- Terry Robinson – Colo
- BillieJo Shahan – Ackley
- John Stein – Nevada
- Adam Stenberg – Britt
- Doyle Stern – Boone
- Billy Sturtz – Boone
- Samuel Tesch – Osage
- Laura Tibbs-Cortes – Ames
- Kathryn Upmeyer – Garner
- Jordan Vansice – Melbourne
- Rick Vokoun – Chelsea
- Gary Whitsell – Chelsea
- Larry Williams – Madrid
- Michael Yegge – Lake Mills

## DISTRICT 3 - NORTHEAST

- Dan Bahe – Marion
- Brian Berns – Luana
- Matthew Bonert – Epworth
- Mariah Boots – Cedar Rapids
- James Brecht – Norway
- Austin Breitbach – Hopkinton
- Gary Burkle – Dyersville
- DaQuan Campbell – Waterloo
- Mike Cook – Waterloo
- Mike Crow – Blairstown
- Scott Domeyer – Manchester
- Bob Donovan – Farley
- Tricia Engelbrecht – Waverly
- Terry Harder – Holy Cross
- Ambrose Heisler – Farley
- Brian Hermsen – New Vienna

- Michael Jenks – Aurora
- Bob Kirkwood – Hopkinton
- Darin Kleve – Fort Atkinson
- Chris Klostermann – Dyersville
- Nick Knepper – Hopkinton
- Robert Lassen – Garrison
- Mark Liebe – Center Point
- Ben Manternach – Cascade
- Brian Manternach – Cascade
- Craig Manternach – Cascade
- Jay Manternach – Cascade
- Todd Manternach – Cascade
- Joel Meythaler – Marion
- Grant Miller – La Porte City
- Lee Miller – Waterloo
- Seth Newton – Blairstown
- Steven Nielsen – Cedar Falls
- John Noe – Brandon
- Derek Noe – LaPorte City
- Jason Opheim – Postville
- Lois and Jim Peters – Tripoli
- Tyler Peterson – Cedar Falls
- Phelps Farm, Amy and Andrew Phelps – Guttenberg
- Brett Randall – Cedar Falls
- Andrew Recker – Earlville
- Dan Reuter – Peosta
- Robert Ritscher – Keystone
- Ken Schlarmann – Hopkinton
- Dale Schlarmann – Worthington
- David Schlarmann – Worthington
- Ray Schlarmann – Worthington
- Jeff Schmitt – Holy Cross
- Chris Shadden – Central City
- Ted Smith – Durango
- Jack Smith – Epworth
- Tim Sroka – Epworth
- Brad Stoner – Mount Vernon
- David Stoner – Mount Vernon
- Kyle Stoner – Mount Vernon
- Lee Sturtz Jr – Brandon
- Scott Taylor – Cedar Falls
- Steve Thompson – Van Horne
- Anthony Varda – Waterloo
- Patrick White – Hopkinton

## DISTRICT 4 - SOUTHWEST

- Jake Anderson – Yale
- Luke Applegate – Shelby
- CULTIVATE Local Food Connections, Lisa Bean – Waukee

(Continued on page 34 →)



