

the PRACTICAL FARMER

SPRING 2023



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Economic Engines

Planting for the Future



Tim Swinton leads guests on a tour of his farm near Clemmons, Iowa, during his October 2022 field day and highlights trees he has recently planted as part of his effort to create a diverse silvopasture system. Read more about Tim on page 6.





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ON THE COVER:

One of Dayna Burtness' Hampshire hogs enjoys hugs while feasting on Albert Lea Seed's Big Rack Wildlife Mix. Dayna and her husband, Nick Nguyen, raise pastured pigs at Nettle Valley Farm in Spring Grove, Minnesota, and use Holistic Management to guide their decisions. Learn more on pgs. 26-27.
Photo courtesy of Cailee Gates.



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.

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Relationships are the “Magic Sauce”

PFI is a unique network of farmers and supporters who believe in learning, innovative research, business development and risk management approaches like cost-share programs to help farmers build resilient farms and communities. The amount of work we’re accomplishing together as a network is astounding, and we’re starting to see the needle move toward resilient, regenerative agriculture.

Last year alone, 8,300 people attended 258 farmer-to-farmer events where they learned how to make changes to better their farms. Also in 2022, 1,335 farmers enrolled in PFI cost-share programs for cover crops and small grains, planting 383,357 acres of covers and small grains as a result of participating.

These programs are vitally important, and, they wouldn’t be nearly as effective as they are without the relationships created within PFI’s network. Long-time PFIer and board member Vic Madsen, who farms near Audubon, Iowa, regularly talks about how relationships are PFI’s “magic sauce.”

These relationships provide people the confidence and support needed to make the positive, but hard, changes on their farms. When you’re creating a new market, trying a new practice or building a new business model, people who can provide expertise, solidarity – and sometimes, just a supportive set of ears – are so vital.

I am grateful for the relationships I’ve formed through PFI. And I know I’m not alone. I’m grateful for Ann Franzenburg, who farms near Van Horne, Iowa, and recently served as PFI’s board president as part of her nine years of board service. I am able to ask her questions about flower varieties and get the latest on top sellers; learn about fundraising best practices; navigate having difficult conversations with respect and camaraderie; and have a whole lot of laughs.

I am grateful for Nathan Anderson, who farms near Aurelia, Iowa, and who just took over as PFI’s board president. Nathan can eloquently sum up a conversation in a way that causes the rest of the room to nod in agreement. His intelligence is readily apparent alongside his humility and humor. It’s fun to hear about how he and his wife, Sarah, are raising their sons, Fletcher and Finn, on the farm. During our March board



Nathan Anderson and Sally Worley

meeting, for instance, Nathan shared how the boys, ages 3 and 5, were planning their gardens and showed interested in cherry tomato varieties.

There are so many other relationships I’ve formed through PFI that help me professionally and fill my cup personally. I (and Vic, too) talk about relationships a lot, because they truly are the “magic sauce” to working together to make positive change. The PFI conference, with record attendance of 1,045 people, is one event where this magic is on fully display. For two days, a diverse, passionate and innovative group of farmers come together willing to share about their farming challenges and successes. I look forward to attending every year because I know I’ll connect with many friends, partners and colleagues while enriching my network with new connections who inspire, teach and keep me grounded in why PFI’s work is so important.

Spring is upon us: Bulbs are peeking up, buds are bursting, covers are greening, greenhouses are filling up – and field days will be here before we know it. We are preparing for a fantastic field day lineup across the state (and across state lines).

Thank you for being an ingredient of PFI’s “magic sauce,” and I hope to see you on a farm this summer!

Sally Worley

Planting for the Future

Inspired by his land's potential, and the benefit to future generations, Tim Swinton is turning former row crop ground into a diverse system with trees, prairie, pasture and goats

By Martha McFarland



Tim Swinton's 11-acre farm just outside Clemons, Iowa, is surrounded by rolling fields of corn and soybeans. To the north a short ways, Middle Minerva Creek cuts through this patchwork of crop fields, flanked by the dappled green of trees growing along its banks. Just northeast of town, the creek joins South Minerva Creek, forming a triangle of trees before the conjoined waterway winds south and west of town in a sinuous green loop.

Viewed from above, the streams look like verdant veins snaking across the landscape. When Tim's vision comes to fruition, his hope is that his farm will add to this arboreal mosaic. Since purchasing the land in 2018, Tim has been working to convert the former row crop acres into a diverse silvopasture system with a range of fruit and nut trees, shrubs and prairie plants integrated with pasture and goats.

"I wanted to move beyond the corn and soybean bubble," says Tim, who also practices family medicine and describes himself as "an Iowa boy looking into the future."

"They [the goats] are very specific about what they want to eat and when, so we give them a choice."

- Tim Swinton



Goats playing around on Tim's farm.

Growing Food in Iowa

Tim has been raising goats since 2003, keeping them on a friend's farm. When he found his current farm site – which also includes a historic house built in 1856 that was once a roadside inn and stagecoach stop – he chose it intentionally, knowing he had other plans for the corn and soybean fields.

Since then, Tim has worked steadily to plant a variety of tree and shrub species, like chestnut, apple, pear, honeyberry, black currant and oak. He has also established prairie buffers, seeded over 20 pasture species, adopted rotational grazing and worked with Sustainable Iowa Land Trust's landowner consultations to explore his farm's potential.

Last October, he hosted a PFI field day to share his vision, showcase his newly planted trees and shrubs and lead guests on a tour of the property, which included meeting his playful Kiko goat herd. The event was co-hosted by SILT, which has partnered with the Natural Resources Conservation Service on a five-year grant to offer Iowa landowners free consultations to explore their farm's potential for food production.

SILT cofounder Suzan Erem says the program is designed to help remind landowners that table food can be grown in Iowa. "Iowa imports over 90% of its food," says Suzan, who retired earlier this year as SILT's executive director. "So many landowners had forgotten they could grow table food, thinking that building [for development] and commodities are the only choices."

Through the partnership with NRCS, Suzan says SILT is working to reverse that startling statistic. Landowners who sign up for the consultations go on a land walk with a SILT employee intensively trained to assess a land's potential, and they receive a report outlining those opportunities. Suzan stresses that the land walk and report are not meant to teach landowners how to farm, but rather to inspire them to think about how they could use land in a different way.

"Tim had the capacity and the passion to make that change. It's very exciting to see," Suzan says. "A lot of landowners are in a place in their lives where their perspective is different – more financially secure, a higher tolerance for risk. That puts them in a position where they can attempt new things."

Creating a Resilient Ecosystem

Tim's vision for his land starts with the understanding that a biodiverse ecosystem is more resilient. He also recognizes the importance of stacking enterprises on a small land base. Tim's goats graze rotationally on the silvopasture, which is pasture that incorporates trees. He has planted 22 species of trees and shrubs every 12 feet in several of his pastures. In others, he has planted prairie that can be burned.

"My dad says you don't really pick a tree for your property, it picks you," Tim says. "So much of what I'm doing is to see what thrives in my soil conditions."

He adds: "Silvopasture is really about creating an ecosystem that complements itself in a flourishing, multidirectional sphere, like an orchestra. A diversity of trees encourages diversity in microbiology, birds, wildlife and goat diet choices."

Tim explains how doubling up on enterprises is particularly beneficial if you have limited land. He also notes how using trees in pastures saves moisture, provides shade and can extend the grazing season. "The grazing season may be increased by a week or two in the spring and fall because of protection from harsh weather," he says.

He also cuts branches from some of the trees to provide additional forage. Once the trees mature, Tim's goats will also have the nuts from oak, pecan and chestnuts to munch on, as well as the pods from other trees like honey locust and catalpa. "Mulberry is candy to goats," he says. "There are a lot of ways to make tree forages extend your pasture life."

Tim has also experimented with a mix of grasses on low and high

(Continued on page 8 →)



"A diversity of trees encourages diversity in microbiology, birds, wildlife and goat diet choices."

- Tim Swinton



Tim's Planting Notes

Tim has planted dozens of tree, shrub and pasture plants on his farm to increase diversity, improve his soil and offer a buffet of forage options to his goats. When all his fruit and nut species mature, he'll also have an array of tree crops he can market. Throughout the process, Tim has kept notes on why he's planted various species, and how they are doing in his fields. Here is a small sampling of what he's planted.

Orchard

Paw Paw - Commercial production after windbreak is improved

June Berries - Excellent berry flavor, stressed by sun and dryness

Raspberries - 4 varieties put out

Aronia Berries - Windbreak and my consumption

Silvopasture

Mulberry - Rapid growth, berry production [for] birds and layer hens, reserve feed in dry years

River Birch - Windbreak, diversity

Hybrid Poplar - Fast growth, tannins, excellent windbreak

Honey Locust - Nitrogen fixing, open canopy by edge prairie, edible pods for goats, wildlife

Pasture

Sunn Hemp - Broadcast in spring, no germination

Delar Burnett - Persists well, low water needs, goats nibble on it, handles heat well

Phacelia - Annual, vigorous in spring, reseeds itself well, fills gaps well

Chicory - High-nutrient, drought-resistant, goats favor it, competes well in poor and compacted soils



Suzan Erem of SILT (blue plaid shirt) speaks to the crowd with Tim Swinton at his field day in October 2022.

ground, identifying which survived on eroded ground or in wetter pastures. Chicory, he explains, thrives on compacted and eroded hillsides. “Its deep tap root reaches down so it instantly comes back,” he says. The diversity of plants in his pastures also lets his goats self-select what they need to support their health.

“One of my favorite wild plants is wild lettuce,” Tim says. “The goats go right for it even when it’s fuzzy – they eat the fuzzy heads off. They are very specific about what they want to eat and when, so we give them a choice.”

Continually testing his system, Tim regularly tries new strategies to see what may help his goats, including using kelp as a supplement, trying sprouted barley and offering new species like sweet yellow clover or African cabbage. Beyond this focus on plant diversity, Tim actively manages his goat herd. He intensively selects breeding stock and diligently culls a high percentage of his herd each year to be sure he is developing a herd with hardy and resistant genetics. His goal is to select animals with robust parasite resistance and strong mothering instincts who also thrive in his silvopasture system.

Farming for the Next Generation

Tim recognizes his farm is in the early stages of a long-term project. He imagines the possibility years from now when his trees and shrubs have all matured and are bearing fruit, and what healthier soil will mean for each species. He also thinks about what others can learn from his farm and how it can serve as a model.

“Sometimes, someone in the neighborhood just has to go first,” Tim says. “One neighbor gets a chuckle about what I’m doing



in rural Iowa because culture, the ideas really have to prove themselves over time.”

Tim advises other landowners thinking of making changes to first consider their resources – like how much time they have and what kinds of equipment. He also emphasizes the need for patience. “It takes about five years to get your soil back,” he says. “And every year my pasture changes.”

Tim has found that rotating pastures in the spring or later in the summer can change what grows from year to year. In dryer years, he’s noticed that warm-season grasses are likely to flourish. What grows can also change based on how much rest his pastures get and how long between rotations. “It’s a moving target what you keep in your pasture,” he says

As Suzan reflects on her retirement from SILT, she describes the power landowners like Tim have to make changes on the Iowa landscape. “It’s a legacy for those who don’t see land as a commodity,” she says. “They see that land gives us life.”

Tim is certainly one of those people. “We have had such a pioneering spirit,” he says, referring to past generations in Iowa who once produced a diversity of crops and livestock on the land and grew most of their own food. “I’m looking for innovations that are going to help the next generations of farmers.” ■



Guests toured Tim Swinton’s property during the field day he hosted in October 2022.

