

the PRACTICAL FARMER

SUMMER 2021



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Protecting Pollinators







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Photo courtesy of Anne Plagge



WHAT WE DO

Practical Farmers of Iowa was founded in 1985 as an organization for farmers. We use farmer-led investigation and information sharing to help farmers practice an agriculture that benefits both the land and people.

OUR MISSION

Practical Farmers of Iowa's mission is equipping farmers to build resilient farms and communities.

OUR VISION

An Iowa with healthy soil, healthy food, clean air, clean water, resilient farms and vibrant communities.

OUR VALUES

Welcoming everyone

Farmers leading the exchange of experience and knowledge

Curiosity, creativity, collaboration and community

Resilient farms now and for future generations

Stewardship of land and resources

THE PRACTICAL FARMER

the Practical Farmer is published quarterly as a benefit of membership to help keep farmers and friends of farmers in touch with one another through informative articles on relevant farming topics, current on-farm research, upcoming events and other news of interest.

Magazine Editor: Tamsyn Jones

Back issues are available upon request. Unless otherwise noted, articles may be reprinted or adapted if credit is given. Clippings and notice are appreciated.



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As Seasons Change, Anticipation Blooms

I write this with spring bulbs in full bloom, asparagus emerging and cover crops exhibiting my favorite color – that vibrant green that can't be replicated outside of spring. But by the time you read this, those spring bulbs will be merely a memory, replaced by summer flowers. The cover crops will be replaced by cash crops. And both of our summer event series will be underway.

"the Practical Farmer" magazine creation is a collective labor of love. First, staff send ideas to Tamsyn. She and Nick compile these ideas into a draft magazine plan, and Tamsyn sends out final assignments. Staff turn in draft articles to Tamsyn, who edits each one. Then, Sarah Krumm and Tamsyn share laying out articles into spreads. Nick and I edit, Tamsyn makes final changes, the magazine goes to print and then it reaches your mailboxes.

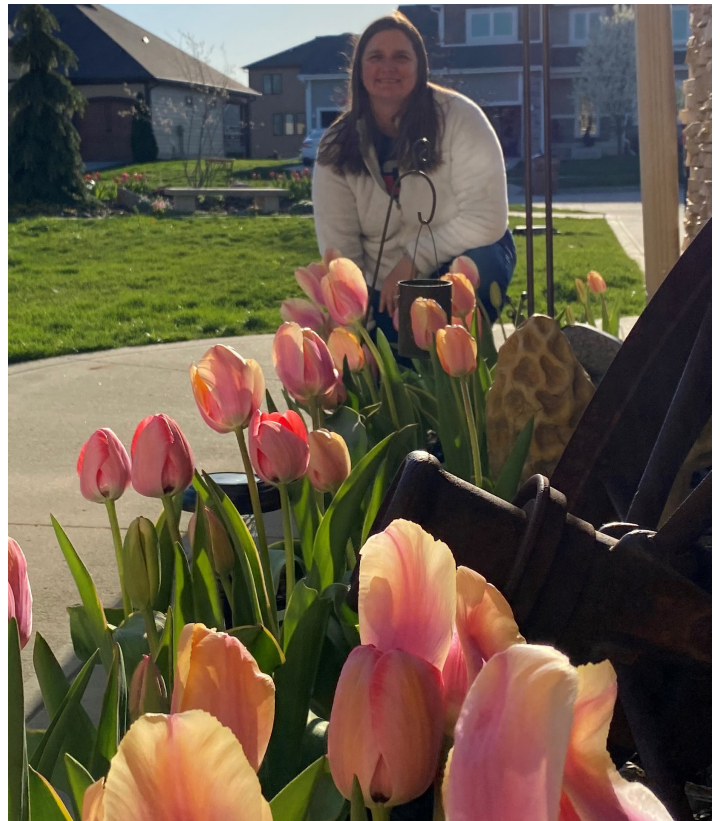
This means that as staff, we strive to predict the seasons and circumstances two-plus months in advance as we come up with topics. Over the past year, this time lag has proved a bit more thought-provoking as we have adapted so that our services continued amidst COVID-19. This summer, I am delighted that we are meeting again in person, via our "Catching Up" events. And, per your request, we are still offering some virtual events, including our new summer series "Live From the Farm." See pages 14-15 for more details about these series.

COVID-19 has kept us on our toes with planning and adaptation. While overwhelming at times, these skills have made PFI more malleable as an organization, which is important in serving our members – and is also a key component of resiliency. The pandemic, coupled with civic unrest, political division, a derecho and a drought, has also underscored that PFI is needed more than ever. Daily, our members embody PFI's values of welcoming everyone in a spirit of curiosity, creativity, collaboration and community.

Furthermore, as COVID-19 highlighted how fragile our concentrated food system is, PFI members have been leading the way providing food in a more localized, adaptive supply chain. We can all work together to ensure that these diversified local food systems are valued and supported beyond the pandemic.

While PFI, like many of you, was consumed by adaptation this last year, not all things were pandemic-related. As we cycle into our new strategic plan, we are adding many exciting endeavors to our plate. The first six months of our strategic plan has largely been about organizing and systems. This work is inspiring to those of us immersed in it, as we see how much opportunity we are going to unharness to grow as an organization, and to take on some new directions to create an Iowa with healthy soil, healthy food, clean air, clean water, resilient farms and vibrant communities.

Here is a smattering of our new directions: We are meeting with partners across Iowa to work together to better serve the land access needs of beginning farmers. We are working to serve a more diverse membership. We are expanding our programming for non-operator landowners, who own more than half of Iowa's farmland. We are redefining our role in regional food system work.



PFI Executive Director Sally Worley poses by blooming tulips, whose early-spring blooms remind us that winter has ended and brighter days have arrived.

And we want to make PFI a household name, so all farmers and eaters can learn about all of the innovative things our members are doing as we more effectively build resilient farms and communities.

You, our members, are our biggest inspiration as PFI blooms into new areas of work. Please reach out to provide us seeds of ideas that we can nurture as we venture into new seasons together.

Sally Worley

"When the seasons shift, even the subtle beginning, the scent of a promised change, I feel something stir inside me. Hopefulness? Gratitude? Openness? Whatever it is, it's welcome."

– Kristin Armstrong

The Joy of Flowers

For some members, growing flowers is about creativity, sustainability and connecting with community

In recent years, local flowers have dazzled with their growing presence in restaurants, cafes, Main Street shops, farmers markets, and of course, on social media.

When scrolling through photos of gorgeous bouquets on social media or imagining rows of dahlias and hedges of pillowy hydrangeas, the romance stands out. But there is much more to flower farming. Cut flowers can offer flexibility, community connection, a means of sustainability and an outlet for creativity quite unlike any other crop.

Balancing Bottom Lines

Chad Hensley and Katie Hensley started Big Creek Farm in fall of 2012. They live on a lot-and-a-half in Lamoni, Iowa, with ample growing space for annual flowers, an array of perennials and flowering shrubs and trees. Of the additional 160 acres of rented farmland, roughly 1 acre is in vegetable and flower production and the rest in rotational grazing for grass-fed beef. Flowers were a big part from the beginning. Today, beef is a key focus, but when they started, the Hensleys lacked capital to get into cattle at any scale. Horticultural crops felt like a better opportunity for return on their investment.

Chad and Katie's foundational principles were clear, though. They strive for Holistic Management, an approach that prioritizes balancing economic, environmental and self-care considerations. With this framework, and by sinking their roots into their community more deeply, the Hensleys are excited and determined to show what they can accomplish in a local economy.

Finding the right market for local flowers can be a journey. Many flower farmers find a good fit with florists, wholesalers, or both. There are also opportunities for dried flowers, individual stems and more. For a time, Chad and Katie pursued wholesale with florists in Kansas City, Missouri. Eventually, they concluded that making those trips didn't meet holistic bottom lines that worked for



“There is joy in watching flowers grow, develop and bloom. It is also meaningful to think about the happy and sad moments when people are receiving flowers . . . They are worth the money even if they aren't a necessity.” – KATIE HENSLEY

them, so they stopped and pivoted to their own community.

“Flowers are good because you can stay at your own scale,” Chad says, referring to the flexibility that growing flowers afforded them.

Today, Big Creek's main sales focus is a flower CSA. This model lets the Hensleys secure revenue at the start of the season and builds in security and flexibility. For 15 weeks, customers get either the small “nice” bouquet or the large “wow” bouquet, as Katie describes them. With the closure of Lamoni's only florist shop three years ago, Katie has become the town florist.

In the overwhelming year that was 2020, Big Creek Farms' flower CSA turned out to be more valuable than Chad and Katie ever expected. They discovered that the beauty and joy flowers brought people was as necessary as any other nourishment that year. As they put it, “People simply needed it.” One customer bought one flower share to keep and a second to have a bouquet to give away every week. Another customer gifted a flower share to a local nursing home, making

Katie's bouquets a consistent bright spot for staff and residents through dark days of isolation and uncertainty during the pandemic.

Chad and Katie both express a deep feeling of being of service to their community. “There is joy in watching flowers grow, develop and bloom,” Katie says. “It is also meaningful to think about the happy and sad moments when people are receiving flowers – for graduations, a miscarriage once, weddings, funerals. They are worth the money even if they aren't a necessity.”

A Creative Way Forward

Meredith Nunnikhoven operates a flower CSA at Barnswallow Flowers & Produce, a 3-acre, diversified, sustainable farm that operates alongside her family's commodity-based farm outside Oskaloosa, Iowa. Like the Hensleys, she is also committed to proving that the small, diversified model can work.

In choosing the best route for marketing her flowers, Meredith has tried several options, including working with wholesalers, selling directly to florists and taking part in farmers markets. She is now focused on the CSA model – though she has also found success in partnering with nearby farms that presell through online sales.

In addition to flowers, vegetables are a piece of the puzzle, and chestnuts will soon add another income stream as the grove matures. Meredith is a proponent of diverse income streams, including “off-farm income.” She also rents her 1940s-era farmhouse on Airbnb and will soon further expand her enterprises with valued-added products that include hot sauce and a mysterious “secret project” that she's not ready to divulge.

But the flowers are where Meredith's creativity, innovation, inspiration and marketing savvy reveal themselves. Similar to Big Creek Farm's bouquets, a Barnswallow bouquet may include cultivated annuals, stems from heirloom shrubs, foraged grasses, blooms from cover crops and more surprises. Meredith draws on the full range of flora from across the property for her

arrangements, resulting in dramatic botanical combinations and wildly unique bouquets.

Growing flowers also plays a role in Meredith's focus on regenerative practices. She opts to grow plants from seed and without chemicals, fertilizing with chicken litter from a neighbor's farm, supplementing with organic worm castings from a company based in Indianola, Iowa, and focusing on outdoor production.

She is also experimenting with raising plants that may grow well in Iowa but aren't easy to ship. For instance, are artichokes a viable crop here? How can she best extend the life of cut lilacs? What varieties of peonies are best suited to her farm? Seeking the answers to questions like these feeds Meredith's curiosity, expands her offerings and creates a market niche for her products, all through a quest for greater sustainability. "It's about communicating a message through what we're making," Meredith says. "We're finally getting to what aligns with our values. It's about staying local and getting involved with the customer down the road."

