

2018

Organic Vegetable Production Conference

February 2nd and 3rd
Alliant Energy Center
Madison, WI

This producer initiated conference is built around farmer to farmer skill sharing and includes growers from Minnesota, Michigan, Illinois, Iowa, and Wisconsin.



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Schedule

| Friday, February 2, 2018 | | |
|----------------------------|---|---|
| 9:00 | Registration & Visit Exhibitors | |
| 10:00 | Welcome <i>Mendota 3 & 4</i> | |
| 10:15 | Right Sizing the Vegetable Farm <i>Mendota 3 & 4</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Dennis Fiser, <i>Regenerative Roots</i>• Liz Graznak, <i>Happy Hollow Farm</i>• Mike Noltnerwyss, <i>Crossroads Community Farm</i>• Kat Becker, <i>Cattail Organics</i>• John Hendrickson, <i>Center for Integrated Agricultural Systems, Facilitator</i> | |
| 12:00 | Lunch & Visit Exhibitors | |
| 1:00 | Cauliflower <i>Mendota 1</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Hans Bishop, <i>PrairieEarth Farm</i>• Abby Benson, <i>Featherstone Farm</i>• Tony Miller, <i>Whitefeather Organics</i>• Amanda Gevens, <i>UW Extension</i> | Insect Management Strategies <i>Mendota 2</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Russ Groves, <i>Department of Entomology, University of Wisconsin Extension</i> |
| 2:30 | Break | |
| 3:00 | Strawberries <i>Mendota 1</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Andy Cotter, <i>York Farm</i>• Mike Noltnerwyss, <i>Crossroads Community Farm</i>• Amanda Gevens & Russ Groves, <i>UW Extension</i> | Racial Justice: Making an Impact as a Vegetable Grower <i>Mendota 2</i> FACILITATORS: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Laura McNeill, <i>Groundwork</i>• Karen Nicholson, <i>Groundwork</i> |
| 5:00 | Happy Hour at Old Sugar Distillery, 932 East Main Street, Madison | |
| Saturday, February 3, 2018 | | |
| 8:30 | Registration & Visit Exhibitors | |
| 9:00 | Niche Hoophouse Crops: Ginger, Celery, and Kale <i>Mendota 1</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Sandy Dietz, <i>Whitewater Gardens Farm - Ginger</i>• Robyn Calrey, <i>Park Ridge Organics - Celery</i>• Liz Graznak, <i>Happy Hollow Farm - Kale</i> | Farm Labor: Creative Sourcing and Compensation <i>Mendota 2</i> FACILITATOR: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Claire Strader, <i>UW Extension Dane County & FairShare CSA Coalition</i> |
| 10:30 | Break | |
| 11:00 | Tomatoes <i>Mendota 1</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Dennis Fiser, <i>Regenerative Roots</i>• Janet Gamble, <i>Turtle Creek Gardens</i>• Sandy Dietz, <i>Whitewater Gardens Farm</i>• Amanda Gevens & Russ Groves, <i>UW Extension</i> | Farmer to Farmer Topical Round Tables <i>Mendota 3 & 4</i> FACILITATOR: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Harriet Behar, <i>Sweet Springs Farm & UW Madison Organic/Sustainable Cropping Systems</i> |
| 12:30 | Lunch & Visit Exhibitors | |
| 1:30 | Vegetable Varieties Round Tables <i>Mendota 3 & 4</i> FACILITATOR: Julie Dawson, <i>Horticulture, University of Wisconsin, Madison</i> | |
| 2:30 | Cucumbers <i>Mendota 1</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Ariel Pressman, <i>Seed to Seed Farm</i>• Chris McGuire, <i>Two Onion Farm</i>• Elizabeth Minich, <i>Kings Hill Farm</i>• Amanda Gevens & Russ Groves, <i>UW Extension</i> | Equipment for Every Farm Size <i>Mendota 2</i> FACILITATOR: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• John Hendrickson, <i>Center for Integrated Agricultural Systems</i> |
| 4:00 | End | |

Session Descriptions

Friday, February 2

10:00 AM Welcome *Mendota 3 & 4*

10:15 AM Right Sizing the Vegetable Farm *Mendota 3 & 4*

When making a living intersects with running a business and then crosses paths with farmer quality of life, there are many possible definitions of success. This session will offer examples of what kind of success is possible at different farm scales, common trade-offs, and things to consider when devising your own definition of success.

