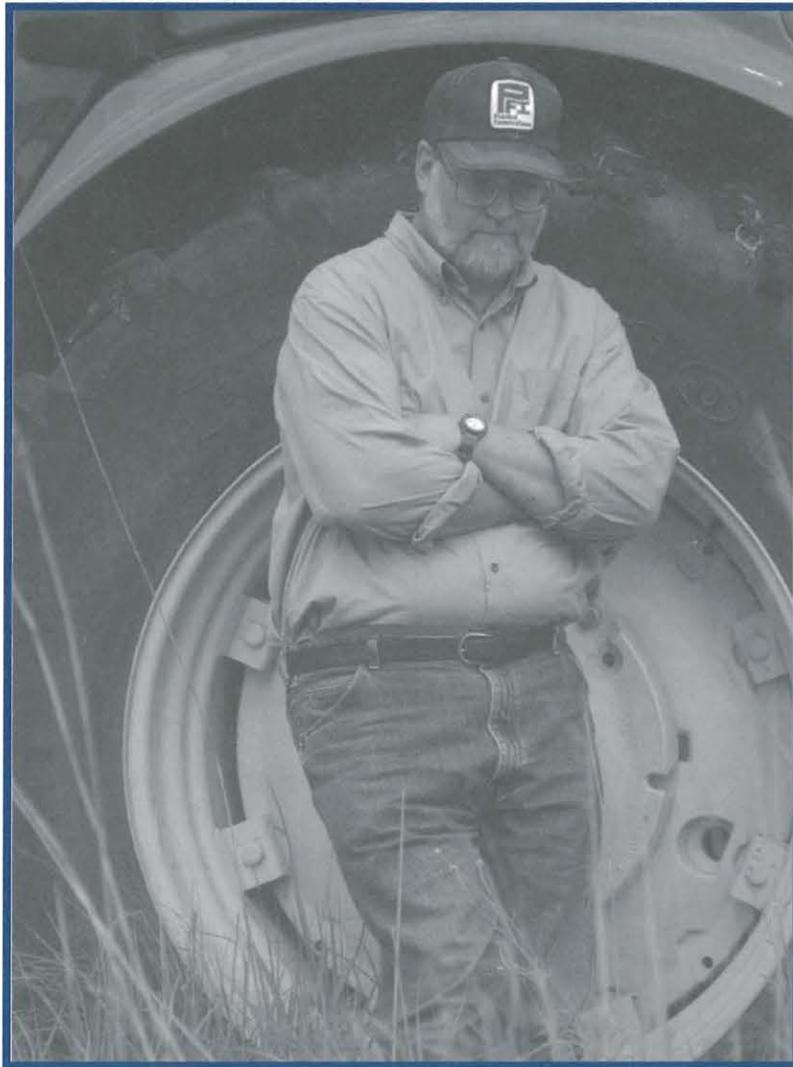


the
Practical Farmer

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Cover: Mark Tjelmeland talks about his experience
transitioning row crops to organic at his summer field day.



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Flashback: 25 Years

Practical Farmers of Iowa will celebrate its silver anniversary next year. Join us at our annual conference January 8-9, 2010, to celebrate!

I'm using the coming occasion as an excuse to pore through the archives—what talent, commitment, and fun PFI has had! Do you have stories to share about PFI? What was your most significant moment with this organization? What is PFI's greatest accomplishment? How have we improved over the years—or lost some of our original focus? I welcome your responses.

How much do you know about PFI? Here's a PFI pop quiz, which Board members took at their meeting in March:

1. Name five past presidents of PFI.
2. How many people attended Dick and Sharon Thompson's first farm tour in 1984?
3. Name five winners of PFI's Sustainable Agriculture Achievement award.
4. What year were non-farmers first elected to the PFI board?
5. What is the number one reason people say they belong to PFI?
6. PFI compensates its members for hosting field days, conducting on-farm research and demonstration, and for providing food for PFI events. How much did PFI pay its farmers in FY2008?

\$5,750 \$13,200 \$17,770 \$22,500 more than \$25,000

Answers are below.

I often get asked how Practical Farmers of Iowa is funded. The most important source is our members—we exist because of your support! PFI does rely heavily on grant sources as well. See the pie chart for more details.

We will talk with you on the blog, on Facebook, on Twitter, on email (believe it or not, we have all of these technologies now). Better yet, let's talk in person at a PFI Field Day!

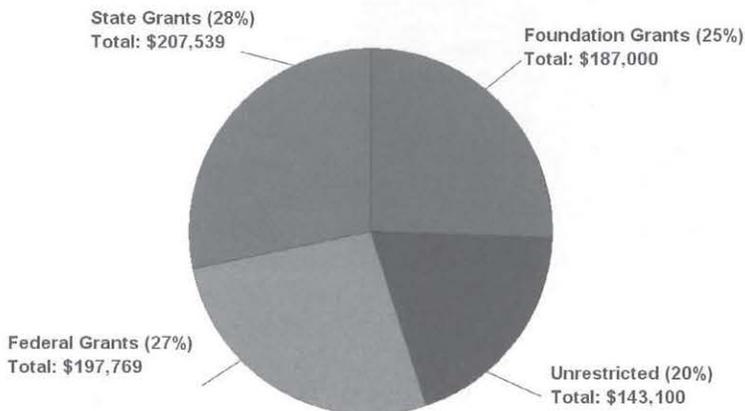
Teresa Opheim

Teresa Opheim
Executive Director



Featured farm dog: Blue, of Jill Beebout and Sean Skeeahan's Blue Gate Farm, takes a well earned break from watering to enjoy some summer shade.

PFI Revenue Sources - 2009 Budget



1. Past PFI presidents: Eric Franzenburg, Susan Jutz, Colin Wilson, Dave Lubben, Ron Rosmann, Tom Frantzen, Vic Madsen, and Dick Thompson
2. 500
3. PFI Sustainable Agriculture Achievement Award winners have been (from 2009-1990): Vic and Cindy Madsen, Kamyar Enshayan, Francis Thicke, Paul Johnson, Denise O'Brien, George Beran, Rich Pirog, Rick Exner, David Williams, Mark Honeyman, Jean Wallace Douglas, Neil Hamilton, Dennis Keeney, Michael Duffy, Dick and Sharon Thompson, Richard Cruse, Larry Kalleem, Jerry DeWitt, John Pesek and Alfred Blackmer
4. 2005
5. Networking
6. More than \$25,000

PFI Pop Quiz: Answers

Another Piece of the PFI Pie

Sally Worley

Why do non-farmers support a group called “Practical Farmers”?

We asked four of our valued non-farmers for their answers

Rosemary Partridge: PFI's Practical Tips, Strong Vision

Rosemary Partridge, Wall Lake, became a member of Practical Farmers of Iowa after farmer neighbor Ken Wise encouraged her to do so. “I would like to encourage others who aren’t farmers to support PFI, because it’s all about our food system,” she said.

Although farming isn’t Rosemary’s primary occupation, she owns farmland that she cash rents. She also has land in the Conservation Reserve Program along the Raccoon River. “A big issue for me is water quality. Since we have land along the Raccoon River, it is important we incorporate sustainable practices to protect the watershed.”

Rosemary and her husband planted a shortgrass prairie on the land behind their new “green” office building on the edge of Breda. Rosemary also gardens both at home and at her office. “We use a lot of conservation practices on the land we own,” Rosemary said. “Through our involvement with PFI, we’ve learned some practical land management techniques as well as a general attitude toward the land that is part of PFI’s vision.”



Rosemary Partridge

Rosemary appreciates the farmer-to-consumer connection she gains from PFI: “I’m very big into local foods and sustainable practices on the land, and there’s a lot of that in Practical Farmers. I love learning about interesting members, like those who have pasture fed beef and nut orchards.”

Rosemary has connected with new people since joining PFI. “I’ve met a lot of fellow members that I never would

have known if I hadn’t joined.” She likes to read [the Practical Farmer](#) to learn about what is happening on the Iowa landscape and to learn practical tips for her land. “About everything you have in your newsletter is of great interest to me. You’re a great organization,” she said.

Jan Hollebrands: Kindred Spirits

Jan Hollebrands of Urbandale delved into the study of food as medicine when she was trying to alleviate allergies, sleep problems, and digestive complaints. Studying the link between health and food choices led her to think about farming and Iowa. Her family owns farmland, and she started pondering her family’s role in Iowa agriculture and the environment. “I started thinking, if my mom is renting the land out, and just gaining profit from it, we may be adding to the water and erosion problems in Iowa.” She decided if she inherited the land some day, she might want to manage it differently. “But, how would I start? How would I change things and who would

I get in touch with?”

Jan started asking around and found out about Practical Farmers of Iowa. “Once I contacted PFI it was so nice to know there were people in Iowa who thought the same way I thought and who were doing things like I would in an ideal world. It was encouraging to know things could be moving in a positive direction.”

Her involvement with Practical Farmers of Iowa led her to explore political policy. “The similarity between what is happening to the rest of the world and what is happening to farmland is amazing. It’s kind of like a small microcosm.” She has joined other groups, such as Iowa Citizens for Community Improvement and Women’s International League for Peace and Freedom.

“My beginning motivator in this journey was studying how food



Jan Hollebrands

“The similarity between what is happening to the rest of the world and what is happening to farmland is amazing. It’s kind of like a small microcosm.”

Jan Hollebrands

affects us on a personal basis. It just blossomed out into so many other things.” Jan feels she is part of an instrumental transformation. “When you read the newspaper or turn on the TV, it seems like so many people are changing. It’s imperative responsible change occurs, or it’s going to be harder and harder as my grandson and future generations grow up.”

Jan visited her family farmland with her mom. “At the time, I sort of saw farmers as villains, and I didn’t want to feel that way. After I met them, I really liked and understood more about them. It seems like they’re caught up in a system that doesn’t work to their benefit.”

Jan thinks Practical Farmers of Iowa is able to approach change without being overzealous. She liked the article about Aaron Lehman in PFI’s spring newsletter that talked about a traditional farm that is

slowly transitioning to organic. "I like the approach that farm took. They are trying it on a small scale and seeing how it works for them. That is a practical way to make change."

Jan likes to attend field days and meet fellow PFI members. "It must be really rewarding for people to know there are kindred spirits out there. It is great to see them openly share information." Since her membership with PFI, Jan has a new appreciation for her home state. "This has made me feel so much a part of Iowa. Even though I'm not a farmer, it makes me feel like I never want to leave this state. I think how wonderful it would be to be a young person and take advantage of the information coming out of PFI."

