

The Practical Horticulturist - Looking forward to winter events

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Equipping farmers to build resilient farms and communities.



Meet a Co-Hort: Kyle Poppens

Kyle Poppens owns and operates Poppens Produce in Parkersburg, Iowa. In addition to farming 4,000 acres of row crops with his family, Kyle grows specialty crops on his farm, including many types of fruit and vegetables, which he sells through Facebook. With a degree in agronomy and a minor in horticulture, Kyle says he has "an overzealous green thumb" with interests that range from orchids to honeyberries to yellow multiplier onions and many things in between.

Why do you grow horticultural crops, in 5 or fewer words?: I love growing plants!

What is something you're excited about trying?: We're trying blackberries in our greenhouse! We are expanding our 35-by-70-foot greenhouse to be about 90 feet long, and we're adding more blackberries. They have just taken off in there and are nearly 20 feet tall, so we're looking to add more.

What is one thing you would change about your industry?: That's kind of hard to answer, but I'm really interested in growing the horticulture side of our business, but the barrier to doing that is time, followed by labor.

Favorite PFI memory: Connecting with **Jeff Sindelar** about honeyberries. He is a wealth of knowledge. I learned more from talking with him than from all the research I did on my own.

Your favorite crop and why: Probably blackberries. It's like I'm growing dessert!

PROGRAM UPDATES

Recapping our last horticulture field day



To cap off the 2023 slate of horticulture field days, farmer **Kevin Novak** hosted us on Oct. 6 at his Flavor Country Farms in Honey Creek, Iowa, tucked into the Loess Hills. Kevin led nearly 60 attendees through the production of mushrooms (4 types) and microgreens (12 types, grown in a shipping container) as well as a mushroom tasting.

Thank you to all who hosted or attended a horticulture field day this year. See you on the farm in 2024!

Didn't make it to any PFI field days?
[Register for the last one on Nov. 18 at Early Morning Harvest.](#)

Next round of Produce Safety Cost-Share opening soon



Be on the lookout! The next round of PFI's Produce Safety Cost-Share is coming soon.

This cost-share helps specialty crop producers in Iowa make on-farm food safety improvements; one of this year's participants added an AZH Rinse Conveyor to improve their operations.

To be eligible for the cost-share, you must complete or plan to complete the Produce Safety Alliance Grower Training. [View information and dates for upcoming PSA trainings.](#)

Do larger heads mean larger harvests?



Farmers **Roxane Mitten, Jon Yagla and Jordan Scheibel** wanted to put conventional wisdom to the test and investigate if larger seed garlic and potato onions produce larger yields compared to small or medium seed.

Read about their on-farm research and their findings in [their report from the PFI Cooperators' program.](#)

IN THE FIELD

PFI seeking 2024 Labor4Learning trainers



Are you looking to hire a high-quality, motivated farm employee in 2024? Are you willing to share some farm management training with them?

Become a Labor4Learning trainer and get paid up to \$200 per month (maximum \$1,000 per year) to help a beginning farmer learn what it takes to run a farm business.

Apply now to be a Labor4Learning trainer for the 2024 season.

Grant opportunity in Johnson County



The Johnson County Community Food and Farm Grant Program is accepting applications until Oct. 27.

Farms, food businesses, nonprofits, and individuals who produce, process or distribute community-based food in Johnson County, Iowa, or enable these activities are eligible to apply for grants between \$1,000 and \$25,000.

UPCOMING EVENTS

Save the date! PFI Annual Conference in Des Moines



The **2024 PFI Annual Conference** is moving! This flagship annual event will take place at the Iowa Events Center in Des Moines, January 18-20, 2024.

Watch for registration to open in November 2023!

Friends of PFI events

All events listed in Central Time.

***NEW DATE* Nov. 15: Short Course – ISU High Tunnel Short Course**

*Hosted by: Iowa State University Extension
TBD | Ames, IA*

Nov. 28: Training – Let Us Reason Together: Kansas Farmers Union Pre-Convention Training

*Hosted by: Kansas Farmers Union and Common Ground
8 a.m.-4 p.m. | Salina, KS*

[View our events calendar](#)

Contact our team

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