Economic Engines

Cover crop seed businesses are helping farmers like Ryan Gibbs improve their farms, communities and the environment

By Taylor Hintch

Cover crops are many things. During the cold months of winter and early spring, they're like green shrouds and sponges, safeguarding soil from scouring winds while living roots soak up nutrients left unused by summer crops.

In the wet warm season, they are soil anchors during heavy rain. To soil compacted by heavy wheels, they are like drills, boring breathing spaces into the hardpan. To livestock, they are nutritious forage, while to soil microbes, they are harbingers of soil health – a visible cue to unseen transformations happening below ground.

For farmers like Ryan Gibbs, cover crops are also economic engines. Beyond their other benefits, these crops are increasingly underpinning new farm business enterprises that have local and far-reaching impacts.

Growing the Farm With Cover Crops

Ryan and his wife, Kristy, raise corn, soybeans, cereal rye, buckwheat, feeder cattle and contract and pasture pigs at Gibbsfield Farms near Worthington, Iowa. In 2019, they added a new enterprise – Gibbsfield Ag – to provide cover crop seed and services to farmers in their area of northeastern Iowa.

“The seed business ties in hand-in-hand with my farming operation,” Ryan says, “because we are growing cover crops on our farm and I’m able to share what I’ve learned with my customers.”

Ryan grows rye and buckwheat for seed, and he handles all the custom cover crop application for Gibbsfield Ag himself. To provide customers with a full array of seed options, the business also relies on relationships with other local seed companies, like Iowa Cover Crop, to reliably offer over 100 varieties of seed. “My busiest time is in the fall, he says, “when I’m delivering and planting cover crops into the night and combining [crops on my farm] all day.”

He and Kristy got started with cover crops in 2017, as part of a farm transition to no-till that included adding cover crops to their farm. The following year, Ryan started working as a dealer for Iowa Cover Crop. “The second year, we expanded again and put in an LLC to protect ourselves,” Ryan says.

Gibbsfield Ag has expanded rapidly since then. Ryan now uses a 30-foot grain drill to do custom seed applications and hires



Ryan and Kristy Gibbs with their children

aerial seeding for some of his customers. His neighbor also cleans seed for him, and he is continually adding storage and other infrastructure to build capacity.

“I wanted to expand my operation with a different crop aside from corn and beans,” Ryan says. “Since I was already a seed dealer, I had a market for my own cover crop seed.”

In 2022, with his cover crop seed business growing, Ryan enrolled in PFI’s Cover Crop Business Accelerator. Participants in the program, which is run in partnership with Iowa Soybean Association, receive customized business support about how to build a viable business plan, market to customers and set strategic goals.

“We were looking at income expansion and were asking: Where should we invest or expand to get the best return on investment?” Ryan says. “We got some great advice through this program.”

Driving Healthy Soils and Resilient Communities

Nurturing more cover crop businesses like this is a key reason why PFI and ISA started the Cover Crop Business Accelerator in 2020. Not only do these businesses help farmers diversify their incomes, they create new opportunities in rural communities. Vitally, they are also helping farmers plant cover crops on more acres – which is essential for Iowa to reach water quality goals spelled out in the state’s nutrient reduction strategy.

The Iowa Nutrient Reduction Strategy, adopted in 2013, calls for a 45% cut in levels of nitrogen and phosphorus that move from Iowa watersheds into the Mississippi River Basin, and eventually the Gulf of Mexico, where they contribute to a vast area that's unable to support marine life. Cover crops are one of the key practices outlined in the strategy. But farmers face a range of barriers to adding or expanding cover crop acres – including access to cover crop seed.

That's one reason why businesses like Gibbsfield Ag are so critical.

“Cover crops contribute to rural Iowa communities by improving water quality,” Ryan says. “When farms flood, that's the same water that travels through all of these communities taking the topsoil away.”

Keeping soil in place is one reason Ryan wants to see more cover crops in his community. But he also sees their potential to improve water quality and food systems. “Employing cover crops is part of a larger societal benefit,” he says. “Healthier soil means a better-quality cash crop, and that means more nutrient-dense food and healthier living.”

Through Gibbsfield Ag, Ryan hopes he can help customers find ways to make cover crops feasible on their farms. By addressing some of his customers' barriers and concerns, he sees the potential to unlock a cascade of cover crop acres – with improved water quality, healthier rural communities and more resilient farms following in tow.

“For us, resiliency means making each acre the most profitable it can be while cutting back on certain inputs,” Ryan says. Diversifying rotations and revenue streams is Ryan's approach to building resiliency on his farm. “We sell cereal rye, we have hogs, we have cattle – so even if two markets fail, we won't ruin our business.”

Growing Pains – and Plans

Ryan's cover crop enterprise is healthy and expanding, but as with any business, he has faced challenges.

“The most challenging aspect of the business right now is dealing with changing prices and logistics,” Ryan says, describing high trucking and fuel prices that fluctuate often.

Cover Crop Business Accelerator Program

The Cover Crop Business Accelerator program couples funding with customized business support to help emerging cover crop seed and application businesses grow and flourish. Started in 2020 between PFI and Iowa Soybean Association, the program has helped 40 businesses across Iowa to date. In 2022, these businesses seeded over 135,000 acres of cover crops, grew over 3,000 acres of seed and added 14 full- or part-time employees to their operations.



“Our quotes were changing, and it isn't ideal when you're trying to make customers happy. Just trying to keep costs down and stay competitive was the biggest challenge last year.”

While Ryan maintains many partnerships with local businesses and neighbors to help spread out some of the work, Gibbsfield Ag is still owned and operated by Ryan alone. “I'm a one-man show,” he says. “I'm trying to make things efficient and balance everything with the farming operation.”

In the near future, with work already busy and growth looming, Ryan says that hiring an extra set of hands – or two – is a priority. “In five years, I would like to have a warehouse and office space, two to three employees, more capacity for marketing and finance, and online sales traffic for small-scale seed sales nationwide.”

As his business expands, another goal is getting more cover crops in the ground and sharing his knowledge with fellow farmers along the way.

“I want to increase my presence teaching people and educating farmers on the feasibility of cover crops,” Ryan says. “I have numerous farmers that I'm helping with paperwork, maps of fields, tickets for purchasing seed, planting fields, germ tests – I want to give everyone all of the information they need.”

Ultimately, Ryan's goal with Gibbsfield Ag is about building up rural communities – with cover crops as the foundation for healthier soil and water, healthier food and healthier communities for people to work, connect and enjoy Iowa life. ■

Get Involved

PFI will be accepting 15 businesses into the Cover Crop Business Accelerator in 2023.

For questions about the program, contact Lydia English at (515) 232-5661 or lydia.english@practicalfarmers.org.

Doing the Math to Grow a Farm

Finding their purpose in farming, first-generation farmers Carly and Ethan Zierke are focusing on finances as much as growing skills to ensure a stable future

By Jacqueline Venner Senske

“This is the kind of math you need to know to farm?!” Carly Zierke asked herself as she sat through her first farm finance course at the Organic Farm School in Clinton, Washington, in 2021. The instructor was showing the class of beginning vegetable farmers, which included Carly and her husband Ethan, what an actual farm cash flow looked like.



“We were looking at the numbers farmers use to understand the amount and cost of water during a drought to pay for the seeds they need to start,” Carly says. On that first day, those numbers appeared indecipherable to her.

Now, several steps into their farming journey, Carly and Ethan know enough to recognize the answer. “Calculating the cost of water to buy for your seeds to start? Yes,” Carly says. “That’s exactly the kind of math you need to know.” This realization may have been among the first for these first-generation farmers, but it was far from the last.

From Curious to Driven

Carly and Ethan grow produce for a CSA and local markets at Sweet Season Farm, near Decorah, Iowa. In March, Carly also joined the PFI staff as the new digital content coordinator, a position she’ll hold while continuing to farm. In 2019, she and Ethan first started thinking about farming for two key reasons: a concern for the environment and a desire to get closer to how their food was grown.

“It started with curiosity and led to a drive to keep learning about it,” Ethan says. “We got our first farming jobs at Echollective Farm near Iowa City in the early pandemic days.”

Ethan describes the evolution of their perspective. “We saw just how important the local food system was for so many people [due to] supply chain issues. A more resilient local food system was necessary, and we wanted to be part of the solution.” As their farm dreams started to take shape, it was clear they had a lot to learn. Though they both grew up in Iowa – Carly in Marquette and Ethan in Iowa City – neither came from a farming background.

Not only did they lack access to land and capital, they also needed to develop a fuller understanding of production techniques and business management. A connection in their farming network illuminated a path forward for them. “Corbin Scholtz is a close friend who also farmed in the Iowa City area,” Carly says. “She introduced us to the Organic Farm School, which we attended in 2021.”

The Organic Farm School is a nonprofit whose mission focuses on “training new farmers to develop and manage small farms focused on ecological, economic and social regeneration.” The organization also helps participants learn about their role in local and regional food systems. “There, we learned about both the growing side of things as well as the business end, such as cash flow and how to apply for loans through the USDA’s Farm Service Agency,” Carly says.

“It seems hard to learn,” Ethan says. “But in reality, it’s essential to be able to forecast what finances are going to look like for the future on your farm.”

Gaining Land and Insight

As the Zierkes were working to fill their farming knowledge gap, a connection they made within their network helped them address the land access problem. Barb Kraus has been raising organic fruit, vegetables and flowers for 25 years at Canoe Creek Produce near Decorah. She also provides land access to beginning farmers through an incubator farm program she runs on her land. “I met with Ethan and Carly, and sometimes you can just tell right away – ‘oh, this is going to work,’” Barb says.

“Working with Barb is humbling because we have access to things that aren’t available to many beginning farmers, from an acre of land to plant to a two-wheeled BCS tractor, heated greenhouse, growing space in a high tunnel and more,” Carly says. “Barb’s expertise has been a huge driving force for us. It’s amazing to be able to turn to her.”

“The incubator farm model is such a great approach because it gives them a huge safety net,” Barb says. “And it works for me to not work so hard as I scale back, yet I feel that I’m still contributing to the farm community I have built.”

In growing as farmers, the Zierkes recognize that tending their finances is as key to long-term viability as tending their crops in the field. “We got a really big push at the Organic Farm School to think about things like labor and healthy debt – things that we really didn’t want to think about yet,” Carly says.

“Farmers are really great at growing,” Ethan adds, “but it’s really important to be able to see the proof of your success with the finances.”

Their financial planning led them to a big decision about their farm this year. To help them grow sustainably, the couple decided that Ethan would start farming full-time while Carly sought a full-time off-farm job. Carly says the stability of an outside income would “add some flexibility and security in our lives,” helping them to build up savings and emergency funds. They are also seeking to build a solid and sustainable foundation for what they see as their life’s work.

“In these first years, we’re working toward being able to pay ourselves a living wage and reinvest in our business,” she says. “Being able to pay for own labor at all has felt good. And that was only possible because of the incubator situation.” ■



3

Helpful Farm Finance Tools

Carly and Ethan shared three key tools they use to help manage their farm finances:

Wave

waveapps.com

“We use this free bookkeeping software to create invoices and track sales data,” Carly says.

Square

program.squareup.com

“It’s great for use at the farmers market to compare daily sales, as well as for our CSA.”

Google Sheets

docs.google.com/spreadsheets

“It’s easy to access and update, even in the field. Google Sheets offers loads of flexibility.”

Notes From a Small-Farm Financial Expert

By Andy Larson

Fresh produce is regarded as the backbone of a healthy local food system, and small-scale vegetable production has lower barriers to entry than many other types of agriculture. But vegetable farming requires a lot of labor, which adds to costs. American consumers have a comparatively low willingness to pay higher food prices, so profit margins can be thin.

