

The Practical Horticulturist - Register for field days + New cauliflower trial research

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Equipping farmers to build resilient farms and communities.



Meet a CoHort: Natasha Hegmann

Natasha Hegmann farms with her husband, **Pete Kerns**, at Turkey River Farm near Elkader, Iowa, where they raise produce for markets and CSAs. They also operate a greenhouse for bedding and vegetable plants. Natasha is the senior horticulture viability coordinator for PFI.

Why do you grow horticulture crops, in five words or less: It was an accident!

What is something you're excited about this year: For the first time since we started farming in 2015, we have decided to not grow fall crops this year. We have a small growing space and have always had a big focus on successions of crops. So we're not focusing on starting new plants right now, and scaling back in that small way is a good fit with my off-farm job.

What is one thing you would change about your industry? I wish vegetable farmers didn't have to work so hard to make their farm businesses viable and that there were economic forces that make fresh, local food the easy choice. For instance, what if we taxed imports on vegetable products from outside the state of Iowa.

Favorite PFI memory: Swimming in the unheated pool with our toddler at the hotel during the Cooperators' Meeting around 2022.

Your favorite crop and why: Sweet peppers, because they are abundance personified in a crop. When peppers are in season, I feel like the richest person in the world. Plus, they are my favorite thing to snack on; a sun-warm Carmen pepper is the best!

PROGRAM UPDATES

Farmer-to-farmer sharing on insurance challenges



Photo depicts recent wind damage at Sweet Season Farm

A recent conversation in PFI's email discussion list highlighted mounting insurance challenges for farmers.

In response, PFI convened a series of virtual meet-ups where common challenges were identified, including insurance companies becoming more risk-adverse, insurers finding it difficult to gauge diverse farms and policymakers wanting to hear from farmers about their experiences.

For more resources, [see the blog post.](#)

IN THE FIELD

Submit proposals for Marbleseed 2025



The team at Marbleseed is seeking input to help shape their 2025 Organic Farming Conference held annually in February.

Complete **this form** to suggest a topic or presenter for this renowned regional event!

A global view of season extension



Every now and then, horticulture growers need to zoom out – way out. **Researchers at the University of Copenhagen** recently shared satellite imagery that they used along with artificial intelligence tools to map greenhouses across the planet. The resulting estimates triple all previous numbers.

The article also discusses the pros and cons of this trend and lists the top 10 countries by share of greenhouse coverage. Spoiler: The U.S. doesn't make the list.

New research report: "Fall Cauliflower Variety Trial"



Cooperators **Natasha Hegmann and Pete Kerns, Michael Piphon, Mark Quee and Carmen and Maja Black** all had questions about which cauliflower varieties they should plant for their fall crop. Building on previous PFI Cooperator research investigating this topic in 2019 and 2022, they performed a cauliflower variety trial in fall of 2023.

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

UPCOMING EVENTS

Field day: "Growing, Processing and Marketing Onions and Potatoes for Wholesale Outlets"



Wednesday, July 10 | 10:30 a.m. - 2 p.m. | Fertile, IA

Hosts: Steve Rachut and Ron Rachut

Steve Rachut and his uncle, **Ron Rachut**, each grow onions and potatoes primarily for wholesale markets. At this enterprise scale, production, handling, packing and marketing look different to most direct-market farms in Iowa. Attend this field day to discuss machinery and crop fields and to see a vegetable handling and packing facility. [RSVP here](#).

Upcoming PFI events

All events listed in Central Time.

June 30: Field Day – [Agriculture Supporting Community: Cultivating Food, Habitat and Leaders at Mustard Seed](#)

July 11: Field Day – [Organic U-Pick Blueberries and Day-Neutral Strawberries at Blueberry Bottom Farm](#)

Host: Kim Andersen

Community Farm

Host: Alice McGary
3-5 p.m. | Ames, IA

July 20: Field Day – Growing Food for Habitat: Supporting Pollinators and Beneficial Insects in a Community Garden

Host: Kamyar Enshayan
10 a.m.-Noon | Waterloo, IA

10 a.m.-Noon | Brighton, IA

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

Host: Dale Raasch
4-7 p.m. | Bridgewater, IA

Friends of PFI events

July 14: Field Day - Organic High Tunnel Peach and Outdoor Apple Production at Down Home Farm

Hosted by: Organic Fruit Growers Association
10 a.m. | Readstown, WI

[View our events calendar](#)

Contact our team

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