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Practical News - Using cover crops to reduce nitrogen rates + Now recruiting for two research trials

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From Practical Farmers of Iowa <info@practicalfarmers.org>

Date Mon 9/9/2024 1:03 PM

To Emily Yaddof <emily.yaddof@practicalfarmers.org>



**September 9, 2024**

*Equipping farmers to build resilient farms and communities.*



**For Ross McCaw, cover crops are the pathway to lower nitrogen rates and healthier soil**

**Ross McCaw** has been farming his whole life and operating McCaw Custom Farms near Marengo, Iowa, for the past five years focusing on corn, soybeans and hybrid rye.

Since 2019, Ross has been planting cover crops specifically to reduce how much synthetic nitrogen fertilizer he uses. At his Aug. 30 field day, guests loaded on a trailer to visit two of his corn fields to see his soil health principles in action.

By focusing on nitrogen-fixing cover crops and applying chicken manure when needed, Ross has been able to use just 95 pounds of nitrogen per acre this year – and he hopes to keep all his fields under 100 pounds per acre in the future. To monitor the impacts of his decisions, Ross uses soil and tissue testing.

**[Explore the rest of our upcoming events on our website.](#)**

## NEWS

### Put your soil health to the test with on-farm research



On-farm research is a great way to see if your long-term practices are paying off for your soil.

**Practical Farmers is recruiting for two on-going research trials:**

- Can We Reduce N Rates to Corn and Improve ROI?
- Do Cover Crops Increase the Number of Days Suitable for Field Work?

**[Sign up today for the 2025 planting season.](#)**

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**Nominate a farmer for the Sustainable Agriculture Achievement Award**



Do you know an inspirational PFI member who has been most influential in creating healthy soil, healthy food, clean air, clean water, resilient farms and vibrant communities?

Nominations are open for our Sustainable Agriculture Achievement Award!

The recipient will be recognized at our 2025 Annual Conference next January in Des Moines.

**Nominations are due by Sept. 16.**

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## New "Practical Cover Croppers" video on drill spacing



Narrow spacing when seeding oats and red clover can help greatly with weed suppression.

In this **new video**, **Wade Dooley** of Albion, Iowa, talks about the spacing he uses when co-seeding oats and clover with a Landoll 5531 drill. He also briefly talks about depth for oats depending on conditions.

For more about cover crops, **watch and subscribe to "Practical Cover Croppers" on YouTube.**

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## Have you checked out our new local food directory?



Did you know PFI has a directory of members growing table food throughout the state?

This **interactive resource** allows you to find options for local products or advertise your own offerings to the broader PFI network.

To list your farm, email **[emma.liddle@practicalfarmers.org](mailto:emma.liddle@practicalfarmers.org)**



## UPCOMING EVENTS

### Featured field days



#### **Sept. 13: Field Day – Multi-Species Cover Crops + Farmland Owner Legacy Award**

*Host: Tim Kelley and Brent Nold*

4-6 p.m. | Elmo, MO

**Tim Kelly** and his tenant, **Brent Nold**, will discuss how they use multi-species cover crops after a small-grain crop. Tim will discuss his soil health goals, his aspiration to get cattle back on the land and his conservation efforts, including a recent oxbow restoration. **During the field day dinner, PFI will present Tim with the Farm owner Legacy Award.** All are welcome to join for a tour and celebratory dinner on the farm. **RSVP**

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#### **Sept. 20: Field Day – Developing Infrastructure on a Diversified Farm One Project at a Time at Brun Ko Farm**

*Hosts: Nathan & Emily Paulsen*

4-6 p.m. | Exira, IA

In recent years, farmers **Emily and Nathan Paulsen** of Brun Ko Farm have enhanced their farm's infrastructure to increase their revenue.

**Attend this field day** to see how they've used diverse funding sources to repurpose a hog barn into a packing shed, add a high tunnel to extend their vegetable season and install additional waterlines to better use their pastures.

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#### **Sept. 26: Field Day – Sheep, Dogs and Sheepdogs**

*Host: Fiona Harrar*

9 a.m.-Noon | Washington, IA

**Fiona Harrar** is the livestock manager at Premier Experimental Farms, a production farm with 1,000 ewes and 50 meat goats that produces lambs year-round. She also raises and trains border collies and livestock guardian dogs who work with her daily on the farm.

**Attend this field day** to learn about all things sheep, and the dogs who guard them.

**\*\*This event will be presented in English with Spanish interpretation available upon request.**

View the full field day schedule

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## More upcoming events

*All events listed are in Central time.*

**Sept. 10: Field Day – Advanced Cover Crop and Nutrition Management**

*Hosted by: Michael Vittetoe*  
5-7 p.m. | Washington, IA

**Sept. 12: Meet-Up – Field Crop Farmer Meet-Up**

*Hosted by: Paul Hoffman*  
*In partnership with ADM*  
8 a.m. | Earlville, IL

**Sept. 12: Field Day – Making a Livelihood With Livestock: A Whole-Farm Approach With Forage Crops and Cover Crops**

*Hosted by: Dan & Ila Taylor and Noah, Sarah and Todd Taylor*  
4-6 p.m. | Bouton, IA

**Sept. 13: Field Day – Equitable Land Access and Culturally Relevant Vegetable Production at Feed Iowa First's Wanatee Farm**

*Hosted by: Feed Iowa First*  
8-11 a.m. | Marion, IA

**Sept. 15: Field Day – Diversifying the Farm by Integrating Pastured Poultry With Tree Fruit and Berries at Solstice Farm + Paha Cider Co.**

*Hosted by: Mark Westbrook*  
2-4 p.m. | Waverly, IA

View our events calendar

## IN THE NEWS

### Members in the News

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

**George Naylor** of Churdan, IA, wrote an article featured on the [La Via Campesina website](#): **Parity Pricing, Supply Management and Fair Income for Family Farms: A note from the US**

**Kristine Lang** of Brookings, SD, was featured on [Farms.com](#): **SDSU Extension, Southeast Research Farm To Host Organic Field Day**

**Matt and Jocelyn Vermeersch, Maggie McQuown and Steve Turman** of Red Oak, IA, and **Liz Kolbe**, PFI's farmer-led education director, were featured in [The](#)

Red Oak Express: [Field Day at Mud Ridge Ranch](#)

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## PFI in the News

**Grace Yi**, PFI's senior habitat viability coordinator, was featured in [Public News Service: Incentives for farmers work to restore Iowa habitat, protect soil](#)

PFI was mentioned in [No-Till Farmer: What is Narrow Strip Cropping?](#)

PFI was featured in [The Mendota Reporter: Practical Farmers of Iowa sets Field Crop Farmer Meet-Up event for Earlville](#)

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**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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