It’s easy to calculate operating profit margin: Take net farm income, add back farm interest expense and divide that by gross sales. The result is the percentage of profit retained by the farm for every dollar of sales. Assuming prices are maximized for the marketplace, the best way to improve your operating profit margin is to reduce costs of production.

For most vegetable farms, labor is the biggest cost. Monitor labor efficiency by taking total labor cost divided by gross sales, then try to decrease that percentage every year. Investments in capital that reduce labor can prove efficient, but only if they don’t compromise cash flow.

Additionally, monitor labor productivity by taking gross sales divided by number of full-time-equivalent workers (about 2,000 hours of labor in a year). The resulting dollar amount is how much revenue each FTE produces annually.

And when we need to be brutally honest with ourselves and calculate the true cost of production, we’ll do these calculations again with a per-hour cost for owner labor included. Paying ourselves for all this hard work contributes to both personal and operational sustainability, and it helps justify the opportunity cost of farming versus getting a job in town.

Andy Larson is a farm outreach specialist with the University of Wisconsin’s Food Finance Institute, with expertise in strategic farm business planning, farm financial statements and projections, farm succession and more.

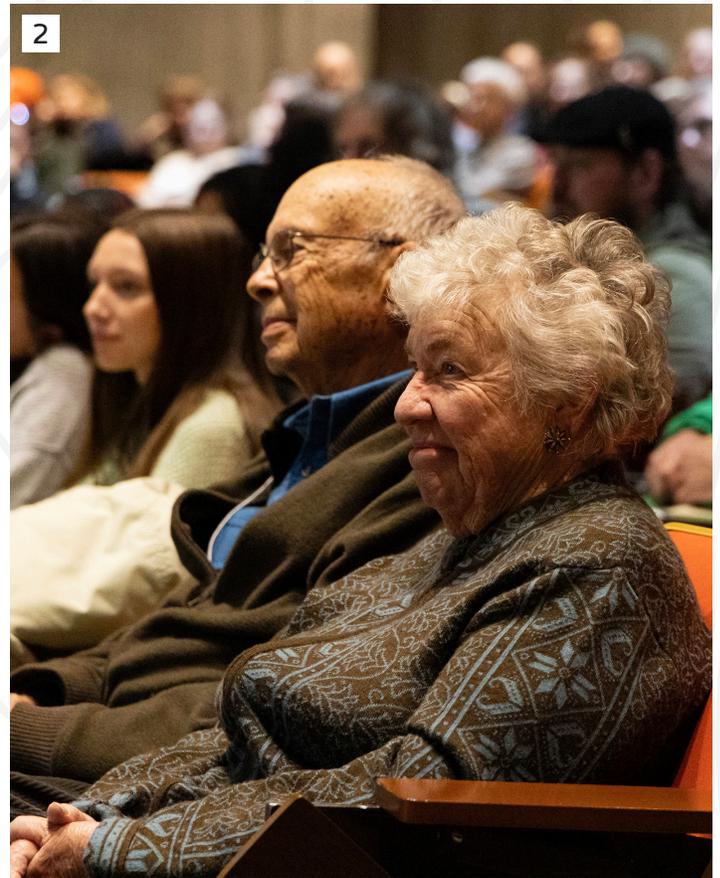
ON COMMON GROUND

Practical Farmers of Iowa Annual Conference
January 19-21, 2023 | Ames, Iowa



Photo Album

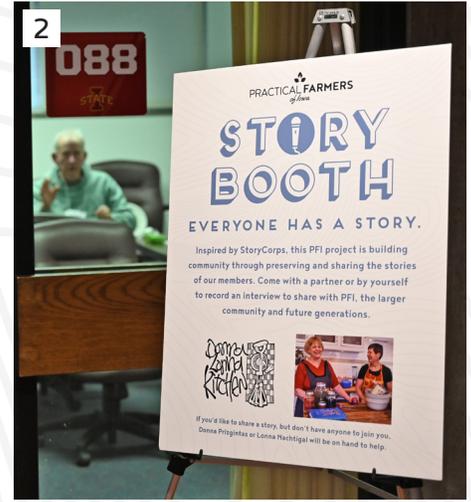
Thank you to 90+ speakers and 1,091 attendees who joined us at our 2023 annual conference. The record-breaking crowd embodied the PFI spirit of curiosity, creativity and community from the first cowbell to the final goodbye. See you again in 2024!



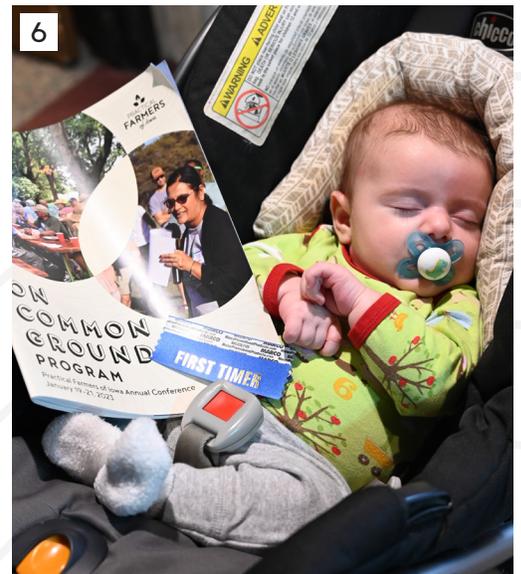
(1) Donna Pearson McClish delivers her keynote address to a packed house. Sharing the story of Common Ground Producers Co-op and Mobile Market, she emphasized the importance of the long work and investment needed to re-build an equitable food system. **(2)** Dean and Judy Henry, longtime owners of the Berry Patch Farm near Nevada, Iowa, receive PFI's 2023 Sustainable Agriculture Achievement Award on Friday night before the keynote.



(1) From left: Maggie Buscher, Beth Koenen Buscher, Joe Lacina and Laurel Tuggle grab a standing breakfast on Saturday. **(2)** Erin Van Waus of Iowa Natural Heritage Foundation chats with an attendee in the exhibitor hall. Erin also participated in a panel discussion of conservation easements. **(3)** Anna Geyer (left) talks with Bob and Kristy Walker as they review the Friday sessions. **(4)** DaQuan Campbell, of We Arose Co-op, shares how a tough market morning ultimately set him on the path to building a producer cooperative for his community in Waterloo, Iowa, during the PFI Storytelling session on Saturday afternoon. **(5)** A little taste of the offerings from the Pickles & Preserves Potluck that accompanied the PFI dinner on Friday night.



(1) Attendees enjoy lunch and conversation on Saturday. **(2)** Throughout the conference, attendees were invited to share their stories and memories at the PFI Story Booth. Donna Prizgintas and Lonna Nachtigal of the DonnaLonna Kitchen Show served as hosts for this new conference experience. **(3)** Dayna Burtness of Nettle Valley Farm presents about getting started with pastured pigs. **(4)** The crowd at the PFI dinner explores and samples the Pickles & Preserves Potluck table. Thanks to the ISU Sustainable Agriculture Student Association for keeping the potluck tables organized and tidy! **(5)** Jacob Bolson presents a 100-level session on successfully planting into cover crops. **(6)** Isaac and Jonathan Book, of Crooked Gap Farm, explored many conference sessions as a pair while representing their family's farm.



(1) Sally Worley leads the crowd in a memorial and “three cheers” for PFI co-founder Sharon Thompson, who died on Jan. 17, 2023. **(2)** Roger Engstrom (*left*) and Shaffer Ridgeway (*right*) chat with a group about vegetable farming equipment during a roundtable. **(3)** Wilbur De la Rosa (*second from right*) converses with Jennifer Ripp (*right*) over beers at the PFI dinner. **(4)** Phil Brown (*left*) and Benson McClarren talk during the meal. **(5)** Tom Wahl and Kathy Dice tell the story of their first U-pick customers at Red Fern Farm – a day that changed their farm forever. **(6)** Andrew Ronald Rosmann dreams his way through his first PFI annual conference (*after a bit of light reading*).



Fresh Off the Farm



For over 50 years, Dean and Judy Henry have sought to build community around their pioneering U-pick farm

By Tamsyn Jones



Judy and Dean Henry



Judy and Dean with their son, Mike



Strawberries at Berry Patch Farm

When Dean and Judy Henry, owners of the iconic Berry Patch Farm, planted their first strawberries over 50 years ago, they were students at Iowa State University with no land, experience or mentors to help guide them.

“Our little front yard at Pammel Court was the size of a postage stamp,” says Judy with a laugh, recalling the ISU student housing where she and Dean nurtured those first plants.

“They didn’t do very well,” Dean adds with a chuckle.

Today, the Henrys are widely recognized experts in berry and orchard fruit production whose 140-acre pick-your-own farm south of Nevada, Iowa, has been a staple for generations of Iowans, synonymous with high-quality, flavorful fruits and a commitment to community. For five decades, the Henrys have raised a variety of horticultural crops, both familiar and less common. During that time, they

“Our strategy was to have something diversified through the whole season.”

- Dean Henry

have pioneered fruit production and marketing approaches in Iowa; championed community-focused agriculture and local foods; experimented with a range of vegetable and fruit crops, both outdoors and in greenhouses; and worked to steward their land while serving as mentors to the next generation.

Farming with their son, Mike, who has been an integral part of the farm’s operations for many years, the Henrys currently raise several varieties of apples; strawberries; blueberries; red, black and gold raspberries; elderberries; red and black currants; tart cherries; gooseberries; rhubarb; pumpkins; decorative gourds; and, most recently, honeyberries – all of which they market through U-pick. They also operate an on-farm store and sell their produce to local restaurants and through partnerships with local CSAs.

In January, Dean and Judy received PFI’s 2023 Sustainable Agriculture Achievement Award in recognition of their dedication to resilient farms and communities. PFI has granted the award each year since 1990 to an individual or couple that has shown exemplary commitment to sustainable agriculture, generously shared their knowledge with others and been influential in efforts to foster vibrant communities, diverse farms and healthy food. The award

ceremony took place on Jan. 20, during PFI’s 2023 annual conference.

Pioneering Fruit Growers and Soil Stewards

Strawberries have always had a special place on the Henrys’ farm. Dean and Judy were among the first growers in central Iowa to raise strawberries for local markets. In 1970, they purchased the land that would become the Berry Patch, and before they had even built their house, the couple planted apple trees in preparation for their future orchard. “We planted strawberries as well, and they were a dismal failure,” Dean says. “We had nothing but weeds all over the place. But we gradually learned via our mistakes, and through a lot of discussion with other growers.”

With few strawberry resources or growers available in Iowa, Judy and Dean started traveling to conferences in the Midwest, as well as Canada. They got so interested in planting strawberries, Judy says, they would plant for other people, mainly in central Iowa but going as far south as Rathbun Lake. “We would take our planter, tractor, our crew and spend the whole day.”

“At one time,” Dean recalls, “we had a grower in Mason City that we even developed some very preliminary plans with to plant strawberries in other states, and follow the season.”

That plan never materialized – which Dean is glad of – and he and Judy watched as many of those amateur growers ended up quitting and selling their land to developers, cowed by the hard work of managing weeds and diseases once the “honeymoon” period of planting strawberries into “virgin soil that had never seen strawberries” was over.

“One of the things they really didn’t understand,” he says, “was that you had to have some long-term plans for that soil.”

Dean and Judy had a plan, and were ahead of their time in using cover crops and crop rotations to build soil health. Through diligent soil sampling and extensive cover cropping each year with marigolds, cereal rye, tillage radishes and yellow mustard, the Henrys have doubled their farm’s organic material while rehabilitating land Dean says had been “pretty abused by cattle buyers” before he and Judy purchased it.

