the PRACTICAL FARMER

WINTER 2025

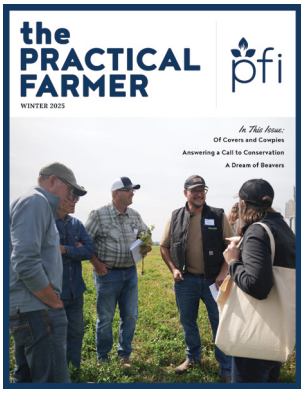
pfi

In This Issue:

Kevin Martin spends a minute observing his goats, paying attention to what they're eating and how they behave. Read more on page 26 about how farmers are practicing the art of observation on their farms.

FEATURES

DEPARTMENTS



ON THE COVER:
Field day attendees ask host Daniel Sheetz (*second from right*) about his field of buckwheat, planted following small-grain harvest during his field day on Sept. 9 in Garwin, Iowa. Turn to page 16 for some highlights from the second half of the 2025 season.

PRACTICAL FARMERS of Iowa

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

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THE PRACTICAL FARMER

the Practical Farmer is a quarterly magazine published as a beneft of membership in Practical Farmers of Iowa. Through engaging stories and photos, our aim is to share the knowledge and experiences of PFI farmers, build a strong and connected community of members and supporters and celebrate our collective efforts to build resilient farms and communities.

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

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The late Dick & Sharon Thompson
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Innovating and Collaborating To Clean Our Water

There's only one exactly like it. It's in Grundy County, Iowa, on Clark Porter's farm. Field day attendees got to see this novelty – an experimental conservation practice that shows strong potential to clean water leaving crop fields – at the field day Clark and his wife Sharon held last September.

Clark started off his field day talking about the responsibility he and other farmland owners carry. "Farmers don't want regulations. If we don't have regulation, it's farmers' responsibility to figure out our water quality issues." Clark explained that 80% of water quality issues in Iowa are due to agriculture – which shouldn't be surprising, since 85% of our total land base is devoted to agriculture. The recently published Central Iowa Water Source Research Assessment (CIWSRA) backs up Clark's claim.

"Responsibility is layered," Clark said. "Everyone needs to do something, and most people need to do multiple things, taking a layered approach."

That's what Clark is doing on his farm. He discussed in-field practices like cover crops, no-till and split- and variable-rate applications. He also showed his saturated buffer, an edge-of-field practice that has the potential to remove 50% of nitrates from water diverted through it. But these buffers, while effective, have specific landscape requirements that limit where they can be installed.

Enter the new tool researchers are testing on Clark's farm: a saturated grass waterway. It's basically a modification of a standard grass waterway, which slows and channels surface water. Standard grass waterways manage erosion and surface water runoff, but don't treat nitrates in subsurface drainage tiles. The saturated grass waterway, however, does both. Water flows slightly up slope and stairsteps through water gates, slowing the tile water so it can be denitrified through natural processes.

On Clarks' farm, the waterway - arguably the first of its kind - has effectively reduced nitrate by 69% since being installed in 2023. The concept was designed by Keith Schilling, state geologist of Iowa, and colleagues at the Iowa Geological Survey at University of Iowa. And since it can be installed where standard grass waterways are suited, the design could be used more widely on waterways across the Midwest. But first, Keith's crew will expand their research on other sites to gather more data.

Many farmers in PFI's network like Clark take responsibility for the water that comes off their farms. Equally important, they share their experiences, helping spread the adoption of clean water practices. You can see photos of farmers who generously shared their knowledge at PFI field days on pages 16-23. Many of these farmers – and others in the PFI network – are using practices that help our water quality. On pages 8-10, you can read how Andy Getting and Aaron Alons, and Mark and Dawn Madison, are maximizing the benefit of cover crops while improving their water quality. Thank you all for working to provide us clean water. It's seen and it's important.

This is (left to right) Matthew Streeter (Iowa Geological Survey at University of Iowa), Clark Porter and Keith Schilling (Iowa Geological Survey at University of Iowa). They are standing in Clark's saturated grass waterway.

Water quality is a pressing issue. In addition to the July release of CIWSRA's findings, Iowa's nitrate levels have been at a record high. The situation caused Central Iowa Water Works to institute its first-ever watering ban over the summer. Simultaneously, more concerns are being raised about Iowa's cancer rates and what is in our drinking water.

As 2025 comes to an end and we embark on a new year, PFI is embarking on a new strategic plan. As we reflect on how we should focus our work the next few years, water will certainly be on our mind. You will have an opportunity to provide input on how and where we focus our energy next year through a member survey and some listening sessions–stay tuned.

I'm grateful to know stewards like Clark and so many others I've met through PFI's network, and I look forward to being inspired and informed by many of you at our upcoming conference. Thanks for your leadership, and I hope to see you there!

Sally Worley

Answering a Call **to Conservation**

For Ruth Rabinowitz, caring for her family's farmland is an act of meditation, art and tribute to her father's legacy.

By Terri Mork Speirs

When Ruth Rabinowitz inherited farmland, she could have sold it to the highest bidder. She could have hired tenants to produce the greatest yield. She could have functioned as a distant landowner, detached from the challenges faced by Midwestern farmers.

Instead, she did the opposite: She went to work.

"I'm not a person that would just take money and lay on the beach somewhere," Ruth says. "That's just not who I am."

Ruth inherited not only farmland but also a commitment to doing the right thing because she is her father's daughter.

Daughter

Ruth's father is the late Dr. David Charles Rabinowitz, whom she considers a visionary. Her father was born a child of the Great Depression and grew up hardscrabble in Camden, New Jersey. Equipped with a work ethic and intellect, he put himself through university and medical school. David moved his family – including young Ruth – from Michigan, where Ruth was born, to Arizona where his medical practice thrived. He enjoyed helping people. As a reader and thinker, he also pursued his interests in agriculture. He gardened the family's arid urban acre.

"He was such an astute learner," says Ruth, recounting his varied interests such as Shakespeare, world hunger and the types of soils. He studied climate change before it became part of our cultural lexicon.

Knowing that Midwestern soils were premium, through the years Ruth's father bought tracts of farmland in Iowa and South Dakota. To make these purchases possible, he pieced together resources – such as mortgages on the family house, lines of credit and payment plans. He invested in land partly to create security for his children, yet he also believed Ruth and her younger sister needed to support themselves.

"Dad did not spoil his kids," Ruth says. "He expected us to work jobs at a young age for any spending money we wanted. I worked as early as 13 years old and never stopped."

Infused with her father's influence, as an adult Ruth moved to California to pursue art.

Artist

Ruth holds a bachelor's degree in art from University of California Santa Cruz and a degree in early childhood education with a site supervisor focus. She ran her own photography business for 20 years and worked in portraiture, floral arranging, ceramics and education.

When her father fell ill in 2013, Ruth shifted her work to providing care and handling the family farms, totaling 1,650 acres. At the time, she was inexperienced with land management. The more she

In this image, land Ruth Rabinowitz enrolled in the Conservation Reserve Program is visible in the foreground while a no-till crop field and oxbow lake surrounded by walnut trees are in the background.

From left: Ruth's father, the late Dr. David Rabinowitz, Ruth (taller child) and her sister Shaunna.

Photos courtesy of Ruth Rabinowitz

learned, the more she understood the urgency at hand. She discovered erosion, poor soil, ploughed-in waterways, low returns, delayed maintenance and debt.

Could the family keep the farms and pay for David's mounting medical needs? Ruth had decisions to make. "It was really like five-alarm bells. If I don't save this, it's going to be lost," Ruth says. "And I didn't want it to go away. I wanted what my dad had done to really stand. My father had spent his whole life working to purchase these farms."

Her artistic brain hatched a plan. She would approach her problems like a puzzle – trying, fitting and piecing answers one by one. Just as her dad had patched together funds for farm purchases, Ruth would cobble up resources for farm resilience. The self-described "land healer, Earth warrior-artist, prairie tender, rewilding and sanctuary designer" committed herself to the task. Meanwhile, she cared for her father, her best friend, for five years until he died in 2017. Ruth would later build a little house on the Iowa prairie and shift her purpose to full-time farming.

Farmer

As she embraced the task, Ruth got to work researching agriculture.

She read books, watched videos and signed up for webinars. She joined Practical Farmers of Iowa and networked with experienced farmers. She earned her Permaculture Design Certificate. She partnered with organizations such as Ducks Unlimited, Iowa Farmers Union, Environmental Defense Fund, Pheasants Forever, Xerces Society and Women, Food and Agriculture Network.

Ruth also got to work doing agriculture.

She walked the land, paid debts and replaced farmer tenants with ones who shared her values. She incorporated cover crops and no-till. She limited chemicals and expanded buffers. She established ponds, orchards and pollinator habitats. She planted 300 native trees and shrubs. She weeded and seeded prairie by hand. She installed wildlife corridors and restored oxbows. She devoted sweat equity.

"I think with boots on the ground, the skin in the game, that's when you get credibility," says Ruth.

"I wanted to heal and take care of and enhance the farm."
- Ruth Rabinowitz

Asters on Ruth's reconstructed prairie.

Ruth planted and nurtured 300 native trees and bushes by hand.

Presently, Ruth owns and farms a total of 800 acres, with 300 acres in conservation. Farming enterprises include alfalfa, corn and soybeans. Her land thrives with native flora and fauna. The soil is rich and gives back. She builds intentional, trusting relationships with her tenants and neighbors.

Still, she wants more. Ruth seeks healing.

Healer

Before David died, he implored Ruth and her sister not to sell the farms. He may have known the worries of transitioning farmland when personal values do not align. But Ruth's values aligned.

"I wanted to do more than just 'don't sell the farm.' I wanted to heal and take care of and enhance the farm," Ruth says. "I did really feel for the land right away. I saw it as a living organism, the soil as a living being and that it needed me to take care of it because everyone else was extracting from it – extracting money, extracting topsoil, extracting crop."

Ruth feels outreach and education are important. She communicates tips and tricks on her social media platform – Oxbow Farms Iowa – infused with her photography and reflections. She shares her knowledge, such as how to write one's own farming and hunting leases. She presents at PFI events and is a stewardship ambassador for WFAN. Additionally, she has made her own farm succession plans with conservation as the primary goal.

Ruth Rabinowitz had choices when she inherited land. Her actions to prioritize conservation led the PFI board of directors to select Ruth as the 2025 Farmland Owner Legacy Award recipient. The award ceremony was held Oct. 23 in Madison County, Iowa, where some of Ruth's Iowa farmland parcels are located. With this award, Practical Farmers calls attention to the important role non-operator farmland owners can play in the future success of sustainable agriculture.

"Without intention, non-operators can perpetuate ag trends that result in environmental, community and economic degradation. But with intent, they can do a lot of good," says Sally Worley, PFI's executive director. "Ruth is a shining example of the impact a landowner can have."

Ruth answered the call to conservation by integrating her roles of daughter, artist, farmer and healer to do what she believes are the right things: steward the land, honor her father, live her joy.

