



For Release: May 5, 2017

Contacts:

Jill Beebout | Blue Gate Farm | (641) 203-1709 | mail@bluegatefarmfresh.com | bluegatefarmfresh.com

Tamsyn Jones | Outreach & Publications Coordinator | Practical Farmers of Iowa | (515) 232-5661 | tamsyn@practicalfarmers.org

Field day at Blue Gate Farm will explore benefits, affordability of two-wheel tractors in vegetable production – May 21, Chariton

CHARITON, Iowa — For vegetable farmers, balancing efficiency and expenses are key aspects of being profitable. But efficiency often requires investments in equipment, labor or facilities – and those costs are sometimes too high.

Two-wheel tractors – a tool once common on small farms in the U.S., but which is now unknown to many farmers – could be an affordable solution, according to Jill Beebout of Blue Gate Farm.

“They’re a traditional tool that will look to most people like the front end of a normal garden tiller,” says Jill, who raises Certified Naturally Grown produce, laying hens, honey bees, hay and alpacas on 40 acres with her husband, Sean Skeehan. “They’re still used in Europe and were used in the United States mainly from the 1920s through the early ‘60s. They provided small farmers with a power unit that drove any number of implements.”

Jill will share her experience with this vintage farm technology at a Practical Farmers of Iowa field day she is hosting on **Sunday, May 21, from 2 to 5 p.m., near Chariton** (749 Wyoming St., about 14 miles north of town). The event – “Two-Wheel Tractors: Old Technology, New Inspiration” – is free to attend and marks the launch of Practical Farmers’ 2017 field day season.

On her farm, Jill says the hilly terrain and permanent-bed systems she uses make it hard to cultivate mechanically, resulting in lots of manual labor. “The two-wheel tractor gives us the ability in small areas to have a mechanical advantage – and certainly, a speed advantage. It allows us to work much more quickly and efficiently, but at a fairly reasonable economic impact. The first unit we bought, at an auction, we bought the body and a whole handful of implements for \$35. To date, we’ve spent under \$300.”

During the event, Jill will share her experiences using this vintage equipment – including vintage-era push seeders and wheel hoes – for vegetable production, and she will showcase her collection of two-wheel tractors and implements. Jeff Lauber, a nationally known antique implement expert who lives near Columbus Junction, will demonstrate and discuss the benefits and challenges of the specific models for current farm use, and will compare the antiques with newer models, where possible.

Jeff will also bring several items from his extensive collection of two-wheel tractors and their implements, including different brands and sizes, for field day attendees to see and try in the field, weather permitting.

“We’re hoping, if the weather will cooperate, that people will be able to get hands-on with some of these tools – put them in the soil, see how they feel,” Jill says. “I want people who aren’t 6.5-foot-tall, 300-pound men to know that this is equipment that is completely sized for everyone.”

Directions: Blue Gate Farm is in Marion County, just over the northern Lucas County line, halfway between Chariton and Knoxville. At the intersection of IA Hwy 14 and Wyoming Street (County Line Road), turn west for 1 mile. Do not approach the farm from the west on Wyoming Street; it is a minimum-maintenance road that is often in poor shape.

Practical Farmers’ 2017 field days are supported by several sustaining and major sponsors, including: Ag Ventures Alliance; Albert Lea Seed; Center for Rural Affairs; Fertrell; Gandy Cover Crop Seeders; Grain Millers, Inc.; Iowa Beef Center; Iowa Environmental Council; Iowa State University Department of Agronomy; Iowa Sustainable Agriculture

Research and Education (SARE); ISU Extension and Outreach; La Crosse Forage and Turf Seed; Lemken; Leopold Center for Sustainable Agriculture; MOSA Organic Certification; Natural Resources Defense Council; Organic Valley / Organic Prairie; Riverside Feeds, LLC; The Scoular Company; Trees Forever; Unilever; University of Iowa College of Public Health (I-CASH); Upper Iowa Audubon Society; USDA: Natural Resources Conservation Service; Wallace Chair for Sustainable Agriculture; and Welter Seed & Honey Co.

###

Practical Farmers of Iowa strengthens farms and communities through farmer-led investigation and information-sharing. Our values include: welcoming everyone; creativity, collaboration and community; viable farms now and for future generations; and stewardship and ecology. Founded in 1985, farmers in our network raise corn, soybeans, livestock, hay, fruits and vegetables, and more. To learn more, visit <http://practicalfarmers.org>.