Clyde Cleveland: PFI's Bottom-Up Approach

When running for governor on the Libertarian ticket in 2001, one of Clyde Cleveland's main platforms was moving Iowa toward less chemical intensive farming methods. "Our agriculture has become way too dependent on chemicals and genetic engineering," Clyde said.



Clyde Cleveland

Clyde believes that the way we are using our land to grow food has a tremendous negative environmental impact, and higher priority needs to be given to this issue. He holds a bottoms up mentality: "All the solutions I've seen proposed for global warming and other environmental crises are macro on down. To effectively solve our problems we need to start at the bottom."

Clyde prizes the approach Practical Farmers of Iowa takes in helping farmers: "PFI works with

individual farmers for the health of the farmer and for the health of their soil. They give them tools to make changes."

Clyde continues: "I believe in what you are doing. I seek out bottom up problem solving and that is where I put my money. PFI is a classic example of directly using money to benefit farmers."

"PFI is a classic example of directly using money to benefit farmers."

Clyde Cleveland

Clyde wrote a book about bottom up solutions entitled Restoring the Heart of America. He used several PFI farmers (including Doug Alert, Vic and Cindy Madsen, Tom and Irene Frantzen, and Ron and Maria Rosmann) and their stories as examples of how individual farms have created change by switching to a less chemical intensive approach on their land. Clyde recently published a second book, Common Sense Revisited, in which he writes about community-based problem solving versus "large governments far away that don't have any idea how to solve problems in our own neighborhoods."



Father Marvin Boes (left) talks with Dr. John Pesek at a PFI Annual Conference.

This new book is available online at www.commonssensevisited.com.

Father Marvin Boes: Constant Learning

Father Marvin Boes, director of the Diocesan Peace and Justice Action Commission in Sioux City, joined Practical Farmers of Iowa "to constantly learn, and to be able to offer how spiritual values and principles are really a common heritage of most religions as well as those who hold a secular human philosophy."

Father Marvin has worked strongly with agriculture and rural communities since the 1980s. "I was finding out more and more that people were running into problems retaining their family farms and their local communities. I wasn't aware how deep it was until I saw it firsthand." His goal was to get churches involved in helping retain these Iowa rural communities.

"I called our local parish to a meeting to see what people saw as needs and wants in regard to rural communities. I told them some of the information I was gathering, and that I was seeing a problem with sustainability in farms. Those in attendance said they wanted our churches with them as they struggled through the problem."

During this time, Father Marvin witnessed steady consolidation of land ownership, with one or two people in almost every rural community purchasing and renting the majority of the land to put into corn and soybean production. "Young people weren't able to farm, and there was a helpless feeling in rural areas."

Father Marvin believes sustainability is based on ideas of economic, environmental, biological, and social responsibility. "An economic system is meant to serve people, not vice versa. To say we'll have community by having competition, to make things big and hire and move people any place we want to in order to make our economic system work, is the wrong approach."

Father Marvin remembers a session at a PFI conference where a soil scientist talked about the relationships in the soil. Particular elements interact to create the overall structure of the soil. "There's something spiritual in getting those relationships moving. You can get a better understanding of the way the soil stays healthy by understanding those associations."

Father Marvin likes the approach Practical Farmers of Iowa uses to help their members. "They do research right there where the farmers are doing it: on the land, with the crops. PFI is helping farmers maintain and develop their independent enterprises in all phases of society, from households to the greater community."

Reviving the Family Farm, One Earthworm at a Time

Luke Gran

The Wallace family of Benton County is converting Iowa ground from row crop to pasture, reconstructing biology in degraded soils, employing practical animal husbandry, and seeing a steady growth in profits from direct market sales of grass-based meats. None of this may have happened had a 20-year-old Nick Wallace not fallen sick with cancer in 1997.

“The question on everyone’s mind was how could an otherwise healthy college athlete get cancer?” remembers Nick. The family looked for red flags and found none. After chemotherapy at age 22 Nick’s father Steve met Sally Fallon, director of the Weston A. Price Foundation at the ACRES USA conference where she promoted the health benefits of grass-based meat production.

“When your kid gets cancer, you go ‘this isn’t right, there has got to be a reason,’ you know?” said Steve. Steve’s focus was on health of the land and health of people like his son. “One thing led to another, I tried some grass-fed meat from a producer, it tasted really good, we thought if we could grow something this good we could have a business.”

Steve grew up on a farm, 160 acres of which currently is held in a family trust between him, his brother and sister. As a young man, he and his family farmed corn, soybeans, oats, and hay in rotation. They had hogs as a kid but in college, Steve “fell in love” with the beauty of the rumen. “It’s the most fascinating thing how ruminant animals can convert something into food that we cannot,” says Steve.

When Steve left for college in 1970 the family could not continue the diverse farming operation, and rented out the crop ground to a neighbor. After 40 years of corn and soybean row crops, the family land was in rough shape. “You couldn’t even find one earthworm out there,” noted Steve, who holds a master’s degree in ruminant nutrition, has worked as a farm manager, farmed himself for awhile, and most recently has run a forage seed business for 15 years.

After his recovery from cancer, Nick graduated from college, and



Nick Wallace, right, listens to father Steve address the audience at their summer field day

found work in Chicago, Oregon, and Colorado for several years. At the same time, the knowledge of the health benefits of grass-based meat was increasing in the media. While the family had no land suitable for grazing, they thought money could be made in direct marketing.

In 2000, Steve, along with his son Jason and daughter-in-law Lisa, began selling family friend Doug Gunnick’s grass-based meats online at www.eatwild.com and to customers in Chicago. Gunnick is a southern Minnesota grass-based cattleman and farm consultant to Wallace Farms. “It was like all hands on deck in the beginning,” said Steve. Then as now, he sees his customers as one of two types of people: “Either they want to buy food that they feel is healthier for them, or they want to know where their food comes from.”

For several years the family business stayed small and included a milestone of incorporated status in 2002. Originally, Wallace Farms was thinking of selling Doug’s meat exclusively. But in 2004, Nick returned to the farm. Steve watched as Nick enjoyed farm chores, and told his son: “I’ve got a crazy Idea. What do you think about

Steady Progress of Wallace Farms		
Year	Marketing	Production
2001	www.eatwild.com grass-fed meat	2-3 beeves sold
2002	Wallace Farms is incorporated	2-3 beeves sold
2004	Nick returns to farm, sells at 3 Des Moines farmer’s	2-3 beeves sold
2005	Sells at farmer’s markets and CSA	15 beeves sold 50 acres row crop seeded with fescue and birdsfoot trefoil
2006	Monthly buying clubs in Chicago with email marketing	30 beeves sold Overseeded with chicory, meadow fescue, and brome
2007	Adds buying clubs in Iowa cities	45 beeves sold Pasture first grazed with cattle from a neighbor
2008	Adds buying clubs in Iowa cities	75 beeves sold First year grazed own cattle
2009	Clubs in Chicago (4), Cedar Rapids, Des Moines (2), Iowa City, Ames	About 100 beeves to be sold 18 Wallace cows ready for slaughter
2010	Club to be added in Ankeny	30 acres row crop to be converted to pasture in the Spring

turning this row crop into pasture?”

“I didn’t think it was crazy. I thought it was a great idea. We would build the marketing first, then the farm will be able to grow to supply our customer base,” said Nick.

In 2004, Nick began direct marketing grass-fed meats raised by local producers at three Des Moines farmer’s markets (Johnston, Valley Junction, and Drake). He also sold Alaskan wild caught salmon caught by a small family fishing operation. In 2005, Nick started selling product in Ames at the Magic Beanstalk CSA (now Farm to Folk) distribution site. In 2006 the Buying Club model promoted by Virginia farmer Joel Salatin struck a chord with Nick. “I thought to myself, this just makes sense. Consolidate your time, and get more bang for your buck, which means more time to farm, and more time to live.” The first buying club distribution in Chicago grossed \$2,000. “More than I made all summer at the farmer’s market,” said Nick.

Wallace Farms is run with patience, with growth models that are gradual and self-financed. “We had a bad run with banks during the farm crisis in the 1980s so we tend to do things on our own,” says Nick. 50 acres is currently converted to pasture, but the Wallaces plan to have all 160 converted some day. “We are trying to make mistakes on the smaller scale,” jokes Steve, “and lack of labor available limits our pace of increasing acres of converted pasture.”

The father and son working relationship is a match that works “most of the time,” says Nick with a laugh. “There are some frustrations from time to time, but when he is down I’m up and when I’m down he is up,” says Steve.

The Wallace family works together well because each have diverse gifts that complement the operation as a whole. “Dad and I dream together. We dream a lot,” says Nick. “Mom and my wife are more grounded, and together we can all work through things.”

Wallace Farms filed as an S Corporation with simple minutes taken at all meetings. Each member of the family is a shareholder. The family talks about future farm scenarios. “There are never impulsive decisions made,” says Nick. Looking to the future, the family is watching out for their options to continue the farm operation into the next generation. Keeping in communication with family members about the goals of Wallace Farms is important, and Steve’s brother and sister are very supportive. “My siblings see it more as a health thing, and a conserving thing—land conservation with rotational grazing rather than row crops.”

Wallace Farms pays Nick part of his salary (for marketing) and Steve pays the rest as his farm manager. This works out well for their family. As Steve puts it, “Nick has two hats, marketing hat and farmer hat. The marketing hat is getting bigger and bigger.”

The family farm is an investment legacy Steve and Linda are happy to build for their children. As Nick puts it, “The return of

investment Dad wants most is greater health, a good lifestyle for his family, learning new things, rearing kids, and environmental stewardship. Not to mention he would love to see half of Iowa back in pasture.”

However, it is not as easy as one would think to convert row crop to pasture without high inputs of fertilizer. “It takes time! That is the one thing I didn’t calculate for the system to become sustainable,” says Steve. “It isn’t as simple as planting grass and getting a magical

“Consolidate your time, and get more bang for your buck, which means more time to farm, and more time to live.”

Nick Wallace

system.” Wallace Farm’s pastures are on their 4th year and Steve is still unsatisfied with spring growth. Steve hopes that by 2014, the pastures they established in 2004 will be higher quality without having to amend the soil, producing high quality animal protein.