The Art of Sustainability

For Naomi Friend, sustainability is a core part of her goal with flower production. In rare cases, she has had to order from floral suppliers to have enough flowers for an off-season event. Working with these flowers, rather than ones she had grown herself, was eye-opening. "The waste in the floral industry is a lot," she says.

"By providing an alternative product, I'm serving customers who share my values of chemical-free methods and worker protection, as well as those who simply prefer to shop locally."

- NAOMI FRIEND

(Opposite): Katie and Chad Hensley share beauty and joy with through a flower CSA at Big Creek Farm in Lamoni, Iowa. **(Above):** A flower arrangement created by Meredith Nunnikhoven of Barnswallow Flowers & Produce near Oskaloosa, Iowa. Flowers are part of the farm's diversified operation. *Photo courtesy of Meredith Nunnikhoven* **(Right):** Andrew and Naomi Friend raise flowers at at Friend's Flowers near Story City, Iowa.



"It's about staying local and getting involved with the customer down the road." - MEREDITH NUNNIKHOVEN

From excess packing materials and oversized boxes to time spent rehydrating flowers that were shipped hundreds of miles, Naomi says she was amazed at the environmental impact and inefficiency. As a working artist and the lead grower and designer at Friend's Flowers, Naomi approaches the farm with an artist's creativity and a farmer's curiosity. Through trial and error, she has learned everything from how to enrich her farm's ecosystem (with greater diversity), to how to capture a swarm of honeybees (with a mosquito net and a cardboard box), to how to solve the big question: how to build a market for chemical-free, local flowers. She finds that informed customers are part of the solution.

Cut flowers are a multibillion-dollar global industry. As perishable goods, many flowers are chemically treated to control pests and extend their life through shipment over hundreds or thousands of miles. "Too often, safety standards are weak and wages are low for industry workers," Naomi says. "By providing an alternative product, I'm serving customers who share my values of chemical-free methods and worker protection, as well as those who simply prefer to shop locally."

Growing local flowers in ways that put the soil first and work with, rather than against, nature is an approach that Meredith, Naomi and the Hensleys share – and for each, flowers have become a centerpiece of their farm operations.

For these flower farmers, their journey began with a question. For the Hensleys, how can they achieve the best answers to their economic, self-care and environmental goals? For Meredith, how can flowers express and feed her interest in regenerative farming practices? For Naomi, how can her art and sustainability ethic fulfill her longing to return to the land?

All of them see flowers as an essential part of the answer. ■



Financially Strong Through a Tough Year

Thanks to robust member and donor support, PFI stayed buoyant through the unique challenges of 2020

Despite, or maybe due to, the difficult year, Practical Farmers' budget and membership continue to grow. This is a testament to the importance of PFI's supportive network in creating resilient farms and communities.

In fiscal year 2020 (Oct. 1, 2019 – Sept. 30, 2020), Practical Farmers received \$3.24 million in revenue. This is up by about \$445,000 from fiscal year 2019. Much of this growth is due to continued and expanded grant support, additional memberships and generous donations from our supportive network.

Of this revenue, **\$132,915 came from donations above membership from 291 individual donors.** These individual donations are vital to our ability to respond directly to our members' needs. Of these donations, \$26,072 were made to provide savings matches for beginning farmers to put toward farm assets upon graduating from PFI's Savings Incentives Program.

In addition, 11 generous members purchased gift memberships for others, both supporting PFI and bringing more people into the network (see sidebar). **Practical Farmers also received funding from 52 operating grants in fiscal year 2020.**

We are humbled to receive donations from such a wide swath of supporters. We realize you have many options for investing your money to make an impact, and are so grateful you have decided to invest in PFI.

We take great care to use your donations to further PFI's mission of equipping farmers to build resilient farms and communities. **Sincere thank-yous to all of you for your generosity that allows us to do this vital work.** ■

INVESTING IN BEGINNING FARMERS

Angela Tedesco, of Johnson, realizes the capital and support that beginning farmers need to get started. Upon graduating from Iowa State University with a master's degree in horticulture, she started a vegetable farm, one of Iowa's early community supported agriculture (CSA) programs, near Granger, Iowa, in 1998. Angela says about starting a farm: "It is an intense experience to dive in, plan and execute producing food for so many people each year. It is like birthing a child with a similar load of responsibility, given the commitment."

Now retired, Angela has served several years on PFI's SIP committee, providing guidance to program criteria and helping to select program recipients. She has also mentored numerous beginning farmers through PFI's programs and beyond. She and her husband, John, are part of the PFI community who made a financial donation toward SIP savings matches last year. ■



TRIBUTE GIFTS

Each year, PFI receives gifts in honor and in memory of people. These gifts are extra meaningful, as they recognize the important impact extraordinary people have had on the lives of those who donated in their name.



This last year, one "in honor of" donation came in the wake of the derecho. PFI lifetime member Nathan Anderson, who farms near Cherokee, Iowa, was in Ames,

Iowa, helping his sister and some PFI staff, including Stefan Gailans, clean up felled trees with his chainsaw.

Hardworking Nathan worked the duration of his time in Ames and ended up cleaning up trees for Stefan's neighbor, Kathryn

Corones, as well. As a result, Kathryn donated to PFI in honor of Nathan. Thanks, Kathryn and Nathan both for your generosity! ■

IN HONOR OF

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Read our complete 2020 annual report – including stories of more PFI leaders – at practicalfarmers.org.

Multiple Approaches to Mentorship

Learning how to build support networks can boost the chances of farm success

When beginning farmers start farming, they often seek mentors to support them as they navigate their early farming years. Many applicants to the Savings Incentive Program cite the mentor match aspect of the program, as well as the other connections they make in SIP, as their main motivation for participating.

Having mentors and peers to call on who can help frame problems or barriers a beginning farmer has hit can be invaluable. When working with Savings Incentive Program participants, we teach them that there's no single person who can help with all their challenges, and that they need to instead build a network to support different facets of their farming journey. For example, one farmer might offer helpful advice about purchasing a piece of equipment, such as what questions to ask or where to search for it, while another farmer might be a go-to person for crop production advice.

Mark Westbrook, a graduate of the 2019 Savings Incentive Program class and owner of Solstice Farm near Waverly, Iowa, has found many ways to build his network of peers and mentors. He and his wife, Theresa, decided to take their years of hobby farming to the next level and purchased an acreage on which to establish perennial fruits and diversified livestock. When they moved to Waverly from New Mexico, they didn't know many farmers in the area. Seeking community and farming experience, Mark found Jóa Food Farm located not too far away.

He reached out to owners Wendy Johnson and Johnny Rafkin about connecting with them to learn more about farming. "I was attracted to their vision for farming and the methods they used," Mark says. "It so happened that they had just posted for a farm helper." Mark was hired to work two days a week on the farm, learning the vocation at the same time. Reaching out to Wendy and Johnny – and then working for them – helped Mark build a community connection that he can still access today when he stumbles into a sticky situation.

Caite and Jim Palmer of Castalia, Iowa, graduated with the SIP Class of 2017. Being the fourth generation to farm on Jim's family farm, they have a strong connection to

other local farmers and the community. Caite has found that having this local network is helpful, but says sometimes you need more.

"When at these PFI events, I know I am going to meet others who have the same goals and ideals as me, which makes it easier to meet people I can connect with."

– MARK WESTBROCK

"I find a strong mentor for me is someone who gives me personal strength to deal with the family and mental health issues that come with farming," Caite says, noting that farming with children can be rewarding, but can also be challenging and mentally draining. "I need someone who can help me work though how to help my daughter through losing a lamb she so deeply loved," Caite says. These are nuances and



dimensions of farming that aren't easily found online. Having someone to talk with during such stressful situations, and who can offer emotional support, is another important facet of mentorship.

Finding Connections at Farmers Markets

Building that network, however, can be a challenging process, and there's no single right or best approach. When Mark was getting started farming, he followed the path many direct-market beginning farmers do: He signed up for a couple of farmers market booths. This gave him the opportunity to have customers find him.

But an unexpected benefit was building relationships with other farmers. "When you are all together each week, all season long, you start to chat and connect with one another," Mark says. He has found having a market presence to be one of the easiest ways to meet other farmers. And he adds that from these connections grew some collaborations that may have not happened otherwise. For instance, Mark explains how fellow market vendor Eric Jensen, also a beginning farmer, was increasing his off-season production in his high tunnel but needed ways to get the produce to customers. Mark agreed to promote the produce Eric had available each week to his egg customers. The collaboration was a win-win for both beginning farmers and their customers.

In addition to the farmers market, Mark has found success in meeting peers and mentors through local field days and conferences. "When at PFI events, I know I am going to meet others who have the same goals and ideals as me, which makes it easier to meet people who I can connect with," Mark says.

Building Networks Through Formal Programs

Caite, meanwhile, has met a number of mentors through more formalized programs, like the Women, Food and Agriculture Network's mentoring program and PFI's Savings Incentive Program. Each program has paired Caite with a mentor based on

“I find a strong mentor for me is someone who gives me personal strength to deal with the family and mental health issues that come with farming.” - CAITE PALMER

some criteria she was seeking. Currently, Caite is mentoring with Carrie Chestnut Mess, a dairy farmer in southeastern Wisconsin, through WFAN's "Harvesting Our Potential" mentoring program. When accepted into this program, Caite says she had an idea of who she wanted as a mentor, being a reader of Carrie's "Dairy Carrie" blog. This program lets participants decide whether to choose their own mentor or have WFAN make a match.

Being familiar with Carrie's background, however, didn't make the prospect of asking Carrie to be her mentor any easier. "It's intimidating to ask someone to be your mentor," Caite says. "Why would someone want to take time out of their day to help me figure out my problems?" Despite the anxiety, Caite knew the worst that could happen was for Carrie to say no. So she summoned her courage – and Carrie accepted the invitation.

The two women took time in their first meetings to set expectations and goals for the mentorship. "This has been key to feeling like it's of value to us both," Caite says. They both agree on how they will communicate, how often and what they want to accomplish. Caite and Carrie spent the first month honing in on what Caite wanted to gain from mentorship.

This process led to the idea of Caite starting a Facebook group where other farmers with families could share tips, or just support one another in their challenges. Thus, the Barnyard Language group was born. This has been a place for other farmers to share how they struggle with feeding their family between chores, deal with depression and so much more. (If this group sounds like a place for you, check it out on Facebook.)

For Mark, the Savings Incentive Program connected him to Peter Kerns and Natasha Hegmann of Turkey River Farm in Elkport, Iowa. Collectively, the trio approached the mentorship very casually, which worked well with their personalities and intentions. "It has been a great experience getting to know Pete and Natasha," Mark says. "They have a similar worldview to us and their scale is not so much bigger than ours. This means we have many practices we can discuss that are relevant."



(Opposite): Theresa and Mark Westbrook, pictured with their daughter, farm at Solstice Farm near Waverly, Iowa. **(Above):** Left to right: Jim, Charlotte, Caite and Henry Palmer farm near Castalia, Iowa.

Even though the mentorship through SIP is complete, these farmers still keep in touch and support each other – an example of how mentorships sometimes lead to lifelong friendships.

Adapting SIP to Reflect Changing Mentorship Needs

When beginning farmers are getting started farming, they need support with particular skills and problems that will change as their farm and knowledge base grows. Because of this, what they need from their support network will change over time as well.