The Henrys have been leaders in other ways too. Strong local food advocates, they helped found a farmers market in Ames in 1968 and were familiar faces for years at several central Iowa farmers markets, including the Des Moines Downtown Farmers’ Market. They introduced the concept of U-pick to central Iowans and have embraced novel crops – like the 10 acres of asparagus they raised in the late 1980s; giant gooseberries; and honeyberries, which they added just five years ago.

“We did asparagus because it was unusual,” Dean says. “Our strategy was to have something diversified through the whole season.”

Lifelong Mentors and Teachers

Acutely aware of the importance of good mentors, Dean and Judy have also shared their knowledge widely over the years through workshops, farm tours, participation in groups like the North American Raspberry and Blackberry Association and North American Strawberry Growers Association (Dean served on the boards of both) – and through Judy’s long-running farm-based preschool that was years ahead of the farm-to-school movement.

“She never quit for 32 years,” says Dean, who used his carpentry skills to build custom play structures for the children.

“We were doing farm-to-school before there was a name for it,” Judy says. “The preschool was a good way to transition between spring and the busier growing season. We were done by April or May and could put our full energies into the summer crops.”

In 1995, the Henrys joined PFI after learning about the group from Ryan Thompson, son of PFI’s late co-founders Dick and Sharon Thompson. At the time, Dean was teaching science at Des Moines Area Community College – a career he maintained for over 30 years in addition to farming. “Ryan was in my class at DMACC,” Dean says, “and said I should meet his dad because he had crazy ideas [about farming], like me.”

Since joining, the Henrys have hosted many field days, conducted on-farm research, spoken at PFI’s annual conference – including this year’s, where they shared their experience running a U-pick operation – and participated in PFI programs like Labor4Learning to help mentor aspiring farmers.

“We were doing farm-to-school before there was a name for it.”

- Judy Henry

Committed to Long-Term Sustainability

The couple met in 1956 while attending Moody Bible College in Chicago. Judy, who grew up near Philadelphia, was studying education and Dean, who grew up in Ames, was studying science. They returned to Ames and married in 1959, both continuing their studies at ISU. In addition to Mike, the Henrys have two other children – Karl, who lives in Madison, Wisconsin, and David Henry, who lives in San Clemente, California.

Over the course of their long farming career, Dean and Judy have seen changes in the agricultural landscape, customer preferences and awareness of local foods. While some of that change has meant more competition and shifting consumer and market dynamics, the Henrys have also had a chance to see the impact their farm has made.

“I’ve seen more adults wanting to know where their food has come from, and wanting to pass that on to their kids,” Judy says.

Recounting the birthday wish of a long-time customer, Mike shared a recent anecdote to illustrate the affection customers have forged with the business. “She turned 100 years old,” he says, “and wanted to pick apples here for her birthday.”

Despite all the change, the Henrys’ commitment to holistic sustainability – and to an authentic experience of an Iowa farm – has never wavered. Nor has their commitment to lifelong learning. “We’re still trying to get it right,” Judy says, of their desire to constantly improve. “We’d like to be here next year – that’s sustainability in one sense,” Dean says. “In a larger sense, we want to pass the farm onto the next generation without it being worn out, so we work on keeping the soil in good shape.”

“Why do we do all this?” Dean continues, pausing to reflect.

“I want these children [visiting our farm] to pick apples,” Judy says, “and know where they came from.” ■



See more photos in the web version of this story at practicalfarmers.org/SpringMagazine2023.



Nourishing Nectar

When hungry pollinators emerge in early spring, they're finding vital early-blooming flowers, trees and grasses on PFI member farms

By Vanya North



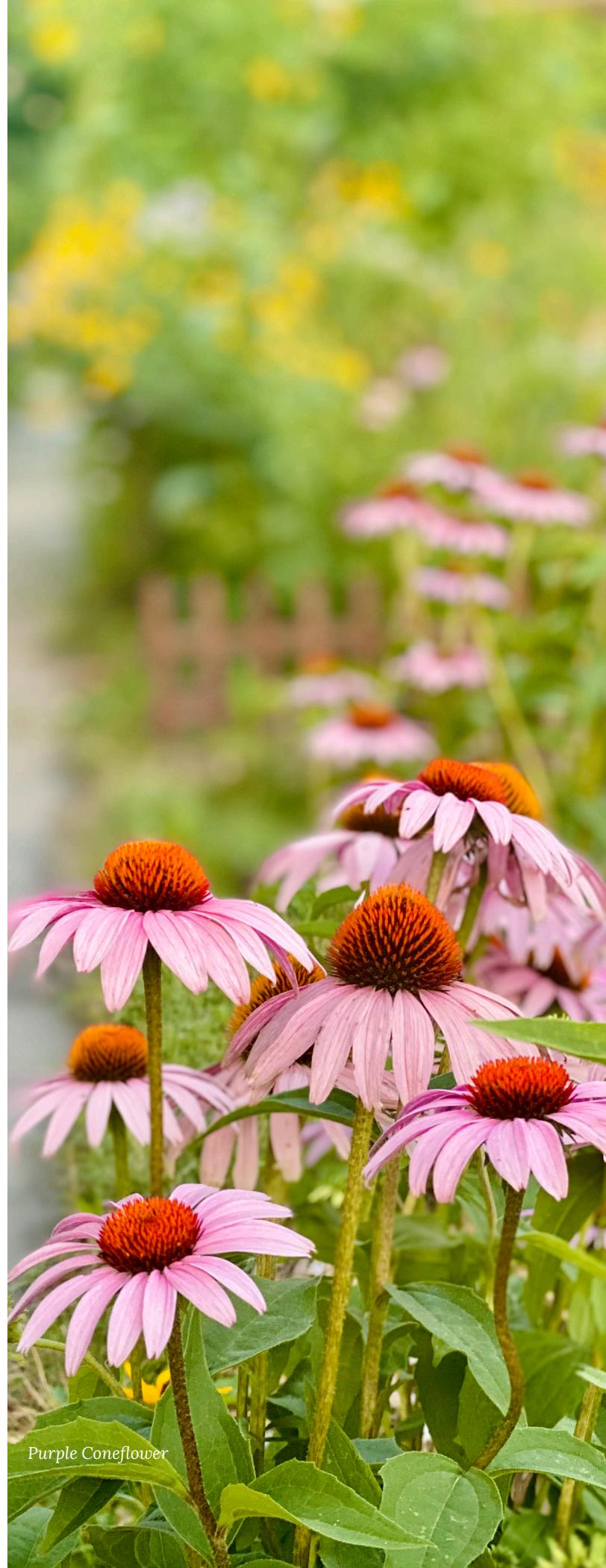
Gary Guthrie remembers the day he had his epiphany about how he could help restore the abundance of pollinators he recalled from his childhood. It was a “beautiful, sunny fall day in September,” Gary says.

He had planted a half-acre patch of prairie in 2015 – the first of several subsequent seedings – next to his house in rural Nevada, Iowa, where he also raises 145 acres of corn, soybeans and vegetables at Growing Harmony Farms. Part of his motivation with that first patch had been sentimental – to add back some habitat in response to the decline in pollinators he'd witnessed since his youth.

His father had been an entomologist studying European corn borers, an invasive insect that can devastate corn plants, and Gary remembered how thick with bugs the air could be. “I can remember as a kid here in Iowa, the windshield would be plastered with corn borers when you went for a drive – that and lots of other insects. Nowadays, you're lucky to have one. In trying to control for the pests, over time, we've diminished the beneficial pollinators as well.”

That warm, clear September day, Gary's young prairie happened to be humming with insect activity. “I went out there and was stunned by the level of buzzing insects, especially the number of bumblebees, and I had an epiphany: What if I could increase the numbers of those insects from my childhood around my home?”

“It was already September, so I began to make plans for plantings that would not only provide for them in the summer and fall, but the very early springtime as well, when most things are not blooming yet.”



Purple Coneflower

Restoring Pollinator Habitat

As Gary realized in that moment, if he wanted to help pollinators, it wasn't enough to provide nectar resources just in summer and fall. It's true that the flowers and milkweeds of Iowa's hot mid-summer season are crucial food sources at those times of year. But ants, bumblebees and other pollinating insects start to stir under leaves and snags long before the blooms of summer are on the landscape to offer up their nourishing nectar.

Historically, as these insects emerged from their winter slumber, they found an abundance of early-flowering plants to sustain them in Iowa's prairie, savanna and woodland ecosystems. But as settlers ploughed prairie to plant crops and felled trees for fuel, farms and other needs, these early-season food sources dwindled.

Today, in the faint beginnings of spring, when snows may still lie upon the fields, it is still the native trees, shrubs, forbs and woodlands that play the most vital role in sustaining pollinators until the bounties of summer – and some farmers and landowners are intentionally planting this type of habitat.

"I went out there and was stunned by the level of buzzing insects, especially the number of bumblebees, and I had an epiphany: What if I could increase the numbers of those insects from my childhood around my home?"

- Gary Guthrie

For Gary, the results of that first half-acre prairie planting awed him – and ignited his resolve to do even more. He has since installed over 4 acres of prairie strips on his farm, each containing around 150 species of grasses and forbs. He has taken care to include early-flowering trees and shrubs, which are often the only natural nectar sources for newly awakened pollinator species in the early spring.

"I was very excited when I went out one day at the end of March and there was yellow everywhere," Gary says. "The golden Alexander had bloomed. It was great to see all that color after the winter, and then to see all the bees buzzing around. It was a scene out of my childhood, to see those early-blooming plants that aren't on the landscape as much now."

Alongside golden Alexander, Gary also planted frost aster, heath aster, purple coneflower and common mountain mint, all of which are classified as early-blooming prairie plants and excellent sources of nectar and energy in the spring. "At the end of the day, I really wanted to re-create those memories I have as a kid here in Iowa, the ones where there were insects everywhere," Gary says. "These prairie strips were installed with that dream in mind."

(Continued on page 22 →)



Gary Guthrie's prairie strips



Gary Guthrie

Planting Trees for Bees

Gary's efforts have resulted in an oasis of early-spring foraging opportunities for pollinators on his farm. Beyond planting prairie strips, Gary has also left many of the trees on his farm in place, including a crab apple and several maples. "I have seen bees and other insects crawling around on them when nothing else is growing or in bloom yet," he says.

Cara Marker-Morgan and Lance Brisbois of Golden Hills Resource Conservation and Development in Oakland, Iowa, confirm Gary's observations. Maintaining tree rows, they say, is the best way to support pollinators in early spring. Across Iowa's landscape, however, many trees are being removed. "Out here in southwest Iowa, we're seeing lots of tree rows being removed, especially along waterways," Lance says. "Not only is that permanent cover being removed, but many of those tree species serve as an early food source for pollinators."

Cara says many trees are removed as farms get larger and landowners buy adjacent land. "They remove the fence and tree rows to create larger tracts, not considering that trees are the first sustenance source for pollinators - particularly oak and maple varieties, which flower long before flowering grasses," she says. "Leaving as many trees in place as possible creates that pollinator foundation and habitat that the entire food web depends on. That is something landowners can do now."

