



The Specialty Growers News

...representing fruit, vegetable,
herb, and irrigated growers...

**June
2016**

**IL Specialty Growers
Association
Page 2**

**IL State Horticulture
Society
Page 7**

**IL Vegetable Growers
Association
Page 11**

**IL Herb Association
Page 15**

**IL Irrigation
Association
Page 18**

Issue 95 - June 2016

The Specialty Grower News is a newsletter published 3/year and is free of charge to members of Illinois Specialty Growers Association. For further information, contact:

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Rick Weinzierl Retirement Sentiments

I am writing this in early May at the request of Diane Handley. May 31, 2016, is my official date of retirement from the University of Illinois, and Diane asked that I write my own farewell to ISGA members. I appreciate the opportunity, because it lets me say things that really are important to me.

First, the simple history...I joined the faculty of the University of Illinois in 1984 as an assistant professor on a 100% Extension appointment in the Office of Agricultural Entomology. I started working in entomology at North Dakota State University in 1975, and I guess I have been more or less a "bug-guy" ever since. My research and Extension focus when I started at the University of Illinois was on insect management in stored grains and livestock...though my previous graduate research and Extension responsibilities at Oregon State University were tied to fruit and vegetable pest management. In 1990, with the retirement of Dr. Roscoe Randall, another Extension Specialist in Ag Entomology, my focus shifted to insect management in fruits and vegetables, and I also began a six-year "volunteer" stint teaching a graduate-level course on integrated pest management in the Department of Entomology. Following the reorganization of the College of ACES in the mid-1990s, I have been an associate and then full professor in the Department of Crop Sciences, with a three-way extension, teaching, and research appointment.

I have taught Introduction to Applied Entomology for ACES undergraduates for 20 years, co-taught Principles of Plant Protection, and contributed to several off-campus and on-line courses, and my research has included a wide range of insect management topics...managing insecticide resistance has been a common thread through stored-grain, livestock, fruit, and vegetable insect management studies. Extension has remained my real love through the course of my career...I guess that is why I seldom missed an opportunity to provide insect management recommendations in whatever way that I thought might work for growers--annual extension publications and regional conferences, over 500 issues of the *Illinois Fruit and Vegetable News* newsletter (and yes, I tried to read and edit every word of every issue), coordinating the Illinois Specialty Crops, Agritourism, and Organics Conference for the Illinois Specialty Growers Association, and coordinating a USDA-funded Beginning Farmer Training Program titled *Preparing a New Generation of Illinois Fruit and Vegetable Farmers*.

This spring I started establishing a two-acre apple and peach orchard not far from Urbana-Champaign, a retirement career that I hope will (1) keep me from driving my wife crazy; (2) keep me out of the bars during the daytime (LOL); and (3) maybe even make some money after the first few years. Hey, I am still young, right?

If I have not bored you too much and you are still reading...I owe a lot to great mentors – Glen Fisher and Paul Koepsell as my supervisors in Oregon who continually gave me opportunities to expand my career (OK, by doing more work), Don Kuhlman and Roscoe Randall in Ag Entomology here (they reminded me who Extension specialists really work

Continued on page 3

2016

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Chairman's Report

By Craig Tanner



After watching the many primary elections this year, I am confused how the Democrat party picks their candidate. It seems that Bernie Sanders has won more primaries, but Hillary Clinton has been getting more delegate votes. The Democrat system of super delegates choosing their candidate independently of the primaries has had me scratching my head. I think that it has also irritated a number of Bernie supporters, too. Looking at the numbers today, May 12, Hillary needs 164 more delegate votes, while Bernie needs 906 more. It is looking more and more like it will be a Clinton vs. Trump election. I almost wonder if Bernie would run for President as an Independent should he not secure the Democrat nomination.

ISGA operates a Farmers Market in the Illinois Department of Agriculture's tent during the Illinois State Fair in August. This has been a very successful venture for ISGA over the years, but needs our members' support to continue. We have done a very good job of promoting Illinois Specialty crops during the fair that in turn helps promote what our members are doing on their own farms. I have always enjoyed volunteering at the Farmers Market tent and know that you would, too. Please consider volunteering for this great opportunity to help support your Association and Industry.

The affiliated associations of ISGA will host events this summer. ISHS has their Summer Field Day on June 9 at Valley Orchard in Cherry Valley, IL. IHA had their annual Herbfest on April 16 at the Chillicothe Public Library in Chillicothe, IL. IVGA has a Twilight meeting planned for St. Charles Research Farm on July 21. There is also the Pumpkin Field Day at the Ewing Demonstration Center on August 31 in Ewing, IL. More information can be found on these events within the content of this newsletter.

Manager's Farewell Message

It is with sweet sorrow I recently announced my retirement from Illinois Farm Bureau® (IFB®) after 23 years effective July 29. I had the privilege of working with the Illinois Specialty Growers Association my entire tenure with IFB along with stints with three other affiliated associations over the years. As I said at the annual banquet in January, ISGA is my heart. I have enjoyed all the groups I have worked with but ISGA has been the sweet spot of my career. I will truly miss all the wonderful farmers and agribusiness professionals I have met along the way.



I am very encouraged by the recognition specialty crop production has seen over the last 5-10 years. For most of my career, I have felt our industry has been overlooked in a state dominated by corn and soybean production. But, with the rise of the local food movement, our industry has grown by leaps and bounds. I have seen a huge influx of new and beginning farmers thanks to the University of Illinois and other groups offering training for new farmers. I have seen seasoned farmers growing their businesses by adding agritourism features. I have seen medium to

large farmers scaling up and entering the wholesale market thanks to programs such as IFB's Meet the Buyer. Isn't it amazing what can be accomplished when we work together for the greater good?

Regarding the association itself, I am hopeful some of the positive changes I have been involved in will continue to move forward. I hope you have enjoyed the new and improved all-color newsletter and the Member Features I introduced a few years ago. I hope you take advantage of occasionally checking out the ISGA web site that Charlene and I work hard to keep updated, and if you are not a member of the ISGA Facebook page, that you will "like" us. The Prairie Bounty continues to be a valuable resource with close to 800 farms listed. A few years ago, we moved from the paper booklet to the electronic searchable tool that it is today, thanks to our partnership with Market Maker. Our State Fair Farmers' Market project has grown tremendously since its inception over 12 years ago, and fair-going consumers seek us out each year to buy fresh produce. And, as I do not hesitate to tell anyone, my greatest source of pride is the specialty crop conference's growth and visibility throughout the state. We went through some pretty dark years with low attendance and struggles to stay afloat financially. However, with the assistance of Rick Weinzierl and his team of coordinators, coupled with the specialty crop block grant funding, we came back stronger than ever. I am optimistic that this growth will continue for many years to come.

In listing all these accomplishments, please do not think for one minute that I did this alone. I give great credit to my predecessor and mentor **Lowell Lenschow** for guidance and training. I give great credit to my assistant **Charlene Blary** for being the backbone of this organization and always having my back. My supervisors over the years have been more than generous in allowing me opportunities to grow through participation in conferences and serving on boards that facilitated my knowledge and expertise in the specialty crop world. For me personally, I owe a ton of gratitude to **Rick Weinzierl** and other university folks for always being there when I had industry questions or needed convention planning advice. As I do not hesitate to tell people, especially when I get huge accolades about the conference, it takes a village! And, I am very grateful for my "village."

