



The Practical Horticulturist - Apply for PFI's business development programs + Annual conference on the horizon

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To Anna Pesek <anna.pesek@practicalfarmers.org>



Join or renew as a PFI member during our fall membership drive before rates increase on Oct. 1. We'll send some PFI swag your way as a thank you!

September 2024

Equipping farmers to build resilient farms and communities.

Meet a CoHort: Mark Gingerich



Mark Gingerich farms alongside his wife **Kristina Gingerich**, at the Berry Basket Farm near Iowa City, Iowa. He raises about three acres of u-pick strawberries, along with 350 acres of row crops.

Why do you grow hort crops, in five or fewer words: To connect people to agriculture locally.

What is something you're excited about this year: Well, this year I got some new tools, including a PTO-driven rake, which I use to remove straw from the rows of strawberries in the springtime. I was just tickled with how well it worked! For

2025, our farm got a grant from Johnson County to dig a well, so that's pretty huge and will allow us to maintain and grow our strawberry enterprise.

What is one thing you would change about your industry: There's a lot of competition between growers in our area and I think there could be more collaboration. With a limited number of customers, it tends to make growers keep things more to themselves. We have some shared challenges and would benefit from further sharing information.

Favorite PFI memory: It's not a single memory, but I really value education and personal development. Every time I'm at a PFI conference, I'm amazed at how broad agriculture is and I love learning about such fascinating areas of it. More specifically, once I stayed overnight at Gary Guthrie's house during the conference, and he served his apple pie, and we stayed up talking late into the night.

Your favorite crop and why: Strawberries!

PROGRAM UPDATES

Grow your farm with Savings Incentive Program



Calling all farmers with less than seven years of experience! Applications are now open for PFI's Savings Incentive Program.

The **Savings Incentive Program** focuses on business planning, network-building and capital investing. Participation in SIP results in a 1:1 financial match for up to \$2,400 or a 1:2 financial match for farmers of color.

Apply to be part of the next class of SIP participants.

New opportunity: Sustainable Agriculture Business Incubator



Our **Sustainable Agriculture Business Incubator** is a two-phase program to support agricultural businesses looking to scale up and explore private equity investment.

This program is ideal for on-farm or off-farm businesses such as processors, financial services businesses, input providers, aggregation and distribution services and similar initiatives.

Apply for the program.

Save the date for the 2025 Practical Farmers of Iowa Annual Conference



Join us for our 2025 Practical Farmers of Iowa Annual Conference, **Jan. 10-11, at the Iowa Events Center in Des Moines, IA.**

Since our founding, the **annual conference** has been a keystone event for sharing knowledge, building connections and celebrating agriculture in Iowa.

Take part in pre-conference short courses, farmer-led sessions on a wide variety of agricultural topics, exhibitors booths, locally sourced meals and a spirit of curiosity and community.

IN THE FIELD

Investigation continues to evaluate practices for overwintering spinach



Overwintering spinach is the practice of insulating a fall-planted spinach crop through the winter and produces an early spring crop of sweet, delicious spinach.

Farmer-researchers **Hannah Breckbill, Emily Fagan, Natasha Hegmann, Peter Kerns and Mark Quee**

continued investigating the best time to plant spinach for overwintering and test whether direct-seeding versus transplanting performed better. [Read the research report.](#)

Choose Iowa Food Bank Pilot Program



IDALS announced a pilot program to assist food banks in buying food from Iowa producers to feed food insecure communities. The State of Iowa allocated \$225,000 for this farm-to-food access program. Producers must be enrolled in Choose Iowa to participate and work with a food hub that is a Choose Iowa member.

To learn more, visit the [Choose Iowa website](#) or contact chooseiowa@iowaagriculture.gov.

Funding alert: Heartland Regional Business Builder Grants



The Heartland Regional Food Business Center's Business Builder grants range from \$5,000 to \$50,000 each and support projects focused on meeting regional needs and increasing capacity among food and farm businesses.

For support with your grant application, reach out to PFI's business viability manager, **Savanah Laur**, at savanah.laur@practicalfarmers.org.

Applications are due on Oct. 15.

UPCOMING EVENTS

Fall flower farmer meet-up at Englebrecht Farm



Sunday, Oct. 20 | 1:30-4:30 p.m. | Waverly, IA

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.

Bring fresh or dried flowers to share for a hands-on design project. Light refreshments will be provided.

Pre-registration required. Limited to 35 people.

Friends of PFI events

Sept. 28: Field Day – Cultivating Resiliency through Intergenerational Collaboration: Tour of Organic Greenhouse, Straw Bale House, and Farmer Panel at Rolling Acres Farm

Hosted by: Iowa Organic Association

Noon-3 p.m. | Atlantic, IA

Nov. 1-2: Conference – Emerging Farmers Conference

All day | Minneapolis, MN

Nov. 13: Short Course – High Tunnel Short Course

Hosted by: Iowa State University

All day | Madrid, IA

Registration opens soon

Oct. 6-8: Conference – Perennial Farm Gathering

Hosted by: Savanna Institute

All day | Spring Green, WI

Nov. 8: Conference – Southwest Iowa Local Foods Summit

Hosted by: Center for Rural Affairs

9 a.m.-4 p.m. | Malvern, IA

View our events calendar

Contact our team

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