No team would be complete without an excellent bookkeeper: Linda Wallace performs these duties flawlessly, processes all transactions and asks for no reimbursement. Nick characterizes his mother’s contribution in this way: “Without her Wallace Farms is dead in the tracks tomorrow.”

Signs of success abound. When Nick started his brother Jason insisted that lack of supply would be the biggest problem. “I thought he was crazy because early on, I was worried about having too much supply,” said Nick. “Last summer my brother’s prediction came true. I ran out of beef.”

This year Wallace Farms will sell 80-100 beeves, 100 head of hogs, 600 chickens, and 100 turkeys. Much of the meat sold comes from other producers, including PFI members Lynn Rinderknecht, Ryan Herman, and Karl Dallefeld. The earthworms are coming back. Nick has been healthy and cancer-free for years, and he and his wife just celebrated the birth of their first child.

Steve sees profitability and sustainability as inseparable and noted at a recent PFI field day in his pasture, “There is a lot of money to be made out here, and our hope is that we will be building our soil and growing more and more sustainable overtime.” Steve believes PFI farmers like the Wallace family are providers not just of meat, but of ecosystem services. “We can save water, prevent soil loss, while producing beef in a system that mimics nature. That’s good for everybody!”



Visitors tour the Wallaces’ pasture

Weed Machines: Top Picks from Iowa Farmers

Sally Worley

Every year, keeping weeds at bay is at the forefront for vegetable farmers. Unruly weeds foster disease and pests, reducing quality of product, and setting the scene for even worse future weed wars. Depending on your farm size, implements such as hand and wheel hoes, combined with some old-fashioned hand pulling, may suffice.

However, weed pressure grows along with the size of your farm. Instead of spending all of their time on hands and knees, and paying labor to do the same, many vegetable farmers invest in machines that combat weeds efficiently. Here are four Iowa farmers' weed machine top picks.

Blanchard Picks

Chris Blanchard operates Rock Spring Farm near Decorah. He grows about 15 acres of fresh vegetables and herbs each year. Chris has gone through a variety of equipment in his farming career, and now uses three cultivating methods. "You've got to have the right tractor. You need to be able to see the equipment while looking forward." His current cultivating tractor is a Kubota L245H, an offset diesel cultivating tractor. Offset tractors allow an open view of the cultivating equipment below. Chris also owned an International 140 that he liked. He loves his Kubota because it has a really slow range similar to a creeper gear—slow motion is key for close and precise cultivation. Cultivating tractors are not widely available new, and can be purchased on the used market.

When planting your crop, it is important



Close up of Chris' shanks and sweeps cultivator

to plan for cultivation. Chris plants many beds three rows per bed with 15-inch centers so they are compatible with his machinery. He seeds with tractor mounted Planet Jr. or Stanhay seeders. "We often want to cultivate three rows at a time, so having everything precisely spaced is very important," Chris said.

Chris uses a Buddingh Basket weeder (www.buddinghweeder.com, approximately \$2500-\$3000 new depending on your tractor and spacing) for small seeded crops and small transplants. The main crops he uses this tool for are salad mix, carrots, and beets. The basket weeder has two rows of rolling baskets that are connected with chains and gears.

"The best time to cultivate is before you can even see the weeds, when they are in the 'white thread' stage. This is when they have thrown out their root, but don't have a leaf above soil yet. You hit them, they're dead."

Chris Blanchard

The front baskets drive the rear baskets faster, spinning over and removing weeds in their path. "You can operate the basket weeder pretty fast without moving soil side to side, which is nice," remarked Chris.

With the Buddingh basket weeder, Chris can cultivate to within one or two inches of the carrots within three days of germination. Chris likes to get in and get the weeds early. "The best time to cultivate is before you can even see the weeds, when they are in the 'white thread' stage. This is when they have thrown out their root, but don't have a leaf above soil yet. You hit them, they're dead."

You can't adjust how close to the row the baskets run. Chris' baskets are set at a



Chris Blanchard runs the Buddingh Basket weeder through his field.

four-inch gap, so he cultivates really close on one side of the crop, turns, and cultivates the other side. Although he does two passes, he does so in a timely fashion because he can drive the weeders through quickly. The Buddingh is not suitable for perennial crops, compacted or heavily crusted soil. It is more effective in friable soils.

"I like this tool. It's fast and you don't have to be a highly skilled operator to use it."

Cultivation tool number two at Rock Spring Farm consists of an assortment of clamps, shanks, knives, and shovels that Chris uses for one to two row per bed large-seeded crops.

"The day beans germinate, they grow two inches. You can be more aggressive cultivating something like beans, sweet corn, or a transplant such as winter squash. These crops get up quickly and the weeds lag behind. Throwing dirt into the row actually helps kill in row weeds."

This tool is something Chris has created on his Kubota mounting frame. Chris sourced new trip shanks for \$73 each. Chris will adjust the attachments depending on his crop. "Part of the trick is to have a variety of shovels and sweeps for the trip shank so you can control how much dirt you are throwing in the row."

This implement is not easy to adjust in

the field. When Chris moves from one crop to another, he has to return to the shop to correctly adjust this tool. “When I go out to cultivate I might be cultivating 10 different kinds of vegetables in three or four different stages of growth. I don’t have time to run back up to the shop every time I need to make a change.”

The third cultivating tool at Rock Springs Farm is Chris’ favorite. He had it manufactured at a local welding shop based on an Italian cultivator he used at Richard de Wilde’s Harmony Valley Farm. A spring-loaded parallel frame with a depth control shoe is clamped to a diamond tool bar that attaches to the tractor. Knives are attached to the frame, and there is a knife cutting weeds between each pair of rows. The knives in this setup are side knives, shaped like an L. With these knives, you don’t move dirt toward the plant at all. The knives are easily



Operators guide the spinning discs of the Reigi to remove weeds

and quickly adjusted to be closer or further away from the rows, and each knife runs independently.

“This is my multipurpose cultivator. I use it on absolutely everything,” said Chris. “What I really like about it is its extremely flexible. The independent suspension is really nice—if a bed is a bit uneven, this tool doesn’t cause problems for me. It’s easy to control the depth, and I can easily cultivate just one half to one inch deep, turning up minimal weed seeds.”

Franzenburg’s Picks

Eric and Ann Franzenburg farm 120 acres of herbs and 380 acres of row crops near Van Horne. This is the second season they have grown vegetable and flower crops outdoors. Eric tracked down a Reigi Ecoweeder after seeing one at the MOSES

organic conference. Its original purpose was for weeding their herbs, but the Reigi works great for their vegetable crops as well.

One, two, and four person units are available. The Franzenburgs own a two person unit. The Reigi has PTO (power take-off)-driven spinning discs with stiff tines attached to hand levers. Two seats are mounted behind the discs, and each operator weaves two discs in and out of the rows to take down weeds.

“We were initially having limited success because we didn’t have the right tractor,” Eric said. With his previous tractor, he could not get down to a slow enough speed for accurate weeding while maintaining enough RPMs to keep the discs spinning at an effective pace. Last year they purchased a hydrostatic tractor that Eric said “made all the difference in the world. The biggest key as far as this machine is concerned is to make sure you have the right tractor.” Eric thinks a tractor that has a creeper gear would effectively run the Reigi as well.

Eric uses his Reigi on two rows per bed crops, primarily transplants. He likes to get the transplants in the ground, and take the Reigi to the field two or three weeks later when the crops are established. “You may throw dirt up onto the plant a little bit, so you want at least two inches of crop height, and preferably three to four inches.” Eric has one disc that he uses, but different types of discs can be sold separately for different kinds of cultivation; strawberries, raspberries, squashes, zucchinis, pumpkins, cauliflowers, cucumbers, and green peppers.

If all goes well, Eric likes to take another pass with the tractor to get a second flush of weeds. The Reigi works on fairly large crops. “As long as you have clearance, say up to 18 inches, the Reigi works just fine.”

Eric thinks the Reigi would work well with direct seeded crops, but timing is critical. “You have to have a good enough jump on the weeds that you can still see the crop,” he commented. According to the “Weed ‘em and Reap” YouTube video (www.youtube.com), the Reigi works well for both weeding and thinning



Stiff tines on the Reigi’s weeder disc effectively combat weeds

direct seeded crops.

Dunham Picks

Last year Andy Dunham purchased a Williams Tine Weeder for his 10-acre Grinnell Heritage Farm. This tool consists of four rows of Lely tines attached to a frame that is mounted to a tractor hitch using a diamond front tool bar. The tines are individually adjustable for depth and can be quickly flipped up to accommodate crops when weeding in between rows. There are additional toolbars in front of and behind the four rows of tines where additional knives and discs can be attached. Andy runs his Williams tine weeder with a 45HP tractor, but says you could use it sufficiently with a smaller tractor.

The implement cost Andy about \$3200, including all knife attachments and shipping. Shipping was steep, \$500-\$600, since it came from Pennsylvania. “We have about 1.5 acres of asparagus that we planted with the tine weeder spacing in mind. Last spring I

-Continued on page 19-



The Lely tines on the Williams Tine Weeder flip up and down quickly and easily to accommodate different plantings

Aerial seeding environmental benefits

Sarah Carlson

Cover crops can improve water quality, decrease soil erosion and serve as a green manure, a grain, or hay crop. The potential uses of cover crops are many and PFI farmers have been experimenting with this practice for two decades. Several other organizations have begun researching how to increase cover crops in a wide range of farming systems: organic, no-till, conventional, grazing and horticulture crops. Farmers in all of these production systems can and are using cover crops.

Iowa Cover Crop Acreage Inventory surveys say:

Practical Farmers of Iowa, with support from the Leopold Center for Sustainable Agriculture, surveyed approximately 17,000 farmers during pesticide applicator trainings that took place in the winter months of 2008-2009. 1285 surveys were returned. 96% of these farmers heard of cover crops while only 35% have ever planted them.

These survey results suggest that barriers to adoption exist. Some barriers articulated in Singer (2007) include lack of: incentive payments, cost share, and educational programs about the logistics of use, such as cover crop seed cost, selection, and management. Discussions with farmers reveal that another barrier has been a lack of knowledgeable field resource personnel available for trouble shooting this practice.

Even though these barriers exist, cover crops are working in Iowa! From the 83 counties that returned Iowa Cover Crop Acreage Inventory surveys, 62 had at least one farmer using cover crops during 2006-2008 with a state average of 17,890 acres planted in cover crops each year. Among members of Practical Farmers of Iowa at least 147 farm families are using this practice.