Lastly, to give you an idea of my future, my husband, Kevin and I are in the fortunate position of being able to retire a little younger than the normal retirement age, and our dream and long-term goal has always been to winter in Florida. A few years ago, we purchased a small home in a 55+ retirement community in Ft. Myers. We will be wintering there and then enjoying the summer months at our home in Bloomington, spending time with our kids and 13 grandchildren. We look forward to finding a new norm down the road that will involve perhaps some new hobbies, volunteer opportunities, and sports activities. I have several ideas for what I might enjoy on a part-time basis in the future but will not be rushing into any decisions.

In the meantime, I am grateful for this career opportunity with IFB® and ISGA and for the many friends I have made along the way. I hope to keep in touch and hope you will too. My personal email is handleydiane@gmail.com. I hope you will reach out and keep in touch.

Continued from page 1

for), and Chris Doll and Bill Whiteside from the University of Illinois Extension field staff. I owe a lot to great co-workers ... too many to list, but one who must be acknowledged – Jeff Kindhart. I, and many others, miss him greatly. I will be "around" even after retirement. I have agreed to continue to coordinate the program for the annual Illinois Specialty Crops, Agritourism, and Organics Conference for at least a year or two. And (shameless advertising alert!), Weinzierl Fruit and Consulting is my retirement business. For now, contact me at rweinzierl@gmail.com or 217-621-4957. Thank you to all who receive this newsletter ... it has been a pleasure and a privilege to work with this industry.

Rick Weinzierl

Jim Fraley Named ISGA Manager



Jim Fraley currently serves as the Illinois Farm Bureau's Director of Affiliate Management and Livestock Programs. Because of his many years of experience in managing associations, Jim will work closely with Diane and Charlene to transition into the manager role for both ISGA and the Illinois Wheat Association. Jim is a 29-year employee with Illinois Farm Bureau, and actively farms corn, soybeans, hay, and freezer beef with his wife, Margie. Their son and daughter-in-law own Finding Eminence Farm, which is an on-farm market and farmer florist. Jim always seems to find time to help them out with their specialty operation, and looks forward to serving this agricultural sector. Please welcome Jim as he begins to become visible this summer at ISGA-related events.

University of Illinois Meetings

By Diane Handley, Manager

On April 11, I and six fruit and vegetable leaders, Matt Klein, Tom Halat, Brad Paulson, and Mark Schottman (IVGA) along with Wade Kuipers and Randy Graham (ISHS) met with University of Illinois College of Aces administrators to discuss the closure of the research centers and how we can work together to develop a new funding model for faculty positions in applied research and extension in horticulture in view of the financial challenges faced by their institution. Because the University of Illinois has gone to a tuition-based model, departmental areas such as the research centers and extension centers who do not generate income, have become heavy targets over the last few years. ACES has gone from 48 faculty members six years ago to 32 faculty members today. The administrators assured us that they plan to maintain the Entomologist position (held by Dr. Weinzierl) and the Pathologist position (held by Dr. Babadoost). In addition, the Plant Clinic will be maintained as well as the University-based research center.

In order to increase revenue into the college, they have been successfully increasing the number of students and the number of classes taught. Another option they are looking into and have asked our help with is obtaining funding from industry to assist with research positions and salaries. The six leaders present were willing to rise to the challenge of assisting with communicating with industry contacts our desire to partner with them to keep research viable and ongoing in the state of Illinois.

The ISGA manager also attended a second meeting at the University of Illinois on April 21 as part of the ACES College Advisory Committee. It was learned that the University is looking at reducing state dependence by 50% over the next 8-10 years which means colleges are looking at more and more budgetary cuts. With University of Illinois having the highest tuition rates in the Big 10, raising tuition rates is highly unlikely. So, the college is “thinking outside the box” for ways in which to bring in more dollars. In addition to the ideas presented in the previous meeting mentioned above, they are also raising substantial dollars in fund raising efforts. Both meetings generated a lot of good conversation and soul searching in how to address the budgetary crisis while still offering students a quality education as well as also attempting to meet the research needs of the fruit and vegetable industry. The dialogue is far from over, but I am happy to report that ISGA is involved in the conversation and will do their part to work with the university administrators in seeking a common resolution. The University of Illinois administrators recognize our concerns over the closing of the research centers and are pleased that we are being proactive in working with them toward a viable resolution to address our industry needs while also understanding their financial limitations.

2016 Southern IL Twilight Series

Do You Raise and Sell Fresh Products Locally?
Thinking About Diversifying Your Farming Operation?
Would You Like to Get To Know Your Local Farmer?
Join University of Illinois Extension as they team up with area farmers to provide four monthly evening meetings to highlight and demonstrate diverse farming enterprises across southern Illinois. Over the course of the four twilight meetings, growers, industry professionals, and extension educators will provide information on the following topics: certified organic production system, blueberry, blackberry, raspberry, and peach production, intensive vegetable production, GAPs certification, high tunnel vegetable production, and utilizing farmers markets, roadside stands, restaurants, CSA's, and wholesale outlets to market products.

Meeting Dates and Locations – Mondays 6-8pm

May 16, 2016	All Seasons Farm, Cobden, IL
June 20, 2016	G & C Meyer Farm, Steeleville, IL
July 18, 2016	Spring Valley Farm, Pulaski, IL
August 8, 2016	Grant's Orchard, Marion, IL

There is no cost for these programs but pre-registration is appreciated. Register online at <http://web.extension.illinois.edu/ghhpsw/> or by phone 618-382-2662. For more information, contact Bronwyn Aly, 618-382-2662, baly@illinois.edu; or Nathan Johanning, 618-687-1727, njohann@illinois.edu.

Popcorn Handbook

The [2016 Popcorn Agri-Chemical Handbook](#) is now available to ensure everyone in the popcorn industry is informed about products registered for use on popcorn or in popcorn storage facilities. The handbook lists agri-chemicals registered and the regulatory status or special use restrictions. The handbook continues to provide appendix information on residue tolerances, as may be found in the [Global MRL Database](#), which includes popcorn (corn, pop) and denotes established levels by the US, Codex, and 106 markets.

The handbook notes the Mode or Mechanism of Action (MOA) numerical classification of each listed chemical when used on a product label. The classification schemes are published by the Insecticide Resistance Action Committee, the Herbicide Resistance Action Committee, and the Fungicide Resistance Action Committee. The handbook also highlights the Signal Word “Danger” when used on a product label as required by the EPA's Label Review Manual. For more information, go to <http://www.popcorn.org/about/handbook>.