Ruth says, "I'm very grateful to my dad for that incredible gift of a vocation and an avocation simultaneously." ■

Learn More

Hear Ruth's acceptance speech from the award ceremony in this video: **youtube.com/watch?v=nIBpU6Wat5c**

Read more about Ruth's work to plant trees on her land in this story, "Wonders of Windbreaks," from our Spring 2024 magazine: **practicalfarmers.org/the-wonders-of-windbreaks**

Of Covers *and* Cowpies

For several farms, grazing cover crops has helped cut costs and expand opportunity. But the practice has also revealed deeper webs of partnership and possibility.

By Solveig Orngard

The summer cover crop Andy Getting planted offers sustenance for his neighbor Aaron Alons' hungry herd of cattle.

In August 2020, Andy Getting received a call from his neighbor, Aaron Alons. Though the O'Brien County, Iowa, neighbors had known of each other for decades, they hadn't interacted much. The last call Andy received from Aaron was 10 years prior when Aaron had gotten his pickup truck stuck in a field.

Andy thought his neighbor might again be in a fix. But this time, Aaron had a proposition – one that could have long-term benefits for both farmers and the broader landscape.

"'Hey, interesting deal," Aaron recalls saying to Andy. "Somebody wants to purchase some ground, has a vision of what they want to happen and just needs someone to implement. Would you be willing to visit with me about it?'"

It turned out Aaron had met a couple who planned to purchase land nearby and were looking for farmers to bring regenerative farming practices to it. Aaron was already raising grass-fed, grass-finished cattle on his farm – and he knew that Andy raised organic row crops. What if they combined their know-how to farm this couple's land?

"We visited, came up with a business plan and the rest is history," Aaron says.

A Partnership Begins

The arrangement the two neighbors worked out, with the support of their new landlords and a Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education grant, involved Andy farming the land organically using practices such as cover cropping that were already familiar to him. Then Aaron would bring in his cattle to graze the cover crops in the fall.

Five years have now passed and both farmers are reaping the benefits of this partnership. Through farming the nearby land together, Aaron and Andy realized they could extend the partnership to their own farms. Andy was already trying to find ways to make his organic farming practices more regenerative, and livestock integration is a core principle of that approach. "Having his cattle involved with my cover crops just made a lot of sense," Andy says.

It works like this: In early spring following soybean harvest the previous fall, Andy plants oats interseeded with a cover crop mix of

Andy Getting and Aaron Alons

"Having his cattle involved with my cover crops just made a lot of sense."

– Andy Getting,
on his partnership with Aaron Alons

Dawn and Mark Madison

alfalfa, medium red clover and berseem clover. He harvests the oats in July and Aaron's cattle rotationally graze the cover crop mix as it continues to grow. "Andy wants every cow I have from August until the first of November," Aaron says. "That's really good for me, because it's free food for my cows."

Each element in this chain forms part of a beneficial cycle. As the cattle munch the cover crop, the plants are prompted to regrow, producing sugars that feed the soil microbes. The manure, spread by the cattle, fertilizes the legume cover crop – which fixes atmospheric nitrogen in the soil for the next cash crop. Once winter arrives, Aaron's cattle return to his home farm, and Andy's cover crop protects the field until corn planting the next spring.

Cover Crops to the Rescue

Just an hour's drive away, near Adrian, Minnesota, Mark and Dawn Madison graze their own cover crop acres as third-generation farmers on Mark's family farm. For 30 years, the farm was a conventional dairy that continually grazed its pastures. Mark and his father started incorporating cover crops in 2012 and began dabbling in no-till and strip-till a few years later. Then in 2019, Mark and Dawn chose to end their dairy operation and switch to raising Angus beef cattle.

Their decision soon after to start grazing their cover crops came out of necessity. "I brought in more cows than I had pasture for," Mark says. Dawn had first learned about cover crops through her work with the Natural Resources Conservation Service years before bringing the practice to the farm. When they ran out of pasture, she knew grazing the cover crops could be a viable option.

Today, the Madisons grow cereal rye in multiple fields. They save the best-looking field for harvesting, which takes place in July, and graze the rest as a cover crop from spring until soybean planting in June. After the rye harvest, they plant a multispecies cover crop mix that includes a variety of legumes, brassicas and grasses destined for grazing, ideally at a ratio of one cow to one acre.

The plant diversity helps in many ways. Legumes capture nitrogen while brassicas like radishes and turnips can combat compaction – a risk cattle can pose to soil over time. "We always err towards more things in our fields than less when it comes to covers," Dawn says. "We provide a big-variety salad bar and every day [the cattle] choose what they need. That gives them the opportunity to balance their own diet and biome."

Poop Power

One of the big contributions livestock make to row crop operations is their poop. As they graze covers, cows leave their manure across the field, which is an excellent source of crop nutrition. Andy had wondered about improving fertility for his organic farm even before getting cattle on his cover crops. Aaron's cows are now a source of natural fertilizer.

Dawn has found that ensuring the right nitrogen balance can be trickier than one would expect, given the presence of both legumes and manure – which supplies nitrogen, phosphorus and potassium to the soil. It can be easy, she says, to assume you'll have plentiful nitrogen for the next crop. "One of the challenges when you have clover and livestock in your fields is how to calculate the amount of

(Continued on page 10 →)

nitrogen you're going to actually need and how much to give credit to the clover. I think initially we gave too much credit to the clover."

The Madisons and Andy have both used soil testing to better understand the real nutrient content of their soil and plan for future crops. Aaron and Andy believe that grazing cover crops has saved them $30 to $40 per acre in fertilizer inputs.

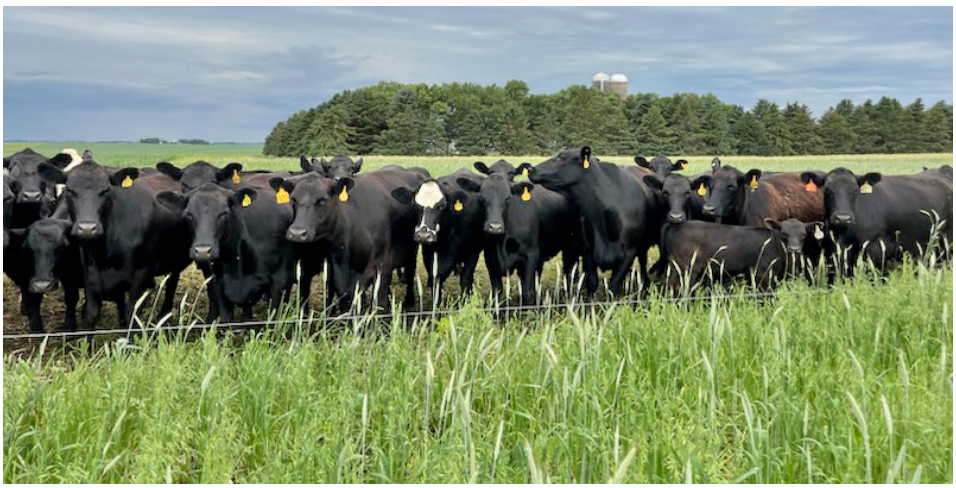
Reciprocity in the Field

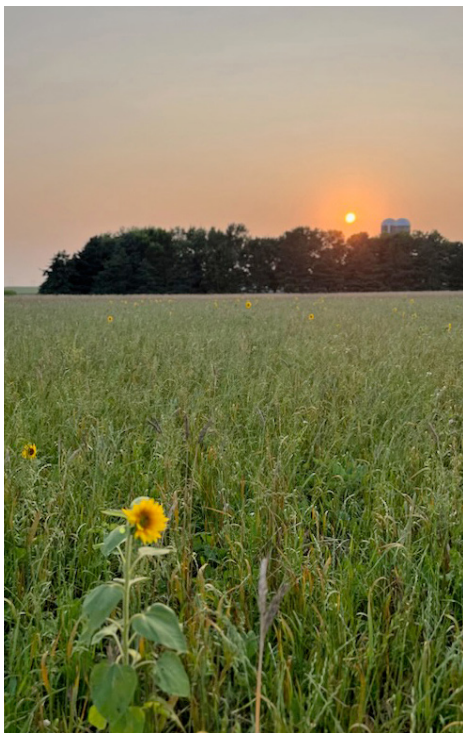
But there's a deeper cycle of reciprocity that emerges from grazing cover crops. Cattle, crops, land and people all benefit. The crops are nourished by the manure while cattle have fresh food for longer. Aaron has increased his herd size to 75 cows and calves, and he uses less hay. In 2020, he had six cows and a bull and was finished grazing by Labor Day, "Now this year, I'm hoping to have implemented a system that gets me to Christmas [before feeding hay]," he says. "That's a major step forward!"

At an even deeper level are the supportive human relationships buttressing the practice. Dawn notes that she and Mark wouldn't have jumped into grazing covers if other farmers had been unwilling to share their knowledge. "We really couldn't do this without the ability to talk to others that are just so far ahead of us," she says.

> **"We really couldn't do this without the ability to talk to others that are just so far ahead of us."**
>
> – *Dawn Madison*

Aaron agrees. "If there's anything that runs through this whole story as a thread, it's partnership. It's about getting to know people and telling your story. And it's those partnerships that weave through everything, that give you opportunities." ■





Clockwise from top left: Cattle enjoy a robust salad in Dawn and Mark's cover cropped field. Aaron Alons shares about his grazing strategies at his September 2025 field day hosted alongside neighbor Andy Getting. Sunflowers peek over other cover crop species to enjoy the day's last rays of sunshine on the Madisons' farm. Mark and Dawn's cattle anxiously await their next meal in the neighboring paddock.
All photos except the field day image are courtesy of the Madisons.

A Dream of Beavers

Beavers are ecological engineers par excellence. Landowner Beth Richards and her siblings are working to bring beavers back to several family farm properties to help with their broader restoration goals.

By Vanya North

> "Beaver are nothing less than continent-scale forces of nature and in part responsible for sculpting the land upon which Americans built their communities."
>
> – Ben Goldfarb

Photo courtesy of Mike Digout

Another day is drawing to a close on one of landowner Beth Richards' central Iowa farms. Gazing at a stream running through the property, she pauses to imagine the future:

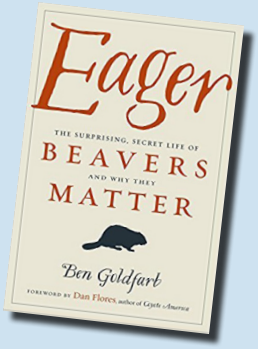
> *It's dusky twilight in early autumn. Across the still surface of a small but burgeoning wetland, a ripple spreads. At its helm, a beaver slips silently through the water, a branch clasped between strong teeth, before dipping under the surface towards the safety and shelter of its lodge.*

For Beth and her siblings, Jane and Bert, the vision is more than a passing fancy – it's an aspiration. As they work to steward and restore their family's farmland, the return of beavers is closely tied to their hopes for the future of their land – and for deeply held conservation goals.

