
The Practical Horticulturist - Register now for the 2025 PFI Annual Conference + Empower Farmers Program is enrolling

From Jacqueline Venner Senske <jacqueline.venner.senske@practicalfarmers.org>

Date Thu 1/30/2025 12:04 PM

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



December 2024

Equipping farmers to build resilient farms and communities.



Meet a co-hort: Jim Ryan

Jim Ryan owns Ryan Farm in Buffalo Center, Iowa, where he raises orchard crops, berries, diverse vegetables, beef and poultry that he sells through on-farm sales,

at a farmers market and to restaurants.

Why do you grow hort crops, in five or fewer words: To eat well and it's more affordable to just grow it.

What is something you're excited about this year: Our farmhouse will get finished this year! I picked up the rest of the fossilized bamboo flooring so we can finish. On the farm side, there's so much going on that it's hard to pick one thing. The raspberries were a huge crop this year; we almost got tired of picking them.

What is one thing you would change about your industry: For the fruit and vegetable side, I don't have a problem selling produce because we sell to a lot of restaurants. But on our farm, we also have beef and poultry for meat. I would love to see more processing facilities for our beef and poultry. Because I sell to restaurants, I need a USDA-inspected processor. There are a lot of custom butchers, but so few of them are USDA-inspected, so that's a limitation.

Your favorite crop and why: Plums – I like to eat them! Apricots are great, too. It's fun to grow the rare stuff that not everyone grows.

PROGRAM UPDATES

Register for PFI's 2025 Commercial Apple Growers Workshop



PFI's 2025 Commercial Apple Growers Workshop will take place Jan. 28 at Wilson's Orchard & Farm's central Iowa location in Cumming, Iowa. Sessions will cover tactics for greater resilience, extreme weather, and training and pruning high-density orchard systems. Wilson's Orchard owner **Paul Rasch** will share the process and what he learned while establishing the new orchard in Cumming.

[Learn more and register today.](#)

PFI's produce safety cost-share enrollment is open



PFI offers a cost-share program for specialty crop farmers seeking to make on-farm food safety improvements. Participants must spend at least \$2,200 on improvements and will receive a \$2,000 reimbursement.

Improvements include installing a cooler or CoolBot system, enclosing a packing area, purchasing protective fencing and more. **The cost-share is almost full so apply today.**

Apply for the Empower Farmers Program



The Empower Farmers Program offers up-front payments to support the success of historically underserved farmers and ranchers by helping to reduce financial barriers.

These payments may be used for eligible farming expenses such as equipment, operating expenses, accounting software, contractor services and more.

Applicants may request between \$500 and \$2,000 in funding. **Apply by Dec. 31, 2024.**

IN THE FIELD

New research report: "Drip Irrigation for Potatoes"



Irrigation can increase potato yield and quality, but setting up and running irrigation systems can be costly.

In this trial, farmer **Lee Matteson** set out to evaluate how much increase one might expect to see in potato yields with irrigation, to inform his ROI calculations for the cost of the irrigation system.

[Learn about this trial and Lee's findings.](#)

UPCOMING EVENTS

Register for the 2025 PFI Annual Conference today



[Register now](#) for PFI's 2025 Annual Conference, happening Jan. 10-11, 2025.

Don't miss the **[pre-conference short course on strawberry production in Iowa.](#)**

The conference will once again take place at the Iowa Events Center in downtown Des Moines, Iowa.

Need help with registration? Call the PFI office at (515) 232-5661.

Upcoming PFI events

All events listed in Central Time.

Jan. 28: [Workshop – Commercial Apple Growers Workshop](#)
8 a.m.-4 p.m. | Cumming, IA

Jan. 30: [Meet-Up – NE Horticulture Farmers](#)
5-7 p.m. | Decorah, IA

Friends of PFI events

Jan. 23-24: Conference – Organic Vegetable Production Conference

Hosted by: UW-Madison, FairShare CSA Coalition, ISU Extension & Outreach, and Cetner for Integrated Agricultural Systems
9 a.m.-12:15 p.m. | Online

Feb. 7: Workshop – Produce Safety Alliance Grower Training
8 a.m.-5 p.m. | **Online**

March 13: Workshop – Produce Safety Alliance Grower Training
8:30 a.m.-5 p.m. | Hiawatha, IA

April 4: Workshop – Produce Safety Alliance Grower Training
8:30 a.m.-5 p.m. | Indianola, IA

[View our events calendar](#)

Contact our team

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