Dennis Fiser is one of three owner-managers at Regenerative Roots, a 2 acre organic vegetable farm growing for market, CSA, and wholesale, with a strong focus on greens and tomatoes. Regenerative Roots grows over 50 varieties of tomatoes, totaling several thousand plants, primarily for wholesale, even as the farm has remained intentionally small and focused on providing a good quality of life.

Liz Graznak grows 7 acres of veggies, fruit, eggs, and flowers that she sells thru CSA, farmers market, and local restaurants and grocery stores. She is a Columbia, MO native who returned home after grad school and working on other farms to start her own operation. Six years of working a “real” job allowed Liz and Katie to purchase land where Liz is now fulfilling her long-anticipated goal of growing beautiful, healthy food and sharing it with a community of people that share her commitment to a local food system.

Mike Noltnerwyss, along with his wife Cassie, owns and operates Crossroads Community Farm. Crossroads is a 20 acre, organic vegetable farm with a 400 member CSA. The farm also sells at farmers market and area stores in the Madison area. Mike and Cassie both live and work on the farm full-time. They have 3 young daughters.

Kat Becker owns Cattail Organics in Athens WI and has been farming for 13 years (previously at Stoney Acres). In restarting her farm she has chosen CSA and high value wholesale markets as her primary focus, cutting her gross sales by 60% and focusing on fewer enterprises, higher net per acre, and a reasonable work week and “real” farm life balance. She is even growing flowers (gasp) in 2018.

John Hendrickson coordinates research and training programs in organic and sustainable specialty crop production, marketing, and profitability at the Center for Integrated Agricultural Systems, UW-Madison. His work focuses on the economics of small-scale vegetable farming. He manages the Veggie Compass program—a spreadsheet tool to help growers measure profitability by crop and market—and coordinates the School for Beginning Market Growers and School for Cut Flower Growers. John also operates his own organic vegetable farm.

1:00 PM Cauliflower *Mendota 2*

This session will provide detailed production information from variety selection to postharvest handling enhanced by photos 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.

Hans Bishop and his wife Katie, grow 20 acres of Certified Organic Vegetables for farmers markets, CSA, and wholesale in Central Illinois on PrairieErth Farm. The Bishops grow a wide range of vegetables, while not growing a large amount of cauliflower, it is plugged into their system by planting it with other fall brassicas and managed similarly to those crops.

Abby Benson is a crop manager at Featherstone Farm, a 135 acre certified organic vegetable farm in Rushford, MN. She manages 40 acres of brassica crops, transplant production, and spray planning and implementation. Before coming to Featherstone in 2014, Abby worked for several small scale vegetable farms in the midwest and across the country.

Tony Miller has operated Whitefeather Organics, LLC since 2006 growing vegetables for CSA and other fresh markets. He has experience growing cauliflower in a range of methods and quantities for over 15 years.

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.



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1:00 PM Insect Management Strategies *Mendota 2*

Beneficial insect habitat, cultural controls, and pest prediction can go a long way to limit insect pest damage over the course of a production season. This session will dig into those topics and also cover how to define and measure pest population action thresholds, and what options exist when prevention fails. Specific examples will focus on vegetables covered in the production track.

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.

3:00 PM Strawberries *Mendota 1*

This session will provide detailed production information from variety selection to postharvest handling enhanced by photos 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.

Andy Cotter owns and operates York Farm, a certified organic fruit farm in Hutchinson, Minnesota. He has been transitioning the 85 acre family farm from conventional row crops since 2010. The main crops are strawberries, pears, apples, and table grapes. Other crops are currants, gooseberries, raspberries, cherries, apricots, seaberries, plums, and kiwi.