Pre-Harvest Planting

Some farmers are overcoming the barrier of a short window between fall harvest and cover crop establishment by overseeding into a standing crop. Overseeding methods that some farmers use are: high clearance equipment like a "high-boy" or a detasseling machine, aerial seeding, or broadcasting at last cultivation. However, planting at last cultivation or using high-clearance equipment can occupy a farmer's time during the fall. A cost effective and time efficient option is aerial seeding.

Aerial seeding is done by an airplane or helicopter. Planes fly 10 to 50 feet above the field. An airplane used for spraying pesticides can be switched over to plant cover crops in about 45 minutes. Greg Todd from Todd's Flying Service says, "I just take out the pump and booms and put on the spreader under the airplane." The cover crop planting rate is adjusted by a gate on the spreader.

Planting Rate Suggestions:

- ❖ Small Grain 1.5 – 2 bushels/ A
- ❖ Vetch 20-30lbs/A
- ❖ White Clover 5-10lbs/A
- ❖ Red Clover 10-15lbs/A

Lighter seed like lawn mixes are not as successfully planted using aerial seeding as heavier seeds like small grain (rye, wheat, triticale, barley) or legumes (clovers, vetches or alfalfa).

If you are organic and want to fly on a cover crop, Ray Yokiel from Wells, MN has certified his plane. Ray has mostly been using his plane to frost-seed clover and alfalfa seed into pastures in the spring. About seven or eight years ago he flew on his first fall cover crop of winter rye. Ray, an



This cover crop was aerial seeded into standing corn on September 3, 2008. Harvest on May 7, 2009, resulted in 664 pounds per acre biomass. To provide environmental benefits, the cover crop needs to produce at least 500 pounds of biomass per acre. Photo taken at Lewis Byers' farm in Northwest Iowa.



Chop Gibson uses a Hagie Highboy to overseed his cover crops

organic farmer himself, certified his plane so it could be available for his farming system and to contract with other farmers for pasture renovation and cover crop establishment.

“Organic regulations would allow a chemical pesticide applicator to wash out their plane and then use it for organics but the applicator would not be able to switch back to applying chemicals,” commented Ray. Access to aerial applicators that can plant on organic farms are few.

The same challenges exist for both conventional and organic aerial seeding. “Wind and weather conditions are the biggest challenge to aerial seeding cover crops,” reported Ray and Greg. Transmission lines and local distribution lines add a little more challenge to the task. In addition, because seeding cover crops in the fall is a small part of these applicators’ regular business, other contracts like controlling aphids in both organic and conventional farms can compete for air time.

To be successful, several PFI farmers have suggested coinciding planting with moist conditions or rainfall. Fall planting date suggestions from Tom Kaspar at the National Soil Tilth Laboratory:

Aerial Seeding Small Grains	
	Late August into standing soybeans
	Mid-to-Late September into standing corn
Aerial Seeding Legumes	
	Early August into standing soybeans
	Early September into standing corn

“Seed legumes a little earlier because they are small seeded and need more time to establish before a hard freeze,” states Tom.

Caution: Don’t plant too early because germinated cover crops without enough rain for two or more weeks could die.

Depending on the size and the type of seed being planted,

planes can carry enough seed to plant 12 to 100 acres each trip. Helicopters carry smaller loads but can land and re-load closer to the planting site. A nearby grassy summit can be used as opposed to flying back to a runway. Each plane is different, but both operators stressed the importance of a nearby runway. “If a runway is grass versus concrete or if it is ‘short’ will affect how much weight the plane can hold and ultimately how many trips to and from the field during planting the pilot needs to make,” stated Ray. “The trips to and from the runway and the turns across the field while planting all influence the price per acre. The plane needs about a half mile to turn around.” explained Greg. Both applicators suggested that planting mile long strips across the field would be ideal and would help decrease the number of turns and therefore decrease the cost per acre.

The cost of aerial seeding is competitive with the cost of drilling or broadcasting the seed on the ground. Both applicators quoted a range of \$7 to \$12 per acre. They recommended loading 50 pound bags of seed for ease when hand loading at the runway. The final price is determined by amount of total acres being planted, proximity to a runway, runway size and type of seed being planted. Both applicators are very flexible and willing to work with farmers to help increase this practice of continuous living cover on the ground.

If you would like help organizing a group to cover crop an area in your part of Iowa through aerial seeding or with high-clearance machinery, or if you want to participate in an on-farm demonstration and research project with cover crops please contact Sarah Carlson at (515)232-5661 x305 or sarah@practicalfarmers.org.

Calling for Cover Crops

PFI has received two grants to work on increasing the amount of cover crops planted in Iowa. The Iowa Department of Agriculture and Land Stewardship has granted PFI funds to work with the Iowa Learning Farms to promote the use of cover crops. PFI also has received a grant from the USDA SARE (Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education) program that will help us double our efforts to assist farmers with their opportunities and challenges in making cover crops a part of their rotations. Sarah Carlson coordinates this work for PFI; please contact her if you’re interested in participating.

Camp



Jake Armstrong tempts fate on the zipline



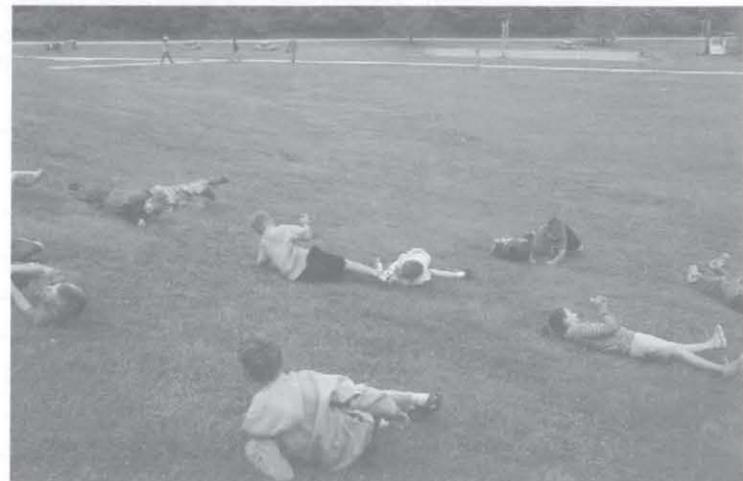
Campers learn precision skills in archery



Campers work up a sweat on the soccer field

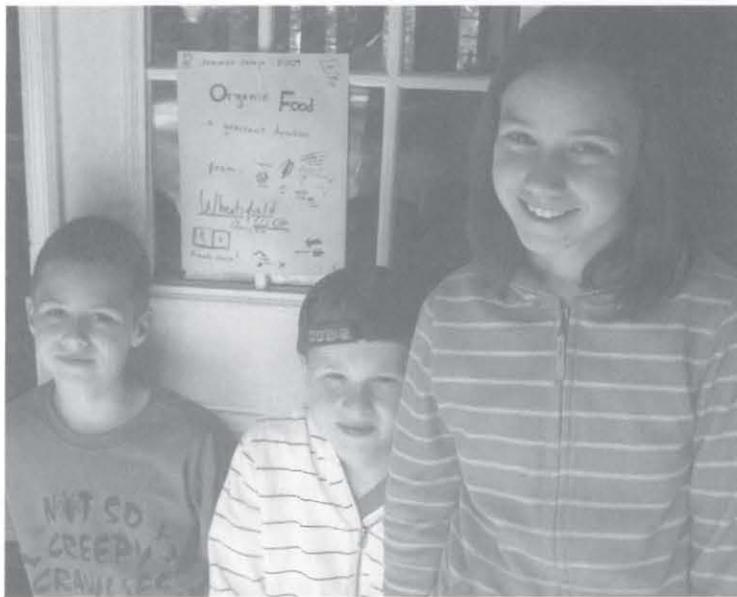


Collin Leffel (left) and Gil Taiber (right) reach new heights on the climbing wall



Whee! Campers roll down the hill

Thank you to the CHS Foundation for sponsoring PFI's 2009 Summer Camp, "Not So Creepy Crawlies."



Gil Taiber, Joey Dunning, and Allie Taiber give a big thank you to Wheatsfield Co-op for their donation



The group pose, full of grins and goofs



The group learns about decomposition on their discovery hike



Robert Pace and Max Prizgintas gleefully show off a hissing cockroach



A "Creepy Crawly" camp run by a farm organization wouldn't be complete without a vermicomposting lesson

What Campers Learned at PFI's 2009 Summer Camp:

- ❖ That there are a lot of things you can eat in the woods
- ❖ I learned that butterflies pollinate and that the wind pollinates
- ❖ I learned about bat and night vision
- ❖ If you take one thing from the food web, you distress the whole thing
- ❖ Worms make good soil

From Celebrities to PFI

Sally Worley

Chef Donna Prizgintas is committed to agriculture. Since moving to Ames almost three years ago, she has been an active member of the local community and of Practical Farmers of Iowa. Donna cooked for PFI's summer camp this year, and campers ate well while learning about their food system. "I really liked our cook," commented one camper.

Donna will preside over PFI's Annual Garlic Festival this year on November 7th. She dedicated her time and expertise to the event last year as well, and it was quite a success. "One of the reasons I like doing the Garlic Festival is because it's a way for me to give back to the community here specifically. There's some very sophisticated agriculture going on around here. I like to serve food that accentuates that."

As the title implies, garlic is the focal point of this dinner. Rick and Stacy Hartmann of Small Potatoes Farm provide multiple varieties of heirloom garlic to sample and compare. Donna will prepare all varieties in the same manner, which will allow guests to taste the tremendous variations between the garlics. "As a farmer, you see differences in yield, climate compatibility, pest resistance, maturity times, and so on. As an eater, you experience a difference in flavor," explained Donna.

Donna defines her cooking style as rustic. "When you have great products—great dairy, wonderful fruits and vegetables, fabulous meat—it doesn't take complex preparations. That's not what sophisticated food is all about. It's about uncovering the innate deliciousness of the product and letting it do its thing," she states. Donna knows her way around seasons and flavorings and appreciates their place in the kitchen. But she lets the food do the talking.

"Complexity in the kitchen is less fashionable than what it used to be. A large amount of what we see on food television or in glossy cookbooks are like airbrushed



models. Food doesn't really look like that, nobody has the time to make it taste like that, and it's simply not necessary."