State and National Legislative Update



Agribusiness Signs – HB 4318 (Rep. Moffitt/ Sen. Anderson): This bill would authorize IDOA to sell to qualified applicants signs designating that an agribusiness has been operated for 100 years or more or 150 years or more as the same agribusiness. HB 4318 passed the House on a vote of 112 yes and 0 no votes and is currently in the Senate. *IFB and ISGA support HB 4318.*

Minimum Wage Increase - SB 2145 (Sen. Lightford): This bill increases the minimum wage from \$8.25 to \$9.00 beginning July 1, 2015 and increases it by \$0.50 each July 1 until July 1, 2019, at which point the minimum wage will be \$11.00. The bill also creates a credit against the withholding tax liability of employers with fewer than 50 employees, calculated based on the increase in the minimum wage. SB 2145 has been assigned to the Senate Executive Committee. *IFB and ISGA oppose SB 2145.*

Local Food, Farms, and Jobs Council - HB 5933 (Rep. Gabel): This bill would allow the board of directors of the Local Food, Farms, and Jobs Council to divide board membership into classes with and without voting rights. HB 5933 is currently on the floor. *IFB and ISGA are neutral on HB 5933 as amended.*



Agency and Industry News

Know Your Food, Know Your Farmer, Know Your Future

This annual event will be held in Chicago on July 14 and is hosted by USDA's Illinois Rural Development, Food & Nutrition Service Midwest, Illinois Farm Bureau®, and Fresh Taste. This unique convening offers farmers, businesses, organizations, state and federal agencies, institutions, and others involved in agriculture an opportunity to learn about USDA agencies, programs, and grants. Panel discussions will include topics on: Millennials influence on the new food and agriculture economy; National food waste reduction goal; Specialty Crop Block Grants; and Farm to School Food service/early education on health and nutrition. Cost is \$25 per person and pre-registration is required. Registration deadline is July 11 and you may register at: <http://www.ilfb.org/ifb-news-and-events/conferences-events/july-14.-2016-know-your-farmer,-know-your-food,-know-your-future.aspx>

A Good Directory for Any IPM Toolbox

The Integrated Pest Management (IPM) Practitioner's 2015 Directory of Least-Toxic Pest Control Products is now available online.

This Directory lists more than 2,000 products such as baits, traps, pheromones, microbials, biocontrol agents, least toxic pesticides, and other materials needed for IPM for insect, disease, weed, and vertebrate control. Contact information is provided for more than 600 national and international suppliers. The Directory can be found in a pdf format at <http://www.birc.org/Final2015Directory.pdf>. Those who want to buy a hard copy of this 48-page resource can order it from the Bio-Integral Resource Center (BIRC), PO Box 7414, Berkeley, CA 94707. Cost is \$15 including mailing and handling.



Illinois Farm to School Summit

Join us on June 7 at Lincoln Land Community College, in Springfield, Illinois, to participate in a day of hands-in-the-dirt workshops on many topics from school gardens to the food on the cafeteria tray. Discover how farm to school activities can improve learning and student nutrition. Everyone is welcome. The Illinois Farm to School Summit will have separate tracks for food service staff, farmers, and educators. We will all eat a fresh, scratch-cooked lunch of local foods that can be served in any school. Join us!

Advance registration is required. To register, go to <http://illinoisfarmtoschool.org/summit/agenda/>.

Portable Farm Storage Loans

USDA will provide a new financing option to help farmers purchase portable storage and handling equipment. Changes include a smaller microloan option with lower down payments and are designed to help producers, including new, small and mid-sized producers, grow their businesses and markets. To learn more, go to <http://www.fsa.usda.gov/programs-and-services/price-support/Index>.

Open Prairie Rural Opportunities Fund

USDA Secretary Tom Vilsack recently announced the launch of a new private investment fund with the potential to inject \$100 million into small food and agriculture businesses across rural America. The fund, known as the Open Prairie Rural Opportunities Fund, will be the fourth Rural Business Investment Company (RBIC) that USDA has helped to create since 2014 and is part of USDA's ongoing efforts to help attract private sector capital to investment opportunities in rural America to help drive more economic growth in rural communities. If you would like to learn more about the Open Prairie Rural Opportunities Fund, please contact Jason Wrone via email at Jason@OpenPrairie.com.

Value-Added Producer Grant (VAPG) program

The VAPG program helps agricultural producers enter into value-added activities related to the processing and/or marketing of bio-based, value-added products. Generating new products, creating and expanding marketing opportunities, and increasing producer income are the goals of this program. You may receive priority if you are a beginning farmer or rancher, a socially-disadvantaged farmer or rancher, a small or medium-sized farm or ranch structured as a family farm, a farmer or rancher cooperative, or are proposing a mid-tier value chain. The deadline for submitting VAPG applications is July 1 for paper applications or June 24 for applications submitted via www.grants.gov. If questions, contact Matt Harris, Rural Development, matthew.harris@il.usda.gov or go to <http://www.rd.usda.gov/programs-services/value-added-producer-grants>.

McHenry County Farm Bureau® Ag Expo

Every other year, the McHenry County Farm Bureau hosts an Ag Expo for over 3,500 third and fourth graders. This year, the Expo was held April 11-14 at the McHenry County Fair Grounds. During the four days, groups of school children arrived from their McHenry County elementary schools to visit 20 different stations. Each station represents different agricultural operations such as specialty crops, dairy, beef, corn, soybeans, baby chicks, and so on. Upon arrival, each group is guided by volunteers from station to station to learn about agriculture. Teachers are given agricultural information before the Expo to use in their classroom to prepare their students for the Expo and information to use after the third and fourth graders return to their schools. They will spend several minutes at each station. The adjacent photo shows students at the Specialty Growers station where Chad Nichols, Nichols Farm, Marengo, is the speaker. Mr. Nichols is a specialty crop producer and member of the Illinois Specialty Growers Association.



GroupGAP

The USDA Agricultural Marketing Service (AMS) announced the official launch of GroupGAP, a new certification program that helps small and mid-sized growers and cooperatives meet retailers' on-farm food safety requirements. Read more here: https://www.morningagclips.com/new-group-gap-program-announced/?utm_content=articles&utm_campaign=NL_Campaign&utm_source=Newsletter&utm_term=newsletteredition&utm_medium=email

There's an App for That!

ID Weeds: For I-Phone and Android. ID Weeds is produced by the University of Missouri's College of Ag Food and Natural Resources' Division of Plant Sciences.

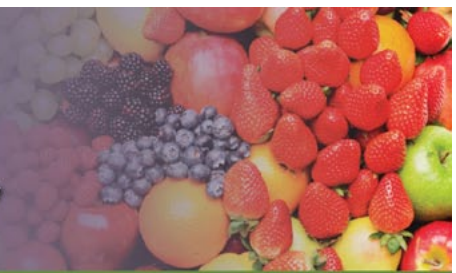
Weather Underground: For I-Phone and Android. This weather app is best used for the radar. It also provides for the ability to look up personal online weather stations and see rainfall amounts in real time.

SoilWeb: For IPhone and Android. This app uses the GPS built into the smartphone to acquire your current location and then submits an HTTP request to a server via the SoilWeb API. A graphical summary of the soils mapped at your current location is presented onscreen.

GAP Certified: App provides on-the-go data entry to help farmers meet the requirements for GAP certification. Designed for users of GAP Certified, this app allows you to enter data on your phone or tablet that will then sync with your account. From recording wildlife sightings to tracking storage temperatures, you can enter the details you will need for the reports that are required during your annual GAP audit. The app is free but requires a subscription of \$29/month or \$319/year. It may be beneficial for someone required to be GAP Certified. It's available at www.gapcertified.com.



