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PRACTICAL FARMERS
of Iowa

The Practical
**HORTI-
CULTURIST**
May 2023

Equipping farmers to build resilient farms and communities.

Meet a Co-Hort: McKinley Lain



McKinley Lain and his partner, **Casey Lewis**, operate Cooper Field Farm near Centerville, Iowa, where they grow diverse vegetables and pumpkins that they sell through farmers markets and on-farm sales.

Why do you grow hort crops, in 5 words or fewer? Feed community & the soil.

What is something you're excited about trying this year? We are testing four different bed prep methods to compare costs, benefits and risks of each for different crops. We are trying black landscape fabric with drip tape, hay mulch, cardboard mulch and traditional tilled beds.

What is one thing you would change about your industry (no limits)? Oh, there are so many ways to go with that question! I want to decentralize production and increase consumer awareness about - and farmers' ability to grow - local food.

Favorite PFI memory: At the 2020 PFI Conference, I made some really powerful connections with amazing folks like Nicole Masters and Tommy Hexter. The networking opportunities through PFI are so incredible.

Your favorite crop and why? Dried beans! The diversity of beans is continually impressive. I can connect to a lot of cultural points through beans, which is fun. Plus, they're easy to store and eat over the winter.

"PFI closes the gaps between experiences and people." – McKinley Lain



PROGRAM UPDATES

See you at our 2023 field days! Registration is now open



Get ready for another season of farmer-to-farmer learning on PFI member farms! Horticulture farmers across the state are sharing their knowledge on a range of topics.

Whether you're new to PFI field days or a yearly attendee, you'll find a **welcoming atmosphere, a spirit of curiosity and a culture of mutual respect** as farmers share their knowledge and experience.

[View the field days and register online today.](#)

IN THE FIELD

Are you an urban farmer? Get help boosting beneficial insects with our new cost-share



Do you operate an urban farm and want to boost beneficial insects on your land?

Through our new beneficial insect habitat cost-share, we will pay for **native plants so you can create insectary strips or beetle banks.**

Xerces Society will then help guide you as you work to increase natural predation and pollination on your farm. **[Apply online today.](#)**

Priority will be given to applicants who have been historically underserved.

New research report: "Fine-Tuning Fertility for Better Broccoli"

Hannah Breckbill and Emily Fagan, Kate Edwards and Mark Quee wanted to know how fertilizer practices on their farms affected broccoli production.

Each farm took a different approach to compare their typical practices with new ones to discover whether a change was in order.

[Read their findings in our latest research report.](#)



Put your farm on the map with DriftWatch



May is a great time for specialty crop growers and beekeepers to register their farms on the **[Iowa Sensitive Crops Registry.](#)**

The online registry fosters enhanced communication and collaboration between producers of pesticide-sensitive crops and pesticide applicators. This

is a helpful tool in reducing incidences of pesticide drift. [Click here to add your location to the map.](#)

May is mental health awareness month

Farming is a profession with challenges that can lead to stress, depression and anxiety.

Resources are available to offer support and give you space to talk:

- [Iowa Concern](#)
 - Call **1-800-447-1985**
- [National Suicide Prevention Lifeline](#)
 - Call or text **988**
 - [Chat online](#)



UPCOMING EVENTS

Upcoming PFI horticulture events:

All events listed in Central Time

Join us at our first Spanish social of the year



May 20, Noon-2 p.m. | Iowa City, IA

We are excited to offer Spanish speakers an opportunity to connect at our first [Spanish community social](#) of the year.

Marcela Hurtado, of Emprendimiento Latino 5M, will host the event. Marcela farms at the [Global Food Project](#), and guests will also have a chance to learn about that initiative.

[View all upcoming Spanish socials and register for an event near you.](#)

Field day: Maximizing Opportunity in a Small Town at Twisted River Farm



June 18, 1-3 p.m. | Mitchell, IA

Farmer **Steve Strasheim** has truly made the most of the opportunities and available spaces to operate Twisted River Farm in his small northern Iowa town.

Learn how he uses production-maximizing techniques on a small footprint and then travel to a nearby field to see Steve's geothermal-heated hoophouse. [**Please RSVP online.**](#)

POLL

How many field days will you try to attend this year?

Answer the poll question below:

1

Select

2

Select

3+

Select

All of them

Select

I can't attend any this year

Select

Previous Poll Results:

How is your spring planting going?

- **Not started - 35.3%**
- 25% done - 23.5%
- 75% done - 17.6%
- 50% done - 11.8%
- 100% done! - 5.9%
- I don't plant in the spring - 5.9%

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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