

Practical News - From erosion-prone farmland to woodland oasis

Practical Farmers of Iowa <[info@practicalfarmers.org](mailto:info@practicalfarmers.org)>

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To:Carly Zierke <[carly.zierke@practicalfarmers.org](mailto:carly.zierke@practicalfarmers.org)>



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*Equipping farmers to build resilient farms and communities.*



**Thank you for being part of another successful annual conference**

We would like to extend a heartfelt thank you to everyone who attended PFI's 2024 Annual Conference last week in Des Moines.

The annual conference has been a keystone event for sharing knowledge since our founding in 1985. This year's conference boasted **over 1,000 attendees, 80 sessions and 90 exhibitors.**

## ON THE BLOG

### Blog: "Creating a Woodland Oasis for Wildlife in Eastern Iowa"



Concerned about soil erosion, PFI member **Mark Smith** transitioned 27 acres of land from corn and soybean farming to wildlife habitat, including 12 acres of woodland habitat, on his Scott County, Iowa, farm. [Read his story on the blog.](#)

"Planting trees gives a great feeling of giving back," Mark says. "It's my kids and grandkids that will see the fruits of the labor."

Interested in a similar project on your farm? [PFI's Habitat Incentives Program](#), formerly called conservation cost-share, can help.

## NEWS

### Cost-share small grains in rotation with PFI



Small-grains farmers are invited to participate in both of our extended-rotation cost-share opportunities:

- **Small grains cost-share:** \$20 per acre for seeding a small grain with a cover crop that contains a legume species.
- **Fertilizer cost-share:** \$20 per acre for reducing your applied nitrogen rate on corn following the legume cover crop.

[Check your eligibility and reserve your funding today.](#)

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**Navigating moisture levels at oat crop harvest**



For people who haven't raised an oat crop in recent years, or for those trying a new variety, picking the best time to combine can be challenging.

**In this "Practical Cover Croppers" video**, **Martin Larsen** of Byron, Minnesota, shares how he determines, first by hand and then by testing a patch with a combine, if his oat crop is ready for harvest.

## UPCOMING EVENTS

### Dive into commercial apple production at our upcoming workshop



**Tuesday, Feb. 6 | 8 a.m.-4 p.m. | Ames, IA**

At our Commercial Apple Growers Workshop, you'll tour Iowa State University's recently established orchard featuring a diverse selection of apple varieties from the Midwest Apple Improvement Association.

In addition, you'll take part in a pruning workshop to learn or refresh essential orcharding skills and network with other growers. **Register today.**

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### Conference season has just begun! Join us for the Midwest Covers & Grains Conference





**Monday, March 4 | 8 a.m.-4 p.m. | Mankato, MN**

Come learn from other farmers and advance your understanding of how diversified rotations and cover crops can work for you at the [\*\*2024 Midwest Covers & Grains Conference\*\*](#).

This one-day event will explore topics including: adding value with cover crops; incorporating oats and rye in rotations; grazing summer cover crops after small grains; and more.

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## **Focus on oats in our next shared learning call**



**Friday, Feb. 2 | Noon-1 p.m.**

Oat-planting season is approaching! Join us for a call with **Melanie Caffé**, an associate professor at South Dakota State University, who leads the oat breeding program and has participated in developing and releasing varieties "Hayden," "Natty," "Sumo," "Saddle," "Warrior," "SD Buffalo" and "Rushmore."

Discover how developing new oat varieties can improve profitability and help reduce the potential for diseases and lodging. [\*\*RSVP to attend.\*\*](#)

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## **More upcoming events**

**Jan. 30: Spanish Webinar – Cabras Lecheras para Principiantes**

Hosted by: Emily Morgan  
Noon-1 p.m. | [\*\*Online\*\*](#)

**Feb. 10: Retreat – Beginning Farmer Retreat**

10 a.m.-7 p.m. | Iowa City, IA

**Feb. 6: Webinar – [\*\*Turning Point: Key Moments for Two Farms Over Two Decades\*\*](#)**

Hosted by: Jill Beebout & Rob Faux  
Noon-1 p.m. | [\*\*Online\*\*](#)

**Feb. 13: Webinar – [\*\*Figuring Out Funding: Conventional and Unconventional Sources\*\*](#)**

Hosted by: Anna Hankins & Shae Pesek

[View our events calendar](#)

## IN THE NEWS

### Members in the News

*Showcasing member voices and their diverse, independent viewpoints.*

**Martin Larsen** of Byron, MN, was featured in [Post Bulletin: Olmsted County's \\$5 million investment in soil health paying off](#)

**Have you been featured in the media?** If you're a PFI member, tell us when and where to find a link to the article, and we'll feature you in a future issue of Practical News.

**Contact:** [elizabeth.wilhelm@practicalfarmers.org](mailto:elizabeth.wilhelm@practicalfarmers.org)

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