When PFI revised the mentorship aspect of the Saving Incentive Program in 2019, we took what we have learned from farmers about building their network and adapted the program to fit. Now, instead of focusing on matching each participant or farming couple with a single mentor, we want to help them build a strong support network with a variety of mentors and peers.

That same year (2019), we started having all SIP class members in their first year of the program attend a variety of mentor farm visits as a group. Participants tour a mentor's farm and ask targeted questions along the way. They are able to learn from other's questions and network with fellow classmates at these visits. We felt that having a more intimate visit with fewer people can help these beginning farmers build relationships with the mentor, and each other, while learning from other beginning farmers'

questions. Then, in year two of SIP, class members are paired one-on-one with a mentor.

As with Caite and Carrie in their mentorship, it's ideal to have a goal for what you want from the relationship. Now in the Savings Incentive Program, we ask beginning farmers to identify a specific problem or challenge they are looking to overcome. PFI staff then work to pair them with mentors who can help work through that problem. In the end, a relationship may develop and continue, or a solution is found and mentor and mentee agree the mentorship is no longer needed. It's all about forming a relationship and building trust. By the end of their time in SIP, these beginning farmers will leave with many possible mentors to reach out to when they need support. They will also have the skills to identify where mentorship is needed and how to seek possible mentors on their own.

Filling your toolbox with the right people can be the key to getting started with a successful and healthy farm. Mentors and peers can support your farming journey in many different ways, for many different reasons. As your farm grows, so will your network and your needs. Some people who were helpful in the beginning may not be needed as you gain more experience. Remember to be flexible and don't be afraid to ask for help. After all, we all want each other to do well. ■

SUMMER EVENTS SEASON

Over the years, I've often reminded farmers planning field days: "It's not a wedding, it's a field day!" Attendees to PFI field days have never needed fancy setups like mowed lawns and matching chairs. A few hay bales or boards set over buckets to make benches, somewhere to park easily – these simple details serve the purpose. In the same way dinner guests end up in the kitchen, field day attendees gravitate to perching on cast-aside tires and fence rails, examining the implements most deeply buried in the pasture and pulling weeds by the root.

Field days and summer events are billed as educational, but the fuel that really drives summer events is the care hosts and attendees have for one another as friends and neighbors, and for the success of one another's farms as we build a diverse farming landscape in Iowa. It's called many things – a network, a church, a family, a community – but we know it just as PFI.

After a year of virtual-only events, we are pleased to offer a summer events season with a mix of in-person and virtual events, all of which are "low fuss" for hosts and attendees, and hopefully, even richer for focusing only on what matters – getting together and "Catching Up." The concept is laid out here, along with a preview of "Live From the Farm," our weekly series that will stream live from a member's farm most Tuesdays from June through September. On behalf of the dozens of farmer-hosts and PFI staff working to plan these events, we look forward to seeing you soon!

– Liz Kolbe

Be sure to check our website, practicalfarmers.org, and social media for the most up-to-date summer events schedule!

LIVE
from the
FARM

YouTube Live Virtual Events

During 2020, we found many people enjoyed the opportunity to attend field days virtually, so we're improving our virtual engagement options with a weekly series called "Live From the Farm." This series builds on our 2020 virtual field day season, but with improved video and streaming quality.

Most Tuesdays from June through September, we will stream live from a member farm, aiming to showcase important farm activities that are interesting to see but harder to show and make engaging to in-person visitors, such as planting, harvest, cultivating, processing and delivery days.

You'll see things up close, be able to ask questions and have a chance to rewatch your favorite parts. These live events are interactive on YouTube Live, with chat enabled for attendees and the host, and will be available as recorded videos on PFI's YouTube channel as soon as the live event ends.

Flip through the summer events guide to learn more about each episode in the series. Like an old "TV Guide," you can preview the roster and see what episodes are coming up next on "Live From the Farm." To view the live event, visit PFI's YouTube channel at youtube.com/pfivideos.

To get reminders about the "Live From the Farm" events you're most excited about, RSVP on the PFI website at practicalfarmers.org/field-days. We'll send you reminders (and direct links!) specific to the events you choose.

Catching Up

In-Person Events

REGISTER TODAY!

This year, we've planned a series called **"Catching Up,"** an ever-growing line-up of small, energizing, in-person gatherings on farms across Iowa. To keep our farmers, staff and attendees safe, each "Catching Up" event is limited to 15 attendees.

We believe these smaller events will allow hosts and attendees to have richer conversations, and will catalyze new friendships and networks among farmers and friends of farmers.

Because the line-up will expand on a rolling basis throughout the summer – and because these gatherings will be by invitation only and not advertised publicly – individual "Catching Up" events are not listed in this guide. **But we want to make sure there's a place for everyone who wants to come.**

By signing up on our website at practicalfarmers.org/field-days, you'll have a chance to share your location and the topics you're interested in learning about. We will find or plan an event that best suits you, and invite you personally.

We believe these invitation-only events can be more locally relevant, diverse and welcoming for first-time attendees. Over the years, we've learned that just because it's public, doesn't mean everyone feels invited. This year, we want to make sure you feel welcomed, informed and safe attending PFI in-person events.

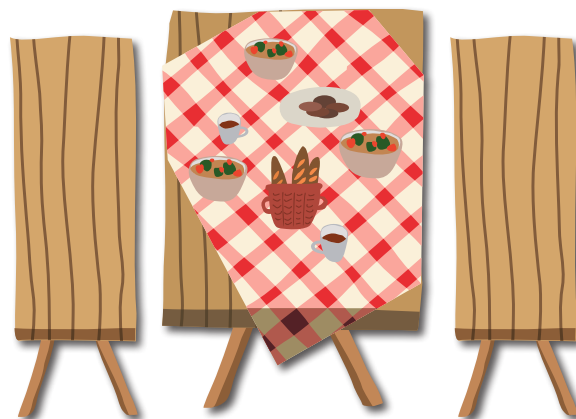
SO HOW DOES IT WORK?

- To get on the invitation list for "Catching Up" events, register at practicalfarmers.org/field-days
- When we have an event that suits your interests and location, we'll get in touch via email or phone. You might not hear from us right away, but you will receive an invitation at least two weeks ahead of the event.
- "Catching Up" events are two hours long, and because of their limited attendance, will be more conversation-based than large field days can accommodate. Come ready to engage!

INTERESTED IN HOSTING A "CATCHING UP" EVENT?

For the first time, PFI staff are planning summer events on an ongoing basis. These are "low-fuss" events, and it's likely you'll gain as much knowledge as you share. If you are interested in hosting an event on your farm (or want to recommend a friend!), sign up as an attendee at practicalfarmers.org/field-days and complete the "interested host" portion.

We are excited to give more farmers the opportunity to host a small PFI event on their farm!



QUESTIONS?

Contact the PFI office at info@practicalfarmers.org or (515) 232-5661.

SPANISH SUMMER EVENTS GUIDE

To receive our Spanish summer events guide, please contact Celize Christy at celize@practicalfarmers.org or call (515) 232-5661.

Para recibir nuestra guía de eventos del verano en español, comuníquese con Celize Christy a celize@practicalfarmers.org o llame (515) 232-5661.



Honoring Past and Future

Through FindAFarmer, landowner Kathleen Hunt and land seekers Jacob and Lindsay Bolson were able to connect over shared values and visions.

By Celize Christy

Access to land is a major barrier for beginning farmers who want to start their own operation. Many families without heirs are also concerned about the future of their land and want to see it continue to thrive for future generations. Landowners like Kathleen Hunt believe deeply in caring for the land while honoring their familial predecessors.

"In 1849, my great-great-grandfather, TJ Sheldon, at age 21, walked from Ohio to Iowa, where his sister lived," Kathleen says. "He spent the winter there, then continued on foot to California in the spring of 1850 to join the gold rush fever. He had success mining, making several trips back and forth from California to Ohio, always on foot."

Eventually, he bought land and settled in Hardin County, Iowa. After his death, TJ divided his land among his nine children, and Kathleen says a portion of that was passed down to her through her grandmother and mother.

Today, Kathleen lives on Washington State's Olympic Peninsula. She was raised in Seattle and says her mother had managed the land from afar – but retained a strong connection to it. "My mother always had deep emotional ties to the land, having grown up there and attending high school in Eldora," Kathleen says. "She originally didn't think I was interested in managing the land, but my sentimental attachment to the farm stems from my childhood summer vacations visiting my grandmother in Eldora. After my grandmother passed, my mother held onto the land and then passed it on to me when she died in 2017."

Connecting at the Right Time

As Kathleen was taking on the management of the land, she hoped to move the farm towards a more ecologically sustainable direction. For about 20 years, the farm had been rented by a farmer who Kathleen's mother had considered to be dependable, skilled and her "much appreciated boots- on-the-ground

(Above): Kathleen Hunt on her Hardin County, Iowa, farmland in 2019.

(Opposite): Jacob Bolson and his family farm near Hubbard, Iowa, and connected with Kathleen through Practical Farmers' FindAFarmer land-matching website. From left to right: Ada, 10; Hannah, 6; Lindsay; Jacob; Jack, 3; and Samuel, 7.

advisor.” But it been in continuous corn production, which Kathleen worried could be depleting the soil.

“My mother had always questioned the strong use of chemical fertilizers and herbicides, and the movement away from crop rotations which was the common farming practice of her youth,” Kathleen says. “Being a big proponent of organics, I wondered if it would be possible for me to move the farm in that direction, with less dependence on chemical supplementation.”

According to American Farmland Trust’s report “Conversations with Women Landowners,” women non-operating landowners are less likely to interact with conservation professionals. Their research shows that non-operating landowners in general, both men and women, are less likely to have personal contact with local extension and natural resource agency staff, which leads to lower resource management knowledge. But for women non-operating landowners, this lack of contact is even more pronounced.

Kathleen began consulting friends to learn more about relevant organizations in Iowa that could help her efforts to transition her land to organic. “It was through one of my friends that I was able to connect with Dr. Matt Liebman, a professor of agronomy at Iowa State University,” she says. “I spoke of my situation, my goal to transition the farmland to organic and asked him how I could go about this as a landowner. He suggested I connect with Practical Farmers of Iowa and the FindAFarmer site.”

Meanwhile, Jacob Bolson and his wife Lindsay were looking to rent land closer to their home in Hubbard, Iowa. An opportunity arose – and was snapped up just as fast by someone else. “Not being able to even have a proper shot at the opportunity was an awakening for us,” Jacob says. “We began to think that, if another land opportunity arose in our neighborhood, to have a chance we maybe just needed to get more creative. We then thought of making a profile on FindAFarmer.”

Kathleen had made some connections on the website, but communicated to those people that it might be a few years until the farm would be available to lease, as Kathleen’s current tenant was still operating the farm. In March 2020, Jacob contacted Kathleen through FindAFarmer and the two communicated back and forth for about a month before tapering off.

That fall, however, Kathleen’s farm manager called to tell her that her tenant had died in a farming accident. Around the same time, the farm manager told her he planned to retire and said she would need to find a new farm manager. “So, I thought to myself, this is the opportunity to try and change things,” Kathleen says. “I contacted Jacob on FindAFarmer, since we had been in touch months back, to ask if he would still be interested in renting from me.”

“Somehow, Jacob and I began conversing at a time when I was ready,” Kathleen adds. “It happened

“We began to think that, if another land opportunity arose in our neighborhood, to have a chance we maybe just needed to get more creative. We then thought of making a profile on FindAFarmer.”