- Nathan Behrends – Wiota
- Jesse Blum – Earling
- Evan Bodermann – Ankeny
- Jeff Bowling – Prole
- Ryan Bowman – Bayard
- Matthew Bradley – Creston
- Norbert Bradley – Lenox
- Steve Bruere – Clive
- Merritt Caviness – Greenfield
- Philip Chalmers – Villisca
- Rod Collins – Adel
- Donnie Conway – Melrose
- Cyndy Coppola – Clive
- Dan Crom – Glenwood
- Tom Cummings – Redfield
- Matt Cunningham – Clive
- Mary Kay Dial – Des Moines
- David Dickson – Clive
- Kym Dresback – Ankeny
- Kevin and Sherlene Eicher – Council Bluffs
- Sterling Fichter – Randolph
- Chad Fisher – Altoona
- Jamie Fowler – Shenandoah
- Will Frazee – Emerson
- Greg Fritz – Avoca
- Ray Gaesser – Corning
- Bill Gift – Clive
- Jim Glynn – Atlantic
- Melissa Hanson – Indianola
- Brad Hayes – Panora
- SWCD, Warren County, Merrill Dean Heemstra – Indianola
- Warren Herr – Waukee
- Rex Hoffman – Henderson
- Dennis Hoover – Guthrie Center
- Carol Hradek – Adel
- Regan Michelle Ingle – Urbandale
- Nzeyimana Jackson – Grimes
- Craig Johnson – West Des Moines
- Ashley Kaldenberg – Albia
- Caroline and Michael Kinney – Redfield
- Bruce Knoll – Adel
- Sheila Knoploh-Odole – Des Moines
- Jason Krueger – Winterset
- Brad Kunze – Lewis
- Tom Lang – Russell
- Dennis Liljedahl – Essex
- La Sonya Luther – Riverton
- Tyson Manny – Winterset
- Shawn McLaughlin – Defiance
- Donald Mueller – Earling
- Kelly Muller – Griswold
- Daryl Nelson – Menlo
- Chris Nelson – Minburn
- Sherrilyn Nikkel – Pella
- Cory Nydene – Urbandale
- Richard Ohlinger – Portsmouth
- Paul Ovrom – Des Moines

- Scott Pearson – Mitchellville
- Cody Redinbaugh – Neola
- Jeffrey Schuler – Atlantic
- Sara Shepherd – Stuart
- Brandon Sleep – Bedford
- Steven and Michelle Sprague – Audubon
- Keith Van Hemert – Pella
- Dean Van Kooten – Kellogg
- Kevin Van kooten – Lynnville
- Jordin Van Wyk – Monroe
- Tim Vander Molen – Pella
- Doug Vansice – Baxter
- Norman Vansice – Baxter
- Mark Vogel – Panora
- Joe Vonnahme – Saint Charles
- Nick Warner – Woodbine
- Melissa Wubben – Norwalk

**DISTRICT 5 – SOUTHEAST**

- Henry Anstey – Ottumwa
- Austin Bell – Letts
- Jared Bond – Hedrick
- Tony Bond – Packwood
- Loren Borntrager – Kalona
- Wayne Braun – Durant
- Alyssa Comer – Iowa City
- Madison Conley – West Branch
- Dallas Davis – Crawfordsville
- John De Taeye – Bettendorf
- Mike Dellamuth – Williamsburg
- Bret Dosland – Calamus
- Curtis Dosland – Calamus
- Glen Erenberger – Solon
- Ken Fawcett – West Branch
- Bob Ferguson – Fairfield
- Roger Fullenkamp – West Point
- Christopher Grimm – Montezuma
- Jeff Gritsch – Brooklyn
- David Heitshusen – South Amana
- Thad Helmig – Columbus Junction
- Kevin Huedepohl – Williamsburg
- Greg Kunkel – Solon
- Mark Lang – Brooklyn

- Kyle Leichty – Wayland
- Jerald McCaw – Williamsburg
- Jerry McKusker – Marengo
- Jennifer Meierotto – Libertyville
- Duane Metz – Riverside
- Joe Miller – Crawfordsville
- Hugh Miller – Riverside
- Rachel Miller – Wellman
- Daryl Parker – Bellevue
- Randy Pedersen – West Branch
- Premier 1 Supplies, Joe Putnam – Washington
- Bob Robertson – Riverside
- Laura Rodgers – Washington
- William Roller – Morley
- Steve Schaefer – Kalona
- John Schmidt – Solon
- Kevin Stahle – Solon
- Cindy Stewart – Oskaloosa
- Leon Stutzman – Wellman
- Andy Thordsen – Monmouth
- Brian Ulch – Solon
- Edward Ulch – Solon
- Todd Vander Molen – New Sharon

