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**The Practical Horticulturist - Thanks for an amazing annual conference + Horticulture meet-ups are starting**

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

Date Thu 1/30/2025 12:06 PM

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



**January 2025**

*Equipping farmers to build resilient farms and communities.*



**Thank you for attending the 2025 PFI Annual Conference**

We want to extend a heartfelt thank-you to everyone who attended our 2025 Annual Conference and horticulture short course, "Strawberry Production in Iowa," last week in Des Moines, Iowa. **You helped make these events a success.**

The annual conference has been a keystone event for sharing knowledge since our founding in 1985. This year's conference attracted more than 1,000 attendees, along with 100 speakers, 70 sessions and 92 exhibitors.

Horticulture-focused sessions featured speakers like farmer and author **Ben Hartman** and Iowa Insurance Commissioner **Doug Ommen**; activities like yoga poses and interactive game show participation; and topics ranging from cover crops for vegetable production to working with food hubs to stale bedding for weed control.

## PROGRAM UPDATES

### Enrollment is open for our beneficial insects cost-share



Practical Farmers of Iowa and Xerces Society are seeking urban farmers who would like to plant beneficial insect habitat on their urban farm.

Through our beneficial insects cost-share program, PFI funds native plants and costs associated with establishing them so you can create insectary strips or beetle banks. We want to help farmers support beneficial insects that can boost natural predation and pollination on their urban farms. **Apply today.**

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**Mark your calendars: 2025 horticulture meet-ups**

PRACTICAL FARMERS  
*of Iowa*

**Horticulture Farmer  
MEET-UPS**

**Jan.-March 2025**

Join fellow fruit, vegetable and flower farmers in your area for conversation and refreshment - on PFI!

RSVP with [jacqueline.venner.senske@practicalfarmers.org](mailto:jacqueline.venner.senske@practicalfarmers.org)

Dates, locations and speakers can be found at [practicalfarmers.org/calendar](https://practicalfarmers.org/calendar)

PFI has organized six horticulture meet-ups for 2025, with the first taking place Jan. 30 in Decorah, Iowa.

Horticulture Farmer Meet-Ups help farmers establish networks of local connections and generate community among horticulture farmers within each region of the state.

To RSVP, email **Jacqueline Venner Senske** at [\*\*jacqueline.venner.senske@practicalfarmers.org\*\*](mailto:jacqueline.venner.senske@practicalfarmers.org).

## IN THE FIELD

### Iowa Organic Association webinar: "Direct Marketing for the Organic Farmer"



Join this lunchtime webinar on Feb. 12 to hear from **Carly Zierke** of Sweet Season Farm in Calmar, Iowa, about how she promotes her farm to grow her following. Topics will include using email and social media to connect with customers, growing a loyal community, telling your farm's story to build meaningful relationships and using digital tools to help grow your farm's presence.

[\*\*RSVP to this webinar.\*\*](#)

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**Differentiate your farm with the Real Organic Project certification**



The Real Organic Project is a farmer-led, grassroots movement with a mission to bring organic back to its roots and protect soil health, animal welfare and the integrity of organic.

Real Organic Project certification is free for farmers and is an add-on label to USDA Organic.

[Learn more and apply here.](#)

## UPCOMING EVENTS

### Today is the last day to register for the 2025 Commercial Apple Growers Workshop



**Tuesday, Jan. 28 | 8 a.m.-4 p.m. | Cumming, IA**

*Please note this event is at Wilson's Orchard's new central Iowa location.*

Hear from regional experts and fellow growers on apple production, connect with other growers and learn about training and pruning a high-density system. Lunch featuring local foods will be provided, with time for networking. **Today is the final day to register!**

**\*\*Walk-in registration will be available.**

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## Upcoming winter webinar





**Jan. 28: Webinar – "Farmers and Food Hubs: A How-To Guide for Getting Started"**

Noon-1 p.m. | [Online](#)

Food hubs can help local food farmers expand their markets. In this webinar, **Nicole Jonas** of Red Granite Farm will talk with **Tommy Hexter**, a food hub manager, and **Matt Johnson**, a farmer who sells to food hubs. Join the conversation to learn how to get started with food hubs, how food hub operations work and what successful farmer-food hub relationships look like. [Register for this webinar.](#)

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## Upcoming PFI events

*All events listed in Central Time.*

**Jan. 30: Meet-Up – Horticulture Farmer Meet-Up**

*Hosted by: Ethan & Carly Zierke  
5-7 p.m. | Decorah, IA*

**Feb. 7: Meet-Up – Horticulture Farmer Meet-Up**

*Hosted by: John & Janna Wesselius  
9-11 a.m. | Sioux Center, IA*

**Feb. 18: Meet-Up – Horticulture Farmer Meet-Up**

*Hosted by: Jill Beebout  
10 a.m.-Noon | Knoxville, IA*

**Feb. 19: Meet-Up – Virtual Horticulture Farmer Meet-Up**

Noon-1 p.m. | [Online](#)

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## Friends of PFI events

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

*Hosted by: UW-Madison, FairShare CSA Coalition, ISU Extension & Outreach and Center for Integrated Agricultural Systems  
9 a.m.-12:15 p.m. | [Online](#)*

**Jan. 31-Feb. 1: Conference – Organic Vegetable Production Conference**

*Hosted by: UW-Madison, FairShare CSA Coalition, ISU Extension & Outreach and Center for Integrated Agricultural Systems  
Madison, WI  
**Say 'hi' at the PFI booth!***

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

**Feb. 11-12: Conference – Iowa Specialty Producers Conference**

**Feb. 15: Conference – Acres of Opportunity Conference**

*Hosted by: Iowa Farm Bureau Association  
Cedar Falls, IA*

*Hosted by: Iowa Specialty Crop Growers Association and Iowa Wine Growers Association  
Ankeny, IA*

**Say 'hi' at the PFI booth!  
Feb. 20-22: Conference – Marbleseed Organic Farming Conference**

*LaCrosse, WI*

[View our events calendar](#)

## Contact our team

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**Donate today**

**Join Practical Farmers**



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