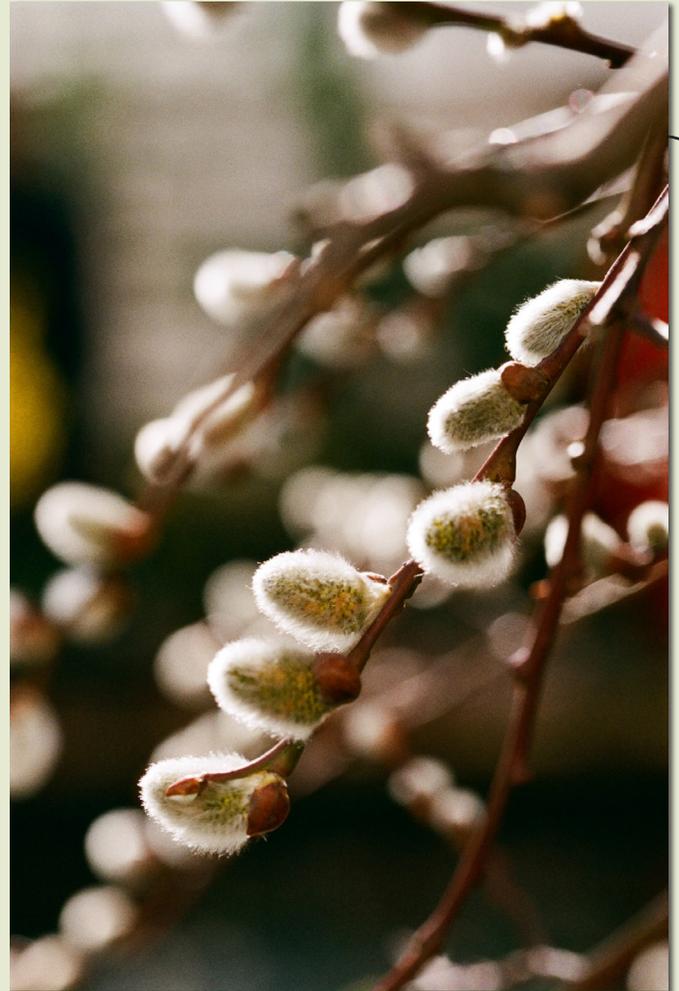
Planting trees is also an easy way non-farmers can help provide essential early-spring pollinator food, says Zach Burhenn of Iowa Native Trees and Shrubs. "And it's great, because trees can be placed anywhere, from large farms to suburban yards and lining city streets," he says. "And they are all going to serve as either habitat or nectar sources in winter and the beginnings of spring"

"Giving pollinators everything they need to thrive - like the trees, dandelions and urban gardens in the early spring - is really the best way to protect all beneficial insects that we depend on into the future."

- Dean Coleman

For those earliest of nectar sources, Zach recommends not only oaks and maples, but American basswood and willow. "Basswood begins to flower in mid- to late May here in Iowa, and the flowers of a basswood are known for being a bee magnet that can attract pollinators for miles around, including over 100 species of bees alone."

Willows, in particularly pussy willows, usually begin to flower even before basswood, and before most fruit trees and many other ephemerals. The pussy willow, which is labelled as either



Pussy Willow



Dean Coleman and his bee hives



Golden Alexander

a small tree or a large shrub, is perfect for all yard sizes and produces beautiful fuzzy flowers. Even better, the pussy willow serves as a larval host for many species of butterflies and moths, as well as their first source of nectar.

Sparing the Dandelions

Bee enthusiast Dean Coleman, who runs a successful and growing honey business, Sweet Endeavors, in the heart of urban Ankeny, Iowa, says providing a big acreage is not a necessity when it comes to caring for pollinators. “I got into this venture on almost a whim,” Dean says. “I looked at my wife one day and stated that I needed a hobby, preferably one that would pay for itself. That’s how Sweet Endeavors came to be.”

Dean’s hives house nearly 100,000 Carniolan bees, a subspecies of the western honeybee known for gathering more nectar than other types of honeybee – including on cool and overcast early-spring days. “As a producer, I artificially supplement my bees’ nectar source with sugar in the hive over winter,” he says. “But as soon as those first hints of spring start, they want out to gather on their own.”

Even though he lives in the middle of an urban area, Dean says his bees find plenty of nectar sources in those first days of spring. “I have great neighbors all around and a lot of people here in town plant various types of maple trees, mostly for ornamental reasons. But they are great sources of nectar when my hives start getting active in the spring.”

Another benefit to producing honey in an urban setting, according to Dean, is the abundance of yards. “The land in town isn’t being treated with herbicides or tilled like the farmland outside of town. That means dandelions are prevalent.” Dandelions, long derided as a weed and nuisance, are an important source of nectar in early spring, when no other ground-laying flowers have bloomed. Dean has seen his bees happily gathering from these bright blooms before the snows of winter have melted. “If it gets above freezing even a little,” he says, “my hives are out and exploring!”

For this reason, organizations such as Xerces Society for Invertebrate Conservation recommend not removing leaves or dandelions from yards in the late winter and early spring. Beyond supplying a vital first source of nectar, they serve as important nesting habitat for pollinators.

“I think the health of pollinators in the future will be these urban settings, since that is where more people are moving to,” Dean says. “I want to continue to grow this business for the next 10, 20, even 30 years, into retirement.

“Giving pollinators everything they need to thrive – like the trees, dandelions and urban gardens in the early spring – is really the best way to protect all beneficial insects that we depend on into the future.” ■



The Savings Incentive Program

Class of 2024

By Greg Padgett

At Practical Farmers, we know that having access to mentors and peers is key to success as a new farmer. For more than 12 years, our Savings Incentive Program has helped by pairing beginning and aspiring farmers with experienced farmer mentors, learning and peer networking opportunities and business planning support to help them be successful.

Over the course of two years, the SIP Class of 2024 will focus on business planning, building their network and investing capital as they start their farming journeys.

During their time in the program, participants will invest up to \$2,400 into their farm savings account. After successfully completing the program, Practical Farmers of Iowa matches their savings dollar for dollar, up to \$2,400, to use toward the purchase of a farm asset.

New this year, we're also excited to offer additional funds to five farmers of color.

Please give our our Savings Incentive Program Class of 2024 a warm welcome - we can't wait to see what you do!

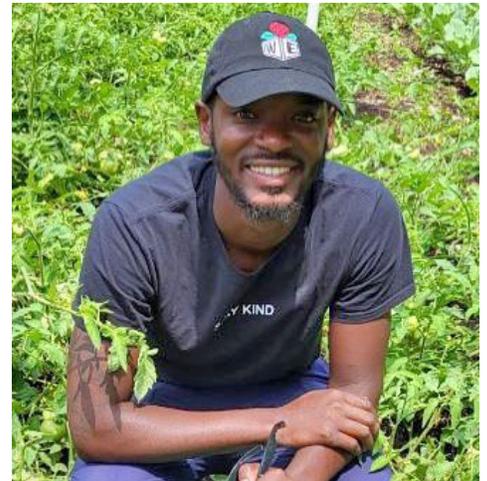
Learn More

For more information on the program, and to read biographies of the farmers, visit practicalfarmers.org/savings-incentive-program.



Maja Black

Sundog Farm & Local Harvest CSA | Solon



DaQuan Campbell

We Arose Co-op | Waterloo



Jenna & Adam Cook

Clovergold Flower Farm | Newell



Rose Danaher

Amana



Elana Gingerich

Shady Grove | Parnell



Yvette Irakoze

West Des Moines



Naina Singh Kami

Iowa Nepali Bhutanese Farm | Des Moines



Kevin & Kendra Martin

Holdfast Farmstead | Mount Ayr



Mari Hunt Wassink

Black Earth Gardens | Cedar Rapids



Ashley & Zachary Wenke

Pleasant Grove Homestead | Montezuma



Carlos Williams

Williams Top Soil | Solon



Carly & Ethan Zierke

Sweet Season Farm | Decorah

FINDING CLARITY

Holistic Management is helping some farmers make space to pause and reflect

By Amos Johnson

"Do you have the patience to wait
Until your mud settles and the water is clear?
Can you remain unmoving
Till the right action arises by itself?"

- Lao Tzu



About 12 years ago, life for Dayna Burtness had gotten to the point where her days were a draining toil: After working in her vegetable fields all day, she found herself too tired to cook dinner. Supper, for a time, was string cheese dipped in Nutella with a 2-liter of Coke.

For seven years, Dayna had been working full-time on vegetable farms. The grueling work had led her into a physical and mental downward spiral. "My body and brain were falling apart," Dayna recalls. Grinding herself down into burnout, she simply kept doing what got her there in the first place. "I was sticking with it out of stubbornness, and ego, and just a lack of perspective."

Until a class on Holistic Management made her pause.

Originally developed by Allan Savory in the context of grazing management, Holistic Management is a decision-making tool that has grown to include all aspects of life on and off the farm. Many books and classes are now dedicated to explaining the practice, but for Steve Riggins, of Cambridge, Iowa, the concept can be summarized in a sentence. "It's going to sound stupid," he says with a laugh, "but Holistic Management is managing everything as a whole."



Steve Riggins

Using the example of a puzzle, Steve explains that "all the different pieces of what you're doing on the farm have to fit together. All the puzzle pieces have to fit together for the same picture, rather than three different puzzles that you're working on for three different pictures."

For Dayna, the puzzle was not fitting together. "With my life as it was, I needed to find peace," she says. "Then I could figure out an enterprise that worked with the reality of what my body needed – and what the land needed."

After applying what she learned in her Holistic Management class, the muddy water settled and what Dayna saw became Nettle Valley Farm in Spring Grove, Minnesota. Dayna and her

husband, Nick Nguyen, got out of vegetable production and switched to raising pastured pigs. They are now entering their tenth season with this system, which Dayna says works much better for their lives.

An Invitation to Pause

The Holistic Management system comprises an extensive and rigorous eight-step process, which is further divided into sub-processes. This complexity can seem intimidating to those considering HM for the first time. However, rather than being rigid and prescriptive, the system can be adapted to what the user needs. All of the farmers interviewed for this story have cut out whole sections of the formal Holistic Management process to make it usable for them.

“Life happens and we don’t have the time we had when we were single, or a young married couple without children,” says Torray Wilson, who farms near Paullina, Iowa. “As time becomes more of a premium, we streamline things. We pick and choose the most valuable parts for us at this point. If we did everything HM says, that would be phenomenal but there’s not enough time in the day.”

The crux of Holistic Management, no matter how much is pared away, is that it creates space for deliberate reflection and examination, whether of the self, farm, finances, grazing or any other sphere of life. It is a practice that demands attention

be paid to details and questions we might otherwise ignore amid the bustle of our daily tasks or moving from one emergency to the next. Where deliberation has succumbed to the pell-mell of modern life, those who use Holistic Management instead commit to carving out time to reflect.

“We try to look at why we do something and what’s going to make the biggest impact, rather than just going through the day-to-day,” says Steve, explaining how HM helps break his farm out of routine. “You’ve got to keep the farm running, but sometimes I focus on the daily task list to escape the larger things I should be doing.” Moving can give the illusion of progress. Sometimes, the harder action is to sit and let the waters clear.

Dayna uses HM as “a tool to help us step back and look at the bigger picture of ourselves and what we want our lives to be – to assess whether or not the farm in its current state is supporting or detracting from that vision.”

Torray emphasizes that the aim of Holistic Management is to get people to focus on what they want, not what they don’t want. “Farmers are notorious for only looking at the weeds, or the problem part of the field,” he says, “instead of looking at the part that’s going really well and finding out why that part is succeeding and replicating that over the rest of the field.”

(Continued on page 28 →)



Nick Nguyen and Dayna Burtness pose with their herd of Hampshire hogs on their farm near Spring Grove, Minnesota.

Asking Questions

Because of its adaptability, how practitioners apply the reflection part of Holistic Management differs by user and by need.

For Dayna, reflecting means closely interrogating her reasons for doing something. “The most powerful piece [of Holistic Management] that stops me in my tracks when I’m thinking about a new idea is the cause-and-effect question,” she says. “Does this action address the root cause of the problem? I think ‘Dayna, what is the actual problem in your life that you’re trying to solve with this? Are you actually addressing the deep-down causes of this, or are you trying to find a new shiny thing to distract you from the root problem?’”