Mike Noltnerwyss, along with his wife Cassie, owns and operates Crossroads Community Farm. Crossroads is a 20 acre, organic vegetable farm with a 400 member CSA. The farm also sells at farmers market and area stores in the Madison area. Mike and Cassie both live and work on the farm full-time. They have 3 young daughters.

Full bios for **Amanda Gevens** and **Russell Groves** are under the Friday, 1:00 session descriptions on pages 3 & 4.

3:00 PM Racial Justice: Making an Impact as a Vegetable Grower *Mendota 2*

This session will explore how agriculture relates to racial justice and how farmers can make an impact. We will look at the history of land and labor as it relates to race, develop a common language for having discussions and explore examples of how we can continue to break down barriers of institutional racism in our everyday lives.

FACILITATORS:

Laura McNeill, planted her Virginia roots in the midwest 15 years ago. She descends from a lineage of white people who have benefited from institutional racism, while also, however imperfectly, fighting for racial justice. She is a founding member of Groundwork, a local white anti-racist collective, and Families for Justice, an organization focused on racial justice education for the whole family and addressing institutional racism in schools. She loves to spend time with her family and play the fiddle.

Karen Nicholson, lives and works in rural Rock County just a few miles from where she grew up. She is an active and collaborative learner, a member of Groundwork Collective, and organizer of a fledgling small town/rural racial justice group. She's been a farmhand in vegetable production for several years, is a homeschool facilitator/educator, a garlic grower, a beekeeper, and loves to dabble in mushroom cultivation.



Saturday, February 3

9:00 AM Niche Hoophouse Crops: Ginger, Celery, and Kale *Mendota 1*

This session will provide detailed production information from variety selection to postharvest handling enhanced by photos from the field. 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.

Sandy Dietz (*Ginger*) farms approximately 15 acres of certified organic vegetables with her husband and family in southeast Minnesota. On their farm, Whitewater Gardens Farm, they raise mainly sweet potatoes and greenhouse tomatoes. Along with these they also raise a variety of other crops including ginger and turmeric. Their ginger has been grown in a variety of ways including in greenhouses, high tunnels and in the field.

Robyn Calvey (*Celery*) 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.

Liz Graznak (*Kale*) grows 7 acres of veggies, fruit, eggs, and flowers that she sells thru CSA, farmers market, and local restaurants and grocery stores. She is a Columbia, MO native who returned home after grad school and working on other farms to start her own operation. Six years of working a "real" job allowed Liz and Katie to purchase land where Liz is now fulfilling her long-anticipated goal of growing beautiful, healthy food and sharing it with a community of people that share her commitment to a local food system.

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9:00 AM Farm Labor: Creative Sourcing and Compensation *Mendota 2*

Where do you find qualified and capable people to work on your farm? How can you devise a compensation package that will not break the bank? And how do you keep trained workers around for the next season? This session will invite growers to share their own successes and challenges through an organized and facilitated discussion.

FACILITATOR: Claire Strader is the Small-Scale and Organic Produce Educator for UW Extension Dane County and the FairShare CSA Coalition. Her background is as an organic vegetable grower serving both CSA and wholesale markets, a produce buyer for a local natural foods store, and a farmer educator. She is currently working with Julie Dawson, the WI Department of Workforce Development and a group of dedicated farmers to establish an Organic Vegetable Farm Manager apprenticeship in Wisconsin.

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11:00 AM Tomatoes *Mendota 1*

This session will provide detailed production information from variety selection to postharvest handling enhanced by photos 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.

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Janet Gamble owns Turtle Creek Gardens and co-manages operations with Steve Tomlins. Turtle Creek Gardens is a 100 acre certified organic farm in Delavan WI. Eighteen acres are dedicated to vegetables for CSA, direct to restaurant and stores, on line and on site store, and farmers market. The remainder of the farm pastures 38 head of cattle as well as pigs that are rotated through the vegetable fields. Regenerative and holistic principles guide our decision making.