– JACOB BOLSON

(Continued on page 18 →)





(Clockwise from top left): Group family photo of TJ Sheldon's family and children; Kathleen Hunt at 1 year old at her grandmother Mabel's house in Eldora, Iowa; Kathleen's mother, Patricia Dorothy Johnson Hunt; Kathleen's mother Patricia as a young woman.



"In the beginning, I felt pretty I lost navigating what to do and who to connect with. It was pretty overwhelming, but the more I read and learned the more I felt comfortable."

– KATHLEEN HUNT

(← Continued from page 17)

synchronistically. Once you start putting feelers out, things just begin to unfold – if you are open and perceptive."

Equitably Transitioning Land

After attending a few women landowner webinars hosted by the Women, Food and Agriculture Network, Kathleen was able to connect with a land manager who had presented during one of those webinars, Mollie Aronowitz from Peoples Company. "Jacob had actually referred me to Peoples Company from someone he knew. Since I had made a connection with Mollie prior, I felt comfortable asking her to be my land manager," Kathleen says.

Mollie helped Kathleen finalize the paperwork and contracts with Jacob, including how to handle the rent and determine a fair payment based on the quality of the land. With the previous tenant, Kathleen says the farm had been operated like a money-making business with little maintenance taking place. "Since Jacob is starting out in his first year on the farm, we wanted to be flexible and allow him to begin at a level that is equitable for him."

Jacob and Lindsay are now renting 139 acres of tillable land with about 20 acres of pasture. "We have been very blessed with Kathleen," Jacob says. "She is a second-generation absentee landowner and wants to do more to take care of the land, operating it in a way that is better for the soil and water. With approval from both Kathleen and Mollie, I've been able to sub-lease the pasture to my father-in-law to put a few cows out there to graze."

"This first year, we planted soybeans green and no-till into the cereal rye cover crop I planted last fall," Jacob adds. He and Lindsay also want to coordinate with Kathleen and Mollie on property improvements, like cleaning up the farm for tool storage, developing an observation plan with their local watershed alliance and installing two saturated buffers. "Overall, it's a very diverse farm," he says. "It has a wetland with some other acres in conservation. There are so many opportunities to establish habitat and more conservation efforts over time."

For Kathleen, the budding relationship with Jacob and Lindsay represents a long-term investment in the land, and peace of mind knowing that the land will be taken care of in a way that benefits the soil and water.



"For some landowners, making investments in conservation might be a hard choice, but to me what is important is the long-term health of the earth and to maintain as much native habitat as possible."

Reflections From a Land Match

More than half of Iowa's farmland is farmed by someone other than the owner. FindAFarmer is a unique platform that helps non-farming landowners find a tenant while connecting land seekers to opportunities to access land. The website is also useful for retiring farmers searching for a non-family successor to continue the farm.

For Jacob, navigating how to access farmland, whether connections are made virtually or in person, is about knowing your audience. "When speaking with a landowner, try to understand their knowledge base on production agriculture and try not to be overwhelming with too much information," he says. "Know your budget and economics. I used Iowa State's cash flow budget template, reviewed it with my banker and then provided it to Mollie."

Jacob also encourages those seeking land to have a multi-year vision for the farmland, as well as plan for how to get there. "Be proactive and look at it from more than just a one-year perspective," he says. "Talk to a prospective landowner about your goals, aspirations and big-picture goals you have for the farm. Also, think about what the differentiation is between you and other land seekers. Why do they need to rent their land to you versus anyone else?"

For landowners seeking tenants, Kathleen says it's essential to immerse yourself in all the options. "In the beginning, I felt pretty lost navigating what to do and who to connect with. It was very overwhelming, but the more I read and learned the more I felt comfortable."

She encourages landowners to seek out community organizations that can help them connect with people, and to "be flexible and comfortable with the decisions you make. Do not be submissive to what you think you should do or what others want you to do. Learn as much as you can, and then do what you feel is right for you, the land and the farm." ■

(Center): Kathleen installed a new gate on the farm to give the Boolsens greater security and privacy.

(Above): Kathleen Hunt stands by an old water pump on her farmland in 2019.



For Anne and Landon Plagge,

a desire to support their community is at the heart of their decision-making process. This desire has led them to invest in local projects, people and their land. The two met in Latimer, a town of 500 in north-central Iowa, and are now settled on Landon's family farm. With his father and uncle, Landon farms 3,800 acres of owned and rented land raising corn, soybeans, oats, rye and hogs.

BUILDING SOIL & COMMUNITY

by Lydia English

photographs by Anne Plagge

Anne and Landon Plagge are using their cover crop and small-grain expertise to strengthen their farm and local community.

Anne does the cover crop marketing, telling the story of what they do and why choosing cover crops is so important. She is also adding a pumpkin, sweet corn, and sunflower patch to the operation. Outside of the farm, she works at the Iowa Department of Public Health in early childhood home visitation and has a doctorate from Iowa State University in human development and family studies.



Landon and Anne Plagge farm with Landon's family in north-central Iowa.



A newly emerging oat crop. Mid-summer oat harvest spreads labor more evenly throughout the season for the Plagges.

Cover crop beginnings

Landon always knew he wanted to farm, but he didn't jump in right away. After graduating from high school, he spent a year as an exchange student in Australia where he learned about other farming practices, specifically no-till and cover crops. The farms he observed were a stark contrast to the black dirt he was used to seeing around his home farm in Iowa. This sparked his curiosity. He returned to the family farm while attending college and helped his dad and uncle.

Then, in 2012, wet conditions prevented the Plagge's from sowing 500 acres. In a spur-of-the-moment decision, Landon planted radishes on an otherwise empty field. By the time autumn rolled around, the radishes were large and their vegetation was thick, allowing the Plagges to apply their hog manure easily and have it soak into the ground. The next spring, that field of radishes was the first to get planted. The ground was easier to work than their other non-cover-cropped fields, and it yielded the highest. These observations led them to think there might be another way they could be farming.

It took roughly three years of experimenting to find out how to make cover crops work on the family farm. "In

those early years, we were looking at two fields right next to each other," Anne says. "The number of worms and the quality of soil in our field of radishes sold me on cover crops. You can see it with your eyes that the cover crop is doing something really positive for the field and building stronger organic matter."

Early funding from the Conservation Stewardship Program helped the family commit to doing no-till and cover crops on half their land. Now they use cover crops and no-till on every acre.

Venturing into small grains

Three years ago, Landon decided to plant oats, primarily so he could install pattern tile to improve drainage in one of his fields. That year, seed oat prices were also remarkably high and he thought he could save some money growing them himself. He had never grown oats before, but his dad and uncle had and he remembers baling straw as a kid. "We should be able to grow oats here," Landon says. "Just because no one is doing it, doesn't mean we can't."

While that first year wasn't a resounding success, Landon expanded their oat acres in 2020 and grew milling oats for Grain Millers in St. Ansgar, Iowa, which

then sold the oats to Oatly. They learned a lot that year. The grain had to be heavy enough to meet food-grade standards, and they weren't quite able to hit the threshold. But, Landon says, "200 acres was enough to allow me to compare the oats with other parts of our cropping rotation to get a sense of cash flow."

Along with the oat grain, Landon gained added revenue by taking off some of the oat straw and selling it to a local dairy. The straw was certified as chemical- and weed-free. He says the grain and straw profits together made the oats compete fairly well with his corn and soybeans that year. And it allowed the whole family to be involved, as they worked together to pick up and load straw bales.

The benefits of the small grains go beyond revenue. The Plagges rely on manure for the majority of their fertilizer requirements. By harvesting the oats in July, they can start growing their cover crops in August. They can also apply some of their hog manure in the summer, which will be actively taken up by the cover crop.

"Small grains open up our labor window by spreading out the seasons," Landon says, "and labor is really important to us. Plus, [with small grains] you get all the other benefits that are hard to put a dollar amount on but I know are helping the ground."

A prime example: The Plagges test the soil in each field every four years, and they have found that their soil organic matter is increasing each year on the acres where they've been using cover crops, no-till and small grains.

Eventually, Landon hopes to put all his fields into a three-year rotation, but to do that the family will need to build more local markets for small grains.

"We should be able to grow oats here. Just because no one is doing it, doesn't mean we can't."

– Landon Plagge

Tying enterprises together

In addition to growing oats for milling, Landon is now growing oats and cereal rye for cover crop seed. "I can use the oats and rye seed on my farm," he says, "but the hope is that I can also sell the seed to my neighbors for them to use as cover crops, and develop a local market."

Building a cover crop business does take investment. Landon recently purchased an air seeder, which will allow them to


get more consistent stands of cover crops and small grains. For their cereal rye cover crop, especially, ensuring they get a consistent, thick stand will let him save costs elsewhere – such as cutting herbicides in his soybeans.

This year, the Plagges also added a seed cleaning and grading facility to their operation. With the seed cleaner, they can separate out their heavy oats from their light oats. The heavy oats will continue on to the milling

(Continued on page 24 →)



The Plagges harvest the oat straw along with the grain, bringing in an additional revenue stream and allowing the whole family to work together at harvest.



“I want the infrastructure that we have invested on our own farm to be used by others. I want to make cover crop seed more accessible to the average person in our north-central Iowa area.”

- Landon Plagge

A maturing oat crop. The Plagges grow oats for milling and for cover crop seed.



The Plagges purchased a seed cleaner in 2020 for their cover crop business. The seed cleaner (green and yellow) will also be able to separate the heavy and the light oats, which will be destined for different markets.

market, and the light oats, which still have good germination, can be used for cover crop seed.

At the core of the Plagges' burgeoning cover crop seed business is the notion that they want to make cover crops more accessible to other farmers in their area. They see the business as being almost akin to a cooperative business model, where they can do things like trade equipment and give volume discounts on seeds. Landon and Anne hope their cover crop business can add a few local jobs as well. "I want the infrastructure that we have invested on our own farm to be used by others," Landon says. "I want to make cover crop seed more accessible to the average person in our north-central Iowa area."

To help their business grow, last year the Plagges joined the Cover Crop Business Accelerator program, led by PFI and Iowa Soybean Association, to develop a business

plan. "The program is a great opportunity to capitalize on skills that we may already have," Anne says, "and it gives us information and support about how to run our business in the best possible way. We want future generations to keep farming and be successful, and we see cover crops as the way to make that happen."

The local community has taken notice of the Plagges' endeavors. While Landon used to be the outlier of the neighborhood, others are now interested in having him help them seed cover crops. Last year, Landon was approached by a landowner to farm new ground specifically because of Landon's experience with no-till and cover crops. To communicate the benefits of their farming practices back to landowners and others, Anne takes photos throughout the year and compiles them into an annual calendar, where they can share their story.

(Continued on page 26 →)

“Our general philosophy is that we want to make our community better than how we came to it and fulfill the potential of what it can be.”

– Anne Plagge



Latimer grocery was reopened in 2014 by the Plagges and another area farmer, and sells grocery staples and deli items.

Building a community in Latimer

Anne and Landon's passion for taking care of their land and soil for future generations extends beyond the farm gate. They are taking care of their local community for future generations as well.

The Plagges' home farm is down the road from another small town, which, back when Landon was growing up, had thriving businesses like a café, bank, library and gas station. Over time, however, those businesses left and the town now feels abandoned. Landon doesn't want Latimer to suffer the same fate.

