
Small Grains News - Preparing to plant oats + Enroll in a PFI research trial

From Solveig Orngard <solveig.orngard@practicalfarmers.org>

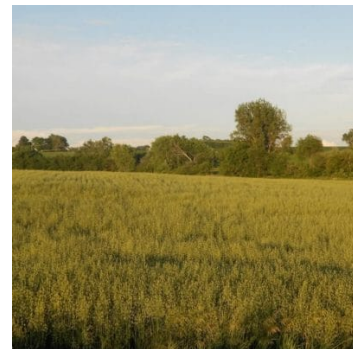
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To Anna Pesek <anna.pesek@practicalfarmers.org>



February 2025

Equipping farmers to build resilient farms and communities.



Planting oats on a heritage farm

Oats are a longstanding crop on the Voss family farm near Atkins, Iowa. Today, the farm is managed by fifth generation farmer, **Dan Voss**, and his son, **Brian Voss**. Once a dairy farm, the operation transitioned to focus on row crops in the 1980s but continued growing oats and hay after the livestock left. Brian and Dan have established local markets for their hay and oat straw in addition to selling oat grain to a nearby elevator.

Planting specifics: With the goal to sell straw, they chose the Rushmore variety, which yields well and doesn't lodge easily. Brian asserts that oats should get planted as early as possible to reduce weed presence without risking losing the crop to late-winter cold, usually in mid- to late-March. They lime the field in the

fall to reduce acidity, then spread a fertilizer mix of 20 pounds nitrogen, 60 pounds phosphorus, 100 pounds potassium and 20 pounds sulfur across the field shortly before planting the oats. Brian and Dan then plant at a rate of 80 pounds per acre in 10-inch spacing that is one inch deep using a John Deere no-till drill.

Oats in rotation: On the Voss farm, because oats are planted in early spring, they follow a rare period of winter fallow after soybean harvest. Brian and Dan have sometimes interseeded or followed the oat crop with alfalfa. They also enjoy planting a cover crop mix after oat harvest, which includes cereal rye, clover, tillage radish and kale. Brian says, "Having a cover crop that fixes nitrogen and reduces the amount of fertilizer needed for corn the next year is a pretty positive benefit long term."

PROGRAM UPDATES

Opportunity to provide shared learning call feedback and ideas



Shared learning calls are a staple of PFI's small grains programming.

Because we have more calls on the horizon, we would love to hear your feedback on 2024 calls and what topics or speakers you'd like to learn from in 2025 and beyond.

Fill out this short feedback form to share your thoughts so we can aim to better tailor upcoming calls to your interests.

Share your ideas for 2025 field days



As February comes to a close, planning for our 2025 field day season is already in full swing. Whether you are interested in hosting a field day or simply have topic or host ideas, the field crops team wants to hear from you!

Use this form or email **solveig.orngard@practicalfarmers.org** to share your ideas directly with PFI staff by March 7 to be considered for the 2025 field day season.

Enroll in two PFI on-farm research projects by March 15



Are you ready to put your soil health to the test with on-farm research?

PFI is currently seeking participants for two on-farm research trials. Both trials are compensated.

- Can We Reduce N Rates to Corn and Improve ROI?
- Do Cover Crops Increase the Number of Days Suitable for Field Work?

Deadline to enroll for both trials is March 15, 2025.

IN THE FIELD

New blog post: “Finding Your Small Grain Market Through Relationship Building”



Relationships are a key ingredient for establishing small grains markets. **Luke Peterson** of Dawson, Minnesota, has connected with people across the supply chain in his region of the Midwest to find markets for his diverse array of organic crops, including spring and ancient wheat, Kernza and oats.

[Read this blog](#) recapping the December shared learning call to learn Luke's tips for relationship building and finding niche markets for small grain crops.

Video: "A Close Look at Drill Components for Seeding Oats and Red Clover"



A good oat crop starts with a good stand, which starts with a well-maintained drill at the right settings.

In this video, **Wade Dooley** of Albion, Iowa, walks us through the components of his Landoll 5531 drill that he uses to co-seed oats and red clover. Wade discusses what components of the drill might need upkeep and replacing.

[Watch the video to help you prepare for oat planting.](#)

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

- Magazine article: ["Beyond 'Random Acts of Oats'"](#)
- Video: ["Farmer-Led Research: Reducing Nitrogen Rates to Corn"](#)
- Blog post: ["Growing High Test Weight Oats in Iowa: Tips from 23 Years of Experience"](#)

UPCOMING EVENTS

Register for the Midwest Covers and Grains Conference by TOMORROW



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

Attend the Midwest Covers and Grains Conference in Wisconsin to connect with farmers interested in the benefits of cover crops and small grains in rotation with or without livestock.

The conference will include:

- Plenary and breakout sessions
- Plenty of networking time
- Delicious locally sourced food
- A farmer social immediately following the conference

Preregister by Feb. 27. Walk-in registrations also welcome.

Small grains shared learning call: "Managing Soil Health for Better Quality Crops"



**Friday, March 7 | Noon-1 p.m. |
Online**

Cyclone Farms grows a variety of organic crops, including hard red winter wheat, yellow field peas, oats and alfalfa. They have cover crops in the rotation, as well as food-grade corn and soybeans.

In our next small grains shared learning call, **Amy Bruch** will talk about how Cyclone Farms manages soil health using various methods to understand what inputs are needed and where. She will also touch on how their farm markets their small grains.

Register today.

Upcoming PFI events

All events listed in Central time.

**March 11: Winter Webinar –
Optimal Nitrogen Fertilizer Rates
for Corn**

Noon-1 p.m. | [Online](#)

**March 25: Winter Webinar – The
Advantages of Cover Crops**

Noon-1 p.m. | [Online](#)

**April 11: Small Grains Shared
Learning Call – Preventing and
Managing Disease in Oats**

Noon-1 p.m. | [Online](#)

Friends of PFI events

**March 3-5: Conference – Small
Farmers Conference 2025**

*Hosted by: Lincoln University of
Missouri*
Jefferson City, MO

**March 5: Webinar – Excellence in
Wheat Growing**

*Hosted by: Ecological Farmers
Association of Ontario*
6-7:15 p.m. | [Online](#)

**March 11: Workshop – Soil Health
Economics: Investing in a
Sustainable Future**

*Hosted by: Chickasaw, Howard,
Mitchell and Floyd County SWCD and
NRCS*
9 a.m.-3 p.m. | New Hampton, IA

**March 11: Webinar – Grain
Marketing for 2025**

*Hosted by: University of Nebraska-
Lincoln Extension*
Noon-1 p.m. | [Online](#)

**March 13: Virtual Field Day –
Evaluating Rotations of Cover
Crops and Summer Annual
Forages**

Hosted by: Iowa Learning Farms
1-2 p.m. | [Online](#)

**March 15: Workshop – Western
MN Small Grains Workshop**

Hosted by: Land Stewardship Project
9 a.m.-1 p.m. | Benson, MN

[View our events calendar](#)

[Contact our team](#)

Solveig Orngard

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Chat with any of us by calling the PFI office at (515)232-5661.

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