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The Practical
**HORTI-
CULTURIST**
July 2023

Equipping farmers to build resilient farms and communities.

Meet a Co-Hort: Steve Carlson

Steve Carlson is not only PFI's membership and office manager, but he also operates Hall's Orchard outside Madrid, Iowa, where he grows 4 acres of apples that he sells on-farm, at Wheatsfield Cooperative in Ames and through Iowa's Local Foods Purchasing Assistance (LFPA) program. Steve is also planting a 1-acre, experimental high-density orchard on his farm.



Why do you grow hort crops, in 5 or fewer words? I appreciate real, good food.

What is something you're excited about trying this year? For the first time, I am using codling moth mating disruptors, which has allowed me to spray less. I think it's working (so far!), but I'm also a little apprehensive.

What is one thing you would change about your industry (no limits)? I would change consumer demand! There's more out there than just Honeycrisp – so many unusual and exciting varieties.

Favorite PFI memory: I have so many great memories, but in 2015, PFI hosted an event where we flew in the late **Michael Phillips**, who is a major organic apple grower, and I got to take him out to breakfast and talk with him. It was very special.

Your favorite crop and why: Choosing apples seems like a cop-out, but it's apples for sure. I start harvesting in a couple of weeks with Zestar, and for an

early variety, it's fantastic. I'm also excited about a lot of russet varieties I'm trying.

PROGRAM UPDATES

Welcome Natasha Hegmann to PFI staff!



Natasha Hegmann joins PFI as the senior horticulture and local foods coordinator.

In this role, she develops partnerships and projects to strengthen Iowa's local food system and supports farmers by developing cost-share opportunities.

Natasha also runs Turkey River Farm near her hometown of Elkader, Iowa, where she and her husband grow vegetables for their 100-member CSA.

[Learn more about Natasha.](#)

IN THE FIELD

Research report: "Selecting Garlic and Potato Onion Seed Stock to Optimize Yield and Consumer Market Value"



Conventional wisdom says to use the largest garlic bulbs and potato onion clumps as seed stock to maximize yield the following year. However, larger garlic and potato onions are also more attractive to customers, so reserving the largest individuals for seed may take away from the marketability of the crop. Learn what Cooperators **Roxanne Mitten, Jon Yagla and Jordan Scheibel** discovered about growing potato onions and seed stock selection in this 2022 trial.

[Read more here.](#)

Getting together to talk agritourism and fruit production



Last Friday, **Maury and Mary Wills** hosted a field day about agritourism and managing production and processing at his (mostly) organic orchard near Adel, Iowa.

Nearly 60 people attended and enjoyed the exchange of ideas over wagon rides and exceptional apple cider donuts.

[View our full schedule and RSVP to a field day near you!](#)

Summer 2023 magazine: "Nurturing Rural Communities"



Stephanie and Austin Meyers of Sonshine Farms near Hubbard, Iowa, raise thousands of pounds of produce marketed to multiple rural communities in their area.

"It's not easy. There are many late nights and early mornings," Stephanie says. "Yet at the end of the season, it's amazing to see the amount of food we raise. Our choice is to serve these communities that don't have access to [local produce] otherwise."

[Read their story.](#)

UPCOMING EVENTS

Upcoming PFI Horticulture Events:

All events listed in Central Time

Online workshop: When Pesticide Drift Happens to You

Aug. 18 | 1-4:30 p.m. | Online

You just had a pesticide drift incident, now what? Join **Rob Faux and Emily Marquez** from the Pesticide Action Network; **Karen Varley**, environmental lawyer; and **Mark Smith** from the Iowa Department of Agriculture and Land Stewardship, as they discuss the process of pesticide



drift investigation, litigation and compensation in Iowa during and after a drift or misapplication event.

[Learn more and register for this free, virtual workshop.](#)

More upcoming events

July 21: Social – [Beginning Farmer Social at Geyer Farm](#)

*Hosted by Anna Geyer
2-4 p.m. | Oxford, IA*

July 23: Field Day - [Trying Out Tools and Talking About Farm Transition at Rolling Acres Farm](#)

*Hosted by Denise O'Brien and Larry Harris with Kent Morris
2-5 p.m. | Atlantic, IA*

***Note: This hands-on workshop is full, but everyone is welcome to attend the lunch, field day and land access discussion adjacent to this event.**

July 24: Field Day - [Playing the GAP Game: Looking at On-Farm Food Safety at Morning Glory Farm](#)

*Hosted by Donna Warhover
10 a.m.-Noon | Mt. Vernon, IA*

Aug. 6: Field Day - [Diversity, Resilience and Beauty at Miss Effie's Country Flowers](#)

*Hosted by Cathy Linker Lafrenz
2-4 p.m. | Donahue, IA*

Aug. 19: Field Day - [Community Farm Tour at Matthew 25](#)

*Hosted by Matthew Arndt
1-3 p.m. | Cedar Rapids, IA*

Aug. 20: Field Day - [Trying Out Tools at Sundog Farm](#)

*Hosted by Carmen Black, Maja Black, Helaina Thompson & Carlos Williams
9 a.m.-Noon | Solon, IA*

Aug. 20: Field Day - [Collaborating to Scale Up Local Food Production at Sundog Farm](#)

*Hosted by Carmen Black, Maja Black, Helaina Thompson & Carlos Williams
1-3 p.m. | Solon, IA*

Friends of PFI Events

July 20: Field Day - [Humble Hands Agroforestry Field Day](#)

Hosted by SILT and Savannah Institute

Aug. 8: Field Day – [ISU Horticulture Research Station Field Day](#)

Hosted by Iowa State University

July 26: Workshop - Introduction to Growing Cider Apples at The Cider Farm

Hosted by University of Wisconsin
1-4 p.m. | Mineral Point, WI

[View our events calendar](#)

POLL

Though it's still high summer, planning for the 2024 PFI Annual Conference begins now! What session topics would you most like to see at the 2024 conference?

Answer the poll question below:

Time for discussion and networking with farmers

Select

Social justice in farming

Select

Crop-specific production sessions

Select

Managing unpredictable weather

Select

Let's talk tools

Select

Weed management

Select

Email newsletters & social media

Select

We want to hear from you! If you have other session or topic ideas, respond to this email to let Jacqueline know.

Previous Poll Results:

What is your biggest challenge so far this season?

- Weed management - 57.1%

- Coping with drought - 42.9%
- Equipment issues - 0%
- Pests/disease - 0%
- Slow markets - 0%
- Finding labor - 0%
- No challenges here – everything's perfect! - 0%

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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