With a background in social services and the "helping profession," as Anne describes some aspects of her work, she feels the same way. She understands the importance of vibrant communities that allow young children and families to grow and thrive. And, as she puts it, "if I have hands to help, I will."

All said, the Plagges are staying busy. Landon and another local farmer co-own the community grocery store in town. After the previous owners closed shop, they didn't want to see Latimer without a place to congregate and buy food. Landon also owns some other local buildings, helping them get fixed up and used for new local businesses, and serves on the city council.

For her part, Anne is active in the local community development board, the county conservation board and the local childcare center's board – and the Plagges have supported their local animal shelter by adopting their dogs, Ivy and BJ, from there. "Our general philosophy is that we want to make our community better than how we came to it and fulfill the potential of what it can be," Anne says.

Together, they're putting down roots on their land and in their community. They hope others will join them. ■



Dogs love oats too. The Plagges' shelter dogs, Ivy (left) and BJ (right), enjoy their time in the oat fields.



A turnip, radish and oat cover crop stand. The Plagges want to help others in their community adopt cover crops.

A Keystone of Rural Vitality

A student's research shows how grazing livestock benefit farmers and the land

Catharine Found spent her spring 2021 semester researching a phrase Practical Farmers of Iowa attributes to co-founder Dick Thompson: “When livestock leave the farm, the people leave and the community begins to crumble.”

Catharine is a PFI member and third-year veterinary student at Iowa State University who is also pursuing her master's degree at the University of Iowa College of Public Health. In early 2021, she reached out to PFI to express her interest in working on a project as part of the culmination of her master's degree work, and wondered if there could be a way to link her public health studies with the needs of PFI staff. Catharine's inquiry came around the same time that PFI released its feature-length film “Livestock on the Land,” in January. Catharine viewed the film during its premiere and was thrilled by it.

The film – which explores how farmers are building resilient farms and communities by centering their operations around the animals they care for – inspired the focus of the project she undertook with PFI. Working with guidance from PFI's livestock program manager, Meghan Filbert, Catharine examined existing research on regenerative livestock practices from a public health lens and – looking at Dick Thompson's statement from a different angle – sought to answer the question: What do grazing-based farming practices mean for farmer well-being and the vitality of rural communities?

Catharine's project connected her to the work of scientific leaders in the field. “I got to sit down with books that I don't think I would have ever come across otherwise,” Catharine says. Books she read as part of her project include: “Agri-Food and Rural Development: Sustainable Place-Making” by Terry Marsden; “Hollowing Out the Middle: The Rural Brain Drain and What It Means for America,” by Patrick Carr and Maria Kefalas; and “Grasslands: Quietness and Strength for a New American Agriculture,” edited by Walter F. Wedin and Steven L. Fales.

The capstone of Catharine's project was the publication of an annotated bibliography, posted on PFI's website, evaluating peer-reviewed articles, socio-economic impact analyses and books. Catharine also learned from pertinent podcasts, webinars and PFI's annual conference, as well as through discussions with research leaders in Iowa, including staff at University of Northern Iowa's Center for Energy and Environmental Education, University of Iowa's Center for Agricultural Safety and Health and the Leopold Center for Sustainable Agriculture.

Project Findings

Catharine explains that exploring how communities are affected when livestock leave the farm initially seemed like a practical endeavor, given that livestock management has evolved alongside humans for thousands of years. But she discovered that almost every article she read referenced the lack of research on



regenerative agriculture and rural integrity practices in relation to human well-being. “It became frustrating to not encounter literature that directly broached this subject,” Catharine says. “But it also sets the precedent for researchers in the agricultural sector. There is a hole we must work towards filling.”

Despite the relative paucity of relevant literature, Catharine did find some pertinent study results. Combined with her other reading and research, she found that grazing and regenerative agriculture practices are linked with a host of benefits to both farmers and the land. Among her findings:

- Regenerative agriculture mimics rather than dominates nature. It repairs the soil and has the ability to increase farmers' income stability.
- Regenerative-based livestock practices have the ability to increase farmers' income stability, while increasing the proportion of middle-class families in rural areas.
- The best species to graze marginal lands, often those unsuitable for crops, are ruminant livestock above any other species.
- Farmers who are strongly committed to local food markets attach greater importance to civic engagement.
- Grazing-based practices give farmers a renewed sense of stewardship of the land. Farmers who understand soil quality and ecosystem services undergo a shift in ethics and rediscover what it means to sustain a farm for generations to come.

(Above): Catharine Found is a third-year veterinary student at Iowa State University who is also pursuing her master's degree at University of Iowa's College of Public Health. (Opposite): Kevin Dietzel and his family raise grass-fed cattle and operate a cheesery at Lost Lake Farm near Jewell, Iowa.



- Regenerative grazing techniques allow for diversification of on-farm funds, diversity of workday tasks and overall improved farmer satisfaction.
- Public health is improved through our grazing-based livestock systems. These systems can mitigate climate change by keeping carbon in the ground and reducing greenhouse gas emissions.
- Grazing-based livestock systems reduce the need to use drugs that kill parasites (called anthelmintics) and antibiotics in animals, both of which have known impacts on human health.
- Grazing-based systems improve soil quality and dramatically decrease runoff into our water sources.

Catharine's research also revealed some of the challenges to adopting regenerative grazing practices. "Most references comment on the need for more research on how to properly implement regenerative strategies, keeping in mind that strategy is highly dependent on geography, soil and management," she says. "Quantifying profits from switching to regenerative grazing is heavily related to location and landscape management. Yet farmers need to quantify profit margins before making the switch."

Solutions

The second part of Catharine's project involved brainstorming some ways to prevent the disintegration and rural decline that follows when livestock leave. The solutions she highlighted range from actions at the federal level to ongoing work that individuals and groups like PFI can continue to do. She notes:

- As outlined in the U.S. farm bill, current federal and farm subsidies skew much more heavily toward supporting commodity production, without incentivizing regenerative agriculture practices. To improve assistance to farmers implementing regenerative practices, federal and state programs need to tailor their funding and consultation toward these interests.

- Continue education efforts that can help encourage a change in the mindsets of federal and state granting organizations and farmers in the PFI region, such as community pasture walks and local hands-on demonstrations.
- Invest in educating younger generations about regenerative grazing based practices, including through National FFA Organization and 4-H.
- PFI should continue to freely share educational materials with prospective regenerative farmers. This could include input and output cost parameters, recommended seed varieties and pertinent native plant species for grazing.

Through her master's project experience, Catharine was able to take a closer look at how our modern livestock practices influence our communities and public health. She learned that mainstream audiences increasingly understand and accept what's involved with sustainable and regenerative agriculture, which opens the door to greater understanding about how those systems relate to community development.

"As a future veterinarian and public health practitioner, what I learned during this experience has had an incredible impact on my career outlook," she says. "I plan to take this experience with me when I practice veterinary medicine in Iowa." ■

Learn More

To view Catharine's annotated bibliography, learn about the "Importance of the Cow," watch PFI's film "Livestock on the Land" and access other resources about regenerative grazing, visit practicalfarmers.org/livestock-on-the-land.

Protecting Pollinators

Adding native habitat to farms can help pollinators adapt to climate change

Carbon sequestration, and climate mitigation more broadly, are hot topics right now. But mitigation is only one of three legs necessary for a sturdy approach to climate change. Just as important and pressing for many wildlife species, including insect pollinators, is their resilience to the impacts of climate change and their ability to adapt quickly enough to survive changing conditions.

Invertebrate pollinators such as bees, beetles, butterflies, moths, ants, flies and wasps provide critical ecosystem services and form the foundation of many food webs. It is not an exaggeration to say that they are one of the most important functional groups of organisms on the planet. According to the Xerces Society, an invertebrate conservation non-profit PFI regularly partners with, they are also one of the most threatened and fastest disappearing groups of organisms on Earth. In a 2019 report titled “Declines in Insect Abundance and Diversity: We Know Enough to Act Now,” Xerces Society scientists cite habitat loss and degradation, pesticides and climate change as the primary drivers of insect decline globally and argue that urgent action is needed now to reverse this trend.

One obvious threat is habitat loss. This is especially true in Iowa, where agricultural intensification over the past half-century has not only transformed the state into one of the most productive landscapes in the world, but has also resulted in the loss of over 99% of the native tallgrass prairie that historically sustained enormous numbers of insects, especially pollinators. Another major threat is the widespread use of pesticides. Here in the Corn Belt, these chemicals are used mainly to control agricultural pests. But insecticides are not selective enough to target only those species. Adding to the challenge is the ubiquitous use of neonicotinoid insecticides in seed coatings. These chemicals are highly water-soluble, spread easily in the environment, persist for a long time in soil and water and are extremely lethal to insects in very small quantities.

Compounding the myriad threats insect pollinators face is the looming specter of climate change. With many species already facing shrinking ranges and, in some cases, steep population declines, climate change

“We’re always asking what we can do to encourage the species diversity that should be here.”

– ERIK SESSIONS

could very well push many insect pollinators to extinction, destabilizing the ecological webs that we rely on in the process.

Climate Change and Pollinators

In Iowa, the current and future impacts of climate change probably seem familiar to many farmers and landowners: rising mean temperatures, unpredictable seasonal weather patterns and more frequent severe weather, including drought and flood events.

These impacts can affect pollinators in a variety of ways. For instance, a warming climate and prolonged periods of extreme temperatures can be lethal to many insect species, or cause significant stress that weakens their ability to thrive. Climate change also has the potential to amplify and

accelerate the largest threat facing most pollinator species: habitat loss.

Over the next several decades, non-native invasive species and some aggressive natives, like eastern red cedar, are projected to flourish as the climate changes, further threatening what little native habitat remains on the landscape. Such encroachment would severely limit the ability of these degraded habitats to support healthy populations of native pollinators and all the vital services they provide.

And because ecosystems are so interconnected, as pollinator numbers decline, native plants that rely on insect pollination will also decline, exacerbating the loss of habitat. Feeding into the vicious cycle, as high-quality habitat disappears from the landscape, pollinators are also less likely to survive impacts from pesticides and other stressors. These sorts of negative, climate change-driven feedback loops can quickly cause dramatic shifts towards less diverse systems, resulting in corresponding declines in ecosystem function and integrity.

What Can Farmers Do?

Farmers and landowners are on the front lines of Iowa’s land stewardship challenges, and they can and must play a key role in breaking this looming cycle of habitat and species loss. The approach is simple in theory: Restore more highly diverse native habitat to the landscape. Highly diverse communities of native plants, managed using practices like prescribed fire and managed grazing, are the linchpins of resilient systems that can help wildlife, especially insect pollinators, adapt to climate change.

PFI member Erik Sessions recently embarked on a project to increase habitat diversity on his farm. He and his family own 41 acres near Decorah, Iowa, 5 acres of which are devoted to a diverse vegetable farm. Since the early 1990s, the family has kept a large portion of the remaining acres, primarily comprising the surrounding hillsides, enrolled in the Conservation Reserve Program. Some of those areas were planted to a moderately diverse mix of native





(Above): Once dominated by brome and fescue, a diverse restoration of native grasses and wildflowers in Winneshiek County, Iowa, provides critical habitat for insect pollinators. *Image courtesy of U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service* **(Oppose):** Erik Session explains some of his vegetable production practices during a 2016 PFI field day.

species, but others were planted primarily to non-native brome grass.