"My dream is to bring species such as beavers and bison back onto our land," Beth says. "Not just for their own survival, but because as keystone species, they can restore land better, faster and cheaper than we humans can."

The siblings' farmland consists of about 1,200 diverse acres strewn between Boone, Hamilton and Hardin counties. Several of these farms have been in the family for four or five generations. Three other properties were purchased by their father "more for the wildlife habitat potential than for its farmland value," Beth says.

She and her siblings grew up on the farm in Hamilton County, Iowa. While they all left Iowa to pursue careers and presently live out of state – Beth in New Mexico, Jane in Colorado and Bert in California – their dedication to the family farmland, and to caring for it, remains strong. "Our father had a deep love of nature and hunting, and a desire to restore wetlands and preserve wildlife habitat," Beth says. After he died in 2012, the siblings started comanaging the farms, placing a heavy emphasis on soil health, restoring the land and creating more habitat for Iowa's wildlife.



As part of her research on these topics, Beth read journalist Ben Goldfarb's book "Eager: The Surprising, Secret Life of Beavers and Why They Matter." The book opened her eyes to the importance of beavers – and ignited her determination to restore them on her family's land. Their return, she says, would represent quiet proof that the land is healing.

Nature's Engineers in Farm Country

In Iowa, and across North America, beavers are a keystone species, meaning they support entire biological communities. Once abundant, beavers were nearly hunted to extinction due to high demand for their pelts in the 1800s and early 1900s. Settlers, viewing beavers as pests, killed them – and many farmers and landowners still perceive them as nuisances. Today, however, ecologists and others widely acknowledge what many Indigenous Peoples have long known: that beavers are a critical part of the natural landscape, and their absence is harmful in many ways.

And as it turns out, beavers actually benefit farmers and the broader farm landscape. A growing body of research is

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Top to bottom: A barn on Beth's Hardin County farm. Beth, Bert and Jane Richards. Cattle cooling off in an oxbow, taking a rest from grazing reed canary grass. *Photos on pages 12-13 are courtesy of Beth Richards.*

> "As keystone species, they can restore land better, faster and cheaper than we humans can."
>
> *– Beth Richards*

showing how beaver dams, for instance, improve water quality by trapping nutrients and sediment and keeping them out of downstream waters. In Iowa, a first-of-its-kind study by Iowa State University researchers recently found that a single beaver dam can reduce nitrates by 1 to 4 parts per million on average. In Rhode Island, researchers have found that beaver dams may be able to remove up to 45% of nitrogen from streams and creeks in rural agricultural watersheds.

How? The ponds that form behind beaver dams slow the water, trapping sediments and creating the right conditions for microbes that break nitrates down. The wetlands that form around these dams also create vital wildlife habitat while absorbing stormwater during heavy rainfall, reducing flooding downstream. But beaver-engineered landscapes also play a crucial role during drought. Beaver ponds store water for longer during dry times. They also raise the water table, keeping surrounding vegetation green – a boon for grazing livestock.

Inspired by this bounty of benefits – and hoping to entice beavers to their own land – Beth and Jane set out to create attractive spaces for beavers in key areas.

Building for Beavers

They started by seeking technical assistance for beaver restoration work from a variety of sources, including the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

On one Hardin County property – a prairie remnant with a stream running through it – the sisters and their partners at FWS have been testing beaver dam analogs. These human-made structures are designed to mimic the work of real beavers. Built from fallen brush, logs and sometimes sheet piling, they slow water flow through eroded areas, encouraging sediment to settle and native plants to return. The structures are often used to jumpstart restoration and can eventually lure beavers to return. "We've seen water spread out and soak in instead of rushing through and worsening deep narrow cuts," Beth says. "You can tell the land is responding."

That farm parcel also has a 40-acre remnant sedge meadow with wet areas and old oxbows. With guidance from FWS, the siblings have introduced targeted grazing as a management tool. Cattle are rotated through smaller, select paddocks on the sedge meadow where they consume invasive reed canary grass. This gives sedges and other native plants a chance to reestablish. "There are beavers in the adjacent river, and we hope they will venture into the sedge meadow and revive one or more of the degraded oxbows more effectively and much less expensively than we could do ourselves," Beth says.

On yet another farm property, Beth, Jane and Bert installed several earthen dams to slow erosion in gullies and provide water for livestock, habitat and recreation. Beth says they recently spotted beavers near one of the ponds. "We're excited that a beaver family has apparently moved in and will improve the dams and maintain the ponds."

Despite these promising signs, some neighbors remain skeptical, worried that beavers might flood cropland, consume crops or block drainage systems. Others, seeing beavers as pests or trophies, trap or shoot them. These social pressures add tension. But the siblings remain considerate of their neighbors' concerns as they strive to balance conservation and community. Beth says, "We explain our overarching goal is reaching a balance between farming and nature."

Sowing the Future

Other conservation projects haven't focused explicitly on beavers – such as enrolling much of their marginal farmland into the Conservation Reserve Program. This has helped stabilize the Richardses' income while letting the soil rest. But in some cases, these efforts have been beaver boons anyway.

For instance, one 80-acre farm they own in Hamilton County has a preexisting wetland. The siblings jointly manage it via a CRP contract on the cropland, which tends to be too wet to farm profitably, and a partnership with FWS to improve the rest. Beth says the project has already attracted beavers – who have wasted no time improving the wetland and helping to control invasive willow.

On a Boone County property, they placed about 70 acres in one of the state's earliest Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program wetland projects. The work involved converting a difficult-to-farm stream corridor into habitat and providing downstream water quality benefits. Back in Hardin County, the siblings converted the 60 cropped acres above the sedge meadow to CRP. Resting the land will let the degraded soil recover and reduce erosion and runoff to the sedge meadow.

"CRP payments give us a base stream of revenue and help us focus on the land itself instead of chasing yields on degraded or inherently marginal farmland," Beth says.

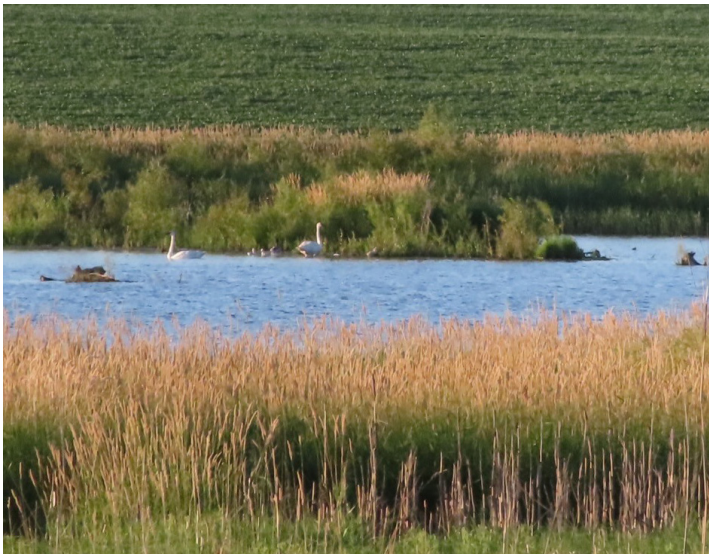
Now in their 60s, Beth and her siblings are planning for the future. With PFI training in farm transition and guidance from organizations like the Iowa Natural Heritage Foundation, they hope to permanently preserve their land.

"If we can leave the farms in better shape than we found them," Beth says, "that's the real legacy." ■

Learn More

Iowa Learning Farms Beaver Resources

(includes infographics, and an archived virtual field day and webinar): iowalearningfarms.wordpress.com/2024/05/30/a-closer-look-beavers-as-superheroes-of-water-quality



Top to bottom: A beaver lodge on Beth's Hamilton County farm. A sandhill crane pair in Hardin County - they have returned to this sedge meadow to nest yearly since 2019. A trumpeter swan family sharing wetland with beavers in Hamilton County.

A Taste of the Tropical

With the aid of season extension, some farmers are growing ginger to push boundaries, expand palates and delight customers.

By Ashly Senske

Kate Solko

Ginger cut, cleaned and ready for customers

Nicki Morgan

From curries to cookies, soups to stir fries, beverages to bonbons, you know it when you taste it: the warm, fragrant zing of ginger, with its peppery kick alongside notes of citrus. This beloved rhizome is the underground stem of Zingiber officinale, a tropical plant native to Southeast Asia that's been cultivated for thousands of years for its pungent yellow flesh.

Highly prized for both its culinary and medicinal uses – which range from digestive and immune support to pain-relieving and anti-inflammatory properties – ginger was eagerly embraced as it made its way around the ancient world along trade routes. For medieval Europeans, ginger's appeal was rivalled only by other costly spices like pepper, saffron and cloves. Their zeal for exotic spices fueled voyages of exploration and conquest that profoundly shaped the course of history.

Today, ginger remains one of the most popular spices in the world. As a tropical plant, ginger thrives in humid, warm climates. India, Nigeria and China are currently the top three ginger-producing countries.

But on some vegetable farms across Iowa and the region, you can find the waxy, bright green leaves of this reedy crop growing next to rows of trellised tomatoes and cucumbers.

By testing ways to grow ginger in a four-season climate, these farmers are expanding local-food options and pushing the boundaries about what kinds of crops Midwestern farmers can successfully raise.

"I want to challenge what you can grow in Iowa a little bit, and also challenge people's palates," says Kate Solko of Root to Rise farm in Ames, Iowa. She grows a range of less common crops and varieties on her 5-acre farm and has been growing ginger for the past five years. So far, Kate has found the crop to be a rewarding challenge.

A Unique Midwestern Crop

Kate's venture started with an intern, curious to take what he had learned about growing ginger at his university and put it into practice. That first ginger crop was successful, and Root to Rise quickly found that it fit their market niche. Because ginger isn't commonly raised in Iowa, there's no standard playbook for growing it here. While Iowa's growing season may seem long and humid in the midst of July, ginger needs several months of sustained humidity to mature. So Kate and her team have developed their own protocols, refining a set of practices that work well for them.

Beginning in mid-February they buy organic ginger and cut it into small pieces, about 1 inch to 1½ inches in size, which they plant into pots. Eventually, these pieces will sprout into individual ginger plants. Once potted, Kate and her team place the plants on heat mats indoors set to around 90 degrees Fahrenheit. Throughout the late winter and spring, they keep the sprouting ginger warm and moist to mimic its natural environment.

When it's warm enough outside, typically in June, the team transplants the young ginger into caterpillar tunnels where

the plants live until they're harvested. Kate points out that consistent moisture is needed in the tunnels to ensure a good harvest.

Kate predominately sells her ginger at the Ames Main Street Farmer's Market. The unique crop, she says, draws people to her stall. The rest she sells to Alluvial Brewing in Ames, which uses the ginger in its ginger beer, Root to Rhizome – a name that pays homage to the brew's key ingredient and its farm of origin.