Illinois State Horticulture Society



From the President By Jeff Broom, Carlinville, Illinois

I hope this newsletter finds all of you keeping up with this season's crop. Here in the south central part of the state, warm temps brought out the peaches, then cool weather moved in and the blooms just sat. We were fortunate to escape any cold injury. Apples came out with a big bloom and set. The jury is still out on whether I have them thinned enough.

A big thanks to Tom Ringhausen for hosting a Twilight Meeting over in Hardin. The meeting was well attended, and Rick Weinzierl gave us an update on insecticide use for this season. These meetings are a good way to ask questions and learn from educators and fellow growers. I highly recommend making the effort to attend. Looking forward to this month's meeting on May 19 at the Joe and Dennis Ringhausen farm in Jerseyville.

Also looking forward to this year's Summer Field Day at Raoul Bergerson's farm on June 9. Hope to see a big turnout. On a sad note, I would like to pass on my condolences to the Curt Christ family on the passing of Walter Christ back in April.

Have a great season.

Summer Horticulture Day – June 9

Raoul and Jodie Bergersen, owners of Valley Orchard, welcome you to their farm for the 2016 Horticulture Field Day. The field day provides the opportunity to learn about Valley Orchard's farm operations. This 35-acre farm grows apple trees, small fruits, vegetables, and pumpkins. Their farm market offers fresh cider, made-from-scratch apple pies, apple cider donuts, caramel apples, and other unique treats and gifts. In addition, the field day will give you a chance to connect with other specialty growers in Illinois and neighboring states. Raoul and Jodie will share their knowledge about the farm business and University of Illinois extension specialists and educators will discuss a range of topics related to specialty crops. Integrated pest management, fruit thinning, high density apples, trellised blackberries, and varietal information are a few of the many topics that will be covered. The agenda consists of walking and wagon tours of dwarf and high density apples, pumpkins, bush cherries, plums, rotating trellised blackberries, raspberries, blueberries, strawberries, rhubarb, and currants. Registration is on-line at: <https://www.picatic.com/ilhortday>.



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Notes From Home

By Jerry Mills



This will be my last column for this publication while Diane Handley is at the helm. I am proud to say that I campaigned in her favor when Lowell Lenchow retired. She was the obvious choice, since she knew almost as much about the organization as he did. She did an outstanding job, confirming my suspicion that the women behind the scenes are often the best qualified as replacements. I hate to see her leave. Some of you may not know that she also performed many of the same functions for other Ag organizations, thanks to support from the Illinois Farm Bureau. Most of these organizations would not be able to function without Illinois Farm Bureau help.

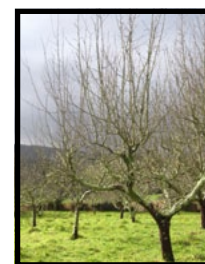
All of Illinois agriculture and especially Diane's organizations owe her and the Illinois Farm Bureau big thanks for their assistance in keeping such groups alive. The history of such agricultural organizations in Illinois goes back a long way. The first settlers in Illinois were quick to realize they needed a forum to share their knowledge. By 1825, agricultural fairs began appearing around the state. These were places where farmers and their wives displayed examples of their labors. There were livestock, crop, machinery as well as fruit and baked products. By 1857, the fruit growers decided they should have their own organization to focus on horticulture. The Illinois State Horticulture was organized almost ten years before agricultural colleges and extension services came into existence. It was a classic example of people organizing to fulfill their own needs without outside help. Membership and participation in such organization numbered in the thousands because there were many small farms in those days. The horticulture societies had hundreds of members all together.

At one time, about 100 years ago, there were three large horticulture societies operating in Illinois, each within their own portion of the state. Many counties even had local groups. Since most of the early settlers came from diverse agricultural backgrounds, such organizations helped teach people what would work and what did not. However, this has changed in the last fifty years. Illinois was once a top fruit producing state in the United States. Fruit, mostly apples, peaches and strawberries were shipped everywhere, especially to the east coast. Sadly, we have lost our dominance through attrition, competition from other states and countries. A once mighty industry is reduced from dozens of wholesale growers and shippers to a handful. The remainder of the industry is composed of smaller farms and orchards that deal directly with the public as growers and entertainers.

Despite such changes, I think the future of our industry is bright for those who want to continue adapting to market conditions. There will always be a need for locally-grown fresh fruit and vegetables. People will always enjoy going out to the source of such food. They will also appreciate seeing locally-grown food in their stores. It will be up to those of us who grow the foods to satisfy such needs in our own unique ways. As our numbers have decreased, it becomes increasingly important to belong to and participate in our commodity organizations, to learn, to teach and to influence the business atmosphere in which we operate. That brings us back to Diane and people and organizations like her who make our jobs easier. Thank you for your services. JOB WELL DONE!

The Orchard of the Future

If asked what commercial fruit orchards might look like in the future—even up to a century from now—those who have studied orchards closely will give you a wide range of answers. The trend toward increasingly larger orchards being owned by increasingly fewer people or corporations will likely continue. These large farms will be highly efficient, with the goal of decreasing variability in biennial bearing, fruit size, and fruit quality. They also will be less diverse in the cultivars they grow. On the flip side, consumer interest in local foods, farmers' markets, and agritainment will continue to grow.



Orchards planted for these markets may look very similar to the high-density orchards being planted today. Operators will need to focus on apple varieties with unique flavors and niche markets. The majority of apple producers might be these smaller-scale growers, even though large-scale producers will grow the vast majority of apples. Future orchard systems will include these five basic principles of modern orchard design: high light interception, good light distribution throughout the canopy, high early yields, simple canopies for partial mechanization, and high planting density. The full article is posted on the ISHS web site page: <http://jhawkins54.typepad.com/files/the-orchard-of-the-future.pdf>.

Fruit Pruning Clinic

University of Illinois Extension hosted a late afternoon pruning and management clinic at the Dixon Springs Agricultural Center, Simpson, IL on Thursday, March 10. This clinic was geared towards beginning farmers, small scale growers, and backyard hobbyists, with nearly 30 people in attendance. As we all know, pruning is a crucial component in the successful culture of fruit plantings. Proper pruning techniques promote increased fruit quality, increased yields, and improved overall plant health. Management of insect and disease pests can be challenging but is essential for successful fruit production. During the afternoon, Extension Educators Bronwyn Aly, Nathan Johanning, and Elizabeth Wahle lead a hands-on workshop covering basic concepts of pruning, management of insect and disease pests, and blueberry and peach pruning techniques. Growers were encouraged to bring their favorite pruning tool and to dress accordingly. The weather cooperated somewhat, as it stopped raining right at the start of the clinic, but rubber boots and rain jackets were still needed. Participants were able to stand inside a high tunnel during the first part of the clinic while pest management practices were discussed. The group then moved out to the blueberry and peach plantings for hands-on pruning demonstrations.



Rendleman Orchard Named Union County Tourism Attraction of the Year



Congratulations to Rendleman Orchards for being named Union County Tourism Attraction of the Year for 2015. The Union County Women in Business organization has for years acknowledged the importance that tourism businesses play in the economy and the success of the area as a whole. The Rendleman family farm is one of the oldest businesses in Southern Illinois. It is very fitting that their fresh fruit produce market reflects their long history. It is the dedication of consistency by the family that has earned them this award. Rendleman Orchards Farm Market will open July 1 with their tree-ripened peaches! Until then, you may visit them at www.rendlemanorchards.com or like them on Facebook to learn what it is Rendleman Orchards does year round.

