

// 2017

# Organic Vegetable Production

Conference //



February 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup>  
Alliant Energy Center  
Madison, WI



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# Schedule

 Vegetable Sessions








 Management

 Full Group

## Friday, February 3, 2017

|       |   |  |
|-------|---|--|
| 9:00  | <b>Registration</b>   |  |
| 10:00 | <b>Vegetable Varieties: The Good, the Bad, and the Deliciously Ugly</b>  <i>Mendota 3 &amp; 4</i><br>hosted by Julie Dawson, UW Madison  |  |
| 12:30 | Lunch   |  |
| 1:30  | <b>Farm Life Balance: Reflections and Ideas from the Farmer to Farmer Podcast</b>  <i>Mendota 3 &amp; 4</i><br>Chris Blanchard, Purple Pitchfork   |  |
| 3:00  | Break & Snacks  |  |
| 3:30  | <b>Carrots</b>  <i>Mendota 2</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Steve Pincus, Tipi Produce</li> <li>• Dan Fillius, Featherstone Farm</li> <li>• Laura Mortimore, Orange Cat Community Farm</li> <li>• Amanda Gevens &amp; Russ Groves, UW Extension</li> </ul> | <b>Cover Crop Equipment, Establishment &amp; Innovations</b>  <i>Mendota 1</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Allen Philo, BioStar Organics</li> <li>• Matt Sheaffer, Sandhill Family Farms</li> </ul> |
| 5:30  | Happy Hour (cash bar at Sheraton Hotel across from the Alliant Energy Center)   |  |

## Saturday, February 4, 2017

|       |  |   |
|-------|--|---|
| 8:00  | <b>Registration</b>  |   |
| 9:00  | <b>Salad Mix</b>  <i>Mendota 2</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• John Middleton, Fazenda Boa Terra</li> <li>• Jenny Bonde, Shooting Star Farm</li> <li>• Shawn Kuhn, Vitruvian Farms</li> <li>• Amanda Gevens &amp; Russ Groves, UW Extension</li> </ul>               | <b>Farm Life Balance: Farmer Panel</b>  <i>Mendota 1</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Chris Blanchard, Purple Pitchfork (facilitator)</li> <li>• Kristen Kordet, Blue Moon Community Farm</li> <li>• Cassie Noltnerwyss, Crossroads Community Farm</li> <li>• Clare Hintz, Elsewhere Farm</li> </ul> |
| 10:30 | Break & Snacks   |   |
| 11:00 | <b>Snap Beans</b>  <i>Mendota 2</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Chris McGuire, Two Onion Farm</li> <li>• Robyn Calvey, Park Ridge Organics</li> <li>• Tim Zander, Emerald Meadows Farm</li> <li>• Amanda Gevens &amp; Russ Groves, UW Extension</li> </ul>           | <b>Hoophouse Systems for Long-Term Production</b>  <i>Mendota 1</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Allen Philo, BioStar Organics</li> <li>• Brian Bates, Bear Creek Organic Farm</li> </ul>  |
| 12:30 | Lunch  |   |
| 1:30  | Cool Tool Show and Tell  <i>Mendota 3 &amp; 4</i>   |   |
| 2:30  | <b>Potatoes</b>  <i>Mendota 2</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Noah Engel, Driftless Organics</li> <li>• David Perkins, Vermont Valley Community Farm</li> <li>• Lonnie Dietz, Whitewater Gardens</li> <li>• Amanda Gevens &amp; Russ Groves, UW Extension</li> </ul> | <b>Cultivating &amp; Motivating Management Employees</b>  <i>Mendota 1</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Linda Halley, Bryn Farm (facilitator)</li> <li>• Barb Perkins, Vermont Valley Community Farm</li> <li>• John Middleton, Fazenda Boa Terra</li> </ul>   |
| 4:00  | End  |   |