**DISTRICT 6 – OUT OF STATE**

- Perry Albers – Wisner, NE
- Donald Brown – Davis, IL
- Nick Fritch – Orion, IL
- Farm Power Implements, Luke Johnson – Woodstock, IL
- Jonathan Klein – Burlington, IL
- Jason Meier – Ridott, IL
- Kim Meier – Ridott, IL
- Alyssa Nelson – Chadwick, IL
- Alan Pals – Leaf River, IL
- George Schreiber – Libertyville, IL
- Mark Tuttle – Somonauk, IL
- Paul Ruger – Olathe, KS
- David Brutscher – Little Falls, MN
- Jesse Brutscher – Little Falls, MN
- Bill Fischer – Marshall, MN
- Mark Gutierrez – Moose Lake, MN
- David Hubner – Little Falls, MN

- Noah Hultgren – Raymond, MN
- Jim Jirik – Kilkenny, MN
- James Kellogg – Taopi, MN
- Raymond Leffingwell – Wanamingo, MN
- Ryan Peterson – Clear Lake, MN
- Dan Pochardt – Lynd, MN
- Lars Polson – Millville, MN
- Richard Robak – Oak Park, MN
- Anthony Rossman – Oronoco, MN
- Scott Vizecky – Hendricks, MN
- Melissa Willits – Mora, MN
- Kent Zaring – Plainview, MN
- Tim Benes – Weston, NE
- Alan Borgelt – Wisner, NE
- Michael Burgert – Louisville, NE
- Larry and Carol Hudkins – Malcolm, NE
- Katja Koehler-Cole – Omaha, NE
- Ryan Kropatsch – Osceola, NE
- Bob Larson – Creston, NE
- Chris Lovitt – Lincoln, NE
- Kyle McGinnis – Arlington, NE
- Daryl and Jackie Obermeyer – Brownville, NE
- Mike Pfeifer – Lindsay, NE
- Tim Rasmussen – Plainview, NE
- Paul Rezac – Valparaiso, NE
- Tom Scheffert – Dorchester, NE
- Mark Schweers – Wisner, NE
- Kyle Smith – Lexington, NE
- Matthew Soukup – Omaha, NE
- Bradley Williams – Cedar Bluffs, NE
- Christopher Ziegler – Waco, NE
- Lee Bruns – Hartford, SD
- Jonathon Waldner – Tabor, SD
- Peter Dickmann – Kewaskum, WI
- Paul McCabe – Random Lake, WI
- Ron Schoepp – Lodi, WI
- Scott Schultz – Watertown, WI

**INTERNATIONAL**

- Elisabeth Bruckmueller – Austria



Bison grazing in the snow at Neal Smith National Wildlife Refuge in Prairie City, Iowa.





## JANUARY

### JAN. 6: Small Grains Shared Learning Call: The Many Uses of Red Clover

Host: Scott Schultz | 12-1 p.m. | Learn more at [practicalfarmers.org/shared-learning-calls](https://practicalfarmers.org/shared-learning-calls)

### JAN. 9: Workshop Series – Getting Started in Farm Planning: Part 1

Online | Learn more at [practicalfarmers.org/beginning-farmers](https://practicalfarmers.org/beginning-farmers)

### JAN. 10: Farminar – Hidden Gems... Lesser-Known State-Funded Conservation Cost-Share Programs

Hosts: Stephen Riggins & Doug Ruopp | 12-1:30 p.m. | Online | Learn more at [practicalfarmers.org/farminars](https://practicalfarmers.org/farminars)

### JAN. 17: Farminar – Creating Healthy Spaces for Pollinators to Thrive: Protecting Pollinator Habitat From Pesticides

Hosts: Karin Jokela & Emily May | 12-1:30 p.m. | Online | Learn more at [practicalfarmers.org/farminars](https://practicalfarmers.org/farminars)

### JAN. 19-21: PFI Annual Conference: "On Common Ground"

Ames, IA | Learn more at [practicalfarmers.org/annual-conference](https://practicalfarmers.org/annual-conference)

### JAN. 27: Workshop Series – Getting Started in Farm Planning: Part 2

Online | Learn more at [practicalfarmers.org/beginning-farmers](https://practicalfarmers.org/beginning-farmers)