Donna sees a tremendous change occurring, as the public is returning to a more local, healthful food systems. "All of the things I've been practicing since I was 20 have consistently become more and more important, significant, and the changes are

Donna knows her way around seasons and flavorings and appreciates their place in the kitchen. But she lets the food do the talking.

happening. When you see societal wide changes in your lifetime, it brings you a great deal of satisfaction."

How did Donna's relationship with food blossom? According to her, "The culinary career was merely an accident."

Donna comes from a meat and dairy heritage rather than a meat and potato one. "People talk about how they have a

refined wine palate. I grew up tasting milk. We could never go anywhere without stopping to try either the ice cream or the milk. I have a good dairy palate."

Donna was born and raised in Illinois by parents one generation removed from the farm. Her dad was in the dairy processing business, hence the dairy tastings, and her mom ran office supply stores. Itching to experience life outside of the Midwest, Donna moved to New York City during her college years. This was her first exposure to a wide variety of foods. Life led Donna to travels in Europe, where she became further interested in food.

When she first moved to New York, Donna learned about the concept of organic agriculture, and it resonated. "Growing up in the Midwest with aunts and uncles and grandparents on the farm, you understand where food comes from and how it is produced."

Donna became a single mother of two children, had to earn a living, and gravitated toward restaurants. As she became more experienced in her culinary role, she started catering and cooking for summer camps. While living in Woodstock, NY, Donna cooked at a growth center. "A group of Native Americans would stay and then a group of Buddhists—it was a revolving bunch of people. Every week I had a different diet I had to cook. I learned a lot, and I enjoyed it," she said.

Donna moved to LA in her mid-thirties. Cooking was her best skill set, so she submitted her information to a domestic agency. This launched her career as a personal celebrity chef.

Donna worked for her first client, Sally Field, for five years. For Sally, family life was important. She would come home from work and want to sit down to dinner with her family. "Sally used to say I was the biggest luxury in her life. That was really

nice," Donna said.

Once in "the loop," Donna was referred from household to household by word of mouth. After working for Sally Field, Donna started cooking for Norman Lear and his wife. "He entertained a great deal and that was really a much more complicated job," she said. Norman often hosted dinner parties, luncheons, screenings, and regular Sunday night film nights. "It was fun because a lot of his guests were interesting people."

While working for Norman, Donna planted heirloom tomatoes in all of the pots around the swimming pool. "I kept presenting them at dinner and saying 'Here is tonight's heirloom tomato.' After the third time I did that, Norman turned to me and asked, 'Donna, what is an heirloom tomato?' That was before heirloom tomatoes were popular."

Donna cooked for Michelle Pfeiffer and husband, David Kelly, for seven years. She had very specific dietary requests. "Most of these people want to eat very healthy. Imagine if you had a career where if you gain ten pounds you lose your job. It's important to both look good and have a lot of vitality. There's a lot of interest in nutrition. I have a good background in nutrition and am skilled at making meals interesting, sophisticated, but extremely healthy," Donna said.

As with all of her clients, Donna was committed to organic food. "As people started to understand what organic means, it actually enhanced my reputation," Donna said.

Like most of Donna's clients, Michelle had young kids. Donna's cooking ethics led Michelle to the realization she could improve her family's diet. "Michelle came to me one day and said 'Donna, let's clean out my cupboards.' She knew that I could help her, and we made everything completely organic in her pantry. That was a really nice moment for me. I got to use my expertise and I was appreciated."

While cooking for Michelle, Donna also cooked for Warren Beatty and Annette Benning. Warren was an entertainer, and Donna kept quite busy. After a time, Michelle moved away from L. A. and

Warren entertained less. "Michelle wanted to hand me over to Steven Spielberg and Kate Capshaw. But I was starting to burn out."

Donna went to work as the executive chef at Paul Newman's Painted Turtle, the sixth of his Hole in the Wall Gang camps for physically ill children. Lou and Page Adler, the camp founders, wanted to offer campers an organic menu. Donna set up the menu and did the first year's cycle of cooking. "The kids with kidney disorders required salt free diets. By the end of their first week on a no sodium diet at the camp, these kids showed marked and immediate improvements. The doctors who came in to care for the kids were astounded by the changes. It illustrated to the doctors that compliance to a salt free diet really worked."

From the Hole in the Wall Gang, Donna did a lot of freelance work. She consulted at health food stores, became a spokesperson for natural products, and wrote for *Delicious Food* magazine.

Donna gravitated back to the Midwest to help care for her parents. She loves her new surroundings in Ames. "There's so much going on here in terms of food and food systems. As a chef it's important to know where food comes from and the effects that it has on people."

Donna volunteers for many organizations, and works hard for causes she supports. She cooks annually for The Land Institute's annual Prairie Festival, and cooks for Organic Farming Research Foundation events. Donna sits on the board of Wheatsfield Cooperative, a locally grocery store in Ames, as well as the Iowa Organic Association board. Look for her sweating it out at the Iowa State Fair this year educating fair goers about the Iowa Organic Association.

"I do a lot of volunteer work because I enjoy it. I choose organizations that have values I want to support. Most are agricultural in nature, and I enjoy making sure that the food and agriculture connection is very visible, because it is to me. I'd like other people to experience that too."



Keenan Wieck enjoyed Donna's kid-friendly culinary skills at this year's summer camp

2009 Garlic Fest Menu

To begin the evening

Tasting of heritage garlics, roasted and served with crostini
Eggplant caponata

First plate

Carrot and microgreen salad plated with beet gelee and goat creama

Second Plate

Comparison tasting of two heritage chicken breeds presented as roasted poussin served with fingerling potatoes and multi colored peppers
Vegetarian entrée: onion and mint duck egg frittata

Dessert

Kabocha squash cobbler with rose geranium chantilly

To learn more about PFI's 2009 Garlic Fest, contact Suzi at (515)232-5661, suzi@practicalfarmers.org

Dog Bones and Lard

Gordon Reeder



The Iowa Food Cooperative (IFC) is a great program, currently in its infancy. The IFC uses the Internet to localize ordering and streamline distribution. The central purpose of the Coop is basic: It connects consumers to local producers. The Coop only sells Iowa-made products.

Customers can order online during the ordering period, which starts at 8 AM on the first day of each month and ends at midnight on the second Saturday of each month. As the website explains, “after the cycle closes, the producers are sent information on who ordered which products. The producers then upload weights of products that can vary (such as beef roasts, whole chickens, etc.) and the prices are finalized. On the Thursday morning following the second Saturday producers drop their products off at Merle Hay Mall in Des Moines, products are sorted, and distributed to customers Thursday afternoon.

The IFC has 220 members, of which 55 are producers. There is a one-time member fee is \$50 with an annual fee of \$10. It functions as an online storefront that allows producers to quickly market their wares, allows consumers to browse a wide variety of products, and provides a centralized location for delivering and purchasing the items. As the welcome page says, “We value and cultivate farmer-consumer relationships, environmental stewardship, and enhanced rural sustainability. The IFC strives to be a business that is financially viable, environmentally sustainable and socially just.” To support their mission the Coop assesses a percent fee on each end of the transaction, the fee is 10 percent for farmers and 10 percent for consumers. This means that if a farmer sells \$100 worth of product, a fee of \$10 will be subtracted from their check, and if a consumer buys \$100 worth of product, a fee of \$10 will be added to their invoice.

None of this explains the peculiar station of the Coop. The Iowa Food Coop houses itself in two of the most stagnant locations imaginable: the Internet—which might be amazing and useful and everywhere at once, but is nothing but a collection of zeros and ones—and a bricks and mortar mall, in this case Merle Hay Mall. In attempting to circumvent the circular logic of the industrial food system, the IFC exists in the speculative land of the Internet and the somewhat forsaken space of the old economy. As LaVon Griffieon told me, “from a land use standpoint I am glad that we are in a building that is a re-use and making use of a space that was available.”

If I were going to plot the Iowa Food Cooperative within a field, I’d say they were cultivating the end rows of agriculture and commerce. To figure out how they pull off this relationship, I decided to become a member of the IFC and pass through an order cycle.

You have all signed up for something online, or signed into your email at least, and it’s easy. For you. I have never signed up for anything correctly the first time. Something as easy as selecting

If I were going to plot the Iowa Food Cooperative within a field, I’d say they were cultivating the end rows of agriculture and commerce.

a password routinely takes me four or five tries, and sometimes I need to change my tee-shirt half way through. On Tuesday The Pew Institute for Computer Usage announced that, “78 percent of the time Gordon Reeder registers on a new Internet site he is unable to re-access that site.”

Luckily the Iowa Food Coop page is easy and straightforward. I cruise through it. But then I see “I acknowledge that I have read and agree to abide by the Iowa Food Cooperative Member Information Statement.” And the sweat soldiers begin to march in circles around my armpits. Have I read the statement? Do I comply? What if there is a section on personal hygiene? (Or Hi Jeanie if you are a girl). I open it and read, “Each order is a legally enforceable contract...” I’ve been running from the law long enough that this doesn’t scare me.

Because the products at the Coop are different every month, the site provides you with multiple ways to scan the list. You can look at the whole thing, or only what is new. You can sort products by producer or category, and even products whose listings have changed from the previous month.

The first option on the product list is a donation to help families using EBT cards pay for the membership fee and/or the 10 percent processing fee. I decide to sign up for this. Raising awareness about the health and practicality of local foods is important. Too often



Zach helps his father Bill Martin of Windy Springs Botanical LLC of Boone unload their produce. This was their first trip to the IFC and they were excited to utilize this new market for their vegetables.

low-income families have been shuttled into high processed foods as their only choices.

I am immediately struck by how extensive the list of products is, and my inclination is to purchase one of everything. As I spoke with both farmers and members at the Coop, a common theme was the importance of having a relationship with each other. One avenue the website employs to encourage this relationship is to allow each producer a homepage that the members view. With 50 some producers, it is quite an investment of time to become partially acquainted with a producer, so the second way the Coop has addressed this issue is through having a producer around during pick up, to hand out product samples and answer questions.

During this pick up cycle, Cindy Madsen from Audubon County Family Farms is the producer on hand. She's sampling bacon and ham and cinnamon creamed honey. The Coop works for her because, although her customers are not concerned about labels like "organic," they want to know their farmers and know how the meat is raised.