Erik is now working to replace some of the brome with native species. While cool-season grasses like brome are excellent at controlling erosion, they have little value as pollinator habitat. By replacing the brome with more diverse flora, Erik will create vital habitat for pollinators while also making his farm more competitive as he and his family seek to re-enroll these acres into CRP. The process is not easy, however, and the Sessions have sought support from a variety of partners, including the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, the Farm Service Agency, the Natural Resources Conservation Service and Prairie Moon Nursery.

"Our main goal is to get re-enrolled in CRP," Erik explains, "but I also have always enjoyed seeing what's blooming and what's coming up in some of the other prairie we have."

Erik also points out that adding more native habitat is good for his vegetable production as well. "Gardens certainly benefit from the prairie diversity," he says. "The surrounding prairie acts as an insectary for all the beneficial insects, and prairie keeps the bees and other pollinators fed for a longer season so they can service the garden."

For Erik's farm, efforts to increase diversity have two components. The first is to reintroduce appropriate maintenance practices like mowing and prescribed fire. Erik explains that these are necessary to help promote prairie diversity and control undesirable species. Other maintenance activities include hand-cutting unwanted trees and shrubs and actively watching for invasive species like wild parsnip.

The second component is replanting 2 acres of his CRP ground that's currently in brome grass with native species. To do so, Erik and his family plan to plow up those acres immediately following a controlled burn and then drill a diverse mix of about 25 species, mostly native wildflowers, into the area. Over the next few years, Erik will mow or burn the area regularly early in the spring when the brome is growing but the native plants are not.

"The goal is to suppress the brome grass while allowing the prairie grasses and forbs time to establish and eventually flourish," Erik says. "We couldn't use chemicals because of the proximity to the organic vegetable garden. If the seeding doesn't take, we'd consider using plugs to try and jumpstart things, but that's more expensive."

Erik also hopes the diversity they're reintroducing on these 2 acres will spread

over time to other parts of the farm. He says that he's been watching native grasses and wildflowers creep into the brome grass over the last several years, and thinks the current effort should accelerate that process. Over time, the goal is for the property to more closely resemble the native plant communities that would have predated settlement. "The land knows best," Erik says. "We're just trying to find out where the land wants the diversity to be and help it along. We're always asking what we can do to encourage the species diversity that should be here."

He hopes the effort to replace non-native brome grass with a diverse community of native prairie plants will significantly increase habitat diversity on his farm, providing much-needed resources for pollinators and hopefully benefiting his garden in the process. Importantly, adding more native habitat to his farm will help sustain vital insect pollinators, and other wildlife, through the turbulence of our changing climate.

"To me as a landowner, there is a responsibility to take care of the land," Erik says. "One of my favorite parts of owning land is having that responsibility, doing the homework, trying to make things work and trying to make it better." ■

A New Cover Crop App

PFI will release its new “Find Cover Crops” mobile app in time for fall planting

Harvest time becomes busy quickly, which can make prioritizing seeding cover crops a challenge. Plus, not everyone has the equipment or supplies to seed cover crops themselves.

Whether you are looking to source cover crop seed or looking to hire someone to seed your cover crop, the new soon-to-be-released mobile phone app “Find Cover Crops” could be of service. Practical Farmers is launching the free app in July 2021. Users will be able to download the app on the Apple App Store and Google Play Store. Once released, you can find it by searching “Find Cover Crops.” In addition to the mobile phone apps, users will also have access to the platform via web browser.

On the app, users will be able to request aerial application, custom drilling and high-clearance seeding services. Seed dealers and seed cleaning services will also be listed, and for timely termination in the spring, users can search for custom spraying services.

The “Find Cover Crops” app enables the user to precisely identify the boundaries of the fields to be cover cropped. After all, your neighbor might not be as enthusiastic about cover crops as you are.

Meet One of the Listed Businesses

Dan Bahe of Stanley, Iowa, operates Bahe Cover Crop Seed, which offers cover crop drilling, several types of cover crop seed and

conservation mixes (such as for Conservation Reserve Program land) and drilling. He is one of at least 44 seed and service providers across the state who will be listed in the “Find Cover Crops” app. “Harvest time is a super busy time of the year, so people can’t always make the time to seed cover crops themselves,” Dan says. “We pride ourselves on being timely and doing a quality job.”

An App to Connect and Build Community

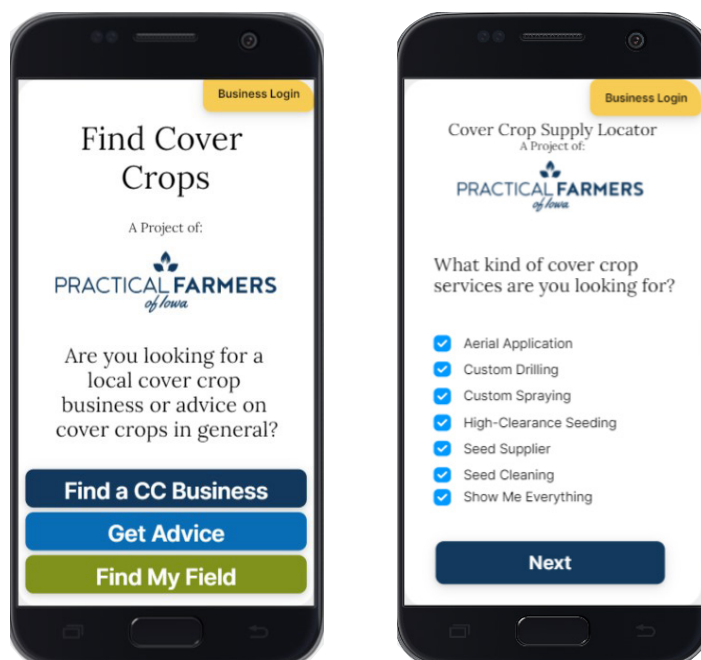
“With more and more people using cover crops, I think this app will help build the community of people using cover crops,” Dan adds. “I’m excited to have a medium to connect farmers to cover crop businesses and sound advice.”

The app also helps spread projects among businesses when necessary. If a cover crop business receives huge demand for seed or services, the business can call on other businesses in the area to help meet that demand.

Resources Abound

The app will include basic recommendations for seeding and grazing cover crops, with termination guidelines forthcoming. It will also include links to the Midwest Grazing Exchange and recommendations based on the “Whole Farm Conservation Best Practices Manual.”

If you want your business listed on the application, contact michael@practicalfarmers.org. ■



(Left): Dan Bahe of Stanley, Iowa – pictured with his dad, Don Bahe – operates Bahe Cover Crop Seed and is one of at least 44 seed and service providers who will be listed in PFI’s new “Find Cover Crops” app. (Above): Screenshots of the new “Find Cover Crops” app that Practical Farmers will release by fall 2021.

Review of Lance Foster's "The Indians of Iowa"

Growing up on a farm in northeastern Iowa, I gave little thought to the people who lived on the land we were now farming, near Fort Atkinson, in Winneshiek County.

In my high school American history class in the late 1970s, we spent several weeks studying Native Americans, but instead of studying Iowa's original inhabitants, I did my project on Chief Joseph and the Nez Perce Tribe of the Northwest. Until a couple of years ago, I didn't really think about who lived in Iowa before my ancestors.

Only recently, as more Americans have begun to acknowledge the Indigenous communities that were the original stewards of our land, has my family started looking deeper into the question of who was living on the land we grew up on, before our ancestors became homesteaders. Who were the Winneshiek? Where did the name Iowa come from?

"The Indians of Iowa," by Lance Foster, offers answers to those questions, and provides a deeper understanding of the cultures of the different tribal groups, as well as an introduction to the story of their time living in, and removal from, Iowa. Lance, a member of the Iowa Tribe of Kansas and Nebraska, covers each tribe in a separate chapter, alphabetically, beginning with the Ioway, one of the first documented tribes living in Iowa, and finishing with the Winnebago. Lance provides an overview of each tribe, including various names, languages spoken, the culture, the time period, where each lived in Iowa and where the tribes reside today.

It is likely that the Ioway lived in or migrated through the area where our family farm is now situated,



followed by the Sauk, Meskwaki, Winnebago and others. I hadn't heard of the Ioway people, after whom our state was named, now living mostly in Kansas, but I did know about the Winnebago (HoChunk), who were moved from Wisconsin and reluctantly lived in northeast Iowa.

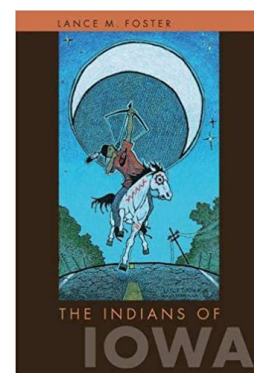
After each chapter, there is a section titled "A Closer Look," which covers topics such as Native arts and crafts, spirituality, Native American women in Iowa and going to a powwow, providing facts and sometimes suggestions for further study. My favorite "closer look" section, "Archaeology in Iowa," describes how the culture was determined by the physical environment of each time period from 11,000 B.C. to the 1950s. I enjoyed the descriptions of the landscape, housing, food sources, tools and how they changed over time with the change in climate. Lance suggests historic sites to visit in Iowa for each of these periods.

Artwork throughout the book, by Lance himself, adds another dimension: illustrations of drumming, canoeing and farming – and they also add a personal touch. I was struck that one person could provide so much researched material on one page and a woodcut print on the next. I would have liked to know more about the artwork, but I appreciate that Lance shared another side of himself with us.

Lance himself says that his book is intended as an introduction. There are many resources at the end of the book on places to visit, tribal contact information and book recommendations for both young and old. "The Indians of Iowa" is rich with information, and I will refer to it frequently, as I plan to visit some of the websites and actual historic sites. I have a lot to catch up on.

Hopefully, "The Indians of Iowa" will be used in Iowa high school American history classes now, and some young woman will choose to do her research on one of the tribes who lived in Iowa. "The Indians of Iowa" is a wonderful introduction and invitation to deeper learning, both for young people and for those, like me, who want to learn more. Better late than never. Thank you Lance Foster, for all of your condensed research. ■

Carol Bouska grew up on a 450-acre farm in northeastern Iowa, and now co-owns the land with her three sisters. Together, they are working to transition the land to a regenerative agriculture system. Carol lives in Minneapolis with her husband Jeremy, where she enjoys biking and swimming in the lakes. In 2020, she and her sisters received PFI's 2020 Farmland Owner Legacy Award.



Author: Lance M. Foster

160 pages

Published: 2010

Synopsis: Many different Indian tribes have lived in Iowa, each existing as an independent nation with its own history, culture, language and traditions. Some were residents before recorded time; some lived in Iowa for relatively short periods but played memorable roles in the state's history; others visited Iowa mostly during hunting trips or times of war. Stimulating and informative, Lance Foster's "The Indians of Iowa" is the only book for the general reader that covers the archaeology, history and culture of all the different native nations that have called Iowa home from prehistory to the present.

Foster begins with a history of Lewis and Clark's travels along the Missouri River adjacent to western Iowa. Next, he focuses on the tribes most connected to Iowa from prehistoric times to the present day: the Ioway, Meskwaki, Sauk, Omaha and Ponca, Ojibwa and Missouria, Pawnee and Arikara, Potawatomi, Illinois Confederacy, Santee and Yankton Sioux, and Winnebago.