### JAN. 31: Farminar – Creating Space for Pollinator and Beneficial Insect Habitat on Small Urban Farms

Host: Stefanie Steele | 12-1:30 p.m. | Online | Learn more at [practicalfarmers.org/farminars](https://practicalfarmers.org/farminars)

## FEBRUARY

### FEB. 3: Small Grains Shared Learning Call: The Latest From Marsden Farm's Long-Term Crop Diversification Trials

Host: Marshall McDaniel | 12-1 p.m. | Learn more at [practicalfarmers.org/shared-learning-calls](https://practicalfarmers.org/shared-learning-calls)

### FEB. 7: Farminar – Thinking Through Cover Crops: How to Set Goals, Design Optimal Seed Mixes and Minimize Costs

Host: Dr. Thomas Björkman | 12-1:30 p.m. | Online | Learn more at [practicalfarmers.org/farminars](https://practicalfarmers.org/farminars)

### FEB. 7: Commercial Apple Growers Workshop

Host: Wilson's Ciderhouse & Venue | Iowa City, IA | Learn more at [practicalfarmers.org/events](https://practicalfarmers.org/events)

### FEB. 12: Workshop Series – Getting Started in Farm Planning: Part 3

Online | Learn more at [practicalfarmers.org/beginning-farmers](https://practicalfarmers.org/beginning-farmers)

### FEB. 13: Beginning Farmer Summit

Ames, IA | Learn more at [practicalfarmers.org/beginning-farmer-summit](https://practicalfarmers.org/beginning-farmer-summit)

### FEB. 14: Farminar – Magic Tarping Ride: Perspectives on a System for Soil Quality, Weed Control and More on Vegetable Farms

Hosts: Hannah Breckbill & Ryan Maher | 12-1:30 p.m. | Online | Learn more at [practicalfarmers.org/farminars](https://practicalfarmers.org/farminars)

### FEB. 21: Farminar – Pricing Pastured Poultry

Hosts: Ben Grimes, Anna Hankins & Shae Pesek | 12-1:30 p.m. | Online | Learn more at [practicalfarmers.org/farminars](https://practicalfarmers.org/farminars)

### FEB. 28: Farminar – Bison, Beef and Tribal Food Sovereignty

Host: Jayme Murray | 12-1:30 p.m. | Online | Learn more at [practicalfarmers.org/farminars](https://practicalfarmers.org/farminars)

## MARCH

### MARCH 2: Midwest Covers & Grains Conference

Cedar Rapids, IA | Kirkwood Center | Learn more at [practicalfarmers.org/midwest-covers-and-grains-conference](https://practicalfarmers.org/midwest-covers-and-grains-conference)

### MARCH 7: Farminar – Diversified Crop Rotations in an Organic System

Host: Jacob Landis | 12-1:30 p.m. | Online | Learn more at [practicalfarmers.org/farminars](https://practicalfarmers.org/farminars)

### MARCH 14: Farminar – Navigating Iowa's New Cottage Food Law: A Farmer-Focused Q&A

Hosts: Julie Kraling & Kurt Rueber | 12-1:30 p.m. CDT | Online | Learn more at [practicalfarmers.org/farminars](https://practicalfarmers.org/farminars)

### MARCH 21: Farminar – Integrated Crop-Livestock Grazing

Host: Heath Hoppes | 12-1:30 p.m. CDT | Online | Learn more at [practicalfarmers.org/farminars](https://practicalfarmers.org/farminars)

### MARCH 28: Farminar – Corn and Soybean Basics for Landowners

Hosts: Mollie Aronowitz & Meredith Nunnikhoven | 12-1:30 p.m. | Online | Learn more at [practicalfarmers.org/farminars](https://practicalfarmers.org/farminars)

## Horticulture MEET-UPS

### February through March

Multiple locations around the state – FREE for everyone

Join your fellow horticultural farmers for a series of in-person meet-ups to close out the winter! Meet-ups are a time for farmers of all backgrounds to discuss the upcoming season, challenges, opportunities and ideas, and to network with other farmers.

