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**Practical News - Enroll in our Habitat Incentives Program + February small grains shared learning call**

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From Practical Farmers of Iowa <info@practicalfarmers.org>

Date Tue 2/4/2025 10:21 AM

To Anna Pesek <anna.pesek@practicalfarmers.org>



**February 3, 2025**

*Equipping farmers to build resilient farms and communities.*



## Orchardists gather to share knowledge at the Commercial Apple Growers Workshop

On an unusually warm day last Tuesday, more than 70 people gathered at Wilson's Orchard and Farm in Cumming, Iowa, for PFI's 2025 Commercial Apple Growers Workshop. In the morning, robust conversations explored weed control, orchard floor maintenance, integrated pest management, disease-resistant apple varieties, practices to build orchard resilience and more.

The event included a panel discussion of apple growers including **Paul Rasch** and **Kyle Tester** of Wilson's Orchard and Farm; **Dave Differding** of Timeless Prairie Orchard; **Chris Deal** of Deal's Orchard; **Marcus Johnson** of Buffalo Ridge Orchard; and **Michael Malik** of Long Land Orchard. In the afternoon, host Paul presented lessons learned in establishing this new orchard, followed by a tour and demonstration of pruning and training in a high-density system.

Delicious apple cider donuts, apple turnovers and a local foods lunch were enjoyed by all. [Explore our full events calendar.](#)

### NEWS

## Video: "Cover Crops for Soil Health and Low-Cost Grazing"



In a new YouTube video, brothers **Landon Brown** and **Derek Brown** of New Providence, Iowa, talk about their initial decision to use cover crops for erosion control. Since then, they've noted other benefits including feed value, better soil biology and increased grazing.

[In this video](#), Derek discusses how he uses a variety of seasonally appropriate cover crops to benefit their farm. He also shares his experiment with swath grazing the sorghum-sudan following corn stalks. [Watch the video.](#)

**The Browns have seen how using cover crops lets them get into their fields earlier in the spring, especially during wet years. If this is something you've experienced or are curious about, [sign up to participate in our research trial.](#)**

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**Access support to increase the habitat on your farm**



Did you know PFI, in partnership with Pheasants Forever, can support conservation practices on your farm, including prairie strips and precision conservation analysis?

PFI's Habitat Incentives Program is here to help you achieve your goals by providing technical and financial support for conservation practices.

**Submit an interest form to get started.** Our staff will contact you to discuss program options for your farm's specific needs and answer any questions.

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## Reaching back to our roots: Decades of PFI research available on our website



Farmer-led research has always been a core component of PFI's work.

On-farm researchers, referred to as PFI cooperators, have long been exploring topics of interest to them, from feeding small grains to pigs, summer lettuce varieties and calving timing on a grass-based dairy to cover crops, field crop research and everything in between.

Our online archive has research reports dating back to 1988 on an expansive range of topics. **Explore past on-farm research to inspire your own ideas and spark your curiosity.**

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## Enroll in our N Rate Risk Protection Program



Are you looking to save inputs on your corn crop?

Our N Rate Risk Protection Program is free to participate in and helps you lower your risk as you reduce nitrogen expenses – saving you money and increasing your farm’s resiliency.

**[Check to see if you are eligible and to sign up.](#)**

## UPCOMING EVENTS

### February shared learning call: “Equipment for Planting Small Grains and Frost-Seeding”



**Friday, Feb. 7 | Noon-1 p.m. | [Online](#)**

Estling Farms Inc., located in Roosevelt, Minnesota, grows a wide variety of crops, harvesting up to 11 species each year. These species include hard red spring wheat, hybrid rye, conventional rye, malt barley, winter camelina, Kernza, spring wheat and more.

For our February shared learning call, **Jade Estling** will talk about the different equipment used in the production of small grains and share why and how he frost-seeds red clover. **[Register today.](#)**

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**Webinar: "How To Sell 300 CSAs in 48 Hours: Cultivating Online Engagement and Converting It to Sales"**



**Tuesday, Feb. 11 | Noon-1 p.m. | [Online](#)**

For many community supported agriculture farmers, late winter begins the season of marketing and recruiting members.

In late fall 2024, farmer **Steve Strasheim** watched in awe as all 300 CSA pre-sales from **Corinna Bench's** Shared Legacy Farms, of Elmore, Ohio, sold out in about two days. In this webinar, Steve will talk with Corinna about her promotion formula, how the process works and why she thinks it did so well. [Register today.](#)

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## Reserve your hotel room today: 2025 Midwest Covers and Grains Conference



**Wednesday, March 5 | 8 a.m.-4 p.m.**

March will be here before we know it, and so will the third annual Midwest Covers and Grains Conference at Great Wolf Lodge in Baraboo, Wisconsin.

**Secure your hotel room at just \$99 with our group rate by Feb. 11 before rates increase.**

This one-day event will explore topics on everything from interseeding cover crops into corn to finding viable market options for small grains. [Register today.](#)

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## More upcoming events

*All events listed are in Central time.*

**[Feb. 4: Winter Webinar – How Do Small Grains Grow and Develop? Harnessing This Knowledge To Improve Management](#)**  
Noon-1 p.m. | [Online](#)

**[Feb. 7: Meet-Up – Horticulture Farmer Meet-Up](#)**  
*Hosted by: John & Janna Wesselius*  
9-11 a.m. | Sioux Center, IA

[View our events calendar](#)

## IN THE NEWS

### Members in the News

*Showcasing member voices and their diverse, independent viewpoints.*

**James Hepp** of Rockwell City, IA, was featured in [The Messenger](#): [Calhoun County named Outstanding County Farm Bureau](#)

**Jeff Hafner** of Panora, IA, was featured in [dsm magazine](#): [Early morning harvest](#)

**Mark Peterson** of Stanton, IA, was featured on [Iowa Agribusiness Radio Network](#): [Keeping a flexible and diverse approach to soil health](#)

**Mike Richards** of Jefferson, IA, was featured in [Wallaces Farmer](#): [How to create a successful landlord-farmer team](#)

**Stefan Gailans**, PFI's senior research manager, **Taylor Hintch**, PFI's senior field crops education coordinator and the following members were featured in [Progressive Farmer](#): [7 Farmers Honored as Master Researchers](#):

- **Jill Beebout** of Chariton, IA
- **Jack Boyer** of Reinbeck, IA
- **Rob and Tammy Faux** of Tripoli, IA
- **Dave and Meg Schmidt** of Exira, IA
- **Dick Sloan** of Rowley, IA

**Todd Western III** of Maple Grove, MN, and **Mike Cook** of Waterloo, IA, were featured in [Successful Farming](#): [Member of Iowa's Oldest Black-Owned Family Farm Talks History, Family, and Finding his Mission Moment](#)

**Ty Gustafson** of Story City, IA, and **John Hogeland** of Lovilia, IA, were featured on the Iowa [Farm Bureau webpage](#): [Meat processors share tips for direct sales](#)

### PFI in the News

**Sarah Carlson**, PFI's senior programs and member engagement director, was featured in [Grist](#): [Fiction to reality: Bridging the urban-rural divide](#)

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**Have you been featured in the media?** If you're a PFI member, tell us when and where to find a link to the article, and we'll feature you in a future issue of Practical News.

**Contact:** [elizabeth.wilhelm@practicalfarmers.org](mailto:elizabeth.wilhelm@practicalfarmers.org)

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