New PFI Signs Dot the Countryside

More than 200 members receive updated signs featuring PFI's new logo and look

After PFI's visual rebranding in late 2019, it was time to get new mailbox and farm signs out to our members that featured our new logo and look.

After our graphic design and photography coordinator, Sarah Krumm, created new designs, we let all PFI members know about the opportunity. Throughout winter 2020, members had a chance to express their interest in receiving a sign. This spring, we distributed more than 200 signs to members across Iowa.

These signs are an excellent advertisement for Practical Farmers of Iowa, and we appreciate our members' enthusiasm for showing their pride in being part of our strong network of farmers, landowners and friends of farmers.

We hope these vibrant signs will spark interest, generate conversations and grow our network.

If you feel you missed out on this opportunity to display your appreciation for PFI in your neighborhood, please contact



PFI's membership manager, Steve Carlson, at steve@practicalfarmers.org. If we no longer have signs available, we will keep your interest on file for the next order. ■

(Clockwise from top left): Edd Eshelman and Joe Cavan of Liberty Farms and Meat mounted their farm sign next to their cattle pasture and vegetable garden in Clarke County, Iowa; a "Proud Member" mailbox sign adorns Steve and Marilyn Kofmehl's Zing N Berry Farm sign in front of their aronia berry field in Dallas County, Iowa; Larry Neppl poses by his new sign in Emmetsburg, Iowa.

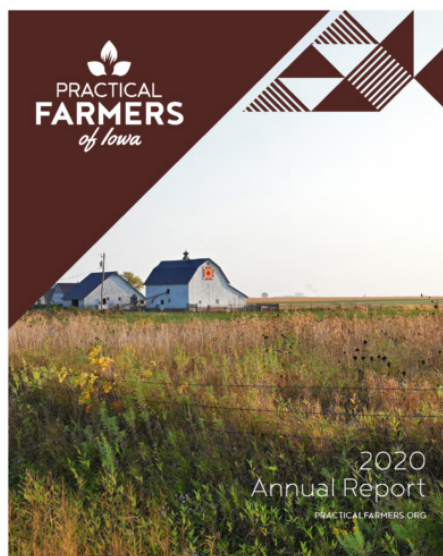


Our FY2020 Annual Report is Online

Members should have received a copy of our 2020 annual report in the mail, but the report is also online for those who wish to view there or share the link with others.

Inside, you'll read about PFI leaders; our growing supply chain relationships; how PFI members stayed connected and supported one another during the challenges of COVID-19, a derecho and a drought; our on-farm research; and more.

Our annual report is an easy-to-read overview of our activities from the previous year, including stories about our members, updates on our programs, financial information and more. We hope you all feel proud of what we have accomplished together. ■



Labor4Learning Jobs Still Open

If you are interested in gaining first-hand experience working on a farm, there are still positions open on farms across Iowa through PFI's Labor4Learning program.

This program is designed for beginning farmers seeking employment and additional training in farm management and production skills. Experienced PFI farmers vetted by a committee of PFI members serve as trainers, and represent a range of enterprises and production practices.

To view the list of open positions, visit practicalfarmers.org/labor4learning-trainers-2021.

Questions? Contact Celize Christy at celize@practicalfarmers.org. ■

New Webpage for PFI Directories

Online directories help you support PFI members

Did you know that, along with the individuals who make up PFI's membership, dozens of companies and organizations also pay annual member dues? As a new member benefit for our organizational members, we've created an online "Business and Organization Directory" to showcase the products and services they offer.

Use this directory to find a wide range of agricultural products and services – everything from seeds and equipment to educational resources and legal services. These organizations care about PFI's work and the farmers we serve, so please use this resource to support them!

Our "Local Foods Directory" lists PFI farmers and farm businesses who market a range of products, from produce and livestock, to flowers and eggs, to agroforestry and value-added products – and more. We also maintain directories of cover crop- and small-grain-related services. Our "Cover

Crop Business Directory" lists cover crop seed suppliers and seeding services in Iowa and beyond, as well as custom cover crop spraying and seed cleaning. Our "Small Grains Business Directory" lists the location and contact information of seed buyers, grain buyers and seed cleaners, as well as the small grains species they buy.

You can find all of these directories – along with instructions for how to get your farm or business added to any that are relevant to what you offer – at practicalfarmers.org/directories. ■

Read PFI Website in 17 Languages

We recently took another step toward making PFI content more accessible to a broader range of people. Our homepage now has a "Language" button, located in the top-left corner, that lets visitors select one of 17 different languages (18 options, if factoring in the choice of Chinese traditional or simplified characters) in which to view content on the site.

We are trying to make our communication more inclusive, and the ability to view our site in a language other than English is one of several steps we're taking. In the future, we may add additional language options. We are also working on a Spanish landing page for the website, having more content professionally translated into Spanish (like our 2021 summer events guide), developing guidelines to make our writing more inclusive and offering more events in Spanish, bilingually or with live translation.

If you have questions or feedback, please contact Sally Worley at sally@practicalfarmers.org. ■

Meet PFI's New Livestock Coordinator

Brynnen Gardner is the newest addition to the Practical Farmers staff

Practical Farmers is pleased to welcome Brynnen Gardner, who joined the Practical Farmers of Iowa staff in May 2021 as our new livestock coordinator. Brynnen grew up in Belmont, Michigan, on a small, diversified livestock operation. She was a member of 4-H, competed in meat judging and exhibited cattle and pigs. These experiences sparked her love for livestock and agriculture and led her to pursue a college degree at Iowa State University.



Brynnen graduated from Iowa State in 2021 with a bachelor's degree in animal science and a double minor in political science and public relations. On campus, she was involved in the Dairy Science Club, the ISU College of Agriculture and Life Sciences Student Council, Block and Bridle, peer mentoring within the Department of Animal Science and the Salt Company.

Throughout college, she was able to witness diverse farming practices traveling to (and living in) multiple states, working on private and university farms, taking an array of animal science classes and interning for multiple companies. Through her college career, Brynnen became passionate about communicating agriculture's sustainability story and the specific ways livestock can further enrich our lives. ■

In her free time, Brynnen enjoys spending time with family and friends, exploring the great outdoors, savoring a good cup of coffee, hanging out with cows and playing with her two Labrador retrievers. ■

Slew of New Research Reports

PFI's Cooperators' Program team has been hard at work analyzing data from 2020 on-farm research and demonstration projects. More than a dozen new research reports have been posted online exploring questions such as how different potting soils affect seedling yields; the effect of early-season mechanical weed control in oats; how grazing Conservation Reserve Program land affects soil health; and more. See all the latest research at practicalfarmers.org/research. ■

Welcome, New Members!

DISTRICT 1 – NORTHWEST

- Brandon Kerkhoff – Templeton

DISTRICT 2 – NORTH-CENTRAL

- Ed Gillott – Ames
- Dan and Monica Huyser – Ames
- Amanda Severson – Clarion
- Jason Schmitt – Manly
- Douglas Wirth – Marshalltown
- James Stephens – Nevada
- Ryan LeDoux – Stratford

DISTRICT 3 – NORTHEAST

- Guy Wendler – Cedar Rapids
- Craig Pesek and Denise Hart-Pesek – Coggon
- Shaffer Ridgeway – Waterloo
- Jerry Steimel – Waterloo

DISTRICT 4 – SOUTHWEST

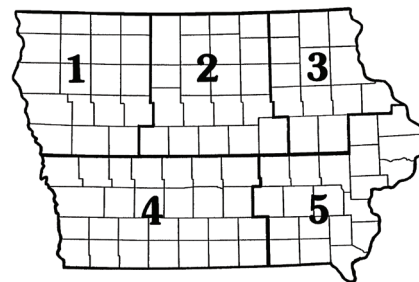
- Jessica Grubbs – Adair
- Curt Hansen – Baxter
- Emily Roush – Indianola
- Mallory Finch – Oakland
- Olivia Manzitto – Oakland
- Brian Mateer – Osceola
- Dennis Clark – Pleasantville
- Daniel Petersen – Walnut
- Max Petersen – Walnut

DISTRICT 5 – SOUTHEAST

- Doug Gross – Des Moines
- Jerry Avise-Rouse – Fairfield
- Christi Nickey – Fairfield
- Keith Hemmings – Farmington
- Joe and Jackie Bisinger – Monmouth
- Gary Terpstra – New Sharon
- Jason Taylor – Wayland
- Bryan Lee – Webster
- Eric Heick – West Branch

DISTRICT 6 – OUT OF STATE

- Phil Michael – Lanark, IL
- Aaron Butler – Malta, IL
- Anna Butler – Malta, IL
- Alexander Hopkins – Malta, IL
- Brian Tanner – Morton, IL
- Chris Von Holten – Walnut, IL
- Ben Moest – Winslow, IL
- Carter Morgan – Perrysville, IN
- Jacob Misch – Wheatfield, IN
- James Schiltz – Imlay City, MI
- Larry Wardrip – Nelson, MN
- Mitch Brummond – Stewartville, MN
- Bruce and Robert Stuart – Lexington, NE
- Emily Boever – Omaha, NE
- David Scheub – Grand Rapids, OH
- Roger Wright – Springfield, OH



- Richard Spaeth – Easley, SC
- Charles Hammer – Beaver Dam, WI
- Joshua Hiemstra – Brandon, WI
- Randy Hughes – Janesville, WI

Thank you

to our newest
lifetime members!

Tim and Ethel Sieren
Keota, IA

Lifetime membership is open to anyone, and confers the same benefits as regular membership – without any renewal notices! Learn more about this option at practicalfarmers.org/lifetime-membership.



Ortrude Dial and her family raise commercial sheep for meat, as well as field crops using non-GMO and organic practices, at Three Sisters Farm near Williams, Iowa. Ortrude will be featured in an episode of "Live From the Farm" on July 13.

Practical Farmers Events

Note: Times are in CST. Full details about all events are available at practicalfarmers.org/events.