In the 13 days the shopping cart was open, I spent around four hours scanning the list. I knew I wasn't going to get everything, and Teresa refused to pay for what I did get, so my order ended up looking like this: Pound of lard. Leg of Lamb. Quart of Strawberries. Package of dog bones. Whole Duck. Pork Cutlets. I can hear Gary laughing...but I'd just gotten a large order of beef, and I'm part of a CSA so my vegetable needs are generally taken care of.

As for how the Coop functions on delivery day, Carolyn Ross, a non-farmer and PFI member who does a lot of the volunteer coordination arrived not long after I did. She helped Gary and his son Isaiah decide where everything that was about to come in was going to go. When the producers began to arrive it went like this: They'd have a few words with Gary about the orders, the weather, the crops, and then the producer would go out and get whatever had been ordered. Once inside Gary would make sure what they brought matched up with what was expected, and then Carolyn or another volunteer would sort the products. At this point the producer's job is done and in the next couple of days the IFC would cut a check and mail it off. Aside from drive time, it took the producers about 10 minutes to get in and out of the Coop, and they arrived throughout the morning in a leisurely way. In the hours between check in and distribution, Gary and the volunteers sorted through the products, putting them in designated freezers, fridges, coolers, or on dry goods shelves.

My favorite part of the distribution was talking to a young volunteer named Lorenzo and his mom Francesca. Lorenzo's in sixth grade and has excited brown hair that hangs over his ears. When I showed up, he was hustling back and forth between the dry



Jeri John and Eric Hatfield and their kids, Sam, Peter, and Alex, of Des Moines turned to the Iowa Food Co-op when looking for a place to buy local produce and meats. They appreciate how easy the ordering system is and how the kids have been eating better and more healthy.

good shelf and the freezers, looking for members to help and clearly enjoying the opportunity to be of service. Although he claimed he was he was only volunteering because his mother made him, he really liked it. He told me that he wanted to do it every day. His ambition for the Coop was simply more. More members and more support and most importantly, more of the Madsens' bacon. As Francesca said, "Cindy is our exclusive bacon provider, and Lorenzo loves bacon, so we know Cindy's bacon very well." But Cindy would only allow him to have one piece of the samples she was frying up.

I was surprised by the number of young couples and families who came to the pick up. Gary told me that about 80 percent of the members were under 55, and most of them shopped with an eye towards feeding their family healthy foods. An obvious absentee was senior citizens. Maybe it is the word of mouth nature of the Coop that is hampering the older population. The families I spoke with heard of the Coop through different avenues. Whether a co-worker or the natural living expo, the Coop was often introduced as a response to the question of providing healthy eating for their children.

By the time I left that afternoon, the Coop was pretty well empty. The morning storms had brought in the first real heat of the summer, and the doors of Merle Hay Mall opened out to a sweltering morass. I was concerned for my strawberries - they faced two questions: surviving the heat and my appetite, since I had about an hour drive to get home and I hadn't eaten since noon. I only bought a quart, and it was my intention that the greatest part would be eaten by my wife and our two-year old daughter. If eaten by me at all, I hoped they'd appear as part of a lard-infested strawberry shortcake. But that wasn't going to happen. I'd not even hit 80/35 before I'd diminished the quart low enough that shortcake was out of the question. I began to fear they would not make it home.

The Iowa Food Cooperative is the brainchild of Gary Huber. He secured grant funding from the Leopold Center for Sustainable Agriculture and the Blooming Prairie Foundation and support from many farmers and consumers to incorporate the Coop in July 2008, with first delivery in November 2008. The Coop is now spun off from PFI as a separate legal entity. 55 PFI members belong to the Co-op. Four of the six members of the Iowa Food Cooperative Board of Directors come from PFI. For more information contact Board President, Jason Jones, (515)202-6473, jjones@thehomestead.org.

Graziers Speak of "Animal Days Per Acre"

Teresa Opheim

PFI members may all speak English, but when they talk grazing, are they really speaking the same language?

Not according to Torray Wilson and Tom German, who presented a session on grazing performance data at PFI's last Cooperators' Meeting.

"A lot of folks will talk about number of head, such as 'I had 100 cows out there for five months,'" says Tom. "But what we need to talk about is pounds of animals, because of course animals vary dramatically in size. If we move to 'standard animal units,' we could standardize how we have our discussion. Then we can have the same measurements, make comparisons between our systems, and make improvements."

Tom compares the muddlement that takes place on forage quantity and quality to the clearer communication that takes place with commodity field crop producers. "With commodity crops, everybody is talking bushels per acre. You don't have some using 'tons per acre,' others using 'kernels per acre,' and still others using 'bushels per acre.'"

Tom and Torray recommend "animal days per acre" or ADA, as the standard measurement graziers should be using. A standard animal unit is 1,000 pounds of body weight. For example: A 500-pound calf is 50 percent of an animal unit. Five adult sheep or goats equal one animal unit.

Animal-days per acre = animals x days/acres of land

1 cow x 100 days = 100 animal days per acre (ADAs) of forage

50 animal units spending four days in a 100-acre paddock will take 50 x 4 divided 100 = 2 ADA from that paddock.

Computing the animal-days per acre tells you how much forage the average acre of a paddock will supply. The "stocking rate," in contrast, is the number of animal units per farm. Stocking rate is a component of ADA. As Tom points out, though, graziers are not even talking the same language when they talk stocking rates, as many are referring to number of animals on their farm rather than poundage.

Using these measurements, you will more likely know the amount of forage each acre contributes to the animal-days of forage your herd will require. Herds of different sizes may spend varying lengths of time in paddocks of different sizes, but you can still reckon how much forage that paddock will supply.

And then you can make improvements, like the interseeding that Bruce Carney did after he calculated ADAs.

"Right now we could be making wrong decisions because we don't know the whole story. If we could all start talking animal days per acre, we can converse across environments better," Tom says. "I can talk to Ron Rosmann or Earl Hafner or anyone else about grazing profitability as long as we have the same baseline of discussion. And compare systems. It allowed us to quantify our yields on our ground. Now I can start talking to people in Missouri, in Nebraska, even in South Africa."

... Except in South Africa, it would be animal days per hectare. Ah, the language problems continue!



For Torray Wilson, taking careful measurements using Animal Days per Acre helps him know which paddocks perform better.

PFI Pasture Walks 2009

The season's partway over, but there's still time to join PFIers on pasture walks! For more information on pasture walk topics or to join PFI's grazing clusters, please contact Grazing Cluster Organizer Tom German at (712)830-3281 or the PFI office (515)232-5661.

August 11, David Haden, Primghar

August 21, Greg and Kathy Koether, McGregor

August 29, Linda Grice, South English

September 10, Wilson Family Farm, Paullina

October 7, William Pardee, Decorah

November 18, Ryan & Kristine Jepsen, Dorchester



Tom and Kristi German (pictured here with their children, Morgan, Daniel, and Grace), didn't start using animal days per acre as a measurement until they started keeping Holistic Management records. "We have only used it about three years; we were feeling our way through it the first couple years. We didn't have great usable data until now."

-Continued from page 9-

spent two hours on this plot with the tine weeder, and never hand hoed it. Just in the asparagus last year this piece of equipment has paid for itself.”

Andy has his Williams weeder set up for stale seed bedding. He has a wheel sweep and

“This is by far and away the best machinery investment I’ve made since starting my farm.”

Andy Dunham

knife following behind his tractor tire so that area gets tilled. About two weeks before he plants his crop, he runs his rototiller through to prepare his beds. He lets weeds germinate, and the day of planting, he hooks on his Williams weeder and runs it through the beds in both directions, scratching weeds up to the surface before anything’s planted. For beds that are on a three row system, he flips down three bars that mark his rows for planting. Andy then plants into the marked rows with a Planet Jr. hand push seeder.

Andy is pleased with this weeder: “This is by far and away the best machinery investment I’ve made since starting my farm. We have about ten percent of the weed pressure that we would if we didn’t stale seed beds with the Williams weeder. It saves so much time and money on weeding. From now on, everything we plant is going to be done this way.”

Andy has found this weed machine to be versatile. For his potatoes this year, he has made a couple of passes with his Williams weeder. When going through potatoes, Andy flips knives down on the outside of the rows and angles them toward the plant. This throws dirt, mounding the rows up a bit and throwing up enough dirt to cover in row weeds. Andy uses the Williams weeder to do additional cultivation as needed in other crops. He simply flips up the tines where the rows are and runs through once. He can go through in between rows fairly fast, leaving only very minimal in row weeding to complete by hand.

When I visited Andy’s farm, I saw two neighboring beds of salad mix. One had

been stale seed bedded with the Williams weeder, one had not (it had been too wet to get in before his planting schedule). There was a noticeable difference, enough so that the one that didn’t get weeded with the Williams weeder is destined to be green manure rather than end up in a salad bowl.

Elsbernd Picks

Glen Elsbernd raises about 10 acres of certified organic vegetables near Ridgeway. He has two main cultivating systems. The first consists of an H tractor with a front mount 234 cultivator. He uses this to cultivate potatoes, of which he grows seven acres, and other two row per bed crops.

With transplants, he waits two to three weeks after transplanting to cultivate. He then runs through with his H tractor, taking weeds down to just a 10-inch band along the row, which is then hand hoed. Glen can’t remember the cost of this cultivator. He picked it up from someone who had it sitting in the corner of his shed. “For me, that’s what I’ve found has worked really well in getting machinery attachments. Usually they’re sitting around in somebody’s trees or in a shed.”

Glen’s second weed setup consists of a Farmall Super C with a wide front end and compatible cultivator frame. Glen has stripped the cultivator to only two lift arms, and he added two bars across. He has attached Bezzerides Spyder weeders to the frame. The Spyder weeders consist of hilling discs with steel teeth that tear up the soil as they move forward. He uses this system for direct seeded crops. “Once I can see where the rows are, I try and run through with that one to keep things knocked back. I go through my salad plantings and that keeps things under control. I can go through reasonably fast with this machine.”

While these farmers all have 10-plus acres, you don’t need to have 10 acres to justify purchasing a weed machine. As Chris Blanchard said, “If you have to hire people to help out, it’s a lot easier to hire somebody to harvest than to hoe. I would definitely invest in mechanical weeding equipment before a mechanical harvest aid.”



