

The Practical Horticulturist - Plan to attend a field day

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Fri 8/16/2024 1:24 PM

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July 2024

Equipping farmers to build resilient farms and communities.



Meet a CoHort: Stephanie Finklea

Stephanie Finklea is the farmer at Black Chick Farm and is a cofounder and managing partner at Omaha Sunflower Cooperative, which supports BIPOC farmers in Omaha, Nebraska, in growing food to feed their communities.

Why do you grow hort crops, in five words or less: Connecting with nature and community.

What is something you're excited about this year: Scaling up! This is my first time on an acre of land, the most area I've ever grown on, so I'm figuring out who shows up there (mostly deer), feeding the soil and learning how to grow. Plus my co-op is scaling up in supporting farmers, so there's lots happening.

What is one thing you would change about your industry: I want to increase support for farmers! Farming [table food] is just not really financially viable for a long time. For small farmers, taking so long to make a profit makes it hard to stay in business, so farmers have to work off farm jobs, which isn't a sustainable lifestyle.

Favorite PFI memory: I love bringing people of color from Omaha to attend the PFI Conference.

Your favorite crop and why: Carrots! They're so amazing; you put this tiny little seed in the ground, and then you hope and you hope that it grows and comes out straight! And then it always feels like this really fun surprise.

PROGRAM UPDATES

Steve and Ron Rachut help fulfill regional food demand with potatoes and onions at scale



In Fertile, Iowa, rooted in soil that once was a marshland, a few fields look different than others. On a rainy July day, field day guests saw **Steve Rachut's** 35-plus acres of onions and potatoes, toured **Ron Rachut's** wholesale-oriented handling facility and heard how they grow and market their crops.

While growing vegetables has barriers, such as finding a market in a state dominated by grain crops, operations this size are important for fulfilling state and regional food demand.

Field days continue through November.

Research report: "Organic Fertilizer for Potatoes"



Last season, **Kate Edwards, Jason Grimm** and **Terry Troxel** researched how yields for potatoes, with their notoriously high nutrient demands, are impacted by the use of organic fertilizer.

Learn how applying fertilizer impacted their yields in [this research report](#).

The 2025 PFI Annual Conference is closer than you think!



Session planning is underway now for the 2025 PFI Annual Conference, slated to take place January 9-11, 2025, in Des Moines, Iowa.

Do you have a horticulture topic you would love to learn about? A discussion you're dying to jump into with other growers? A speaker so compelling you'd drive across the state just to hear them?

Email Jacqueline at jacqueline.venner.senske@practicalfarmers.org with your input and ideas.

Keep sharing about insurance



As the growing season stretches on, severe weather keeps impacting farms across Iowa, and stories continue to trickle in from farmers experiencing coverage loss. If you have experiences to share or other feedback related to private insurance protection for your farm operation, reach out to Jacqueline Venner Senske at

jacqueline.venner.senske@practicalfarmers.org.

For a full recap of the farmer meet-ups on insurance PFI held earlier this year, see this [blog post](#).

IN THE FIELD

What is the most you can get for a melon?



A recent article that appeared in a variety of news sources spotlighted “the world of luxury fruit.” Melons priced over \$150 each seem completely wild, but learning about what is possible in some specialty markets can certainly broaden the mind!

UPCOMING EVENTS

Agenda tweaks for the Bridgewater Farm field day on July 28



July 28: Field Day – Growing Opportunity: Season Extension, Organic Production and Scaling Up at Bridgewater Farm

4-7 p.m. | Bridgewater, IA

Host: Dale Raasch

The agenda for this field day mentions seeing eight newly constructed high tunnels, but this season has brought ongoing weather challenges, delaying construction. Instead, plan to see Bridgewater Farm’s eight new high tunnels at different construction stages, offering a great opportunity to see and discuss the process in action. Don’t miss this exciting chance to learn about a special operation!

Please RSVP for meal planning.

PFI Member Day at the Iowa State Fair



Aug. 13 | 8 a.m.-Noon | Des Moines, IA

Practical Farmers of Iowa is excited to host “PFI Member Day at the Iowa State Fair.” Explore the fair with other PFI members and staff, then meet at noon for a group photo in front of the Agriculture Building.

Learn details here!

Calling all current flower farmers to meet us in Waverly



October 20: Meet-Up – Fall Flower Farmer Meet-Up at Englebrecht Farm

1:30-4:30 p.m. | Waverly, IA
Host: *Tricia Englebrecht*

Do you **currently** grow and sell flowers on your farm? Then this meet-up is for you! Gather with flower farmers from across Iowa to network, compare notes from the season and do some hands-on crafting at the newly renovated barn at Englebrecht Farm. Bring fresh or dried flowers to share for a hands-on design project.

Light refreshments will be provided.
Pre-registration required.

Upcoming PFI events

All events listed in Central Time.

Aug. 4: Field Day – Adaptive Marketing Through a Collaborative CSA, Value-Added Products and On-Farm Sales at Buffalo Ridge Orchard

Hosts: *Marcus & Emma Johnson*
1:30-4 p.m. | Central City, IA

Aug. 29: Field Day – Adding Produce to the Mix at Hayes Farm

Host: *Tate Carlson*
10 a.m.-Noon | Storm Lake, IA

Aug. 27: Field Day – Getting Started With Chestnuts

Host: *Elana Gingerich*
9-11 a.m. | Parnell, IA

Friends of PFI events

July 28: Tour – Jefferson County Farm Crawl

Hosted by: *Iowa Organic Association*
Noon-5 p.m. | Fairfield, IA

Aug. 1: Field Day – Vegetable Producers Day on Pest & Disease Scouting plus Grant Opportunities in Winneshiek County

Hosted by: *Midwest Vegetable Growers Network and Winneshiek*

County Extension
2-5 p.m. | Decorah, IA

Aug. 6: Field Day – Organic Apple Field Day: Fruit Bud Development, Summer Pruning, and Fungal Diseases

Hosted by: Organic Fruit Growers Association

9 a.m.-3 p.m. | Grafton, WI
Registration required by August 1.

Aug. 6: Field Day - ISU Fruit and Vegetable Field Day

Hosted by: ISU Extension & Outreach Horticulture Team and ISU Horticulture Research Station

2-5:30 p.m. | Ames, IA
Registration required by July 31.

Aug. 29: Field Day – Seed Savers Exchange Facility and Farm Tour

Hosted by: Iowa Organic Association

9 a.m.-Noon | Decorah, IA

Aug. 28: Field Day – Wholesale Vegetable Production with Organic Valley

Hosted by: Iowa Organic Association

Noon-3 p.m. | Decorah, IA

View our events calendar

Contact our team

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