Ginger also plays a soil health role on Kate's farm. She uses the caterpillar tunnel to grow ginger and other tropical crops, like lemongrass. This "tropical tunnel," as she calls it, is part of a three-year crop rotation that helps break up the planting cycle and reduces disease pressure between solanaceous crops, like tomatoes, peppers and potatoes, and cucurbit crops like melons, cucumbers and squash.

> "I want to challenge what you can grow in Iowa a little bit, and also challenge people's palates."
>
> - Kate Solko

Ginger growing at Nicki Morgan's previous farm in Missouri.

Other PFI members also have ginger as part of their plant repertoire. Nicki Morgan, who uses the pronoun they, grew ginger at HartBeet Farm near Eolia, Missouri, until taking a break from farming in 2022. In 2025, Nicki moved to a new farm, HartWood, in Riverside, Iowa. Like Kate, Nicki found ginger delighted customers and drew more people to their booth at the local farmers market.

"I also think that once people realized we had it, there was a lot of demand for it," Nicki says. But they add that customers needed education on how to store and use young ginger. "When you're harvesting it [younger], it's not cured and it doesn't have that thick skin on it. So it needs to be stored in a refrigerator instead of just on the counter or it'll dry out too fast."

This is a key difference from the mature ginger typically sold at grocery stores. In its natural habitat, ginger typically takes eight months to a year to fully mature. In Iowa and the Midwest, the growing season for ginger is much shorter, leading to it being harvested when the plant is much younger.

For this and other logistical reasons, ginger grown in the region is known as "baby ginger." This just means it's younger ginger that hasn't been cured, or dried, and thus lacks the tougher skin of mature ginger. On the flip side, young ginger is milder, more tender and a bit sweeter than mature ginger. Because the skin is more delicate, baby ginger has a shorter shelf life. But Kate says it freezes well, and she often grates it directly from frozen for cooking.

A Warming Spice for Frosty Climes

Like Kate, Carmen and Maja Black of Sundog Farm also grow ginger in a tunnel on their farm near Solon, Iowa, starting the plants in their home or in a greenhouse. They use a high tunnel, which is a more permanent structure, whereas the caterpillar tunnel Kate uses has a simpler design that lacks some of the hardware that adds durability to high tunnels.

But while Kate purchases organic ginger from the store to start her ginger plants, Carmen prefers to import disease-tested rhizomes from Hawaii. Since Sundog Farm's high tunnel is used to grow tropical plants year after year (she also grows turmeric, which is similar to ginger), Carmen says having disease-free plants is more important for long-term crop viability. Carmen learned these ginger-growing practices from longtime PFI member (and past board president) Ann Franzenberg, who raises a diverse mix of crops at Pheasant Run Farm near Van Horne, Iowa.

Carmen and Maja market directly to customers through their community-supported agriculture enterprise, Local Harvest CSA. The first year they started growing ginger, in 2022, Carmen says members were surprised to see it in their CSA shares. Unsure the ginger experiment would be successful, Carmen and Maja had kept it a secret. But their first harvest was a success, and customers enjoyed it. Now, customers look forward to ginger in their fall CSA shares, Carmen says. "If you give it the week after the first frost, people want warming ginger and medicinal turmeric. It's been a real delight to the customers."

Presentation-wise, Carmen and Maja do something different with the ginger in their CSA. Whenever possible, they provide the ginger rhizomes with the leaves still attached. "We encourage people to try eating the leaves," Carmen says. "They have a completely different smell and flavor."

She describes the leaves as having a milder peppery flavor, reminiscent of the rhizome but less intense. They can be eaten fresh as a garnish or used in cooking as added flavoring – yet another way these farmers are subtly expanding customers' local-food horizons. ■

Learn More

In 2020, a few PFI members took part in an on-farm research project – "Ginger Variety Trial in Cover and Uncovered Beds" – comparing ginger varieties and growing methods: practicalfarmers.org/ginger-variety-trial-in-covered-and-uncovered-bed

All ginger photos courtesy of Nicki Morgan

2025 FIELD DAY Season

The summer of 2025 hung on until all the leaves fell at once, and PFI farmers kept on with field days through Nov. 13! Over 3,200 people have attended field days in 2025. Here are a few things attendees said were most valuable:

Honesty | Candid discussions | Talking to other farmers | Getting to ask questions in person | Learning new things that are a little outside my comfort zone | Hearing questions and ideas from the group | Seeing two young folks choose to farm differently | Chance to say thank you to the landowner | In-person exposure to techniques, as opposed to internet | How beautiful the land is | Seeing the crops | Seeing the equipment | Seeing and hearing firsthand from the farmer | Getting to connect with really smart people who share | Seeing I'm not alone when thinking differently | Family involvement | Being out in the field | Respectful people | Feeling encouraged to have conversations with all my kids about what will happen in the coming years (farm transfer)

Thank you to all the field day hosts for opening your farms, and to attendees brought their curiosity and ideas!

Opposite page: Attendees gather among the implements for the opening remarks during the Midwest Mechanical Weed Control Field Day. (*Aug. 20, Ames, IA, in partnership with Glacial Drift Enterprises, The Land Connection and Iowa State University*) **This page: (1)** Nothing better than delicious lamb chops and good company in the O'Neill and Wolf family pasture at sunset. (*Oct. 7, Winona, MN*) **(2)** Amanda and Knute Severson, with Landon and Anne Plagge, pose for a picture after showcasing the new Green Acres Milling oat mill at their field day. (*Sept. 13, Albert Lea, MN*) **(3)** Tricia and Seth Engelbrecht make their way through the supper line at the end of their Engelbrecht Farms field day. (*Aug. 5, Waverly, IA*)

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(1) Seth Watkins gathers his sheep with some treats for the field day crowd to see. *(Sept. 4, Clarinda, IA)* **(2)** Tim, Courtney, Sara and Tara Goedken pose with their farm sign after a successful field day where guests toured their dairy operation. *(Aug. 19, Hopkinton, IA)* **(3)** Attendees at the Midwest Mechanical Weed Control Field Day test out tools in "Walk-Behind Alley." *(Aug. 20, Ames, IA, in partnership with Glacial Drift Enterprises, The Land Connection and Iowa State University)* **(4)** Mike Paustian talks with field day attendees about his cover crop and manure management plans ahead of corn. Behind him is a lush stand of split-row cereal rye, which followed a pass with his drag line manure applicator. *(Nov. 4, Walcott, IA)* **(5)** Turkeys on parade try to steal attention at Laura Tidrick's value- added lard field day. *(Sept. 16, Clear Lake, IA)* **(6)** Attendees at Lee Buchholz's field day chat on the hay rack while heading to view a soybean field planted after a rye cover crop. *(Aug. 7, Avoca, NE)* **(7)** Monarch butterflies are released at the Plant Washington community garden during a field day showcasing their new pollinator habitat. *(Aug. 2, Washington, IA)*

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(1) Tom Cummings takes field day attendees to see his rye straw storage space at TRC Farms. *(Sept. 16, Redfield, IA)* **(2)** Tiff Clifton and Matt Johnson show attendees their many growing structures at Long Walk Farm. *(Sept. 18, Council Bluffs, IA)* **(3)** Brandon Iddings, of the Iowa Soybean Association, explains how creating habitat on working farms can benefit water quality. The ISA helped farmer host Jeff Pudenz create an oxbow on his farm. *(Aug. 16, Churdan, IA)* **(4)** Robert Harvey shows how farming practices affect soil structure. At left is a soybean plant grown in tilled soil without cover crops. At right, no-till combined with cover crops created a robust soil ball and healthy soil layers. *(Sept. 11, Redfield, IA)* **(5)** Host Tim Gottman drives attendees along his cover cropped soybean field on the way to an on-farm watershed project monitoring runoff from fields with and without cover crops. *(Aug. 14, Monroe City, MO)*

(6) Dean Dedert happily waits for field day attendees to arrive so he can offer them a ride to the barn to hear David Dedert and Mike Rice discuss cover crop and soil health strategies at Twin Mill Farm. *(Sept. 6, Quincy, IL)* **(7)** Aaron Alons and Andy Getting's field day must be going well because Sally the dog is all smiles. *(Sept. 10, Sanborn, IA)* **(8)** Hosts Ben and Katherine DeBoef welcomed guests to their farm to learn about owning and operating a drone and their management-intensive cattle grazing practices. *(Aug. 25, Montezuma, IA)* **(9)** Geese graze near round bales as the sun sets at Wade Dooley's field day where he shared how he grows pumpkins. *(Aug. 7, Albion, IA)* **(10)** Kate Solko explains the infrastructure required for the overhead irrigation design at Root to Rise Farm. *(Sept. 28, Ames, IA)*

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(1) After a short hayride to the field, attendees hear from field day host Daniel Sheetz about his high-protein food-grade soybeans. *(Sept. 9, Garwin, IA)* (2) John Wesselius explains how his farm team uses their transition house for starts, storage and microgreens. *(Nov. 13, Sioux Center, IA)* (3) Aaron Lehman, president of Iowa Farmers Union, leads a group to the highest point in Polk County, located on his farm. During the hike, participants looked for birds and learned about farming practices that can be beneficial for birds. *(Sept. 23, Polk City, IA)* (4) The Broulik family showed off their no-till equipment after a presentation and tour of their new cattle building. *(Aug. 28, Mt. Vernon, IA)* (5) Tyler Bruck, land stewardship director at Whiterock Conservancy, discusses the cover crop mix that was planted a month prior to the field day. This pasture will be grazed later in the fall by Whiterock's cattle herd. *(Sept. 3, Coon Rapids, IA)*

(6) Bryce Irlbeck talks about his small herd of cows, which are part of a project he's working on to expand the organic dairy market. *(Aug. 12, Manning, IA)* (7) Horses and sheep graze in front of Jamie Hostetler's chicken barn. *(Sept. 13, Bellevue, IA)* (8) Turnip the cat enjoys the sun during Root to Rise's hands-on irrigation field day. *(Sept. 28, Ames, IA)* (9) PFI staffer Solveig Orngard peers into the control structure of a saturated buffer at Clark and Sharon Porter's field day highlighting conservation land management practices. *(Sept. 18, Reinbeck, IA)* (10) Host Shanon Jamison describes how her drones operate before flying them for a cover crop seeding demonstration. *(Aug. 30, Martensdale, IA)*

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Flower Farmer Chat

Cath Schut, Cathy Lafrenz and Fred Howell converse about starting their farms, evolving over time, marketing and more.

By Rachel Burke


Photo courtesy of Cath Schut

Cath Schut

When Catherine (Cath) Schut left her corporate job 10 years ago, she decided to start something that would root her more deeply in her rural community. By 2023, her path had led her to start Hive and Petal, a 3-acre farm in Prairie City, Iowa, where she grows flowers and keeps bees.

To learn how others have built long-term success, she sat down for a conversation with two seasoned farmers: Cathy Lafrenz, who's run Miss Effie's Country Flowers and Garden Stuff for 25 years near Donahue, Iowa, and Fred Howell, who for the past 40 years has run Howell's Greenhouse and Pumpkin Patch in Cumming, Iowa.

(Note: The conversation has been lightly edited for clarity and style.)