Torrey agrees. “We don’t do that very often in farming. We just address the first problem, so we’re constantly putting Band-Aids on instead of getting to the heart of the issue.”

For others, the most clarifying step of the reflection process is determining who is on your farm team. In Jon Bakehouse’s case, he applied HM when he had to expand his team. “I always thought, well it’s my farm, I’ve got to be the creative one and solve the problems myself. But no,” says Jon, who farms near Hastings, Iowa. “HM shed some light on people in my network I had initially overlooked who could help offer that human creativity.”

Steve struggled with the inverse and used HM when he had to trim his team. “I realized I was putting them in as roadblocks, without meaning to. Once we removed those issues and got it down to our core, I think that’s when things moved the best.”

For questions like this – and others – Jon sees Holistic Management as a valuable way to find common language and vision. Torrey holds this as a central pillar for his family. “That’s where the power comes from – having people sharing a vision, and working towards a vision even when things are hard. Sometimes you don’t have to have the most talented athletes, you just have to have a team that’s communicating and functioning well together.”

Like any world-framing philosophy, Holistic Management is not something that can be mastered and finished. It is a practice. Those who go through the trainings are called HM practitioners, not masters. The waters are always turbulent, but every now and then they can be settled enough to see. ■

Dayna and Nick will host a field day this summer on their farm in Spring Grove, Minnesota. Stay tuned for more details.



Torrey Wilson



When Torrey Wilson has a problem, he keeps asking himself “why” until he finds the root.

PROBLEM: A cow is limping.

WHY? ▼

She has hoof rot.

WHY? ▼

She’s low on minerals.

WHY? ▼

I was slow at ordering mineral, and she went two weeks without it.

WHY? ▼

I’m not spending time in the office to make sure the inventories are up to date.

SOLUTION:

The real cause of that foot problem is not spending time in the office.

Review of “The Farmer’s Lawyer” By Sarah Vogel

By Susan Futrell

The farm crisis of the 1980s

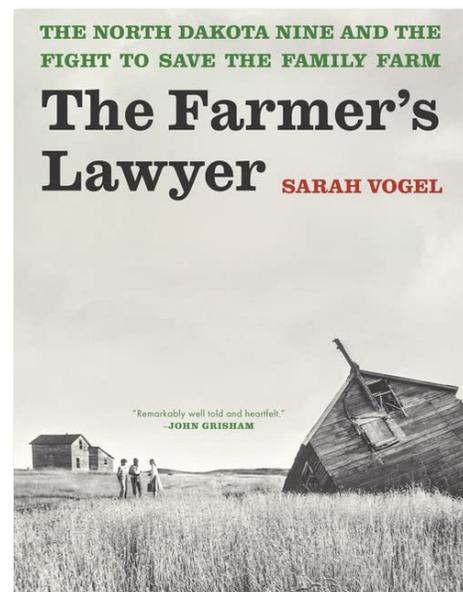
gouged deep, long-lasting scars into rural communities and small towns across the U.S., including among PFI’s members – nearly a quarter of Iowa farmers were pushed out of farming in the decade between 1980 and 1990. Today, we understand the immensity of that crisis. But 40 years ago, that profound shift in farm ownership and economics was a quiet calamity that unfolded mostly untold.

In “The Farmer’s Lawyer” – part true-crime drama, part memoir, part history – Sarah Vogel gives us a front-row seat to an inspiring tale of how a few determined advocates helped turn the tide for hundreds of thousands of farmers in that hard time. Often sharing the view from her aging car, readers join Sarah as she bumps along the back roads of North Dakota to farms, meetings and cafes with her papers, files and toddler son in tow. With her marriage over, credit cards maxed out and struggles paying her bills, she lives the pain of the farmers she is working for.

As an author, Sarah knows how to turn a behind-the-scenes account of a court case about banking regulations into a lively, warm-hearted, hard-knock page-turner. Woven around a central narrative about the twists and turns of a history-making class-action lawsuit on behalf of farmers facing foreclosure, the story is an epic hero’s tale: Sarah, a young lawyer and single mom from North Dakota who quietly files a daring, high-stakes suit against the U.S. government; the Farmers Home Administration (predecessor to the Farm Service Agency) and their lawyers; the U.S. Department of Justice; and a determined group of farmers, farm advocates and lawyers facing down epic injustice.

Intensely aware of what was at stake, Sarah and her colleagues sought to assemble a truly representative group of plaintiffs from North Dakota, where the case would be heard. Eventually, she found eight farm families willing to risk going public as plaintiffs. Still, it wasn’t until she searched out and secured a ninth family to represent Native American farmers that she felt the case was ready. Their strategy was to build an impeccable case in *Coleman v. Block* that would extend protection to 8,400 other farms then in foreclosure, and eventually to over 240,000 farms nationwide.

Sarah lets her readers know right away what a long shot she is. A self-described “research attorney,” she knows the regulatory world in-depth but has never tried a case, or even attended a full trial. When the opposing attorney pulls a surprise move requiring her to call witnesses the day before the case is to be filed, it’s just one more in a roller coaster of seemingly insurmountable hurdles. PFI members will recognize some familiar names – longtime advocates who were doing groundbreaking work on behalf of farmers, then and now. Each thread adds drama, emotion and urgency as the story reaches the powerful redemption of the judge’s ruling.



Sarah went on to serve two terms as the North Dakota Commissioner of Agriculture from 1989–1997, the first woman in the U.S. to be elected to such a position. In 1999, she won another significant case against USDA, *Keepseagle vs. Vilsack*, (and a related case in 2003), which addressed long-standing discrimination against Native American farmers and ranchers, and she remains an active advocate for family farms and Native rights.

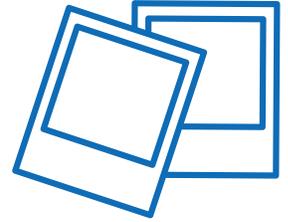
Reflecting on the era’s lessons, Sarah closes by saying “the shift to bigger and bigger farms and corporatized farming is not inevitable ... if we act soon.” Her story makes me proud of our Midwestern heritage of farm advocacy, and bolsters my faith that democratic institutions can be held accountable. If you enjoy a good legal thriller, a heartwarming tale of neighbors helping neighbors and an inspiring account of good people triumphing in the face of tremendous odds, this book is a great read. If you want to understand the impact of farm policy on real people, it is an essential read for our times.

Susan Futrell is a fifth-generation Iowan, author and apple enthusiast with four decades of experience in the sustainable food and farming world in marketing, distribution and education. She has been with nonprofit Red Tomato for the past 15 years and is also a freelance writer and consultant. She lives in Iowa City, Iowa.

PFI MEMBER

Photo Album

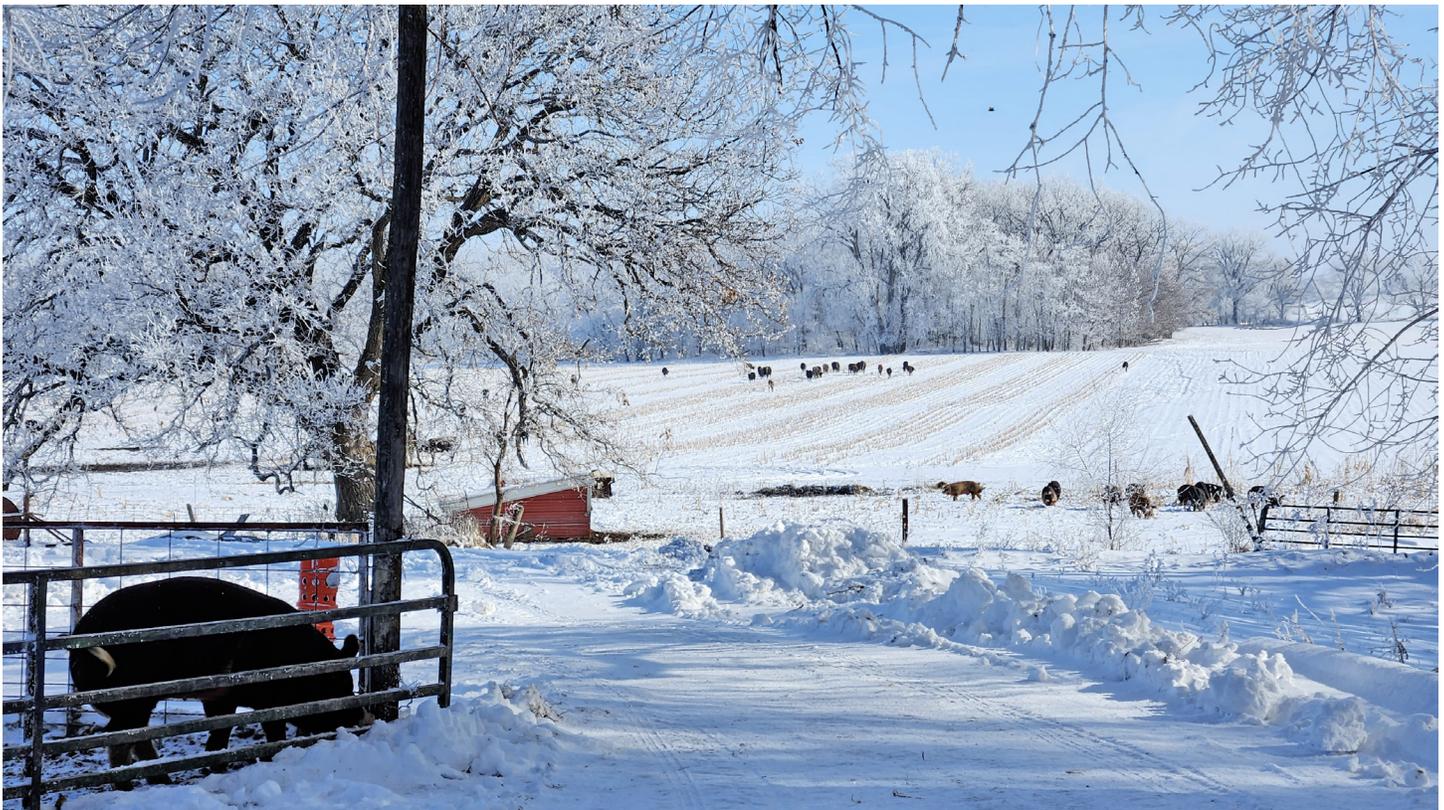
The PFI Member Photo Album features photos submitted by PFI members from their farms. Whether you capture images of the everyday, the awe-inspiring or the curiously beautiful on your farm, send them our way and we'll work to curate them into the album.



“Can Lefty come inside today?” (Eric Jensen – Yellow Table Farm, Tripoli, Iowa)



The clothesline (and the high tunnel) wait patiently for spring. (Rob Faux – Genuine Faux Farm, Tripoli, Iowa)



A frosty morning on a diverse livestock farm. (John Gilbert – Gibraltar Farm, Iowa Falls, Iowa)



Close-up of ice in February. (Eric Jensen – Yellow Table Farm, Tripoli, Iowa)



The sheep at Cory Family Farm. (Mary Ann Mathis – Cory Family Farm, Elkhart, Iowa)



Frozen fencelines are a visual tableau of the artistry of ice. (Neil Peterson – Clover Lane Farm, Fonda, Iowa)



Eighty head of automatic nutrient and microbiology spreaders do their work. (Bruce Carney – Carney Family Farm, Maxwell, Iowa)



An icy spigot in February. (Donna Warhover – Morning Glory Farm, Mount Vernon, Iowa)



Have a photo you'd like featured in the magazine?
Email it to liz.kolbe@practicalfarmers.org or tag PFI on social media and let us know!