Sandy Dietz (Ginger) farms approximately 15 acres of certified organic vegetables with her husband and family in southeast Minnesota. On their farm, Whitewater Gardens Farm, they raise mainly sweet potatoes and greenhouse tomatoes. Along with these they also raise a variety of other crops including ginger and turmeric. Their ginger has been grown in a variety of ways including in greenhouses, high tunnels and in the field.

Full bios for **Amanda Gevens** and **Russell Groves** are under the Friday, 1:00 session descriptions on pages 3 & 4.

11:00 AM Farmer to Farmer Topical Round Tables

Mendota 3 & 4

Is there a topic you have been wanting to dig into with your farming peers? This session will break out into roundtables to address the issues you choose. Come with a topic you care about and ready to contribute ideas to others' topics as well.

FACILITATOR: Harriet Behar and her husband have managed a certified organic farm near Gays Mills, WI, growing bedding plants, vegetables, herbs, small grains, eggs and honey since 1989. As an educator with MOSES, an organic inspector, and currently with the UW Madison Organic/Sustainable Cropping Systems program, she has worked with hundreds of organic farmers. She is a current member of the National Organic Standards Board and the Organic Farmers Association policy council.

1:30 PM Vegetable Variety Round Tables *Mendota 3 & 4*

FACILITATOR: 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.



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2:30 PM Cucumbers *Mendota 1*

This session will provide detailed production information from variety selection to postharvest handling enhanced by photos 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 has farmed with his wife Juli at Two Onion Farm in Belmont, WI since 2003. With their children and six seasonal employees, they raise five acres of produce, primarily for sale through their 500+ member CSA. They grow intensively trained and pruned cucumbers in hoop houses and caterpillar tunnels for summer and fall harvest.

Elisabeth Minich runs Kings Hill Farm in Mineral Point, WI with Steven Shoemaker. We grow 10 acres of certified organic produce for a 250 member CSA and wholesale markets in Madison, WI and Chicago, IL. We grow field cucumbers for CSA and restaurants. My favorite pickle is one that someone else pickled.

Ariel Pressman is a 1st generation farmer who runs Seed to Seed farm—a 12 acre certified organic wholesale operation. Over time they have focused on servicing exclusively wholesale markets for both vegetables and starter plants. They have a strong focus on appropriate technology.

Full bios for **Amanda Gevens** and **Russell Groves** are under the Friday, 1:00 PM session descriptions on pages 3 & 4.

2:30 PM Equipment for Every Farm Size *Mendota 2*

From your favorite hand hoe to the amazing wash line in your pack shed, the right tools are essential to every farm scale. This session will allow growers to discuss the pros and cons of a multitude of equipment options, aided by photos, videos, sourcing notes, and pricing information. Come ready to share and ready to learn about something new from someone who has used it.

FACILITATOR: John Hendrickson coordinates research and training programs in organic and sustainable specialty crop production, marketing, and profitability at the Center for Integrated Agricultural Systems, UW-Madison. His work focuses on the economics of small-scale vegetable farming. He manages the Veggie Compass program—a spreadsheet tool to help growers measure profitability by crop and market—and coordinates the School for Beginning Market Growers and School for Cut Flower Growers. John also operates his own organic vegetable farm.



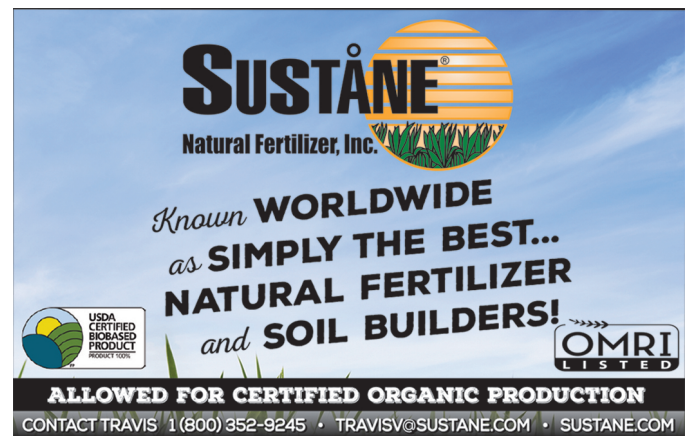
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