Cath: I've been looking forward to meeting you both. Can you tell me a little about your backgrounds?

Cathy: My husband, Cliff, and I started Miss Effie's Country Flowers on our 1.67-acre property after we both lost our jobs. He was an engineer; I worked as an interior designer at a lumber yard. We decided to make the land work for us. I said, 'I want to grow flowers,' and he said, 'OK, let's do it.' We began with a 20-by-20-foot patch and became the first you-pick flower farm in Iowa.

My husband passed in 2020, so I rely more on paid help these days. But I'm not quite ready to quit!

Fred: Before the farm crisis in the 1980s, we raised hogs, cattle and


Cathy Lafrenz

Photo courtesy of Cathy Lafrenz

Christmas trees. Then we heard about a woman near Madrid, Iowa, who was earning good money growing dried flowers on a small plot. We gave it a try with a quarter-acre of annual statice and strawflowers – we didn't even know what they looked like until they bloomed.

At one point, we were drying 10 acres of flowers. Life was good. Then, our blooms went out of fashion. We tried strawberries and asparagus, then built our first greenhouse. Eventually, we added a gift shop and began focusing on agritourism.

Now we raise 3 acres of flowers, 18 acres of pumpkins and an 8-acre corn maze. We've got play areas, a bathtub train and even goat cuddling. Families come for fun, and couples come for date night. The rest of our 800 acres are leased for grazing and row crops.

Cathy: Cath, what about you? What's your background?

Cath: We purchased our homestead 10 years ago after I left my corporate job. I quickly realized I needed a project and that's when we started the farm. It took two years, but we're finally in a place where I am growing flowers and can do some of the things I've hoped for, like having bees. We have 3 acres on the homestead, and my husband's family land, down the road, is leased to row crop farmers.

Cath: What are your main business outlets?

Fred: Our business depends on people coming to the farm. They pick a bouquet or a pumpkin, or they come for entertainment. We see hundreds of people a day [who come] just to cuddle goats! Adding alcohol sales brought in new customers too. Everyone who visits passes several grocery stores to get here, but they come for the experience.

Cathy: We focus on you-pick flowers, on-farm "hers" markets, small events and photo shoots. The photo shoots cover my property taxes every year. We're becoming more of a place to entertain and educate.

I also partner with another farmer, Connie King [owner of Prairie Belle Flowers in Dewitt, Iowa], on a "blossom box" – a mix of starter plants for people

who want to grow their own cut flowers. The box brings in about as much as a customer who visits the farm several times a season.

A big part of my current audience is young women, often ages 16 to 22. They come in groups, pick flowers, take photos and share them online. It's a new type of customer!

Fred: Same here! We have people coming to the farm to do TikToks while balancing pumpkins on their heads.

Cathy: Flower farming can go so many different directions – wholesale, you-pick, farmers markets, weddings, seed sales. You can't do them all. When designing your business, think about your personality and what you want from your life. Everyone is different and you'll need to determine what works for you.

Cath: How do you handle staffing?

Cathy: People often suggest hiring teenagers, but in my experience, they spend more time petting cats than picking flowers. I have a farm manager, Brooke Baker. I'm 71 and have arthritis in my neck, so I need help keeping up with orders and events. We plan seed-and-plug orders together. I also have two part-time employees and a retired engineer who volunteers when he can.

Fred: In the early days, I hired local high school kids to pick flowers after school. We'd start with the dark blue statice and finish with the white so we could still see at dusk. Now I have 15 employees, four of them full-time. One manages events, another runs the shop, another oversees the greenhouse. I also have a retired farmer who helps out.

Cath: What marketing approaches have worked best for you?

Fred: When I started, there was no internet. I once paid $60 for a tiny classified ad in Florists' Review. Over the years, we tried postcards, TV ads and newspapers. Now we focus our energy online – a website and Facebook. We even work with a guy that uses all the tools to creep on people who are talking about dried flowers on the internet.

Cathy: I started mailing postcards in 2002, then began blogging in 2006. That grew into my weekly Substack. Since my business is small, I rely on close relationships with customers. They know what's happening at the farm because I share openly, and that builds trust and great word-of-mouth.

Cath: Educating customers about prices and seasonal availability while keeping and building relationships has been a delicate balance. Do you see that too?

Fred: Definitely. We still get people asking for fresh asparagus in October.

Cathy: Yes, our modern inability to grasp seasons is one of the hardest things to explain to a customer. Even to florists! Many people are several generations removed from farming. Helping customers reconnect with the seasons has become part of our job as farmers.

Flowers hung up to dry. Photo courtesy of Fred Howell.

Cath: What advice would you give beginning farmers in the PFI network?

Cathy: Don't lose yourself to the farm. Make sure you maintain your friendships and family because some of that can disappear. It's easy to get wrapped up in all the work that needs to be done and miss out on good times.

Fred: Don't quit your day job until you're established. Be ready to evolve with your customers. It's taken me 40 years to build my business – I started with $500, a used tiller and a lawn sprinkler. I've tried, failed and tried again. We change something every year to keep the farm profitable. Our farm is always evolving! ■

Hive & Petal Farm. Photo courtesy of Cath Schut.

Howell's Greenhouse & Pumpkin Patch. Photo courtesy of Fred Howell.

The Gift of Presence

By practicing the art of observation,
two farmers solve a practical challenge while improving the lives of their animals

By Amos Johnson

There is an art to noticing.

Whether it's spying the subtle or seemingly mundane details of daily life – the old spiderweb in the corner of the hayloft; the way fallen leaves gather in the yard – or the bigger patterns that unfold over time, observing is a way know someone or something more deeply.

In farming, as in other areas of life, the art of paying attention highlights need – which incites creativity, which begets renewed observation and further impetus to create. This cycle of slow iterations of watching, followed by trial and error, helps us improve our lives, ourselves and our farms.

For Kevin Martin and Heidi Eger, this art of noticing is both practical and intrinsic – a way of improving, and of giving to the animals they care for. Both have created different styles of mineral feeders after carefully observing the needs of their animals and their farms. But the end products weren't simple one-and-done projects. The solutions they found to a vexing farming challenge were the result of continuously watching, adjusting, innovating, paying attention and tweaking.

Kevin points out the rubber lid on a early mineral feeder design. Though weatherproof, the goats liked to stand on it too much.

Left: Kevin Martin's goats in the pasture, where native perennials are rebounding on his farm near Mount Ayr, Iowa.
Right: Kevin's newest mineral feeder has a plywood awning and designated spots for each type of mineral.

Observation as Offering

For Kevin, the art of noticing is closely linked to being present. "What we can do as people is offer ourselves. That's all we can offer," Kevin says emphatically, his resonant baritone carrying over the breeze this autumn day at Holdfast Farmstead in Mount Ayr, Iowa. "And our main thing to work with is attention – going out with the animals in the landscape. It's immersion, knowledge and offering."

Kevin has been sharing his journey from growing up in Missouri to Amazonian naturalist to ship captain to audio book narrator and Iowa goat farmer (he and his family raise Kiko goats, St. Croix-Katadhin sheep and pasture-raised duck and chicken eggs). The through line? "Just chasing life, finding where life is." The farm offers his family their biggest adventure yet, he says. "The amount of life and diversity and what wants to be tallgrass prairie is incredible. There's a lot of room to pursue life very viscerally."

But to work with that abundance, he's had to learn to understand it. When he first started to farm, he says he didn't see everything that he now sees in his pasture. "It just wasn't there for me. There were so many things to pay attention to." With the help of friends and mentors, and spending time with his animals, Kevin has gained confidence to better understand what he's seeing.

One of the ways this practice of paying attention has manifested on the farm is in the mineral feeders Kevin has been developing. He wanted buffet-style feeders so livestock could choose the specific minerals they want to consume, rather than eating a mineral mix with predetermined mineral ratios. The feeders went through three iterations before Kevin was satisfied.

The first mineral feeder he bought was actually designed for cattle and proved too big to be useful. The goats couldn't reach into it easily, and it was far too heavy to move with his herd. Kevin built a second feeder setup, making it smaller for goats and light enough that he could move it by hand. But there were still a few problems with the design. The joinery in some key spots wasn't as sturdy as he'd have liked, and the goats loved to stand on the rubber rain flap, preventing others from eating.

These observations led Kevin to make changes in the next design. He strengthened the weak joints and removed the rubber flap, opting instead for a marine-grade plywood awning. The new setup is tall enough for Kevin's goats to fit their heads to eat, but too short to clamber into. Now, the goats can leap onto the mineral feeder's roof to their hearts' content without impeding their peers. He's already seen an increase in consumption.

But Kevin isn't done with his mineral feeder observations. It's not yet clear how the goats' mineral intake changes seasonally, and around the pasture. This past year, Kevin has been experimenting by only giving mineral when the goats are eating hay. His hope is that this pushes them to eat more diverse plants when they're on pasture to get what they need.

"There are so many variables, it's difficult to say for certain," Kevin says. "But I think that they're eating further into the weeds." Since starting this practice, he has reported seeing new patches of prairie grasses popping up through the pasture – a sign that something seems to be working.

As he waits to bring the mineral back out to the goats, Kevin is already thinking about adaptations for the next version. He wants to better exclude moisture, since the roof doesn't provide as much protection as the rubber cover. But he enjoys this brainstorming process. "Tinkering on projects, and being out in the pasture, just noticing and coexisting – that's probably my favorite thing."

(Continued on page 28 →)

Left: Heidi Eger shows how quickly her shade structure can be disassembled for winter on her farm near Canton, Minnesota.
Right: Heidi shows off the final iteration of her mineral feeders ... for now.

Many Little Tweaks

Near Canton, Minnesota, Heidi Eger watches her sheep grazing amidst the mountain range of mole hills at Radicle Heart Farm. These mounds of dirt pose problems for how she moves her shade structure, but she's overcome them by incorporating a winch into her design.

It only took four iterations to find a shade design she's happy with. Her mineral feeders, for mixed minerals rather than buffet-style, have been a tougher nut to crack. "There have been so many little tweaks," Heidi says. "I'd recognize, 'All right, they need something else, but I don't know what it is.'"

Finding a design that worked took years.

Here's an abbreviated list of Heidi's ideas and attempts:

- ☒ *Can't be anything that has to be moved with a vehicle.* (Doesn't want to use all-terrain vehicles every day)
- ☒ *Open rubber pans.* (Gets wet and easily tips)
- ☒ *A box with plastic salad bar containers.* (Gets wet and easily tips)
  - ☒ *Added a lid.* (Lambs would jump up and trap their mom's head)
    - ☒ *Cut the lid in half.* (Guard llama pawed the containers out)
- ☑ *15-gallon barrels, hole cut in the side ~~and secured to a board underneath for balance.~~*

  (Sheep could get startled and run off with the whole thing stuck on their head)
- ☑ *Remove board. Instead use eye-bolts to secure to repurposed grounding rod.*

  (Sheep rub against it and spin it into the fence where they can't access it)
- ☑ *Move setup farther from fence so the mineral feeders can spin freely.* (Winning design!)