Visit [practicalfarmers.org/fruit-vegetable-farmer-meet-ups](https://practicalfarmers.org/fruit-vegetable-farmer-meet-ups) for more information. Want to make sure there's a meet-up near you?

Contact Jacqueline Venner Senske, PFI's horticulture education coordinator, at [jacqueline.venner.senske@practicalfarmers.org](mailto:jacqueline.venner.senske@practicalfarmers.org).



Find PFI At

## JANUARY

### JAN. 26-27: Driftless Beef Conference

Dubuque, IA | Learn more at [www.aep.iastate.edu/beef](http://www.aep.iastate.edu/beef)

## FEBRUARY

### FEB. 2-4: GrassWorks Conference

Wisconsin Dells, WI | Learn more at [grassworks.org/grazing-conference](https://grassworks.org/grazing-conference)

### FEB. 22-23: Iowa Specialty Producers Conference

Ankeny, IA | Learn more at [iowaspecialtyproducers.com](https://iowaspecialtyproducers.com)

### FEB. 23-25: Marbleseed Conference (formerly MOSES)

Ankeny, IA | Learn more at [marbleseed.org/events/organic-farming-conference](https://marbleseed.org/events/organic-farming-conference)





**A FOCUS ON FLOWERS:** On Sept. 27, Andrew and Naomi Friend of Friend's Flowers near Story City, Iowa, hosted flower farmers from across the state for a Flower Grower Bouquet Workshop. The evening included a production area tour; discussions of growing methods with Dan Fillius of Iowa State University Extension and Outreach; and a teaching demonstration by Dan Brabec, floral industry expert and ISU horticulture instructor (opposite bottom).

Many attendees contributed blooms from their own farms to a flower potluck (above) to supply enough bouquet materials for everyone to make a bouquet (opposite top) along with Dan's instructions.







Join PFI

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

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

### MEMBER INFORMATION

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

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

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

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

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_ Email: \_\_\_\_\_

\* For Farm or Household membership, please list names of all persons included. For Organization membership, you may list up to three contact persons.

### JOIN OR RENEW

#### 1. I am joining at the level of:

- Access - \$25  
 Individual - \$50  
 Farm or Household - \$60
- Organization - \$110  
 Lifetime Member\* - \$1,200  
\* See details at [bit.ly/PFI-lifetime](http://bit.ly/PFI-lifetime)

#### 3. How many years of farming experience do you have?

- 0  
 1-5  
 6-10  
 11 or more

#### 2. Which category best describes you? (choose one)

- Farmer or farm operator  
 Not farming yet, but would like to
- Farmland owner who does not actively farm myself  
 Other: \_\_\_\_\_

#### 4. How did you hear about PFI?

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

### MEMBER BENEFITS

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)!

- Announcements  Perspectives  Field Crops  Horticulture  Livestock

#### Please add my farm to PFI's:

- Local Foods Directory  Business Directory (Organization members only)

### 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:

- \$1,200  \$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

Office Use Only: Check # \_\_\_\_\_ Check date \_\_\_\_\_ Total amount \_\_\_\_\_ Notes \_\_\_\_\_





Staff members Lydia English (laughing at center) and Greg Padget (at right) enjoy some camaraderie over lunch during the fall 2022 staff retreat as Becca Clay (left of Lydia) and Bri Postlewait (far left) proceed through the buffet line. During the daylong event, held Oct. 18 at the Hotel Pattee in Perry, Iowa, staff gained insights into each other's differing temperament types and learned ways to more effectively facilitate meetings and engage with one another.



# PRACTICAL FARMERS *of Iowa*

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Ames, IA 50010

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## Carrying On a Family Farming Tradition

Tika Bhandari (*right*), who spent her early years on her parents' farm in Bhutan, leads a tour of her vegetable plots during the Global Greens field day on Sept. 25 in Des Moines, Iowa.