In Memorium – Walter Christ

Walter Christ, 80, of rural Elmwood, passed away at Unity Point Health-Methodist on Sunday, April 17, 2016 at 3:30 a.m. He was born on April 26, 1935, in Scheppach, Germany, the son of Christian and Luise Siegel Christ. He immigrated to America in April 1953. He married Doris Ann Teubel on February 16, 1958, in Morton. Surviving are his wife, Doris; three sons, Fred (Tina) of Elmwood, Ron (Carol) of Edwards, and **Kurt (Connie) of Elmwood**; and one daughter, Melinda Christ of Elmwood, eleven grandchildren and eight great-grandchildren. Walter farmed in the Peoria area and enjoyed helping at Christ Orchard. He had a lifelong passion for gardening, flowers, and serving others. Walter was a long-time supporter of the Illinois State Horticulture Society and Illinois Specialty Growers Association. His engaging personality will be greatly missed.

Curtis Orchard Nabs Top Award

Champaign's agritourism destination Curtis Orchard & Pumpkin Patch heads into its 2016 season claiming something no one else in the Midwest has: the region's best honey. The worldwide organization Center for Honeybee Research recently awarded Curtis Orchard beekeeper Rachel Coventry (pictured below) with the title of best honey in the central U.S., a nine-state area that includes Ohio, Michigan, Wisconsin, Minnesota, Illinois, Kentucky, Missouri, Kansas, and Colorado.



Coventry and Curtis Orchard also claim status to one of the world's ten best-tasting honeys after making the finalist cut in the prestigious Black Jar International Honey Contest. The honey Coventry collects comes from an apiary located on Curtis Orchard property. Coventry says the variety of pollen sources in this particular area contributed to the award-winning honey. "We have a unique situation of having fruit trees, field crops, and a variety of clover, and other plants that the bees collect from. Our honeybees stay within a three-mile radius of these hives, so to have all of these pollen sources available to our bees makes for a rich and complex-tasting honey that we all benefit from."

New Treatment May Prevent Losses From Apple Scab

Apple scab, a fungal disease affecting apple orchards in Illinois and worldwide, can significantly reduce fruit quality and yield. In fact, the disease recently damaged more than 50% of some apple varieties in Illinois orchards. When samples from those orchards were tested, some strains of the fungus were found to be resistant to traditional fungicides.



"I rushed to do something to prevent this disaster. We did an experiment in 2014 and 2015 and were lucky to get very good results," reports University of Illinois plant pathologist Mohammad Babadoost. Babadoost and his team tested a new protocol using combinations of systemic and contact fungicides. Dithane M-45 (mancozeb), a contact fungicide, should be applied at the green-tip stage at 3 to 4 pounds per acre, along with the systemic fungicide Inspire Super (difenoconazole + cyprodinil) at 12 fluid ounces per acre. After seven days, the treatment should be followed up with a combination of Dithane M-45 and Fontelis (penthiopyrad) at 20 fluid ounces per acre. Each treatment should be repeated three times, seven days apart, for the most effective control.

"When we tested this combination of chemicals, we could not find even a single scabby apple," Babadoost says. "Growers that trialed the treatment in 2015 reported no scab." Despite the success of the treatment, Babadoost notes that it should not be seen as a silver bullet. "We are in a battle with the pathogen almost all the time," he says. Apple scab causes lesions on leaf and fruit tissue that thicken and take on a scabby appearance. In later stages of the infection, the skin of the fruit can crack, allowing in secondary pathogens that can lead to fruit rot or other symptoms. All growing portions of the tree are susceptible to the fungus. Babadoost warns, "Any green tissue is subject to being attacked. It starts very early in the season. If growers are able to control it effectively as soon as growth starts in the spring, there will be almost no disease by summer. But if they miss the window in spring, summer will be a disaster."

In addition to the new fungicide treatment protocol, other control options are available to growers. For example, growers can choose apple varieties that are resistant to apple scab; including 'Honeycrisp', 'Jonafree', and 'Gold Rush'; avoiding susceptible varieties, such as 'Fuji', 'Gala', 'Honeygold', 'Winesap', and others. A more extensive list of resistant and susceptible apple varieties is provided in Babadoost's recent University of Illinois Extension Fact Sheet. Again, Babadoost issues a warning: "Even if an apple variety is resistant, it might not be resistant forever. Resistance might break down."

Small growers, organic growers, and home gardeners can prevent infection by removing or applying a five percent solution of urea to all dead leaves on the ground, as the fungus overwinters in leaf litter. Removing nearby crab apple trees will also be beneficial. Organic growers can apply organic sulphur- or copper-based fungicides, but Babadoost is not confident that organic fungicides will provide good control of resistant strains of apple scab. "Production of organic apples in Illinois is not an easy task," he says.

Growers should monitor and treat trees early and often to prevent widespread infection. With the new treatment protocol in place, the 2016 growing season holds a great deal of promise for apples in Illinois. For more information, read the University of Illinois Extension apple scab Fact Sheet at http://extension.cropsciences.illinois.edu/fruitveg/pdfs/800-Apple_Scab-2015.pdf.

By Mohammad Babadoost, babadoos@illinois.edu, (217) 333-1523, March 9, 2016.

A Renaissance Painting Reveals How Breeding Changed Watermelons

Giovanni Stanchi's painting from the 17th century shows how much watermelon has changed. Look in the bottom right corner of this painting. Stanchi's watermelon, which was painted sometime between 1645 and 1672, offers a glimpse of a time before breeding changed the fruit forever. The watermelon originally came from Africa, but after domestication, it thrived in hot climates in the Middle East and southern Europe. Through hundreds of years of domestication, we have modified smaller watermelons with a white interior into the larger, lycopene-loaded versions we know today. Lately, we have also been experimenting with getting rid of the seeds. Future generations will at least have photographs to understand what watermelons with seeds looked like. But to see the small, white watermelons of the past, they too will have to look at Renaissance art.





Illinois Vegetable Growers Association



From the President

By Brad Paulson, Brodhead, WI

I hope everyone has had a good start to their growing season. Of course, now it is all about timing. Not just about the timing of good weather and rains but also the timing of when we plant the next planting when succession planting is involved. I sometimes get the idea from our farmers market customers that they think the produce we bring each week just happens--something fresh and at the perfect stage magically jumps from our farm to the truck right before we show up at the market (Why don't you have sweet corn this week since you had it last week?).



It is also about timing--when to spray to prevent weeds, diseases, and pests, and that timing is generally before we see a problem. Of course, in addition to scouting and monitoring pest traps (a real time challenge in itself), I encourage everyone to subscribe to the *Illinois Fruit and Vegetable News*. In the newsletter you will find timely information on disease and insect pressure throughout the state and often ideas on what you should be doing to prevent the problem before it gets to you. The *Illinois Fruit and Vegetable News* is edited by U of I Extension Educators Bronwyn Aly and Nathan Johanning. The Newsletter is available by contacting Nathan at njohann@illinois.edu and can be sent directly to your e-mail.

Other information on insect pressure can be found at various web sites such as www.insectforecast.com/ which will help you track pests such as corn earworm and western bean cutworm hopefully before they are munching on your profits.