Meet Our New Staff

Additions to our habitat, education and communication teams

Brad Woodson | Habitat Viability Manager



Brad joined Practical Farmers of Iowa in January 2023 as the habitat viability manager. His work involves leading PFI's habitat viability programming and partnerships to help farmers and landowners create habitat successfully at different scales.

Brad has a fisheries and wildlife biology degree from Iowa State University. He worked in Lee County, Iowa, as a roadside management specialist before spending the last 31 years with the McHenry County Conservation District in northern Illinois. During his time there, Brad held several positions ranging from restoration ecologist to natural resources manager. He has conducted biological surveys on fish, birds, mammals, amphibians and reptiles and has done extensive work on white-tailed deer and their impacts on habitats.

Throughout his career, Brad has helped create and enhance a variety of habitats, from streams and wetlands to prairie and woodlands. Over the last 10 years, Brad has been deeply involved in evolving

the district's agriculture program from a focus on conventional to regenerative agriculture. Brad was successful at creating a lease to bring bison to a conservation area and developing the Joint Grassland Venture, which allows for late-season cutting of hayfields, a practice that benefits grasslands and grassland bird habitat.

Brad has served on the Illinois Prescribed Fire Council as a board member and president. He has conducted over 700 prescribed fires and given several professional presentations on prescribed burning. He also holds professional credentials as a prescribed burn manager and a certified wildlife biologist.

Brad enjoys all things outdoors, including hunting, fishing, birdwatching and working on the family farm near Greenfield, Iowa. Brad and his wife Kris also spend time kayaking, hiking and biking. They have three adult children who live in three different states, so getting their family together is always a priority and a challenge. Brad enjoys reading, spending time with friends and having lively discussions in his spare time. ■

Valeria Cano Camacho | Latino Engagement Coordinator



Valeria joined the PFI staff in winter 2023 as the Latino engagement coordinator in PFI's farmer-led education team. In this role, she helps the department plan and facilitate networking and education events for Spanish-speaking farmers and growers.

A long-term resident of central Iowa (Des Moines and Ames), Valeria has a master's degree in soil science and a bachelor's degree in agronomy and global resource systems, both from Iowa State University.

Prior to her current role, Valeria was an agricultural specialist at Iowa State for the Three Sisters Project. Her agricultural interests are in soil health, regenerative agriculture and ethnobotany. She enjoys understanding the connections between people, culture and agriculture. Her love and appreciation for agriculture started in high school, although her family claims it started as a toddler who would eat handfuls of soil from her mother's flowerpots.

In her free time, Valeria enjoys anything crafty, reading and spending time with her loved ones. She resides in Ames with her partner, Austin. ■

Elizabeth Wilhelm | Media Relations Coordinator



Elizabeth joined the Practical Farmers staff in 2023. As the media relations coordinator, she works to generate media coverage for PFI and its farmers, manages the organization's group of farmer spokespersons and fields all media inquiries.

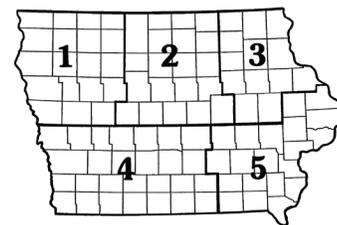
Elizabeth will be graduating from Iowa State University in May 2023 with a degree in agriculture and life sciences education, with a focus in communication, and a minor in animal science. During her undergraduate career, she held internships with the Office of Iowa Secretary of State, the World Food Prize Foundation and Corteva Agriscience.

She also worked at an agricultural cooperative and a local meat processing facility. These experiences gave her a unique outlook on agriculture and the diversity within the industry. Elizabeth is passionate about supporting all farmers, amplifying their voices and sharing their stories with the world.

Originally from Dyersville, Iowa, Elizabeth enjoys live music, trying new recipes, fishing, true crime podcasts and relaxing with her dog, Willie. ■

Welcome, New Members!

From Nov. 16, 2022–March 1, 2023



DISTRICT 1 – NORTHWEST

- Zac Ahrenholtz – Denison
- John Elser – Sibley
- Jacob Hartsell – Early
- Larry Haspels – Little Rock
- Beverly Haspels – Little Rock
- Breanna Horsey – Storm Lake
- Doug Jauer – Hinton
- Andrew Koehlmoos – Granville
- Aaron Maassen – Maurice
- Dan Muhlbauer – Milford
- Jesup Muhlbauer – Royal
- Tyler Pudenz – Carroll
- Tom Schutte – Ocheyedan
- Cory Vanderploeg – Paullina
- Joel Vangelder – Sibley
- Brad Waldemar – Deloit
- Mark Wynia – Rock Rapids

DISTRICT 2 – NORTH-CENTRAL

- Colton Anderson – Boone
- Tim Anderson – Boone
- Silvina Arias – Ames
- Frank Beavers – Colo
- Andy Bruellman – Ottosen
- Matt Buskohl – Reinbeck
- Jon Bystricky – Reinbeck
- Si Eiklenborg – Parkersburg
- Women, Food, & Agriculture Network, Stephanie Enloe – Ames
- William Fields – Paton
- Craif Fillman – Paton
- Ron Flater – Grundy Center
- Justin Graves – Grundy Center
- Floyd Hammer – Union
- Monica Hild – Webster City
- Faron Jensen – Greene
- Josh Jeske – Eldora
- Craig MacDonald – Scranton
- Stephanie Meyers – Hubbard
- Alyona Michael – Ames
- Marguerite Miller – Nevada
- Lois Minch – Nevada
- Gabriela Morel Gadea – Ames
- Chuck Murphy – Reinbeck
- Steven Nalean – Ogden
- Joanna Neff – Jefferson
- Brett Nichols – State Center
- Robin Pestotnik – Boone
- Eric Rector – Clarion
- Calvin Richardson – Tama
- Trevor Ross – Jefferson
- Joel Schmidt – Ottosen
- Jeff Smalley – Boone
- Cheri Sorensen – Maxwell

- Josh Sponheim – Nora Springs
- Haleigh Summers – Ames
- Scott Taylor – Ames
- Craig Tesch – Osage
- Trey Tesch – Osage
- LeRoy Thomsen – Toldeo
- Tony Upah – Chelsea
- Myles Van Patten – Humboldt
- Jennifer Vit – Duncombe
- Chris Vry – Story City

DISTRICT 3 – NORTHEAST

- Dawniell Balderston – Central City
- Aaron Balderston – Central City
- Tom Berns – Luana
- Steve Besler – Hopkinton
- Cary Bierschenk – Van Horn
- Dennis Blumhagen – Castalia
- Luke Broulik – Lisbon
- Robert Broulik – Lisbon
- Sondra Cabell – Independence
- Paul Carroll – McGregor
- Chance Christopher – Decorah
- Alice Cook – Peosta
- Todd Cook – Bernard
- Tony Cook – Bernard
- Philip Deshaw – Dyersville
- Andie Donnan and Ashley Neises – Dubuque
- Ray Elsbernd – Calmar
- Eric Elsbernd – Decorah
- Marv Ernzen – Holy Cross
- Larry Farley – Denver
- Terry Franzen – Ossian
- Rodney Franzen – Decorah
- Ben Funke – Dyersville
- Carl Gerhold – Atkins
- Jacob Groth – Decorah
- David Guthrie – Hopkinton
- Nick Hanna – La Porte City
- Chad Heims – Worthington
- Curt Hollis – Waterloo
- Richard Isaacson – Coggon
- Chad Koopmann – Epworth
- Richard Kundel – Cedar Rapids
- Tony Kurt – Cascade
- Jonah Light – Mt. Vernon
- Jon Lubke – Ridgeway
- Kim Meyer – Castalia
- Adam Moorman – Manchester
- ReRooted Connections, Rachael Munn – Decorah
- Jessica Petersen – Shellsburg
- Jeff Pleggenkuhle – Waucoma
- Jo Porter – Denver

- Richard Recker – Dyersville
- Gregg Recker – Earlville
- Randy Riniker – Guttenberg
- Doug Sass – Monona
- Marty Schwesers – New Vienna
- Spencer Schwesers – New Vienna
- William Selken – Keystone
- David Sexton – Ridgeway
- Parker Shakespeare – Hopkinton
- Doug Stonebreaker – Dubuque
- Faythe Stone-Brocka – Denver
- David Turnis – Bernard
- Robert Uhlenhake – Ossian
- Drew Ward – Spillville
- Virgil Weber – Bernard
- Robert Wendt – Manchester

DISTRICT 4 – SOUTHWEST

- Lacey Bell – Leon
- Annie Binder – Ankeny
- DeWitt Boyd and Sarah Klein – Granger
- Linda Brown – Des Moines
- Phil Brown – New Virginia
- Zachary Cassidy – Des Moines
- Julie Christensen – Guthrie Cetner
- Pat Cook – Winterset
- Michael and Margie Crabbs – Guthrie Center
- Jay Crom – Malvern
- Ben Currie – Des Moines
- David Deardorff – Yale
- Matt Diehl – Osceola
- Kevin Dodson – Corydon
- Steve Downing – Creston
- Steve Downs – St. Charles
- Lela and Nikki Duncan – Stanton
- Daniel Faidley – Colfax
- Daniel Frederick – Bagley
- Chris Gaesser – Lenox
- Casey Gathje – Clarinda
- Karl Harris – Bouton
- Alice Helle – Johnston
- Angi Humburg – Runnells
- Jeff Hundt – Harlan
- Rodney Ingle – Pleasant Hill
- Michael James – Ankeny
- Ash Kading – Casey
- Stanley Kading – Casey
- Stephany Kerr – Indianola
- Leon Kessel – Lamoni
- Diane Kimberley – Urbandale
- Julie Kistenmacher – Urbandale
- Steve Konrady – Des Moines

- John Long – Sidney
- Kenny Lund – Polk City
- Darrell Mateer – Osceola
- Mariko Matsuura – Johnston
- Heartland Co-op, Ruth McCabe – West Des Moines
- William McKibben – West Des Moines
- Shaun Miller – Woodward
- Susannah Miller – Creston
- Justin Mills – Missouri Valley
- Brenda Muhr – Exira
- Tom Muhr – Exira
- Matt Muhr – Hamlin
- Vicki Nordskog – Atlantic
- Pam Obrecht – Malvern
- Greg Oldsen – Newton
- Jennifer Orton – Lorimor
- Pat Pauley – Honey Creek
- Lyle Peitzman – Grime
- D Perrigo – Linden
- Kyle Peterson – Stanton
- Pollock Bros, Inc., Tom Pollock – Malvern
- Grace Reineke – Dunlap
- Eric Sanny – Bondurant
- Jude Sellner – Urbandale
- Levi Shetler – Fontanelle
- Bob Simcox – Des Moines
- Brian Stevens – New Virginia
- Jon Tesdell – Guthrie Center
- Catie Thomas – Avoca
- Billy Tibbles – Oakland
- Ben Vardaman – Clarinda
- Mike Veasman – Colfax
- Elizabeth Vermeerish – Council Bluffs
- Kyle Wendt – Mitchellville

DISTRICT 5 – SOUTHEAST

- Kathy Barkalow – Oxford
- Cheryl Barker – Monticello
- John Black – West Branch
- Stuart Blyth – Williamsburg
- Lance Brenneman – Wellman
- Angie Burr – Lone Tree
- Kenneth Cadden – Brooklyn
- Carl Davis – Winfield
- DeBrower Conservation Services, Shalen DeBrower – Victor
- Kevin Decker – Monticello
- Andrew Dunn – Iowa City
- John E Carl – Grinnell
- Kevin Flander – New Sharon