JUNE

JUNE 22: Live From the Farm – Extended Rotations With Red Clover
2–2:45 p.m. | Online | Learn more at practicalfarmers.org/live-from-the-farm

JUNE 29: Live From the Farm – Clarion Locker Tour
9–9:45 a.m. | Online | Learn more at practicalfarmers.org/live-from-the-farm

JULY

JULY 13: Live From the Farm – Sheep Production With a First-Generation Farmer
5:30–6:15 p.m. | Online | Learn more at practicalfarmers.org/live-from-the-farm

JULY 20: Live From the Farm – New and Favorite Equipment in the Field and Pack Shed for Vegetables
6–6:45 p.m. | Online | Learn more at practicalfarmers.org/live-from-the-farm

JULY 27: Live From the Farm – Small-Grain Harvest and Post-Harvest Handling in the Little Sioux Valley
6:30–7:15 p.m. | Online | Learn more at practicalfarmers.org/live-from-the-farm

JULY 30: Landowner Bootcamp Series – Workshop #1: Every Farm Matters
Noon – 1:30 p.m. | Online | Learn more at practicalfarmers.org/events

AUGUST

AUG. 3: Live From the Farm – Expanding Agritourism on the Farm
5:30–6:15 p.m. | Online | Learn more at practicalfarmers.org/live-from-the-farm

AUG. 4: Low-Till Summer Web Series – Week 1: Reduced-Tillage Research at the University of Wisconsin
6–7 p.m. | Online | Learn more at practicalfarmers.org/events

AUG. 6: Landowner Bootcamp Series – Workshop #2: Rhythms of Agriculture
Noon – 1:30 p.m. | Online | Learn more at practicalfarmers.org/events

AUG. 10: Live From the Farm – Packhouse Set-Up and Packing Vegetable CSA Boxes at Blue Gate Farm
11:30 a.m.–12:15 p.m. | Online | Learn more at practicalfarmers.org/live-from-the-farm

AUG. 10: Low-Till Summer Web Series – Week 2: Cover Crop-Based Reduced-Tillage Practices in Wisconsin
6–7 p.m. | Online | Learn more at practicalfarmers.org/events

AUG. 13: Landowner Bootcamp Series – Workshop #3: Strategies & Next Steps
Noon – 1:30 p.m. | Online | Learn more at practicalfarmers.org/events

AUG. 17: Live From the Farm – Benching & Boulders: Restoring Stream Hydrology and Habitat for Wildlife and Water Quality
10–10:45 a.m. | Online | Learn more at practicalfarmers.org/live-from-the-farm

AUG. 19: Low-Till Summer Web Series – Week 3: Mulch-Based No-Till Practices
6–7 p.m. | Online | Learn more at practicalfarmers.org/events

AUG. 20: Landowner Bootcamp Series – Workshop #4: Strategies & Next Steps for Women Landowners
Noon – 2 p.m. | Online | Learn more at practicalfarmers.org/events

AUG. 24: Diverse Forages for Dairy Operations
1:30–2:15 p.m. | Online | Learn more at practicalfarmers.org/live-from-the-farm

AUG. 26: Low-Till Summer Web Series – Week 4: Reduced-Tillage Practices at Humble Hands Harvest and Middle Way Farm
6–7 p.m. | Online | Learn more at practicalfarmers.org/events

Visit practicalfarmers.org/catching-up for a list of events in our “Catching Up” series this summer – an ever-growing line-up of small, energizing, in-person gatherings on farms across Iowa.

Catching Up

Other Events

Note: Times are in CDT. Find more events at practicalfarmers.org/calendar.

JUNE

JUNE 19: Converting to Organic and Regenerative Fruit Production
1 p.m. | Antigo, Wisconsin | Learn more at organicfruitgrowers.org/events-1/converting-to-organic-and-regenerative-fruit-production

JUNE 24–25: Herbal Health Virtual Conference
Online | Learn more at motherearthnews.com/store/product-category/fair-tickets/herbal-health-conference-june-24-25-2021

JUNE 28–JULY 2: North American Agroforestry Conference
Online | Learn more at savannainstitute.org/agroforestry-2021

JULY

JULY 12: Engaging Your Community to Strengthen Farm and Farm Family Risk and Resilience Interactive Workshop
1–3 p.m. | Online | Learn more at connect.extension.org/event/engaging-your-community-to-strengthen-farm-and-farm-family-risk-and-resilience-interactive-workshop

JULY 22: Organic Row Crops Plus Prairie Restoration
8:30 a.m.–1 p.m. | Madison, South Dakota | Learn more at mosesorganic.org/events/organic-field-days/johnson-farms-july-22/

JULY 31: Creative Land Access and No-Till Vegetable Research
2 p.m. | Decorah, Iowa | Learn more at mosesorganic.org/events/organic-field-days/humble-hands-harvest-july-31/

AUGUST

AUG. 3–5: Minnesota FarmFest
Online | Redwood County, Minnesota | Learn more at ideagroup.com/farmfest

AUG. 7: Okoboji Blue Water Festival
Noon–6 p.m. | Okoboji, Iowa | Learn more at okobojibluewaterfestival.com

AUG. 14: Annual J40 Farm Crawl
Keosauqua, Iowa | Learn more at villagesofvanburen.com

AUG. 21: Silvopasture for Pollinators and Livestock
9 a.m.–Noon | Menomonie, Wisconsin | Learn more at mosesorganic.org/events/organic-field-days/silvopasture-for-pollinators-livestock-august-21/

Join PFI

GROW YOUR FARM WITH PRACTICAL FARMERS. JOIN OR RENEW TODAY!

Want to join or renew online? Visit practicalfarmers.org/join-or-renew.

MEMBER INFORMATION

Contact Name(s)*: _____

Farm or Organization Name: _____

Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ ZIP: _____ County: _____

Phone 1: _____ Phone 2: _____

Email 1: _____ Email 2: _____

* For Farm or Household membership, please list names of all persons included. For Organization membership, please list up to three company contacts.

JOIN OR RENEW

1. I AM JOINING OR RENEWING AS:

- ☐ An Aspiring Farmer
- ☐ A Beginning Farmer
- ☐ A Farmer
- ☐ A Friend of Farmer
- ☐ A Non-Operating Landowner

2. I AM JOINING AT THE LEVEL OF:

- ☐ Student – \$20
- ☐ Individual – \$50
- ☐ Farm or Household – \$60
- ☐ Organization – \$110
- ☐ Lifetime Member* – \$1,000

* See details at bit.ly/PFI-lifetime

3. HOW DID YOU HEAR ABOUT PFI?

EMAIL DISCUSSION GROUP SIGN-UP

When you join our email discussion groups, you can network, build community and exchange ideas from anywhere, at any time. Sign up for as many groups as you'd like (and be sure to include your email address above)!

- ☐ Announcements
- ☐ Perspectives
- ☐ Field Crops
- ☐ Horticulture
- ☐ Livestock

SUSTAIN PRACTICAL FARMERS WITH AN ADDITIONAL DONATION

For the sake of the long-term health and vitality of Practical Farmers of Iowa, we ask you to consider making a donation above and beyond your membership fee. Practical Farmers of Iowa is a 501(c)3 organization. Your gift is tax deductible to the extent allowed by law.

I would like to make a one-time, tax-deductible donation to PFI in the amount of:

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

Or, make a recurring monthly or annual donation. Automatically charged to your credit card on the date of your first transaction each subsequent month or year.

- ☐ Yes, I would like to give \$ _____
- ☐ per month
- OR
- ☐ per year

PAYMENT

Membership Level _____ \$ _____ per year for _____ year(s) = \$ _____

Additional Donation _____ = \$ _____

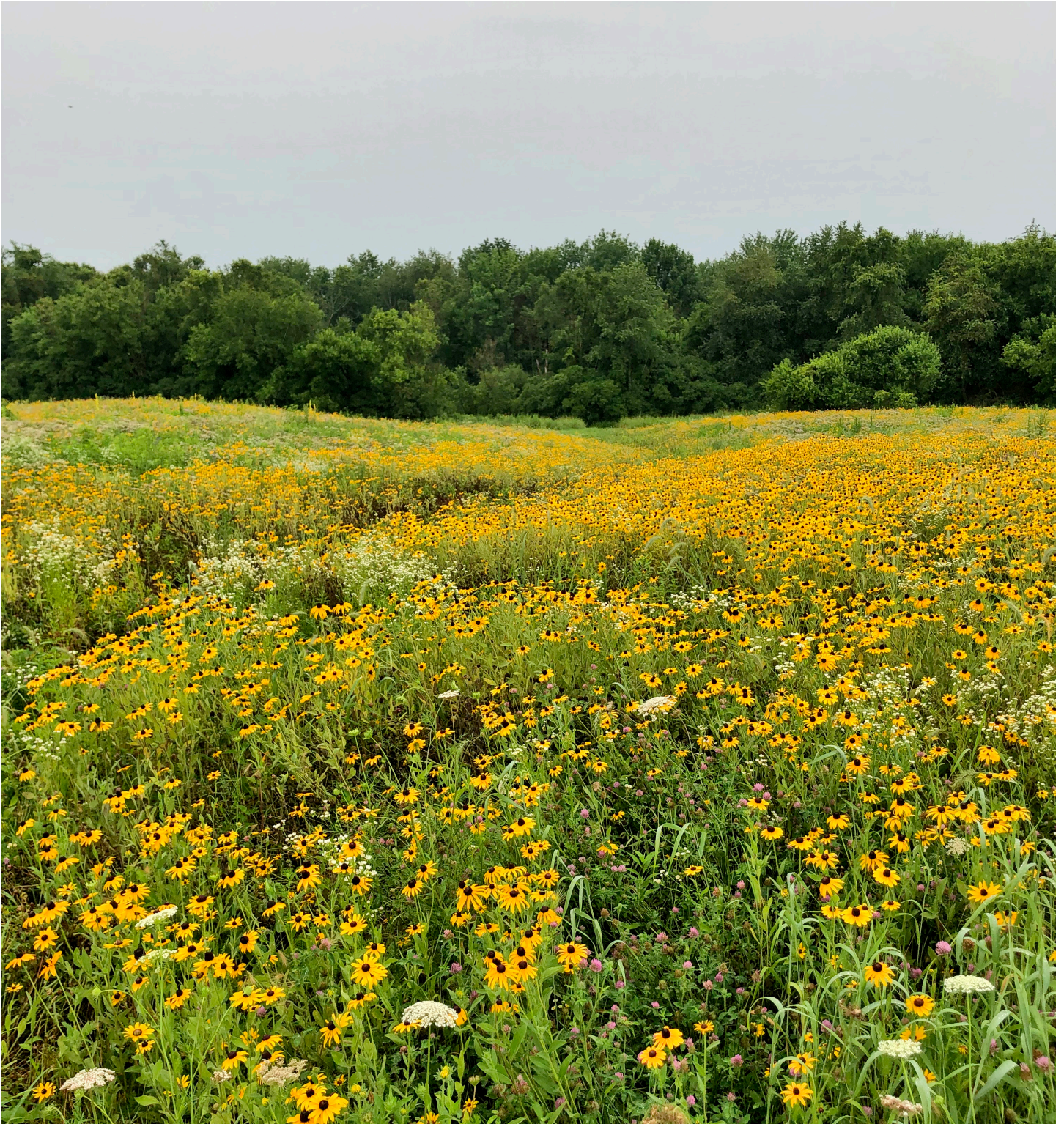
TOTAL AMOUNT _____ = \$ _____

- ☐ Check or money order is enclosed (Please make payable to "Practical Farmers of Iowa.")
- ☐ Credit card (Visa, MasterCard or Discover only)

Name on card _____ Number _____

Exp. Date _____ CVC# (3 digits) _____ ☐ Please automatically charge this credit card annually for membership

Office Use Only: Check # _____ Check date _____ Total amount _____ Notes _____



The prairie really comes alive in mid-July. At the Grow: Johnson County farm just outside Iowa City, Iowa, a pollinator planting on the diverse fruit and vegetable farm provides critical habitat for pollinators that in turn provide extensive ecosystem services to the farm. In 2020, farm manager Jake Kundert and staff worked with Practical Farmers to catalogue and document both quantity and quality of pollinator habitat on the farm throughout the year. *Photo courtesy of Jake Kundert/Grow: Johnson County.*

PRACTICAL FARMERS *of Iowa*

1615 Golden Aspen Drive, Suite 101
Ames, IA 50010

Non-Profit
Organization
U.S. Postage
PAID
Waterloo, IA
Permit No. 901



Grass-Fed Cattle

A calf at Kevin and Ranae Dietzel's Lost Lake Farm, near Jewell, Iowa, represents the heart and future of their grass-fed livestock and cheesery operation.