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Field day will explore dried flower production at Howell's Greenhouse and Floral – Sept. 23, near Cumming

CUMMING, Iowa – For beginning and experienced farmers alike, cut flowers can be a profitable crop to raise. Not only do they represent a growing niche market in Iowa, they are a high-value specialty crop that can be raised in a small area, making them a viable crop for beginning farmers with limited access to land.

However, there can be a learning curve, says Fred Howell of Howell's Greenhouse and Floral. Fred and his family raise flowers on 5 acres near Cumming for both the fresh and dried floral markets.

"It's important to know how to dry and preserve flowers, what flowers to use – and what sells," he says.

Fred will share his experience with flower production, especially dried flowers, at a Practical Farmers of Iowa field day he is hosting on **Saturday, Sept. 23, from 3-5 p.m., near Cumming** (3145 Howell Court, about 5.5 miles southwest of town). The event – "Dried Flower Production" – is free to attend and will include snacks following the field day.

Guests will join Fred on a tour through the dried-flower process on the farm, from production to finished dried arrangements. Fred will discuss perennial and annual flower production in the field and the greenhouse, and his preferred ways to harvest and store different types of flowers. Attendees will see the Howells' 95-by-40-foot drying barn, built in 1910; learn how flowers are dried; and see how beautiful dried arrangements are created.

"I hope guests will take away from this field day a realistic view of the dried flower business," Fred says.

Howell's Greenhouse and Floral is part of the six-generation Howell Farm, which covers 800 acres. Fred began raising flowers for dried arrangements in 1985, and today grows 2 acres of flowers specifically for dried arrangements and wholesale. In addition to flowers, Fred, his wife Cindy and their three children have a pumpkin patch, corn maze, retail garden center and gift shop.

Directions from I-35: Take the Cumming exit (Exit 65) and head west on Cumming Avenue. Follow the pavement for 4.25 miles (the road bends to the south). The farm will be on the left side of the road; look for Howell Greenhouse and Floral signs (and Howell's Pumpkin Patch).

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 Scouler 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.

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