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The Practical  
**HORTI-  
CULTURIST**  
July 2022

*Equipping farmers to build resilient farms and communities.*

## Meet a Co-Hort: Kate Solko

**Kate Solko** started working in organic vegetable production around 2010 and today is the owner-operator of **Root to Rise Organic Farm** in Ames, Iowa.

**Why you grow horticulture crops, in 5 or fewer words:** because I love beautiful food.

**Something you're excited about trying this year:**

My cucumber tunnel! We're growing seedless cucumbers trellised on a single leader. They are parthenocarpic so don't need to be pollinated and can be covered to exclude pests the whole season. The whole tunnel is full of perfect cucumbers!



**What you would change about your industry:** I get anxious seeing spray planes flying close to us this time of year. I don't fault farmers for their choices or practices, but my organic certification - which we worked for years to get - feels at risk with every spray plane I see. Overall, I wish National Organic Program rules and regs were more supportive of small, highly diversified operations rather than large, industrial-scale farmers.

**Favorite PFI memory:** At my first PFI Conference, I was heading toward the door because I experience a lot of social anxiety. But Beth Wilbur grabbed me

and just said, "You should stay." She told me I belonged here, and that meant a lot.

**Favorite crop and why:** Winter squash! It has so many shapes, sizes and colors, and is so beautiful. It's a personal challenge to grow it because of the pests and diseases, but we've figured it out. It keeps for so long and helps us eat local all winter.



*If you see Kate at an upcoming PFI event, ask her for great tips on opening and preparing winter squash!*

## PROGRAM UPDATES

### Feed us your ideas!



**PFI is farmer-led**, so of course, the best ideas come from... you! Your needs, priorities and ideas inform our work. **Do you have a great idea** for a conference session, presenter, field day host or farminar topic?

Please [share your thoughts using this form](#) to feed them into PFI's "Idea Bank."

**We appreciate your input!**

## IN THE FIELD

### Which PFI field days are you attending?

PFI's model of **farmer-to-farmer knowledge sharing is special**, and it works.

**We know our farmers are the experts** on their specific farming systems, and seeing their farms to learn first-hand is the best way to build understanding - and **meet some new folks!**

[Check out our 2022 field days](#), and make plans to join us for a field day



this summer! **All PFI field days are FREE and open to everyone.**

## Growing resources for Iowa's hort farmers



Iowa State researcher **Jose Gonzalez** collaborated with **Dr. Mark Gleason** to produce two podcasts worth your time!

### ***Smart(er) Apple Spraying* podcast:**

***Smart(er) Apple Spraying*** highlights impressions from growers, scientists and economists about the potential and practicality of new spraying technologies and weather-based disease-warning systems as IPM strategies for apple production. The Intelligent Sprayer, NEWA, Fire Blight, SBFS, pesticide use reduction and economic savings are among the topics of this podcast.

### ***The Current Cucurbit* podcast:**

***The Current Cucurbit*** highlights impressions from growers, scientists, and economists about the potential and practicality of new approaches to organic and IPM for cucurbit crops. Mesotunnels, living mulches, pollinators, and biological control are among the topics of this podcast.

**Find both podcasts on Apple Podcasts and Spotify**

## Farmer expertise with university resources

Have you connected with **Dan Fillius**?

As the ISU Extension & Outreach **Commercial Vegetable and Specialty Crop Field Specialist**, Dan is a tremendous resource for Iowa's specialty crop producers.





**Follow Dan on social media** and subscribe to his newsletters!  
Instagram: [@iowa.veg.pro.support](https://www.instagram.com/iowa.veg.pro.support)  
Facebook: [@Iowa State Extension Commercial Vegetables and Specialty Crops](https://www.facebook.com/IowaStateExtensionCommercialVegetablesandSpecialtyCrops)  
ISU hort listservs:  
[Iowa Cut Flower Farmer listserv](#)  
[Iowa Vegetable Farmer listserv](#)

## *the Practical Farmer* magazine: Summer 2022



In the latest issue of *the Practical Farmer*, read what **Lee Matteson**, **Mike Bollinger** and **Katie Prochaska** have discovered on their farms about the possibilities and potential of growing winter spinach in the article "[Finding the Sweet Spot](#)."

## UPCOMING EVENTS

*All events listed in CDT*

### Field Day: Conquering Cucurbits at Red Granite Farm

**Aug. 4 | 2-4 p.m. | Boone, IA**

Do you struggle with in-field production of cucumbers, melons or other cucurbits? Who doesn't?!

Learn from **Steve and Nicole Jonas** about how they successfully produce a great crop in their diverse, family-based business.

**Dr. Ajay Nair** will also be on hand to answer questions and share



information. [RSVP today!](#)

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## Upcoming PFI horticulture events:

### **Aug. 9: Field Day - Growing a Flower Farm at Clovergold Flowers**

*Hosted by Adam & Jenna Cook | Practical Farmers of Iowa*  
2-4 p.m. | Newell, IA

### **Aug. 17: Field Day - Tree Transition at a Mid-Size High-Density Apple Orchard at Timeless Prairie Orchard**

*Hosted by David & Susan Differding | Practical Farmers of Iowa*  
2-4 p.m. | Winthrop, IA

### **Aug. 17: Field Day - Urban Farming How-Tos With We Arose Co-op**

*Hosted by DaQuan Campbell | Practical Farmers of Iowa*  
4-6 p.m. | Waterloo, IA

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## Friends of PFI horticulture events:

### **Aug. 4: Conference - 2022 Iowa Women in Agriculture Conference**

*Hosted by Iowa Women in Agriculture*  
7:15 a.m.-4:30 p.m. | Ankeny, IA

### **Aug. 4: Workshop - Iowa Soil Health Workshop**

*Hosted by ISU Extension & Outreach Ag & Natural Resources*  
8:30 a.m.-3:30 p.m. | Boone, IA

### **Aug. 5: Webinar - Oak Damage Webinar by Prairie Oaks**

*Hosted by Prairie Oaks*  
8 a.m. | Online

### **Looking Ahead: Save the Date!**

**Sept 14: Field Day - 2022 Midwest Mechanical Weed Control Field Day**  
Full Day | Benton Harbor, MI

**Sept. 15: Short Course - ISU Greenhouse Short Course**  
Full day | Ames, IA

**Nov. 4-6: Gathering - Women in Sustainable Agriculture (WISA) Fall Gathering**  
Full day | Whalen, MN

**Nov. 7: Short Course - ISU High Tunnel Short Course**

**Aug. 15: Field Day - 2022 ISU Fruit and Vegetable Field Day**

*Hosted by ISU Department of Horticulture*

2-6:30 p.m. | Ames, IA

Full day | Ames, IA

**Aug. 17: Field Day - Midwest Organic Center Field Day**

*Hosted by Rodale Institute*

10 a.m.-4 p.m. | Marion, IA

[View more upcoming events](#)

## POLL

How are your farmers market sales so far this year?

**Much stronger than usual**

Select

**A bit stronger than usual**

Select

**Right on pace with the usual**

Select

**A bit slow**

Select

**Very slow**

Select

**I'm not keeping track**

Select

**Previous poll results:**

**Your single largest market segment is:**

- Farmers market - 33.3%
- CSA - 33.3%
- U-pick or On-farm sales - 33.3%

*Send us your poll ideas! We want to know what YOU want to know. Reply to this email with your ideas for the next poll.*

STAY CONNECTED



## CONTACT US

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