# Session Descriptions

Friday, February 3, 2017

## // 10:00 AM Vegetable Varieties: The Good, the Bad, and the Deliciously Ugly Mendota 3 & 4

The vegetable variety you choose can make or break your crop. Seed catalogues offer pretty pictures and glowing descriptions, but there is nothing better than talking directly with other farmers about the varieties that work for them. This practical farmer-to-farmer discussion will focus on strengths and weaknesses of currently available varieties as well as the types of tradeoffs farmers make in deciding which varieties to plant. We will start out as a large group and then split into discussion sections on nightshades, cucurbits, brassicas, legumes, and other crops to be determined by attendees. Everyone will have the opportunity to participate in two groups. Please bring your seed catalogs and be ready to talk about:

- Which varieties are your standards? Why?
- Which varieties do you grow despite poor performance in certain traits?
- If your workhorse variety were unavailable, which traits are key in a replacement?
- Which varieties have you had trouble replacing when they were dropped?

Information from this discussion will also be used to help plant breeders understand and prioritize important traits for various crops as they move forward in their organic variety breeding programs.

**Julie Dawson** is an Assistant Professor in the Department of Horticulture at UW-Madison. She works on organic and participatory variety trials and variety selection for direct-market farms and gardens as well as extension resources for beginning farmers and urban growers. She leads a project to test varieties with local farmers and chefs, focused on quality for local food systems.

## // 1:30 PM Farm Life Balance: Reflections and Ideas from the Farmer to Farmer Podcast

 Mendota 3 & 4

Making a living growing vegetables is one thing. Having a life is another. Chris Blanchard spent 25 years farming, so he knows this firsthand - both the good and the bad of it. And after interviewing over a hundred farmers for his Farmer to Farmer Podcast, Chris has heard from farmers across North America about the strategies and realities of creating and maintaining a positive quality of life while owning and operating a market farm.

**Chris Blanchard** provides consulting and education for farming, food, and business through Purple Pitchfork. He has worked in farming for over 25 years, managing farms and operations around the country. As the owner and operator of Rock Spring Farm, Chris raised twenty acres of vegetables, herbs, and greenhouse crops, marketed through a 200-member year-round CSA, food stores, and farmers markets. He is the host of the Farmer to Farmer Podcast.

## // 3:30 PM Carrots Mendota 2

This session will provide detailed production information from variety selection to postharvest handling enhanced by photos and videos from the field and specific to a variety of scales. Extension specialists will contribute current research on the crop. Participants will receive a handout detailing the systems of each of the presenters, including everything from germination techniques to crop spacing to equipment used to disease and pest control and more.





**Steve Pincus** has farmed fresh produce for 40 years. He and his wife, Beth Kazmar, run Tipi Produce in Evansville, WI. They grow 45 acres of diversified vegetables and sell mainly through CSA and to natural foods stores. Of all the vegetables that Tipi Produce is known for, carrots are at the top of the list.

**Dan Fillius** is the Field Production Coordinator at Featherstone Farm in Rushford, MN. Of 130 acres of vegetables at Featherstone, 10 are carrots. Carrots are a major winter storage crop for the farm. Prior to working at Featherstone, Dan was Field Production Manager at the Michigan State University Student Organic Farm for 5 years, teaching students and growing carrots and many other crops on a smaller and more intensive scale.

**Laura Mortimore** runs Orange Cat Community Farm in Reedsburg, Wisconsin. The farm has been in operation since 2010 and grows 3 acres of certified organic vegetables, primarily marketed through a 150 member CSA. At Orange Cat, sales of fall harvested carrots extend through March. Laura has a degree in horticulture, 12 years of growing experience and loves to harvest carrots—who doesn't!?!

**Amanda Gevens** is an Associate Professor and Extension Plant Pathologist at the University of Wisconsin-Madison, where she develops integrated and innovative disease management programs for potato and vegetable crops. She edits a weekly vegetable crop updates newsletter through the University of Wisconsin Extension which has become highly sought after for in-season production guidance especially for disease and insect control.