Please remind your state and local representatives how important the University of Illinois and Extension are for us as producers of fresh produce. Ask them to promote the continued support of these programs whenever possible. Have a great growing season!

St. Charles Vegetable Grower Final Twilight Meeting

A final twilight meeting, prior to its closure, for vegetable growers will be held Thursday, July 21, at 6:00 pm at the University of Illinois Department of Crop Sciences St. Charles Horticulture Research Center. Commercial vegetable growers will be given a walking tour of the vegetable research being conducted by University of Illinois researchers at the facility. Vegetable variety trials at St. Charles this season include popcorn, tomatoes, hot and bell peppers, ornamental gourds, eggplant, cucumber, arugula, and heirloom melons. Visitors will also be given a walkthrough of the Hi-Tunnel system.

Growers are encouraged to attend to learn about the specialty crop research and to ask specialists about current issues in vegetable crop production. Research Center staff enthusiastically receives their comments and feedback on programs at St. Charles. The Research Center is 45 miles west of Chicago in St Charles, IL. It is located on IL Rt. 38, 5.5 miles east of IL Rt. 47, or 1.5 miles west of Kane County Randall Road. The University of Illinois, College of ACES, Department of Crop Sciences, UI Extension, and the Illinois Vegetable Growers Association sponsor this event. There is no fee or pre-registration to attend. For more information, contact Dr. Shelby Henning at 630-584-7254, or shenning@illinois.edu.

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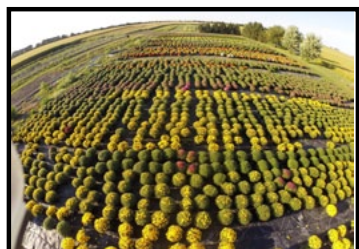
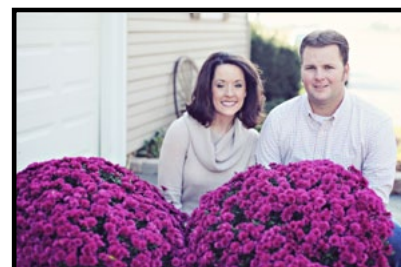
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Member Feature: Triple M Farm: Mariah's Mums & More

By Mariah & Greg Anderson, Clinton, IL

Triple M Farm: Mariah's Mums & More is a specialty crop farm located near Clinton just 35 miles south of Bloomington and 30 miles west of Champaign. Owners Greg and Mariah Anderson met while they were in their first year of college, serving as Section Presidents of the FFA. Hailing from opposite ends of the state, they put their roots down in central Illinois soil in 2005. That year they purchased an old four-square farmhouse with some acreage. For several years, they both progressed



in their careers, but longed to have a small farm operation of their own. In 2009, they pulled the trigger on an idea and a leap of faith to grow their first crop of 300 hardy garden mums. With the mum business rapidly expanding, in 2013 they decided to pursue growing vegetables, allowing Greg to transition to working on the farm full time. Even through growing mums was a new venture for both of them, growing vegetables was not new for Greg. Greg grew up growing vegetables alongside his dad and brothers, who continue to operate a specialty crop operation near Leland.

Today the Anderson's grow 10,000 fall mums, offer a 75-member CSA, sell vegetable starts, and grow a variety of cut flowers. Their customer base for both the vegetables and mums consists both of wholesale and retail business. Their local IGA grocery store started selling their mums in 2010, and last year the store dedicated a section in their produce area for Triple M Farm produce. Their mum customers consist of several area pumpkin farms and in 2013 Triple M Farm began offering on-the-farm hours from May through October. Mariah says this has really been her favorite part of expanding their operation. "It has allowed for us to open our farm gate by offering a full season of locally-grown products, but most importantly, it has allowed for us to connect with our customers on a personal level."



Because of the growing demand for agricultural tourism in their county, the Andersons lead the effort in coordinating what they now call the DeWitt County Farm Crawl. The Farm Crawl is a multi-farm event held in early September where participating farms host demonstrations, tours, and fun farm-related activities, and sell their locally-grown or raised products during the event. Now in the event's third year, the farms have partnered with their local County Farm Bureau for hosting a tractor drive in coordination with the Farm Crawl event.

Triple M Farm's values are rooted in their farm. They believe in healthy food, healthy people, and a healthy planet. They operate their farm through viable based agricultural practice. They are dedicated to providing educational

experiences for youth through ongoing partnerships with the local 4-H and FFA programs. During the season, they employ several high school students and work with their local FFA chapter for offering a Supervised Agricultural Experiences (SAE) for students.

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The Anderson's continue to expand their farm each year and plan to conduct more on-the-farm hosted events for the public throughout the season. To learn more about their farm, visit www.mariahsmums.com.



Heirloom Tomato and Specialty Hot Pepper Trial Results

In 2015, 22 tomato and specialty hot pepper cultivars were evaluated for high-tunnel yield performance at the University of Illinois St. Charles Horticulture Research Center (SCHRC). Tomatoes were grown from seed that were started on March 18 and were potted into 4-inch peat pots filled with Pro Mix on April 9. Hot peppers were grown from seed that were started on February 2 and were potted into 4-inch peat pots filled with Pro Mix on March 30. Both tomato and bell pepper transplants were planted randomly into single-layer black plastic beds 3 feet on center in the high tunnel on May 9. Tomatoes were set at a spacing of 18 inches. Determinate cultivars were grown using a trellis weave system and pruned up to but not including the first sucker below the first cluster. No additional thinning or pruning was done on the determinate cultivars. Indeterminate cultivars were pruned to a single leader and affixed to a single polyethylene twine suspended from a permanent overhead trellis made from treated lumber and high tensile fence wire. Peppers were set in single rows, 18 in. apart.



The planting was monitored for pest problems and treated as required. Insects that presented significant problems were limited to tomato hornworm. Yield data are given in Tables 1 and 2. The data represent the mean of 8 and 3 plants for tomato and hot pepper, respectively. Unless noted, tomato varieties are indeterminate. This research and the resulting report was accomplished with the assistance of Guanying (Bianca) Xu and Jaqueline Nadolny. For more information on these results, contact Shelby Henning at (630) 584-7254 or shenning@illinois.edu. Data can be found here: <http://ipm.illinois.edu/ifvn/contents.php?id=73#welcome>

How Late is Too Late for Pumpkins to Color?



Delayed fruit set in pumpkins can be caused by many factors including late planting, heat and water stress, poor pollination, and excess fertility (too much N). When set is delayed until August, the question is will the pumpkin develop and color in time for sales. Under favorable summer growing conditions, pumpkins will start to color about four weeks after

fruit set and will be completely colored by 7 weeks after set. If fruit set is delayed until August, reduced day lengths and cooler temperatures may increase the time for full-color development. Varietal differences in days to maturity also come into play. In research at Purdue University, pumpkins that set in August were tagged and then evaluated for maturity in October. They found that for flowers that opened between August 10-21, at least 70% produced pumpkins that were either turning or fully orange by October 2 and 10, respectively. The remaining 20-30% either never set a fruit or the fruit was still immature at the time of harvest. This indicates that pumpkins set in mid-August will be ready for October sales. In fields with delayed set, it will be critical to keep vines healthy through September. This will mean additional fungicide sprays through the month with special attention being paid to powdery mildew and downy mildew.

