

The Practical Horticulturist - Apply for produce safety cost-share

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Equipping farmers to build resilient farms and communities.



Meet a Co-Hort: John Wesselius

John Wesselius owns and operates The Cornucopia near Sioux Center in northwest Iowa, where he raises Certified Naturally Grown produce, poultry and eggs that he sells through CSA and three area farmers markets – the Sioux Center Farmers Market, Sioux City Farmers Market and Falls Park Farmers Market in Sioux Falls, South Dakota. John also serves as president of the Falls Park Farmers Market Association.

Why do you grow hort crops, in 5 or fewer words?: Because I can eat them!

What is something you're excited about this year?: I'm looking forward to sharing about our living mulches at the annual conference!

What is one thing you would change about your industry?: The average person's understanding of local, sustainable and successful food. For farmers, there isn't a "real work-life balance," and there are no "winters off." It takes a tremendous amount of passion and work to grow food.

Favorite PFI memory: Around 2015 or 2016, when I had been farming for 10 years, **Liz Kolbe** asked me to do a presentation at the PFI Annual Conference on ten things I would tell a new farmer. I got to explain why I started farming, how I got going and share some recommendations. That was really fun.

Your favorite crop and why: Carrots! Because they're a lot of work and a successful crop is really satisfying. And I love the look, the texture and the flavor. I'll talk about them to anyone who will give me 5 minutes.

PROGRAM UPDATES

Produce safety cost-share is back again



PFI's [Produce Safety Cost-Share is open!](#)

If you are a specialty crop producer in Iowa and have completed the [Produce Safety Alliance Grower Training course \(view upcoming dates\)](#), you may be eligible. This funding can help you make on-farm food safety improvements, such as these stainless steel tables one farmer added to a wash-pack space.

[**Apply today**](#)

Register today for the 2024 PFI Annual Conference!



Register now for PFI's 2024 Annual Conference, happening Jan. 19-20! We are excited to share that this year, we'll be at a **new location – the Iowa Events Center in downtown Des Moines**.

Plus, when you register by Dec. 8, you'll be entered to win two free nights at the Hilton during the conference.

View the full schedule and register on our website.

Sign up to share your 8-minute idea at the annual conference



We're bringing back lightning talks for the 2024 Annual Conference! As the name suggests, lightning talks are short, focused and exciting.

Right now, we're looking for speakers to share new practices they've tried that are working on their farms. Don't worry, lightning talks are only eight minutes long!

Use this form to share your idea and we'll reach out soon.

IN THE FIELD

Cooperators' report on overwintering greens



Farmers **Hannah Breckbill and Emily Fagan** already grow overwintered spinach and are interested in growing a wider variety of types of greens for their customers through the late fall and winter months.

They conducted a qualitative trial where they planted five leafy greens varieties on two dates (Sept. 1 and Sept. 15) and made detailed observations about germination, crop condition and harvestability.

[Learn about what they found in this report.](#)

Winter 2023 magazine: "The Richness of Varieties"



Apples are astonishingly diverse. Varieties grown in North America once numbered around 16,000. Today that number is closer to 2,500, with modern cultivars dominating the country's apple market. Many heirloom varieties are specific to a particular region or locale; a much smaller number enjoy widespread commercial success.

In a modern market environment where crunch is key, what is the value of heirloom apple varieties? [Read "The Richness of Varieties" to learn more.](#)

Additional resources:

- Savings match: [PFI's Savings Incentive Program, deadline Nov. 20](#)
- Grant: [Choose Iowa Value-Added Grants, deadline Dec. 15](#)

UPCOMING EVENTS

Save the date for the Commercial Apple Growers Workshop



Tuesday, Feb. 6 | Ames, IA

Save the date! PFI's annual Commercial Apple Growers Workshop will take place at ISU's Horticulture Research Station near Ames, Iowa, on Tuesday, Feb. 6, 2024.

Details and registration info to come in December.

In the meantime, check out presentations from the 2023 workshop.

Friends of PFI events

Nov. 17-18: Conference – South Dakota Local Foods Conference

Hosted by: South Dakota Local Foods

All Day | Sioux Falls, SD

Dec. 5-7: Conference – Great Lakes Expo

Hosted by: Michigan State Horticultural Society & Michigan Vegetable Council

All Day | Grand Rapids, MI

Dec. 13: Short Course – High Tunnel Short Course

Hosted by: Iowa State University
All Day | Ames, IA

Jan. 8-9: Conference – Iowa Specialty Producers Conference

Hosted by: Iowa Specialty Crop Growers Association & Iowa Wine Growers Association
All Day | Ankeny, IA

Jan. 25-26: Virtual Conference – Organic Vegetable Production Conference

Dec. 1-2: Short Course – Successful Food Product Development for New Food Businesses

Hosted by: Dr. Shannon Coleman, ISU Extension and Outreach
All Day | Council Bluffs, IA

Dec. 6-8: Virtual Event – Perennial Farm Gathering

Hosted by: Savannah Institute
TBA | Online

Dec. 14: Webinar – Organic Management of Fireblight

Hosted by: Organic Fruit Growers Association
9-10:15 a.m. | Online

Jan. 11-13: Conference – Great Plains Growers Conference

All Day | St. Joseph, MO

Feb. 2-3: Conference – Organic Vegetable Production Conference

Hosted by: FairShare CSA Coalition & ISU Extension and Outreach
All Day | Madison, WI

Hosted by: FairShare CSA Coalition
& ISU Extension and Outreach
7-8:30 p.m. | [Online](#)

[View our events calendar](#)

Contact our team

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