**Russell L. Groves** is a Professor in the Department of Entomology with a majority of his effort devoted to Vegetable Insect Pest Management where he has responsibilities for both commercial and fresh market vegetables. His research focus is on the development of integrated pest management systems for vegetable crops and applied insect ecology with an emphasis on insect vector-borne disease epidemiology, insect dispersal and movement, and insecticide resistance management.



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## // 3:30 PM Cover Crop Equipment, Establishment, and Innovations Mendota 1

Cover crops are a staple on the organic vegetable farm, and many growers are already aware of their benefits. Still, small-scale growers can struggle to make them work on their farms. This session will move beyond the basics to focus on useful equipment and establishment methods that result in good stands. There will also be time to talk about some cover crop innovations including no-till methods and some rising stars in the growing collection of cover crop varieties.

**Allen Philo** is the Vice President for Fertilizer Sales and Operation for Biostar Organics, a liquid fertilizer manufacturer based in Kansas City, MO. He owns and operates a farm in Dodgeville, WI and has a degree in Soils from the University of Wisconsin.

**Matt Sheaffer**, with his wife Peg, owns and operates Sandhill Family Farms in Brodhead, WI. Farming on 40 acres of sandy ground on the eastern edge of the Driftless Area, Sandhill direct markets organic vegetables, pasture raised broilers, eggs and lamb into the Chicago market. Over the years, Matt has experienced much of what farming has to offer. Clay soils to beach sand, droughts to deluges, health to pestilence and cheers to tears! One constant, however, has been Matt's reliance on cover cropping to give each cash crop the best possible chance to succeed.

**Saturday, February 4, 2017**

**// 9:00 Salad Mix** 🌱 *Mendota 2*

This session will provide detailed production information from variety selection to postharvest handling enhanced by photos and videos from the field and specific to a variety of scales. Extension specialists will contribute current research on the crop. Participants will receive a handout detailing the systems of each of the presenters, including everything from germination techniques to crop spacing to equipment used to disease and pest control and more.

**John Middleton** and his wife Lidia Dungue started Fazenda Boa Terra in 2011 producing about 1.75 acres of veggies as an incubator farm at Gardens of Eagan. Since moving to Spring Green, WI in 2014 they have grown to a little under 10 acres in vegetable production with over a half acre in greens (lettuce, spinach, arugula and mustard).

After graduating from UW-Madison, **Shawn Kuhn** co-founded and launched Vitruvian Farms with three friends in the summer of 2011. Working to join the local food movement, Vitruvian landed on the crop of baby leaf salad by chance. Now they sell greens to over 40 restaurants around Madison, and harvest upwards of 1,300 lbs of baby greens per week during the height of the season.

**Jenny Bonde** and her husband Rink DaVee started Shooting Star Farm 1996. Their production fields have varied in size from 2-4 acres, with up to one-quarter of the fields devoted to baby greens and salad mix. Most of the planting and harvesting are done by hand. Greens have been sold at farmers' markets, to CSA members, and to chefs at restaurants in Madison, Milwaukee, and Chicago.

Full bios for **Amanda Gevens** and **Russell Groves** are under the carrot session description on page 5.

**// 9:00 AM Farm Life Balance: Farmer Panel** 🗨️ *Mendota 1*

No matter the size or age of the farm, balancing work with the rest of life can be tricky. This panel will discuss strategies for building and maintaining farmer quality of life from a variety of marketing and family perspectives. Whether you are a solo farmer selling primarily to farmers market and maintaining an off-farm job to a farming couple selling through multiple channels and raising kids together full-time on the farm, this panel will build on the Friday Farm Life Balance session and allow you to hear directly from farmers willing to share their successes and struggles.