Andy’s potato bed was cultivated only with the Williams Tine Weeder this season



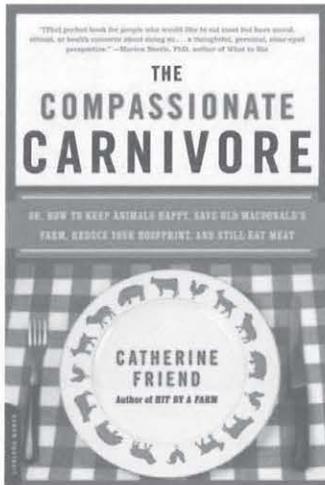
Glen Elsbernd with his Farmall tractor



Spyder weeders sweep through Glen’s young planting

Resources

- ❖ Steel in the Field: A Farmers Guide to Weed Management Tools <http://www.sare.org/publications/steel/steel.pdf>
- ❖ Vegetable farmers and their weed-control machines, DVD: University of Vermont Extension. <http://www.extension.org/article/18436>



Member Book Review

Reviewed by Alexis Hooper, Jefferson

The Compassionate Carnivore, or, How to Keep Animals Happy, Save Old McDonald's Farm, Reduce Your Hoofprint, and Still Eat Meat

By Catherine Friend

The Compassionate Carnivore is a very informative and detailed book that can guide today's meat eater through the confusing world of feel good eating. It is the author's goal to provide the reader with enough information about factory farms that they can make better choices when buying meat.

For most PFI members this is not a book that you need to sit down and read right now. You probably already know all about factory farms and have a pretty good idea where your meat comes from. Rather this is a book to recommend to your friends, family, or neighbors who just don't understand why some raise their animals differently. It will save you a lot of explaining. The author explains how most animals are raised on big farms and contrasts this with how they are raised on small, organic, or compassionate

farms. She walks you through the whole process from conception to the dinner plate and she does not spare the unpleasant details.

Surprisingly, she doesn't make the common farmer feel like an ogre even if he or she owns a feedlot. In an interesting history lesson she explains that it isn't the farmers' fault that farming got so big and out of touch with the animals. It is the fault of big farm companies. She provides suggestions on how one person at a time we can correct the problems.

She does not push vegetarianism on anyone and admits to not really liking veggies herself. She confesses that not all of the meat she buys is raised humanely and she wants to the reader to know it is ok if they can't by 100% organic meat that was given a hug and kiss every morning. Just do what you can to make things better. She talks a lot about making your food dollars speak for you and shows examples of big food companies that have made changes in factory farming based on what their customers refuse to accept when it comes to how animals are raised.

Friend suggests that those interested in eating meat that was raised compassionately take baby steps to change their ways. Make one meal a month or a week from a compassionately raised animal or perhaps eat less meat, get to know local farmers and buy from them, and maybe even raise your own meat or eggs. She talks about researching the animals' farm to make sure they are raised how you want them to be. And she reminds us that organic or natural does not always mean things are better or more humane.

The book does have a few annoying parts. The reader may get frustrated that the author feels the need to remind us that she is a lesbian, a woman farmer, and a sheep farmer about every other page. I felt like screaming big deal you're special, what does that have to do with eating humane meat? At one point she argues that her way of farming doesn't fit with a certain organization's view of humane because she just can't do things that way due to cost, time, etc. She sounds just like a factory farming making excuses for his farm practices. But overall it was a very interesting and informative book.

King Corn Wins Peabody Award

Aaron Woolf, Ian Cheney, and Curt Ellis were awarded a 2008 Peabody Award for their documentary *King Corn*. The George Foster Peabody Awards were established in 1940 and are the oldest, most prestigious honor in electronic media. *King Corn* has made waves both in social media and in the agriculture sector. In a PBS interview following the Peabody Awards ceremony, Ian Cheney stated: "Having a film like this out there spawns all sorts of projects. Corn is just one part of the story."

Aaron, Ian, and Curt have donated *King Corn* DVDs to Practical Farmers of Iowa. 100% of the sale proceeds goes to PFI. To purchase a DVD, fill out the merchandise order form on page 26, or visit www.practicalfarmers.org.



New PFI Members- Welcome!

District 1

Carroll DeNooy, *Sioux Center*
 Charles and Therese Duhn, *Emmetsburg*
 The Market Community Co-op, *Spirit Lake*
 David Zahrt, *Onawa*

District 2

Calcium Products, Inc., *Gilmore City*
 Christina Henning, *Cooper*
 Ed and Michelle Jaselskis, *Ames*
 Hannah Lewis, *Ames*
 Harry Wurster, *Ames*

District 3

Trampes and Lisa Curtin, *Waukon*
 Steven Kurth, *Waterville*

District 4

Erin Bergquist, *Pleasant Hill*
 Ebersole Cattle Co, Shanan Ebersole, *Kellerton*
 E. Adele McDowell, *Des Moines*
 Steve Morrell, *Waukee*
 Mary O'Dell, *Kellogg*
 Ann Robinson, *Des Moines*
 Charles E. Shirley, *Mingo*
 Siobhan Spain, *Des Moines*

District 6 (Outside of Iowa)

Benjamin Barron, *Oran, MO*
 David Moore, *Danville, KY*
 Jane Shey, *Annapolis, MD*
 Soper Farms, Inc., *Palo Alto, CA*
 TRACES Landmark Center, *St. Paul, MN*



New Thompson Agriculture Alternatives Report Available Online

Every year since 1983 Dick and Sharon Thompson of Boone, IA. have produced and updated *The Thompson Agriculture Alternatives Report*. The 2009 report is ready for viewing on the PFI website, www.practicalfarmers.org/resources/alternatives-in-agriculture.html.



Ellen Franzenburg Embarks on World Food Prize Internship

Ellen Franzenburg of Van Horne is spending the summer in Taiwan as part of an internship sponsored by the World Food Prize Foundation. Since 1994, over 100 Borlaug-Ruan Interns have undertaken eight week internships with world-renowned scientists and policymakers at leading research centers in Africa, Asia, Latin America and the Middle East. In June Ellen and her 14 co-interns departed on their global adventures. Ellen's research will take her to the World Vegetable Center (AVRDC) in Shanhua, Tainan, Taiwan. Ellen will be working in their Virology Department with capsicum peppers attempting to strengthen the peppers resistance to different viruses. Ellen has been documenting her trip at her blog, <http://ekfranzenburg.wordpress.com>.

Besides describing the injection of the virus's DNA into the pepper plants, Ellen's done quite a bit of exploring of Taiwan's cities, temples and markets. Everywhere she goes her eyes take note of community, as exemplified by this post, "The last thing we saw was the Half-Side Well. Back in the day, only the wealthy could afford to dig a well. So, the owner of the well had it built so that half of it was inside his wall and the other half was exposed for the general public to use. It was really neat to see this gesture, hundreds of years old now, was valued enough to preserve it even though it is now filled in."

A mere ten days after Ellen's return she'll be enrolling at Iowa State University. A freshman, she is planning on double majoring in Ag-Engineering and Global Resource Systems, with a tentative career path leaning towards crop research.



Virtual Niche Pork Farm Tours a Success

PFI and ISU Extension teamed up to offer eight virtual tours of Iowa niche pork farms over the internet this past winter. The technology involved using the internet to view slide shows, plus using telephones to hear host farmers. While participants were able to ask questions over the phone, a “chat box” on the website for questions was a popular feature.

Creating the tours involved farm visits by Dave Stender of ISU Extension and Rick Exner. Digital images were then reviewed and organized to highlight unique aspects of each farm, such as farrowing pens, feeders and feeding stalls, and sorting facilities. The tours occurred from late January through early March over the noon hour. The number of participants ranged from 30 to 50 per tour.

Evaluations were enthusiastically positive. As one participant noted, “This was such a convenient, accessible way to gather a huge amount of information from farmers that have knowledge and experience raising hogs using alternative practices. The slides were great visuals that enhanced what was talked about, and the ability of the

attendees to ask questions and interact with the presenters made it almost like being in the same room.”

Funding came from the Innovative Swine Industry Enhancement Grant program

of the Iowa Attorney General’s Office. The tours were recorded. If you would like to view them, contact Gary Huber (515-232-5661 or gary@practicalfarmers.org).

Meet Dan & Lorna



IOWA STATE UNIVERSITY
University Extension

Caged Next Generation Coordinator Thinks Outside the Box

What to say only that I am loving this job! Teresa usually lets me go home by dark and I don’t have to wear the chain around my ankle anymore, just the one on my left wrist. When she told me PFI had a “retainer agreement” for new employees I was thinking of something else...but it isn’t so bad. In September I can elect to have the microchip implanted.

The day after Memorial Day this May I began to coordinate programs to assist members with transitioning farms to the next generation and to respond to the new farmers in our growing PFI membership.

This summer I am trying my hand at market gardening with the County of Marshall Investing in Diversified Agriculture (COMIDA) growers. I love music, yoga, and in addition to growing food here, I am forever in love with Iowa’s forests, prairies, and wetlands.

Several desirable qualities come to mind when I meet members: energy, enthusiasm, vision, and a caring nature. It is the best part of my job to meet farmer and non-farmer supporters of healthy food, diverse farms, and vibrant communities.



Luke Gran, right, surveys the pasture with Neal Sawyer at the Wallace field day.

August

Second Annual Greenwave Festival, August 15-16, Okoboji, IA. Special speakers include Amory Lovins from the Rocky Mountain Institute, DNR Director Rich Leopold and many more. For more information Charles Vigdal, (712)336-6352 ext 2212, cvigdal@co.dickinson.ia.us.

Optimizing Grazing and Enhancing the Environment, August 25-26, Honey Creek Resort, Rathbun Lake, IA. Topics will include understanding behavior as a means to better manage landscapes, year-round grazing management, grazing management to benefit livestock and wildlife, optimizing fertilizer dollars, and incorporating annual forage crops into a grazing system. For more information, Joe Sellers, Iowa State University Extension livestock specialist, at (641)203-1270, sellers@iastate.edu, or www.iowabeefcenter.org.

Taste Iowa, Celebrating Agriculture and Locally Grown Food in Iowa, August 28-29, Conrad. Food festival, vendor's market,

All-Iowa omelet breakfast, bbq contest, interactive and informative workshops, and live music. For more information contact Shane Tiernan, (641)366-3898, shanet@gnbbank.com

Whiterock Conservancy Celebration, August 29, Coon Rapids, IA. Commemorate the 50th anniversary of Khrushchev in Iowa. Celebrate how agricultural innovation can help further international understanding. Join dozens of Russian guests in Coon Rapids that day to enjoy a farm machinery parade, the historic Garst Farm House, and more. For more information Rachel Garst at (712)999-7031. www.whiterockconservancy.org.