By Gordon Johnson, University of Delaware Extension, *Weekly Crop Update*, Vol. 23, Issue 23.

Mike Roegge Retirement

Mike Roegge, recently retired from University of Illinois Extension after over 36 years of service. He was an agronomist for many years, but after Extension restructured several years ago, he finished his career as a Local Food System/ Small Farms Educator working out of the Quincy area. Mike and his wife own and operate Mill Creek Farm in Quincy, raising vegetable crops and strawberries. They have a farm stand and also wholesale some of the crop. Mike plans on working full time on the farm. Mike was a regular contributor to the *Fruit and Vegetable Newsletter* that Rick Weinzierl edits and presented programs on a number of topics at the Specialty Growers conference, as well as other similar educational programs. He looks forward to having more time to spend at the farm and being able to enjoy his evenings without having to do farm work.



ISGA congratulates Mike on his retirement and would like to acknowledge that in addition to giving many presentations over the years at the specialty growers conference, Mike was also a member of the team that put together the conference program. We thank him for his service and wish him the best in his retirement.

Mark your calendar - August 31 Pumpkin Field Day, Ewing Demonstration Center, Ewing, IL. Details will be posted on IVGA page of the website mid-summer.

Year of the Carrot

Each year the National Garden Bureau selects one annual, one perennial, and one edible as their “Year of the” crops. Each is chosen because they are popular, easy-to-grow, widely adaptable, genetically diverse, and versatile. Carrots are one of the Top 10 most economically important vegetable crops in the world. Carrots are delicious, nutritious, and versatile — and with a little bit of know-how, this root crop is also easy to grow from seed and perform best when sown directly into a garden bed or patio container.



History: The ancestor to the modern-day carrot is believed to have originated in Afghanistan and was purple, scrawny, and pungent. Over time, cultivation by Greeks and Romans resulted in roots that were plumper, tastier, and came in shades of purple, red, and black. It was not until the late 16th or early 17th Century that the orange, appetizing carrots that we know today were bred by the Dutch in Europe.

Basic Varieties Grown Today: Carrots (*Daucus carota*) are members of the *Apiaceae* family, which also includes culinary plants such as anise, celery, coriander (cilantro), dill, and parsnips. They are biennials, meaning that they will flower in the second year of growth, but are typically grown as annuals (grown and harvested in the same year). There are several different carrot types, and they are primarily divided up by shape. The following are some of the more well-known types, along with their characteristics:

Chantenay: Conical, have triangular shaped roots with broad shoulders and rounded tips. A sweet flavor makes it good for eating fresh. Chantenay varieties include Royal Chantenay, Red Core, Kuroda, and Rainbow carrots.

Danvers: Cylindrical, have thick roots that are often used to make carrot juice due to the high water content and low sugar content. Danvers varieties include Danvers and, Danvers Half Long.

Imperator: Long, have tapered roots with narrow shoulders. These are typically the carrots you would buy in a plastic bag at the grocery store. Imperator varieties include: Sugarsnax 54, Imperator 58, and Yellowbunch.

Miniature/Baby: Small round roots (also called planet-types) or cylindrical and short roots. Miniature/Baby varieties include Atlas, Parisian, and Adelaide.

Nantes: Cylindrical, have cigar-shaped roots that are sweet and crispy. Varieties include: Purple Haze (All-America Selection Winner), Mokum, and Nelson.

Source: National Garden Bureau



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Facebook Pages Worth Checking Out!

IHA: <http://www.facebook.com/IllinoisHerbAssociation>

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Click on these pages and "like" them to get up-to-date information. And don't forget our website: <http://www.specialtygrowers.org/illinois-herb-association.html>



The President's Corner By Megan Greenhalgh, President

Summer is finally here! And there was much rejoicing among IHA members! I hope your gardens are all coming along nicely. I know I am excited to be working outside. But while I have your attention, here are a couple items for your consideration.

We had a great time at HerbFest this year. HerbFest was April 16 and began at Chillicothe Public Library, Chillicothe, IL. Our first speaker of the day, Deborah Lee of Four Winds Farm in Quincy,

has taught medicinal herb classes and worked with clients for 30+ years. Deborah guided us through a virtual tour of many different wild edible and medicinal plants. The second session was led by Melissa Davis. Melissa works with Luthy Botanical Gardens (Peoria, IL) and is the current president of the Peoria Herb Guild. She gave a very nice presentation on various culinary herbs, including what conditions they grow best in, what food they go well with, and some good ways to design and create herbal containers.

After lunch, we had some fun with transplanting. We had a short slideshow, which was followed by some hands-on activities. We transplanted watercress and Sweet Annie; we even potted up



HerbFest attendees learn planting and transplanting techniques.

some tomato and sage plants for the library! The last session was held at Luthy Botanical Gardens as part of their day-long classes. It was a great class on Central Illinois trees. After the class, we enjoyed a tour of the gardens and the lovely greenhouses.

The other thing I wanted to mention is our need for active board members. We have had a few issues lately with a lack of member participation. As times change, the role of IHA has changed too. In order to stay current with our members' needs, IHA needs to know what kinds of events, activities, and

projects are helpful. We will be sending out an email survey in the next month or so to find out what exactly members would like to see from the organization. Please take the time to fill out the survey so we can adjust our efforts accordingly. And if you ever have any suggestions, please feel free to contact me. Well, it is back to the garden. Enjoy your summer!



Deborah Lee presents on edible and medicinal plants.

Saying Good-bye to ISGA

By Chuck Voigt, University of Illinois

As of January 1, 2016, I retired from the University of Illinois. I have greatly enjoyed my 27 years of working with ISGA, from its formation to its current form. I have seen older growers leave us, younger growers get older, and a few young folks get into the game over these years. There have been so many interesting characters that it was always a treat to see whom I would run into at the conference. Whether it was Harley Willaredt, Ted Biernacki, the Alten brothers, Carl Duewer, Wilma Clark, or many, many others, I always knew I could count on a friendly greeting and a story or two.



It was my privilege to be a part of organizing the Illinois Herb Association in 1989 and immediately bringing them under the ISGA umbrella. Starting with Marilyn Miller and Una French, then adding Caroline and Don Schertz, Mike King and his wonderful mother, Maribeth, Joyce Cisna, and whomever I am forgetting, we hammered out the bylaws with help from Don Naylor and Lee Rife, and formed the association. Being the official University of Illinois adviser to this group has probably been the most defining role of my career.

I spent many hours at ISGA board meetings and have to admit that these were not always the most scintillating times of my life, but I did feel that we were working together for the benefit of all the specialty crop producers and marketers in our state. Being added to the board, by name, as a University of Illinois advisor was an honor. It is a toss-up as to which was better, the breakfast tray of doughnuts and selection of juices, or the lunch in the cafeteria there on Towanda Avenue in Bloomington.

Having said all that, I think that I may already have agreed to speak at the 2017 conference, so I won't be out of sight for long. My goal in retirement is to sing in 100 gardens, which will allow me to travel, tour gardens, and sing, all of which sounds pretty good to me. We will see how it plays out. Until then, as Bob Hope sang, "Thanks for the Memories!"