**Kristen Kordet** runs Blue Moon Community Farm, a 6-acre market farm serving CSA and farmers market customers in the Madison area. While she lives on the farm with her husband and son, Kristen is a solo farm owner and primary manager and hires a crew of assistant managers and employees seasonally to help run the operation.

**Cassie Noltnerwyss**, along with her husband Mike, owns and operates Crossroads Community Farm. Crossroads is an 18 acre, organic vegetable farm with a 380 member CSA. The farm also sells at farmers market and area stores in the Madison area. Cassie and Mike both live and work on the farm full-time. They have 3 young daughters.

**Clare Hintz** runs Elsewhere Farm, a production Permaculture farm near the south shore of Lake Superior in Herbster, Wisconsin. The farm features over 700 perennial fruit and nut trees interplanted on five acres, market gardens, rare-breed livestock, and a winter and summer CSA. Clare is the coordinator for the Lake Superior Sustainable Farming Association and the editor of the Journal of Sustainability Education. She is part of the teacher's guild of the Permaculture Research Institute in Minneapolis.

**Chris Blanchard** provides consulting and education for farming, food, and business through Purple Pitchfork. He has worked in farming for over 25 years, managing farms and operations around the country. As the owner and operator of Rock Spring Farm, Chris raised twenty acres of vegetables, herbs, and greenhouse crops, marketed through a 200-member year-round CSA, food stores, and farmers markets. He is the host of the Farmer to Farmer Podcast.



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## // 11:00 AM Snap Beans 🌱 Mendota 2

This session will provide detailed production information from variety selection to postharvest handling enhanced by photos and videos from the field and specific to a variety of scales. Extension specialists will contribute current research on the crop. Participants will receive a handout detailing the systems of each of the presenters, including everything from germination techniques to crop spacing to equipment used to disease and pest control and more.

**Chris McGuire** farms with his wife Juli, their children, and six seasonal employees at Two Onion Farm in Belmont, WI. They raise 4 acres of vegetables and 1 acre of apples, and they market their produce to almost 500 CSA members and to two grocery stores. They raise small succession plantings of bush and pole beans for their CSA program.

**Tim Zander** runs Emerald Meadows Family Farm/Two Good Farms CSA with his wife Becky Breda on 220 acres in Columbus, Wisconsin. Tim grew up in the city of Monona, Wisconsin. After working on his uncle's farm through middle and high school, he attended UW-Madison, graduating with a degree in Agriculture (double majoring in Agronomy and Dairy Science). Emerald Meadows has been certified organic since 1997, and they have been growing green beans for wholesale since 2007.

**Robyn Calvey** owns and operates Park Ridge Organics, a certified Organic produce farm serving the Fond du Lac, Fox Valley and Elkhart Lake Communities. The farm distributes produce via a 300+ member CSA program as well as multiple wholesale accounts, an on-farm store and a long running stand at the Appleton Farm Market. The farm has been commercially growing produce since 2003.

Full bios for **Amanda Gevens** and **Russell Groves** are under the carrot session description on page 5.

## // 11:00 AM Hoophouse Systems for Long-Term Production 🏠 Mendota 1

High tunnels have been all the rage on vegetable farms for some years now. This session will focus on the nitty gritty of hoophouses systems for long-term sustainability including fertility, pH, rotations, and the financials that motivate it all. Whether you are just getting started in hoophouses or wondering what to do now that you and your hoophouse are past the honeymoon phase this session will inform your systems into the future.

**Allen Philo** is the Vice President for Fertilizer Sales and Operation for Biostar Organics, a liquid fertilizer manufacturer based in Kansas City, MO. He owns and operates a farm in Dodgeville, WI and has a degree in Soils from the University of Wisconsin.

**Brian Bates** owns and operates Bear Creek Organic Farm in Petoskey, Michigan with his wife Anne Morningstar. Brian is passionate about small farm finances, making a living doing what you love, and savvy marketing. Firm believers in transparency through the value chain, Anne & Brian have developed a philosophy called "Full-Transparency Farming" where the farm is an open book for customers, wholesalers, and fellow farmers. With no secrets, a lot of ideas, and some serious elbow-grease, Bear Creek has gone from \$0 to \$180k on 1.5 acres in less than three years.