The improved design also led to important observations about her animals. Previously, Heidi had no reliable way of tracking how much mineral the sheep were getting and how much was ending up wasted on the ground. Now that it was all staying in the bucket, she found herself putting out 3-4 cups of mineral every day for two full weeks. Her 40 lambs "were going crazy," Heidi says. "I felt really bad. I was like, 'Oh, I've been that dramatically not giving you what you need.'" But mineral consumption has slowed down and regulated as the sheep have balanced their deficiencies. "I am really excited to pay more attention to how their intake changes over the season, because I have never been able to consistently before."

This new horizon of observation wouldn't be possible without Heidi's careful watching and willingness to test new approaches. That kind of sustained, patient attention is a gift: By finding a mineral feeder design that works for her sheep, she's better able to provide them what they need, when they need it.

But this design, too, isn't final: Heidi is already thinking about potential future adaptions. "I think you could do this and make it buffet style," Heidi says, musing out loud whether little containers might work. "Buffet minerals are something that's very interesting to me. But I need to be able to consistently give them the easy mix for a couple years before I get fancy."

For now, Heidi is satisfied to watch her meticulous labor pay off. "To have something that actually works is very exciting, after many years of many, many failed attempts." Luckily, she adds, she didn't spend much money on those iterations – she had repurposed materials from elsewhere.

Phil Specht, longtime PFI member and farmer outside of McGregor, Iowa, once said that you'll recognize the grass is ready to graze when it "waves, beckoning the cows to eat." It's the type of deep, poetic knowledge that comes from a mindset (and in his case, a lifetime) of giving attention and knowing the land.

With so much calling for our focus all the time, seeking to divide our attention, the act of noticing is a gift – one that enriches both observer and observed. It's both an art, and a choice. For Kevin and Heidi, that choice is rooted in a desire to understand at a deeper level how they can better serve their farms.

"It's misleading but tempting to assume that it's all about exercising control," Kevin says. "It's about co-participation, about being present." As he speaks, he watches the grass wave, beckoning the goats to pasture. ■

"To have something that actually works is very exciting, after many years of many, many failed attempts." *- Heidi Eger*

Heidi takes a moment to pay close attention to her sheep.

PFI MEMBER

Photo Album

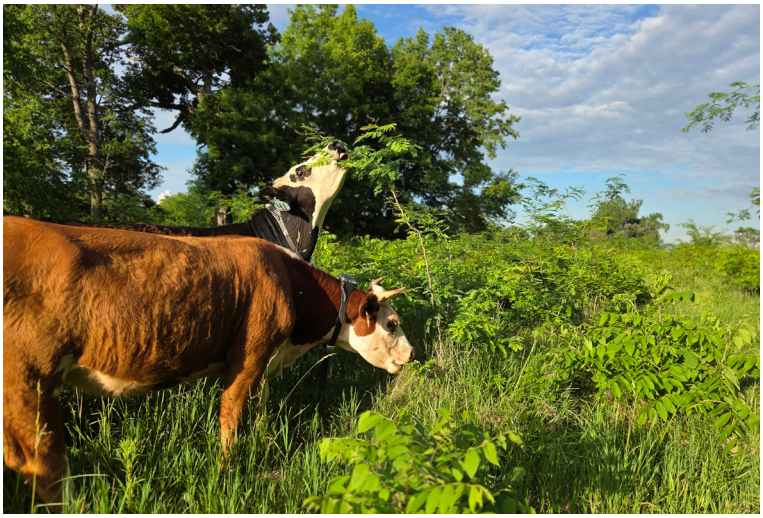
This section features photos taken by PFI members. Whether you're a farmer, landowner or a non-farmer, we invite you to share your images of the everyday, the awe-inspiring or the curiously beautiful from your farm or community; we'll work to curate them into the album.

A good picture of how it went for those of us trying to put up hay and oats this summer. (*Neil Peterson, Clover Lane Farm, Fonda, Iowa*)

An aerial view of Alleman Creek at flood stage after lots of July rain. (*Lee Tesdell, Tesdell Century Farm, Slater, Iowa*)

Cattle graze cover crop cocktail that was planted after cereal rye harvest. (*Alec Amundson, Green Country Farms, Osage, Iowa*)

Cereal rye backlit and glowing. (*Rachel Amundson, Green Country Farms, Osage, Iowa*)



Cattle graze at Indian Creek Nature Center's Sugar Grove Farm while testing new virtual fence collars. *(Laura Keniston, Night & Day Ranch, Alburnett, Iowa)*

My son, Adrian, expresses his excitement about his crop of radishes! *(Karen Koenig, Hampton, Iowa)*

A crab spider sits in a Missouri ironweed plant that's part of a prairie planting at our home. *(Angela Tedesco, Johnston, Iowa)*

Romaine lettuce that was harvested out of our high tunnel for our CSA program. *(Geneva Hupp, Raccoon Forks Farm, Redfield, Iowa)*

Morning light initially prompted me to take this photo, but my iPhone automatically focused on the sunflower while blurring the signs in the background. I think this is a good commentary on how our farming practices are important and can lead to good things, but that ultimately, it's the flora and fauna that are the focus. *(Jon Bakehouse, Maple Edge Farm, Hastings, Iowa)*

With an abundance of grass this year, the condition and weights of the calves have exceeded our expectations. *(Petie Clubb, Vinton, Iowa)*

Sheep glow in warm September light. *(MaryAnn Mathis, Cory Family Farm, Elkhart, Iowa)*

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

Review of Amy Halloran's "The New Bread Basket"

Reviewed by Vickie Renick

Reading Amy Halloran's book "The New Bread Basket" felt like driving through the U.S. with fresh flour in the trunk and a bakery on the horizon. Over the course of 13 chapters, the book, published in 2015, captures the revival of a regional grain-chain system just starting to evolve.

Less familiar than (but similar to) the local foods movement, the grain-chain movement seeks to build and strengthen local and regional grain economies that connect farmers, millers, bakers, brewers and consumers. Throughout the book, Amy warmly and clearly spotlights farmers, bakers and brewers who are building the new grain chain, reshaping how we think about bread.

As a beginning small-grain farmer in the Midwest, I enjoyed seeing my journey reflected in the pages. Her coverage of the Maine Grains Kneading Conference, which I attended this year, highlighted the interconnectedness of growers, millers, bakers and activists working together to build a more resilient and transparent grain chain. The conference is held each July in Skowhegan, Maine – a lovely little city with a great grain company, Maine Grains, leading the way. Amy devotes a chapter in the book to the owner of Maine Grains, Amber Lambke, who is doing stellar work building a viable grain system from the ground up.

I see a lot of parallels between this and the grain movement in the Midwest. I'm aware of two mills in this region working on organic artisan grains (though there may be others) – Janie's Mill in Ashkum, Illinois, and Meadowlark Farm & Mill in Ridgeway, Wisconsin. The book also highlights how far we still have to go in the Midwest to create stronger local grain chains.

For instance, Amy writes about some interesting connections in Oregon that are helping build the networks needed to distribute locally milled flour. The partnership between Camas Country Mill and Hummingbird Wholesale is one example. Hummingbird Wholesale helped launch the mill in 2011 (the first regional grain mill to operate in the Willamette Valley in 80 years), and coined the term "distributor-supported agriculture" to describe their approach to supporting regional food systems. The model is similar to community-supported agriculture, but with the distributor sharing in the financial risk. This is something I don't see in the Midwest.

What stood out most for me in "The New Bread Basket" was the emphasis on quality – how value-added products made from fresh-milled flour used to make sourdough bread are an expression of place and care. This book shows how grains are not just commodities traded on exchanges by speculators who probably do not even take possession of the bushels they profit from, but also about the people building sustainable communities and adding true value to grains.

It's clear there are still gaps in the local-grain processing system, and each region holds valuable information to put the puzzle together. It's fun to read in Amy's book about what each part of the country is up to in the local-grain movement. I believe we are all connected, and I like seeing the way local grains show those connections. Especially since they are edible! Amy's book does a great job showing what's going on and highlighting those connections. ■

Vickie Renick is a beginning farmer in La Grange, Illinois, with a passion for food whose curiosity has led her to farming. She is currently transitioning 15 acres to organic. Her alfalfa is in Year 3 of the process, and slated for organic certification by the U.S. Department of Agriculture in 2026. In fall 2026, Vickie intends to plant a winter grain, including a legume, as a field border. Her hope is to have nutritionally dense small grains for harvest in 2027.

Don't miss our 2026 Annual Conference keynote speaker!

Amber Lambke *Cofounder and CEO of Maine Grains, Inc.*

Join us!

2026 PFI Annual Conference | Jan. 9–10 | Des Moines, IA
Walk-ins are welcome! Find out more about the PFI Annual Conference at practicalfarmers.org/annual-conference

Meet the Newest Members of PFI's Team

Learn more about the PFI staff at practicalfarmers.org/staff.

Adam Mason
Senior Policy Coordinator

Adam lives in Des Moines, Iowa, with his wife Anna and dog Townes. He enjoys do-it-yourself home projects, cooking for friends and family, gardening, canning, running, and cycling in his free time.

Ashly Senske
Horticulture Education Manager

Ashly is originally from eastern Iowa and loves to cook, read and spend time with her two cats, Dumpling and Ravioli.

Lauren Sloan
Senior Human Resources Assistant

Originally from Ann Arbor, Michigan, Lauren now calls Iowa home and is currently in the market for a cat. Outside of work, you'll probably find her lifting weights, swimming laps, crocheting something cozy or running her hobby sourdough business.

It's Almost Time To Fill Out Your Member Survey

Your responses help us understand and serve you better

Every three years, we ask all PFI members to take a survey telling us about who you are and what your priorities are. Your responses give staff and board a vital snapshot of our membership. They help us:

- Better understand you and your needs
- Design relevant and useful programming
- Identify individuals who want to get more involved with PFI or as a leader in their community

Most importantly, by filling out the member survey, you're ensuring we remain a strong member-led organization. Please use this opportunity to lend your voice and help guide our future. (In case it matters, the survey will be much shorter this time!)

Look for an email in February 2026 requesting your participation. You'll receive a link to fill out the survey online. But if you're unable to do so, our staff would be happy to administer the survey over the phone.

Thank you for your help! Questions about the survey? Please contact Steve Carlson at **(515) 232-5661** or **steve.carlson@practicalfarmers.org.** ■

We've Revamped Our Board Election Process

Practical Farmers of Iowa's board governance and nominating committees worked together this past year to revamp our board election process. Their aim was to ensure a transparent, equitable process to source, vet and nominate candidates for PFI's board of directors.

Members are invited to nominate themselves or someone they know to join our board of directors! **practicalfarmers.org/board-member-nominations**

Submissions are welcome throughout the year, and the next round of board candidates will be reviewed in the fall of 2026, with the election occurring January 2027. ■

Labor4Learning Jobs Will Go Live in March

Are you a beginning or aspiring farmer? Do you want to find paid, on-the-job training with experienced farmers in Iowa?