- Scott Flynn – Keota
 - Mary Foster – Oskaloosa
 - Timothy Foster – Oskaloosa
 - John Furlong – Riverside
 - Ed Goemaat – New Sharon
 - Todd Hagen – Homestead
 - Nathaniel Harris – Eddyville
 - Gene Helmig – Columbus Junction
 - Miriam Hoffman – Saint Donatus
 - Derek Hueneke – Bellevue
 - William Ihrig – Monmouth
 - Don Kline – Washington
 - Jonas Kurtz – Bloomfield
 - Dane Lang – Brooklyn
 - Jonathan Mast – Bloomfield
 - Aubrey McEnroe – Corallville
 - Lynford and Laura Miller – Bloomfield
 - Thom Miller – Winfield
 - Beata Nacsá – Fairfield
 - Don Ryan – Marengo
 - Jason Sandifer – Ottumwa
 - Ron Schott – Tipton
 - Sophie Sheeder – Corallville
 - Dennis Stam – Oskaloosa
 - Troy Stanerson – Marengo
 - Marki Stinski – North Liberty
 - Lael Stout – Washington
 - Kent Stuart – West branch
 - Darrell Thordsen – Monmouth
 - Joe Trimpe – South Amana
 - Joshua Urfer – Montezuma
 - Lance Veldboom – Grinnell
 - Michael Williams – Amana
 - Sara Ziehr – West Branch
- DISTRICT 6 – OUT OF STATE**
- Minerva Dorantes – Fayetteville, AR
 - Jacob Chambers – Broomfield, CO
 - Matthew Fritch – Port Byron, IL
 - Randall Leka – Tallula, IL
 - Ryan Carlgren – Formoso, KS
 - Dale Coomes – Girard, KS
 - Myron Goertzen – Newton, KS
 - Scott Ash – Milaca, MN
 - Larry Coffing – Northfield, MN
 - Estling Farms, Inc., Jade Estling – Roosevelt, MN
 - Mike Hunnicutt – Hartland, MN
 - Kay Kay – Wabasha, MN
 - Tyler Larson – Waseca, MN
 - Eric Rabenberg – Aitkin, MN
 - Keith Speltz – Altura, MN
 - Pat Troendle – Lanesboro, MN
 - Nolan Zachman – Belgrade, MN
 - Richard Busby – Parnell, MO
 - Nelson Curran – University City, MO
 - Hubert Gregory – Easton, MO
 - Jason Gregory – Hemple, MO
 - Kellen Krueger – Kahoka, MO
 - Clair Martin – Gorin, MO
 - Ryan Messner – Stanberry, MO
 - Dean Meyer – Guilford, MO
 - Robert Parsons – Parnell, MO
 - Eric Redden – Stanberry, MO
 - Dennis Redden – Stanberry, MO
 - Jeff Runde – Parnell, MO
 - Katherine Taylor – St. Louis, MO
 - Nathan Whitney – Trenton, MO
 - Cory Miller – Missoula, MT
 - Jerome Raile – Wishek, ND
 - Dan Bauer – Spalding, NE
 - Cory Bender – Lexington, NE
 - Ralph Benjamin – Lexington, NE
 - Jordan Brichacek – Dodge, NE
 - Dan Briggs – Seward, NE
 - Kent Brown – Cozad, NE
 - Rick Buell – Lexington, NE
 - David Cast – Beaver Crossing, NE
 - Nathan Cast – Beaver Crossing, NE
 - Greg Crawford – Lexington, NE
 - Chris Denker – Lexington, NE
 - Joel Douglass – Martell, NE
 - Matt Feik – Cozad, NE
 - Guy Freudenburg – Norfolk, NE
 - Pieter Grobler – Waco, NE
 - Diane Gropp – Crete, NE
 - Mike Gropp – Crete, NE
 - Andrew Guenther – Bancroft, NE
 - Mike Hansen – Chappell, NE
 - Erik Holen – Holdrege, NE
 - Rod Hollman – Matrell, NE
 - Brenton Hopkins – Rogers, NE
 - Paul Huenefeld – Aurora, NE
 - Heritage Farms Inc – Waverly, NE
 - Kurt Janke – Wayne, NE
 - Floyd Jansma – Fremont, NE
 - Wayne Jarecki – Lindsay, NE
 - Tom Jarecki – Lindsay, NE
 - Darin Keller – Wilber, NE
 - Greg Keller – Monroe, NE
 - Ron Klink – Columbus, NE
 - Bryant Knoerzer – Elwood, NE
 - Anthony Kreikemeier – Shelby, NE
 - Jordan Kremlacek – Morse Bluff, NE
 - Abe Kuck – Bertrand, NE
 - Steve Lund – Genoa, NE
 - Doug Luther – Overton, NE
 - Reed McClymont – Holbrege, NE
 - Ron McGill – Waverly, NE
 - Randy Oertwich – Pilger, NE
 - Dustin O’Hanlon – Lexington, NE
 - James Olson – Atkinson, NE
 - Dennis Pouk – Loomis, NE
 - Brian Ramaekers – Columbus, NE
 - Micheal Ramaekers – Humphrey, NE
 - Dave Rasmussen – Ericson, NE
 - Bruce Rickertsen – Lexington, NE
 - Brandon Ritter – Beemer, NE
 - Bill Rosenau – Blair, NE
 - Dave Rowe – Darr, NE
 - Dylan Rowe – Lexington, NE
 - Tim Rowe – Elwood, NE
 - Lee Rutkowski – Cozad, NE
 - John Schroeder – Cozad, NE
 - Rick Seberger – Lexington, NE
 - Doug Selmer – Dorchester, NE
 - Bill Shotkoski – Lexington, NE
 - Gary Snide – Martell, NE
 - Darrell Sommerhalder – Auburn, NE
 - Dean Stueckrath – Osmond, NE
 - Tom Sunderman – Fremont, NE
 - David Trembly – Lexington, NE
 - Craig Uden – Johnson Lake, NE
 - Kory Wehling – Diller, NE
 - Neil Wehling – Diller, NE
 - Cheri Worm – Martell, NE
 - Kinyua Kirubi – Princeton, NJ
 - Brian McClarren – Delta, OH
 - Susan Luschas – Brandon, SD
 - Mark Venner – Pierre, SD
 - Kennley Wright – Colman, SD
 - Metro Safari, Dr. Francis Githuku – Steilacoom, WA
 - Jesse Downs – Readstown, WI
 - Jonathan Lightner – Jefferson, WI
 - Kyle Nilsestuen – Arcadia, WI
 - Joann Sustachek – Union Grove, WI
- INTERNATIONAL**
- Joanne Feddes – Canada

Thank you
to our newest lifetime members!
(From Nov. 16, 2022–March 1, 2023)

Ann & Chris Cromwell Williamsburg, IA	Arthur & Colette Dunham Hopkinton, IA	Steve & Jean Gingerich Parnell, IA	Luke Gran Nevada, IA	John Hogeland & Beth Hoffman Lovilia, IA	Glen Kadelbach Hutchinson, MN
Ron Miller Portsmouth, IA	Joseph & Judy Olsen Independence, IA	Nolan Patterson Stratford, IA	Rachel Perry Geneva, IL	James Sayers Humboldt, IA	Dave & Paula Stevenson Waverly, 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.



PFI Events

Note: Times are in CST (except where noted).
Full details about all events are available at practicalfarmers.org/calendar

APRIL

APRIL 14 • Flower Farmer Meetup & Roundtable Discussion
Hosted by Adam & Jennifer O’Neal of PepperHarrow Farm
Des Moines, IA | [Learn more at practicalfarmers.org/horticulture-meet-ups](https://practicalfarmers.org/horticulture-meet-ups)

APRIL 29 • PFI Social at Whiterock Conservancy
Coon Rapids, IA | [Learn more at practicalfarmers.org/events](https://practicalfarmers.org/events)

MAY

MAY 6 • PFI Social at Prairie Oaks Institute
Hosted by Kim Devine-Johnson
Belle Plaine, MN | [Learn more at practicalfarmers.org/events](https://practicalfarmers.org/events)

JUNE

PFI field days begin in June! Starting in mid-May, look for the complete Field Day Guide in your mailbox or stay tuned to the website and e-news for the full line-up of 40+ field days in Iowa and surrounding states.



Find PFI At

APRIL

APRIL 29 • Farm Fresh Food Fest (formerly The Gathering)
Mason City, IA | [Learn more at healthyharvestni.com](https://healthyharvestni.com)

JUNE

JUNE 10 • Gran Festival North Iowa
Hampton, IA | [Learn more at granfestivalnorthiowa.org](https://granfestivalnorthiowa.org)

JUNE 26-29 • North American Prairie Conference
Altoona, IA | [Learn more at northamericanprairie.org](https://northamericanprairie.org)



PFI staffer Grace Yi sets up a display table at the Marbleseed Organic Farming Conference held in La Crosse, Wisconsin, in February 2023.

Sign up today!



Practical Farmers of Iowa
is now offering two new
conservation-focused cost-shares!



Conservation Cost-Share

Are you interested in conservation practices that improve water quality, build soil health, address climate change and provide critical native habitat for wildlife?

Practical Farmers of Iowa will be providing technical assistance and financial resources to help farmers and landowners pay for practices like prairie strips and precision conservation.*



Beneficial Insects Cost-Share

Do you farm in an urban or suburban setting?
Are you interested in increasing pollination or natural predation on your farm?

Practical Farmers of Iowa and Xerces Society will be providing technical assistance and financial resources to help farmers establish beneficial insect habitat on urban and suburban farms.**

To learn more about these conservation practices and the support Practical Farmers can offer, scan the QR code here, visit practicalfarmers.org/cost-share or contact our habitat viability staff at **(515) 232-5661**.



* Partners and funders: Clean Water Iowa, Iowa Department of Agriculture & Land Stewardship, NRCS Conservation Innovation Grant, Pheasants Forever and U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service

** Partners and funders: Ceres Trust, NRCS Conservation Innovation Grant and Xerces Society

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: _____ Email: _____

* For Farm or Household membership, please list names of all persons included. For Organization membership, you may list up to three contact persons.

JOIN OR RENEW

1. I am joining at the level of:

- Access - \$25
- Individual - \$50
- Farm or Household - \$60
- Organization - \$110
- Lifetime Member* - \$1,200
* See details at bit.ly/PFI-lifetime

3. How many years of farming experience do you have?

- 0
- 1-5
- 6-10
- 11 or more

2. Which category best describes you? (choose one)

- Farmer or farm operator
- Not farming yet, but would like to
- Farmland owner who does not actively farm myself
- Other: _____

4. How did you hear about PFI?

MEMBER BENEFITS

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

Please add my farm to PFI's:

- Local Foods Directory
- Business Directory (Organization members only)

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:

- \$1,200
- \$500
- \$250
- \$100
- \$50
- \$ _____

Or, make a recurring monthly or quarterly donation. This will be automatically charged to your credit card on the first day of each month or quarter.

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

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

THE FINAL WORD



PFI staff enjoyed some downtime over games, gab and tacos during their winter staff party at Smash Park in West Des Moines, Iowa, on March 6. Shown here from left to right are: (Top row) Miranda Johnson, Kayla Koether, Sarah Carlson, Lydia English and Nick Ohde

(Middle row) Rachel Burke, Valeria Cano Camacho (seated), Erin Carpenter, Morgan Jennings (seated), Vanya North, Sally Worley, Stefan Gailans, Alisha Bower and Liz Kolbe

(Bottom row) Taylor Hintch, Amos Johnson, Valeria Cano Camacho and Steve Carlson.

PRACTICAL FARMERS *of Iowa*

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Organization
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A Pollinator's World

A fuzzy bee covered in pollen dust searches for nectar on a bright yellow flower. On page 20, read about how PFI members are planting more early-blooming flowers, trees and grasses for hungry pollinators.