## // 2:30 PM Potatoes 🌱 Mendota 2

This session will provide detailed production information from variety selection to postharvest handling enhanced by photos and videos from the field and specific to a variety of scales. Extension specialists will contribute current research on the crop. Participants will receive a handout detailing the systems of each of the presenters, including everything from germination techniques to crop spacing to equipment used to disease and pest control and more.





**David Perkins** and family operate Vermont Valley Community Farm LLC. Since 2004 the Farm has grown Certified Seed Potatoes. All production is MOSA certified organic and certified thru the Wisconsin Seed Potato Program. Currently the farm grows 11 acres of potatoes. A portion of that harvest is used for our CSA. Eighteen varieties are grown and more trialed each season. Our seed is used primarily regionally, but we get requests across the US. Learn more about us at [www.organicpotatoseed.com](http://www.organicpotatoseed.com).

**Sandy Dietz** grows up to ten varieties of potatoes with her husband Lonny and their family at Whitewater Gardens farm along with their major field crops of carrots and sweet potatoes. They struggle with growing potatoes on heavy clay soil which they are working on building and amending to produce consistent yield and quality. Sandy has also been working on potato trials with the University of Wisconsin-Madison.

**Noah Engel** was raised on one of Organic Valley's founding dairy farms. When he was 9 years old he was assigned the summer project of growing potatoes with his older brother. That first quarter acre of potatoes was the launching point for Driftless Organics, and twenty-two years later they continue to be known for their potatoes. Today Driftless Organics manages over 100 acres of certified organic land and grows around 30 different varieties of vegetables. Noah not only remains integrally involved with all the crops but also maintains all the equipment, manages the vast irrigation system, and oversees all mechanical planting, cultivating and harvest on the farm.

Full bios for **Amanda Gevens** and **Russell Groves** are under the carrot session description on page 5.

## // 2:30 PM Cultivating and Motivating Managers on your Farm 📍 Mendota 1

Intermediate managers can make a big difference on a farm. In addition to helping train staff and organize daily labor, managers can also provide helpful perspective and new ideas on farm systems overall. This session will focus on how to hire and/or cultivate management level employees, how to share responsibilities with them, and how to motivate them to do great work. In an ideal situation managers will fill important long-term roles on your farm. This panel will talk about how to achieve that ideal.

**Linda Halley** has been an organic farm owner and operator since 1989. As a pioneer of the Community Supported Agriculture movement, she developed one of Wisconsin's premier CSAs, Harmony Valley Farm. She left Wisconsin to manage Fairview Gardens, a non-profit, educational farm in California, and later, Gardens of Eagan, a 126 acre greenhouse and produce operation in Minnesota. Currently, Linda is General Manager of Bryn Farm LLC in Waukesha, Wisconsin, a diverse farm transitioning to certified organic production.

**Barb Perkins**, together with her husband David, owns and operates Vermont Valley Community Farm LLC, an established 1800+ member CSA located near Madison, WI. Thirty-five acres of certified organic vegetables are grown and distributed through their CSA. The labor picture at Vermont Valley includes 5 family members, full time and seasonal employees and worker shares. Barb manages the people on the farm.

**John Middleton** and his wife Lidia Dungue started Fazenda Boa Terra in 2011. Valuing experience (or fearing failure), John spent a long time working for others before venturing out on his own. He spent 6 years as intern, apprentice, assistant manager, and manager before starting his own farm. Then he spent an additional 3 years as a farm manager while concurrently operating his farm as an incubator business at Gardens of Eagan. In 2014 John left his manager position and moved the farm to Southwest Wisconsin where he and Lidia farm full-time.



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