The Labor4Learning program is designed for beginning farmers seeking paid farm work along with additional training in farm management and production skills. Past jobs have covered a range of enterprises and marketing practices in field crops, livestock, dairying, horticulture and orcharding, and have been located all around the state. As a trainee, you'll get paid at least minimum wage and earn other benefits, including:

- the chance to learn farm business development from an experienced PFI farmer
- paid time off to attend a PFI event during your term of employment
- a discounted rate to attend PFI's annual conference
- opportunities to connect with other trainees in the program
- a free PFI membership

Watch for open 2026 positions to be announced in March. Visit *practicalfarmers.org/labor4learning* to learn more, or contact Martha McFarland at (515) 232-5661 or martha.mcfarland@practicalfarmers.org.

Halloween Meets Potluck at the PFI Office

In late October, PFI staff took a break from work to enjoy some seasonal festivities – and a little friendly competition – during our annual fall potluck. The event, which has become a yearly tradition, features a costume contest, a variety of tasty foods and ample time for remote and local staff to connect and catch up.

This year, the event also gave staff a chance to show off their creative (and in some cases, diabolical!) talents with a staff team pumpkin decorating contest. Starting in late September, eight staff teams worked together to plan and decorate a pumpkin (provided by PFI member Jeremy Gustafson).

The finished products – ranging from the whimsical to the folksy to the macabre – were displayed during the potluck and voted on afterwards in a digital poll. The winning entries included an eyeball pierced with a fork; a bubbling cauldron tended by grinning PFI finance team members; and a giant wrecking ball. ■

PRACTICAL FARMERS OF IOWA
COOPERATORS' PROGRAM

CALL FOR ON-FARM RESEARCH COOPERATORS!

LET'S PUT SOME ACTIONABLE SOIL HEALTH OUTCOMES TO THE TEST

1. Can we reduce N rates to corn and improve ROI?

Do you think soil conservation practices like cover crops, no-till, extended rotations and integrated grazing can help lower your nitrogen fertilizer bill?

- Receive $250 to $2,000 for conducting a strip-trial on your farm.
- Compare your typical N rate with a reduced N rate and see how corn yield and profitability are affected.

2. Do cover crops increase the number of days suitable for field work?

Do you think cover crops improve the trafficability of your fields, especially in the spring and fall?

- Receive $500 for monitoring one of your cover-cropped fields throughout the year.
- On a weekly basis, record which of the seven previous days you could get into your field.
- If you can provide field history and location, we also hope to learn if frequent cover crop use improves crop yield stability over time.

Learn more about these projects by visiting bit.ly/pfitrials or by scanning the QR code.

ENROLLMENT DEADLINE: MARCH 15, 2025

Questions? Contact the Practical Farmers of Iowa office at (515) 232-5661 or email Roberta Bianchin Rebesquini at roberta.rebesquini@practicalfarmers.org.

Row crop farmers in IA, IL, MN, MO, NE, SD and WI are eligible.
Must be a member of Practical Farmers of Iowa to participate in either project.

PFI Events

Registration information for all PFI events can be found at **practicalfarmers.org/events**, or by calling the PFI office at (515) 232-5661.

JANUARY

JAN. 8 • Preconference Short Courses
Iowa Events Center | Des Moines, IA | ***For more information, visit practicalfarmers.org/annual-conference***

JAN. 9–10 • PFI Annual Conference
Iowa Events Center | Des Moines, IA | ***For more information, visit practicalfarmers.org/annual-conference***

JAN. 16 • Small Grains Shared Learning Call
Free | Online | ***Register at practicalfarmers.org/shared-learning-calls***

JAN. 20–APRIL 21 • Winter Webinar Series
Weekly on Tuesdays | Noon–1 p.m. | Online | ***Full descriptions at practicalfarmers.org/winter-webinars***

FEBRUARY

FEB. 19 • Commercial Apple Growers Workshop
The Courtyard | Jefferson, IA | ***For more information, visit practicalfarmers.org/events***

FEB. 6 • Small Grains Shared Learning Call
Free | Online | ***Register at practicalfarmers.org/shared-learning-calls***

FEBRUARY–MARCH • Horticulture Farmer Meet-Ups
Free | Various locations | ***For locations and dates, visit practicalfarmers.org/calendar***

FEBRUARY–MARCH • Grazing Farmer Meet-Ups
Free | Various locations | ***For locations and dates, visit practicalfarmers.org/calendar***

MARCH

MARCH 4 • Midwest Covers and Grains Conference
Five Points Washington, Washington, IL | Free for PFI Members, $75 for Non-Members | ***Register at practicalfarmers.org/midwest-covers-and-grains-conference***

MARCH 6 • Small Grains Shared Learning Call
Free | Online | ***Register at practicalfarmers.org/shared-learning-calls***

EVENTS IN SPANISH

To keep up with the latest on PFI's Latino program, subscribe to Sembrando Resiliencia at ***practicalfarmers.org/email-newsletter-subscribe.***

Find PFI At

JANUARY

JAN. 22–24 • GrassWorks Grazing Conference
La Crosse, WI | ***Learn more at grassworks.org/grazing-conference***

JAN. 30–31 • Organic Vegetable Production Conference
Madison, WI | ***Learn more at dane.extension.wisc.edu/organic-vegetable-production-conference***

FEBRUARY

FEB. 3–5 • Iowa Ag Expo
Des Moines, IA | ***Learn more at iowaagexpo.com***

FEB. 6 • 8th Annual NEMO/WCIL Soil Health Workshop
Monroe City, MO | ***Learn more at mosoilandwater.land***

FEB. 7–8 • WIU Ag Mech Farm Expo
Macomb, IL | ***Learn more at wiu.edu/cbt/agriculture/agmechshow.php***

FEB. 10–11 • Midwest Cover Crops Council Annual Meeting and Conference
Dubuque, IA | ***Learn more at midwestcovercrops.org/meetings***

MARCH

MARCH 3–5 • Hawkeye Farm Show
Cedar Falls, IA | ***Learn more at hawkeyefarmshow.com***

PFI Current Enrollments

From January – March 2026

Habitat Incentives Program
ROLLING APPLICATION
practicalfarmers.org/habitat-incentives-program

Grazing Consultations
ROLLING APPLICATION
practicalfarmers.org/grazing-consultations

1-on-1 Land Matching
ROLLING APPLICATION
Contact Martha McFarland at martha.mcfarland@practicalfarmers.org or call our office at (515) 232-5661.

N Rate Risk Protection Program
APPLICATION CLOSES APRIL 30, 2026
practicalfarmers.org/n-rate-risk-protection-program

Open Calls for On-Farm Research
APPLICATION CLOSES MARCH 15, 2026
practicalfarmers.org/open-calls-for-on-farm-research-cooperators

Labor4Learning On-Farm Applications
OPENS MARCH 5, 2026
practicalfarmers.org/labor4learning

Cover Crop Business Accelerator
APPLICATION CLOSES EARLY MARCH 2026
practicalfarmers.org/cover-crop-business-accelerator-program

You're Invited!

2026 Midwest Covers & Grains Conference

Wednesday, March 4 | 8 a.m.–4 p.m.
Five Points Washington | Washington, IL
Post-conference social hour to follow

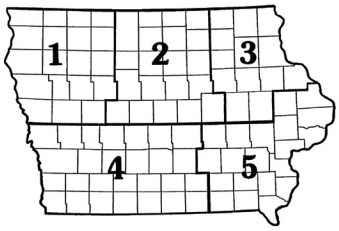
The Midwest Covers & Grains Conference brings together Midwestern farmers to promote successful farming using extended rotations and cover crops with or without livestock. The conference includes farmer-led sessions for experienced practitioners and for those looking to add small grains and cover crops for the first time. Come explore these topics and network with other farmers and service providers!

Visit the website to learn more: practicalfarmers.org/midwest-covers-and-grains-conference

Supported by ADM re:generations. This work is supported by the U.S. Department of Agriculture, under agreement number NR233A750004G053.

Welcome, New Members!

From April 18, 2025 – October 31, 2025



DISTRICT 1 – NORTHWEST

- Terry Aberson – Orange City
- Kenny Bentsen – Sac City
- Jerry Goslinga – Sheldon
- Jacob Granstra – Hospers
- Blake Groeneweg – Rock Valley
- Michael Hagan – Carroll
- Cassi Hammar – Coon Rapids
- Brady Homan – Remsen
- Glen Houts – Sioux City
- Steven King – Spencer
- Roger Reimers – Denison
- Gaylon Rozeboom – Rock Rapids
- Dean Tiefenthaler – Lake View
- Trent Walker – Dickens
- Loren Wynia – Orange City

DISTRICT 2 – NORTH CENTRAL

- Kaleb Appelgate – Marshalltown
- Schontonia Davis – Ames
- Craig Fillman – Paton
- Ben Fonken – Kamrar
- Tate Goeman – Belmond
- Brad Harris – Clear Lake
- Eric Henning – Ames
- Ray Heun – Dayton
- Kyle Holschlag – Osage
- Nate Huntley – Renwick
- Elena Ingram – Ames
- Alan Johnson – Lake Mills
- Suzanne Kashawlic – Boone
- Matt Kopriva – Traer
- Kara Levi – Ames
- Carol Manske – Kelley
- David and Sharon Mitchell – Duncombe
- Dan Olk – Ames
- Steve Owen – Maxwell
- Arnulfo Perrera – Stacyville
- Elmin Rahic – Ames
- Chrissy Rhodes – Cambridge
- Wesley Rieth – Nevada
- Madison Royer – Ames
- Kent Schwartz – Ames
- Linda Shenk – Ames
- Norman Vansice – Melbourne
- Bryan Warme – Ames
- Eldean Wendt – Osage
- Adam Westrum – Boone
- David Willets – Union

DISTRICT 3 – NORTHEAST

- Hannah Bailey – Cedar Rapids
- Josh Behnke – Durango
- Brian Berns – Luana
- Gary Bramel – Holy Cross
- Jerry Brink – Elkader
- Justin Burkle – Dyersville
- Brodie Bushman – Calmar
- MacKenzie Christopher – Hudson
- Chad Davis – Luana
- Dale Dietzenbach – Cresco
- William Doepke – Cedar Falls
- Mark Dolan – Masonville
- Levi Farmer – Elkader
- Tanner Fellinger – Hopkinton
- Tyler Flak – Decorah
- Connor Frana – Calmar
- Grabau Garrett – Lime Springs
- Tim Grabau – Lime Springs
- Jeff Gravel – Cascade
- Charles Groff – Cedar Rapids
- Judd Grover – Cresco
- Garett Hagenow – Readlyn
- John Hogan – Earlville
- John Kalb – Stanley
- Jerry Keleher – Elkader
- Blake Kerns – Oelwein
- Sage Klostermann – Dyersville
- Nathan Knepper – Cascade
- Kevin Koltes – Sherrill
- Sam Kout – Lawler
- Daniel Lambe – Zwingle
- Gracia Larsen-Schmidt – Decorah
- Albert Martin – Springville
- Lonnie Martins – Luana
- Jake Massman – Ossian
- Robert McCarthy – Peosta
- Brandon Miles – Dubuque
- Calvin Rea – Bernard
- Justin Rottinghaus – La Porte City
- Andrew Slattery – Winthrop
- Jill Stannard – Elkader
- Will Staudt – Plainfield
- Larry Tranel – Dubuque
- Mo Valko and Brennan Allsworth – Decorah
- Corey Welsh – Waukon
- Kevin Welsh – Waukon
- James Wulfekuhle – Holy Cross
- Codi Wurzer – Hawkeye
- James Zwanziger – Nashua