September

Producing Sustainability, September 4, Fairfield, IA. Growing Food, Growing Lives, Growing Economies a local foods conference. The conference includes two keynote presenters plus three program tracks: Farm to Institution, Producer Innovation

and Food System Advocates. For more information <http://www.travelfairfieldiowa.com/food-conference>.

Energy and Sustainability Expo, September 12-13, Norway, IA. The expo will focus on green jobs with emphasis on funding and incentives available to homeowners and businesses to use sustainable energy and practices. Keynote speakers include Kate Gordon and Kevin Nordmeyer. For more information www.irenew.org.

October

2009 World Food Prize "Borlaug Dialogue," October 14-16, Des Moines, IA. The theme of the Borlaug Dialogue is "Food, Agriculture, and National Security in a Globalized World," and several hundred global leaders from more than 65 countries are expected to attend. For more information <http://www.worldfoodprize.org>.

From Commodity to Community:

Food Politics and Projects in the Heartland

13th Annual Community Food Security Coalition Conference, October 10-13, Polk County Convention Center, Des Moines, IA.

More than 700 participants will gather for four days of presentations, workshops, networking opportunities, local foods, and a variety of field trips around the state.

This year's conference will include a special one day gathering of state and local food policy council organizers and practitioners on Saturday, October 10.

For more information Suzi Bernhard 515-232-5661, Suzi@practicalfarmers.org.

Watch for Late Fall Webinars

Practical Farmers of Iowa and the Beginning Farmer Center will host eight webinars in the post-harvest season on succession planning and enterprise development. Watch for more details on webinars on the following topics:

- ❖ Whole Farm Planning
- ❖ Legal Issues in Succession Planning
- ❖ Succession or Estate Planning
- ❖ Fitting New Enterprises into the Whole Farm
- ❖ Which Enterprise? Doing Basic Research to Identify Markets
- ❖ Enterprise Budgets: Can I produce enough? What other considerations are there?
- ❖ Farmers Speak on Products, Pricing, Placement, Promotion
- ❖ Financing Your Enterprise: Which governmental programs can help?

Support for the webinars is provided by the Leopold Center for Sustainable Agriculture and the Wallace Genetic Foundation.

Next Generation Campaign Passes Half-Way Mark

Practical Farmers of Iowa's campaign to raise \$10,000 in individual and corporate donations for the Next Generation program has passed the half way mark. As of late June, 25 donors have contributed \$7525 to the fund.

Tim Landgraf, PFI Board President, says, "We hope to conclude the campaign by September 30, the end of PFI's fiscal year. If you are committed to bringing the next generation into Iowa agriculture, please help out!"

The Next Generation program will offer support, training, and mentoring opportunities to beginning farmers. Through the Leopold Center's support, the program has provided get-togethers for farms transitioning a younger generation onto the farm. This fall, the training will be expanded to offer webinars, retreats, mentoring and more. See page 23 for more details.



Bill and Betty Kimble have contributed to PFI's Next Generation campaign. You should too!

Support for horticulture work

PFI's horticulture work received another show of support from The Ceres Foundation recently, when the foundation provided funding for PFI's work to serve fruit and vegetable farmers and PFI's grazing clusters. Sally Worley, coordinator of the work, is using the funding to help farmers conduct the following projects:

- ❖ Compare CSA (community supported agriculture) pricing online.
- ❖ Graft heirloom tomatoes to a vigorous and disease resistant rootstock to see if yields and fruit quality increase.
- ❖ Release schedule and income records for fall 2008 high tunnel season, plus high tunnel construction costs (published in Spring 2009 newsletter).
- ❖ Compare schedule, market value, and quality between high tunnel and field for Spring/Summer 2009 crops.
- ❖ Document schedule and economics of Spring 2009 crops grown in greenhouse heated with a corn boiler.
- ❖ Document schedule and economics of Winter/Spring 2009 crops grown in a wood heated greenhouse.
- ❖ Create alternative planting schedule and storage capacity of specific crops in the off season. Record popularity and ease of marketing of these crops.
- ❖ Develop a plan for an underground tree fruit storage facility that uses minimal supplemental energy while providing optimum storage conditions.
- ❖ Release detailed plans for installing a septic tank root cellar.
- ❖ Test efficacy of fall planted oilseed radish and rapeseed that is spring killed to control weeds in a vegetable planting.



Judy Henry picks a pepper in June from a flourishing greenhouse pepper plant

For more information about PFI's horticulture projects, contact Sally Worley, (515)232-5661, sally@practicalfarmers.org.

Sustain the PFI Legacy

Remember Practical Farmers of Iowa in your will.



Practical Farmers of Iowa has flourished since its initial leaders came together in 1985. With your help, PFI will be around for generations to come.

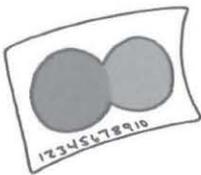
A planned gift (such as a bequest or gift of stocks, bonds, cash, life insurance, or IRA) will:

- Direct your dollars to sustainable farmers, not taxes
- Simplify your estate plans
- Perhaps even increase your income.

Call Teresa Opheim at (515)232-5661 for more information.

Supporting PFI Just Got Easier

The Practical Farmers of Iowa website, www.practicalfarmers.org, can now process credit card payments on line. You can use our safe, easy, and secure website to purchase merchandise, renew your membership, register for events, and make donations.



Henry Wallace's Foundation Supports Next Generation Program

The Wallace Genetic Foundation has awarded PFI a grant for the PFI Next Generation Program. The Wallace Genetic Foundation has been a strong supporter of PFI over the years. The Foundation was founded in 1959, when Henry A. Wallace and his wife, Ilo, transferred shares of Pioneer Hi-Bred Company shares to the Foundation. Wallace founded the company in 1926.

Member Poetry

The Farmer's Spirit

Gary Guthrie

The Spirit of the farmer
comes from the roots of splendor
From the miracles when the seeds
germinate
until the fruits are harvested

The Spirit begins to soar
with the breezes that calm her sweat

Ayy, the Spirit of the farmer
knows well the depths of love for her
earth

She is not her owner
because she knows she will become the
earth herself

She takes care of the land with love
because she is an artist of the panorama

The Spirit of the farmer
gives food to the one who has none
for the experiences of knowing the
balance between
life and death.

The blood flows from the hard and
difficult work
but for that her heart is big and generous

Love the farmer's spirit
and you will never know hunger of the
soul

If you are thirsty for life
come to the farmer's well
and drink from his life

When you drink water from this life
you will never leave with an empty life.

PFI Merchandise

Be a proud PFI member!

Casual Cap—\$12

Khaki, Velcro closure, "Healthy Food, Diverse Farms, Vibrant Communities" tagline printed on back.

_____ QTY _____ \$



White PFI T-shirt, Size S-XL—\$15

PFI logo on front with tagline on back

_____ QTY _____ \$



Farmer Cap—\$8

Summer style farmer cap with light denim cotton front and mesh back.

_____ QTY _____ \$



Colored PFI T-shirt, available in gray, orange, and safety green, Size S-XL—\$15

Scenic landscape with Practical Farmers of Iowa caption on front of shirt

_____ QTY _____ \$



Notecards—\$6 for set of 8

Colorful, picturesque photos of Iowa's agricultural landscape by Jerry Dewitt

_____ QTY _____ \$



King Corn DVD—\$10

Learn about the fate of corn—and our food system

_____ QTY _____ \$



Now
order and pay online at
[www.practicalfarmers.org!](http://www.practicalfarmers.org)

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Total: _____

*Shipping and Handling: \$3 for the first item, \$1 for each additional item

Practical Farmers of Iowa
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Ames, IA 50014
(515)232-5661

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- Check Payable to:
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- Credit Card
- Mastercard
 - Visa

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Support Our Efforts ~ Sustain Our Work

This annual membership is a:

- new membership
- renewal

I am joining at the level of:

- Student—\$15
- Individual—\$35
- Farm or Household—\$45
- Organization (including businesses, agencies, not-for-profit groups)—\$75

My interest in joining PFI is primarily as a:

- farmer/grower
- non-farmer (You will have the opportunity to expand upon this when you receive your membership information form.)

Each membership includes one vote and one subscription to *The Practical Farmer*.

Sustain PFI

For the sake of the long term health and vitality of PFI, we ask you to consider making a donation above and beyond your membership fee.

I would like to make a tax deductible donation to PFI in the amount of:

- \$1,000 \$500 \$250 \$100 \$50 \$_____

JOIN OUR GIFT OF THE MONTH CLUB

The Gift of the Month Club is an easy way to support Practical Farmers of Iowa! Send in your pledge with your credit card information, and we will automatically deduct your donation the first of each month.

YES! I would like to give _____ per month to PFI, to be automatically charged to my credit card the first of the month. (\$10 per month minimum)

Practical Farmers of Iowa is a 501©3 organization Your gift is tax-deductible to the extent allowed by law. Thank you!

Individual or Farm or Organization Name: _____

Mailing Address: _____

City, State, ZIP: _____

Primary Phone (with area code): _____

Alternate Phone (with area code): _____

E-mail: _____

* For Farm/Household membership, please list names of persons included.

* For Organization membership, please list one or two contact persons.

Payment:

Total: \$_____ = \$_____ membership + \$_____ donation + \$_____ merchandise (from opposite page)

Check or money order enclosed. (Please make payable to "Practical Farmers of Iowa.")

Credit Card Visa MasterCard

Card Number _____

Expiration Date _____ Signature _____





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Our Vision for Iowa



Food that is celebrated
for its freshness
and flavor
and connection
to local farmers
to seasons
to hard work
and good stewardship



Farms that are prized
for their diversity
of crops and livestock
their wildlife and healthy soils
their innovations, beauty and productivity
their connection to a rich past
and a fulfilling present
where individuals and families
are earning a good living



Communities that are alive
with diverse connections
between farmers and non-farmers;
places where commerce, cooperation, creativity
and spirituality are thriving;
places where the working landscape, the fresh air
and the clear water remind us of all that is good about Iowa

Healthy Food, Diverse Farms, Vibrant Communities