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Member Feature – Green Acres Herb Farm

By Abby Harding and Megan Greenhalgh

Owned and operated by Don and Caroline Schertz, Green Acres Herb Farm takes its name from the family farm, which was registered as Green Acres Stock Farm on March 26, 1925. The farm is located in Lowpoint, Illinois and specializes in over 400 varieties of herbs, a large selection of heirloom vegetables, and a variety of seasonal flowers.

When they originally inherited the land, it did not take Don and Caroline long to start a vegetable garden. It has always been a high priority to them to provide their family with the healthiest, tastiest vegetables and herbs they could. However, what started in the 1970's as a 25-square-foot veggie garden grew, and by 1990 Don and Caroline were gardening more than 3 acres of flowers, herbs, and vegetables.



With a passion for tasty produce and a conviction that quality food encourages a quality lifestyle, Don and Caroline started to sell at several area farmer's markets, and Green Acres Herb Farm was officially born. Growing herbs and vegetables is a fairly involved process. Seedlings and plug flats are started in the greenhouses. After transplanting, plants are moved outdoors and planted in the fields. Most of the beds in the fields are made using plastic culture in order to cut down on weeds. Green Acres also has a high tunnel for season extension.

The summertime labor force for the farm is mostly comprised of local high school students, but the farm employs a full-time greenhouse manager. In addition, Don and Caroline's granddaughters Abby Harding and Megan Greenhalgh do most of the business management.



Today, Green Acres continues to grow a little more each year. The on-farm shop opened in May 2012 and houses a catalog of over 2,500 new and pre-loved gardening books and cookbooks.

Visits to the farm are encouraged and tours of the greenhouses and fields are also available.

Green Acres currently participates in three local farmer's markets over the summer, including Peoria, Peoria Heights, and Bloomington. The farm has provided floral arrangements for several weddings and has offered a weekly produce box CSA, which includes a variety of herbs and vegetables. For more information, please visit the website at www.greenacresherbfarm.com.





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Nutrient Loss Reduction Strategy Meeting

A Nutrient Loss Reduction Strategy Meeting was held March 3 at the Robinson Community Center with 125 producers and landowners in attendance. The Illinois Irrigation was one of the hosts of this event along with LaMotte Creek Watershed, Crawford County SWCD, Lawrence County SWCD, and Crawford County Farm Bureau. Topics covered related to the Nutrient Loss Reduction Strategy such as:

- The History of NLRS
- Cover Crops & their role in NLRS
- Phosphates and the Embarrass River
- Nitrogen management for NLRS
- Chesapeake Bay



Diversity Paves Road to Success

The introduction of irrigation in the 1970s helped eastern Crawford County farmers expand their crop production. It also provided the Knoblett family of Palestine with an opportunity to diversify into vegetable and seed corn production. Don Knoblett (on the right in adjacent picture) and his son, Doug, have been raising row crops, vegetables, and seed corn on their 1,800-acre farm the past 30 years. When Don Knoblett's ancestors settled in eastern Crawford County in the 1870s, they depended on a diverse farming approach to provide for their family with livestock, crops, vegetables, and fruit. That same diversity continues to be practiced on the Knoblett farm today, but with some tweaking.



Don and his son, Doug, farm 1,800 acres of regular row crops with seed corn and vegetables in the mix. Livestock is a thing of the past on this ground that once served

cattle best before irrigation was introduced. "The thing that makes this little area nice is this side of the county along the Wabash River is on a nice aquifer. We have a very good water supply for irrigation. The other side of the county is real fertile clay soil so they can grow good crops over there, but until we started irrigation on our side, the crops were hurt a lot," Doug said. The installation of irrigation systems in this locale began in the late 1970s. "The irrigation gives us the opportunity to diversify and branch out into other things like growing seed corn. We have grown it for 30 years and it's been a great deal for us," Doug said. "We have also grown sweet corn, green beans, cucumbers, things like that. It gives you choice. It depends on how labor intense you want to get into."

Vegetable Broker: The Knobletts grow vegetables for Razorback Farms, a Springdale, Ark.,-based broker. "One year they needed 200 acres of pumpkins because there was a shortage of pumpkins. So we jumped in and planted a couple hundred acres of pumpkins. We have grown cucumbers that went to Michigan. We grew sunflowers one year that went for bird feed. We have grown just about everything," said Don, an Illinois Specialty Growers Association board member and president of the Illinois Irrigation Association. "Razorback Farms is a family-owned business and a major supplier for snap beans. We've also grown fresh market green beans. It depends on what they need," Doug said.

The vegetable brokers contact the Knobletts the previous fall to "order" so many acres of one or more vegetables. The family then fits that plan into their regular row-crop operation, including planting and fertilizing the vegetables. The company scouts the crops to determine if any treatment is required and also does the harvest. "It depends on how many they need. There have been years when the seed corn company we grow for needed a bunch of extra so

we took some things out of rotation and grew extra seed corn. We try to be flexible with it, and so far it's worked out pretty well," Doug said. "It's been a good deal. With any type of vegetable, though, your risk increases. It could be more profitable, but it's also more risky, so therefore you're sticking your neck out a little more."

Crop Management No Different: As is the case with corn and soybeans, the vegetable crops are rotated with conventional crops to help manage diseases and pests. Fertility management for the vegetables also is similar to corn and soybeans. "We tend to be a little more particular. No one wants to leave anything lacking, but we also do not want to put too much out there due to cost and environmental issues," Doug said. "It's touchier with say green beans, cucumbers, or whatever because if you accidentally get too much nitrogen, the plant will put on too much vegetation and not send as much energy to the vegetable production. Or they might get too tall and lay over later. So we have to monitor it a little more closely. We are using 'fertigation' through our irrigation system to a certain extent. We do not do a whole lot of just certain crops. We will give the seed corn an extra boost," Don said. They do have the opportunity for double crops when planting green beans as those are harvested around July 4 and soybeans can then follow.

Water Rules: The key to this partnership's success is the availability of water. "We go down 15 to 20 feet as a rule, and we have all of the water that we need. We drill our irrigation wells 60 feet, put 40 foot of screen on the bottom of it and 20 foot of blank to the surface," Don said. "Industry used to have to report their water use every year. Now legislation says farmers have to report their usage. In the next 30 days, we will have to turn in our usage report to the Illinois State Water Survey. "This part of the county supplies water for the entire county."

Doug, who also custom harvests Pioneer seed corn for other area producers, said the ability to diversify enables the family to make a living. "Let's say yields aren't that great, which ours are pretty consistent because we irrigate, but maybe prices are down, my income for the corn picking is usually a consistent income and that keeps us from the need to farm several thousand acres. We can stay below 2,000 and have a good lifestyle by spreading that out in different directions," he said.

By Tom Doran, Illinois AgriNews, November 9, 2015.

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B. Please check the organizations you are placing your affiliation with and determine amount to pay by circling dues payable in the appropriate column. All members are required to join **ISGA** and affiliate with **one** or **more** of the affiliated specialty crop associations.

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<input type="checkbox"/> Illinois State Horticulture Society (ISHS)	30	30	30	5
<input type="checkbox"/> Illinois Vegetable Growers Association (IVGA)	10	10	10	5

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