DISTRICT 4 – SOUTHWEST

- Tim Allen – Newton
- Dan Apperson – Blanchard
- Jeff Bentley – Macedonia
- Aaron Bruhn – Manning
- Ralph Chiodo – Ankeny
- Tysen Christensen – Lenox
- Doug Cling – Urbandale
- Community State Bank – Johnston
- Jason and Mandy Dittmer – Lacona
- Jan and Ray Dittmer – Lacona
- Sosia Duffy – Albia
- Wayne Foster – Reasnor
- Jared Fulk – Atlantic
- Anna Galioto – Ankeny
- Eugene Gochenour – Mondamin
- Megan Godfrey – Newton
- Jacob Hagan – Bayard
- Jordan Hager – Urbandale
- Jesse Hagey – Braddyville
- Bridgette Hardesty – Harvey
- Dan Harris – Des Moines
- Levi Hofts – Waukee
- Hoksey Native Seeds – Lynnville
- Richard Hughes – Bayard

- James Kain – Ankeny
- Taylor Kanselaar – Colfax
- Kemin Industries Inc. – Des Moines
- Kyanne Kerbel – West Des Moines
- Daniel Lundquist – Moulton
- Craig and Debbie Mackaman – Ankeny
- Bennett Mann – Maxwell
- Arnold Maynes – Corning
- Erin McAtee – Missouri Valley
- Eric Mortensen – Audubon
- Kathy Munkvold – Waukee
- Pam Obrecht – Malvern
- Robert Overturf – Des Moines
- Mark Pearson – Corning
- Greg Wallin – Essex
- Dane Wardenburg – Creston
- Peter Wicks – Adel
- Chris Witzman – Atlantic
- Brad Woodson – Clive

DISTRICT 5 – SOUTHEAST

- Eric Adam – Harper
- Constance Aldridge – Oxford
- Howard Burgus – Sperry
- Bradley Daufeldt – West Liberty
- Lucas DeBruin – Oskaloosa
- Corey Farmer – Wayland
- Josh Freiburger – Bellevue
- Taylor Hagen – Oxford
- Tim Hale – Bloomfield
- Darrick Hall – Anamosa
- Ryan Heiniger – Burlington
- Leticia Kakasa – Iowa City
- Donald Kriegel – Malcom
- David Kummerfeldt – Durant
- John Kummerfeldt – Muscatine
- Kyle Leer – Keswick
- Frederick Leuthauser – Bettendorf
- Kevin Meskimen – Ely
- Jane Msafiri – Iowa City
- Anny Musenga – Iowa City
- Russell Newquist – Agency
- Tom O'Donnell – Keosauqua
- Aaron Orcutt – Monticello
- Art Peck – Wellman
- Mark Roose – Pella
- Sierra Ross Richer – Parnell
- Erek Sittig – North Liberty
- Ken Somerville – Onslow
- Karla Stout – Washington
- Chris Webb – Sigourney
- Ethan Wellman – Davenport
- Richard Young – Washington

DISTRICT 6 – OUT OF STATE

- Dan Althoff – La Prairie, IL
- Paul Bergschneider – Franklin, IL
- Dan Nyberg – Stillman Valley, IL
- Ralph Pritchard – Atkinson, IL
- Tom Buller – Lawrence, KS
- Larry Honeman – Pratt, KS
- Kimberly Ropp – Wichita, KS
- Richard Bauer – Hastings, MN
- Larry Broadwater – Preston, MN
- Steve Devney – Farmington, MN
- Tony Dick – Mountain Lake, MN
- Bryce Gergen – Hampton, MN
- Jim Gergen – Hastings, MN
- Brian Heaser – Plainview, MN
- Nick Keene – Hastings, MN
- Jerry Kimmes – Hastings, MN
- Roger Kleese – St. Michael, MN
- Emma Link – Minneapolis, MN
- Joel Mintzer – Golden Valley, MN
- Randy Radziej – Little Falls, MN
- Sally Sawyer – Bloomington, MN
- Jordan Simon – Comfrey, MN
- Robert Sommers – Faribault, MN
- Scott Stueven – Heron Lake, MN
- Aaron Timm – Plainview, MN
- Lisa Vandendriessche – Marshall, MN
- Diane Zimmer – Lakeville, MN
- Richard Baldwin – Hopkins, MO
- Laurie Beach – Pilot Grove, MO
- Mike Cunningham and Kelly Lenhart – Helena, MO
- Philip Dickel – Green Castle, MO
- Chris Holliday – Boonville, MO
- Rob Korff – Norborne, MO
- Larry Mason – Shelbyville, MO
- Robert Parsons – Maryville, MO
- Kevin Roth – Blackwater, MO
- Jeremy Smith – Carrollton, MO
- Steve Timm – Boonville, MO
- Michael Vollrath – Pilot Grove, MO
- Steve Yates – Monroe City, MO
- Taylor Moyer – Bozeman, MT
- Paul Welty Jr – Durham, NC
- Cole Ballantyne – Omaha, NE
- Everett Baltz – North Platte, NE
- Trent Bohling – Johnson, NE
- Billy Cutsor – Lincoln, NE
- Clinton Dunn – Homer, NE
- Cole Fiedler – Bloomfield, NE
- Austin Freudenburg – Madison, NE
- Anthony Gengenbach – Eustis, NE
- Timothy Goetz – Herman, NE
- Stephanie Henn – Norfolk, NE
- Thomas Henning – Lincoln, NE
- Devin Johnson – Bloomfield, NE
- John Krohn – Albion, NE
- John Krueger – Roca, NE
- Brian Lange – Hartington, NE
- Justin Lange – Fordyce, NE
- Karen McMahon – Omaha, NE
- Olivia Phipps – Omaha, NE
- Andrew Stech – Osmond, NE
- Jonathan Ronsani – Kinderhook, NY
- Justin Jelsma – Springfield, SD
- Matthew Kurt – Kenosha, WI
- Lakiah McCallson – Onalaska, WI
- Jared Schulz – Waunakee, WI

Thank you

to our newest lifetime members!

Jackson & Amanda Drost
New Sharon, IA

Beth Henning
Coon Rapids, 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****.*

PRACTICAL **FARMERS** *of Iowa*
1615 Golden Aspen Drive, Suite 101
Ames, IA 50010

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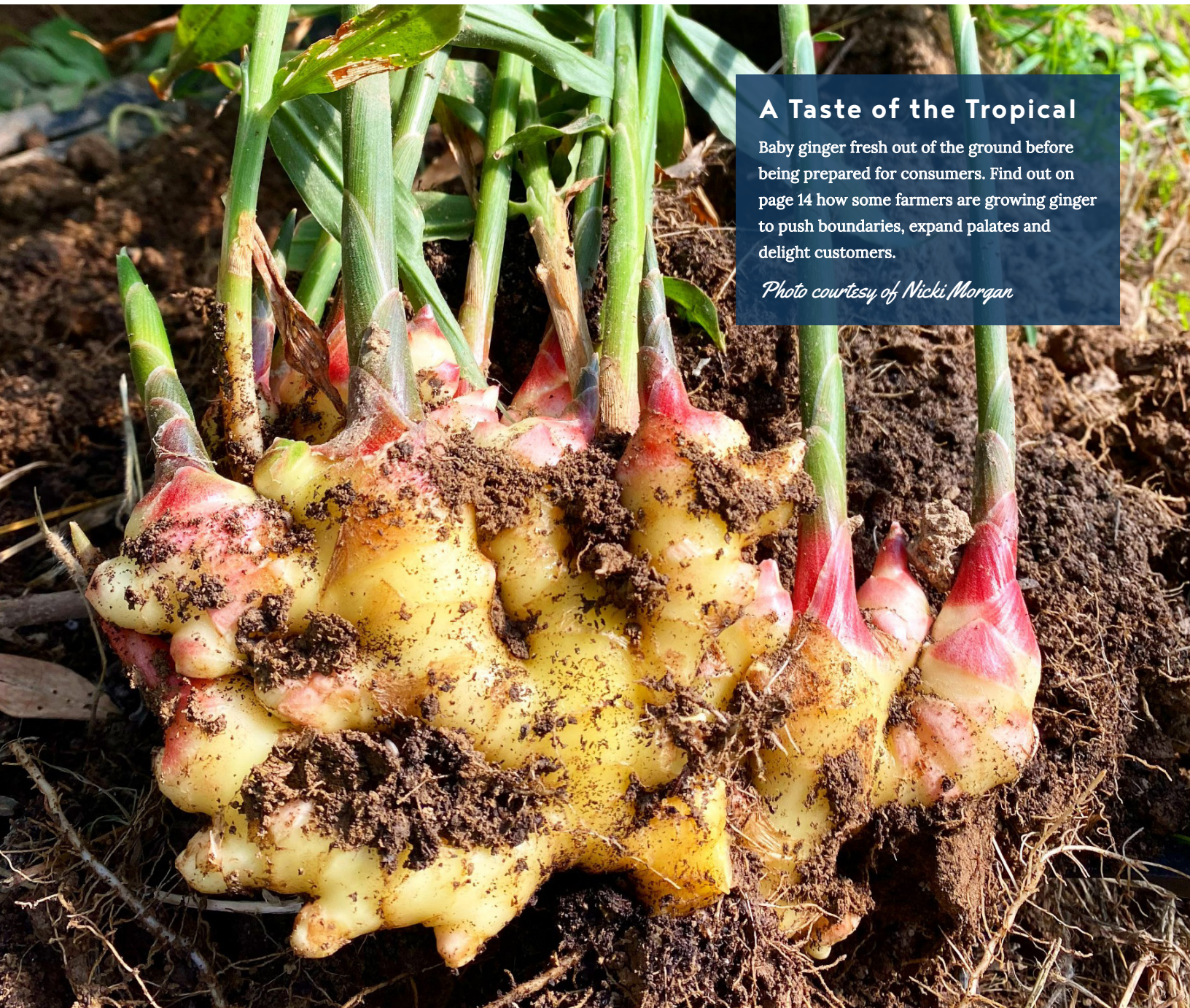
Waterloo, IA
Permit No. 901



A Taste of the Tropical

Baby ginger fresh out of the ground before being prepared for consumers. Find out on page 14 how some farmers are growing ginger to push boundaries, expand palates and delight customers.

Photo courtesy of Nicki Morgan