



## 2021 ILLINOIS SPECIALTY CROP CONFERENCE PROGRAM

### GO-AT-YOUR-OWN-PACE SESSIONS

These sessions are designed to go at your own speed and allow you to view as much or little as you would like. Every title/speaker has a separate recording ranging from 30-minutes to one-hour. You can watch these on your own time over the course of the 3-days. Submit speaker questions to chat feeds in the conference and you will get a response during the conference!

### BACK-TO-BASICS: BEGINNING FARMER

- **Basics of Farm Finances for New Farmers**, *Paul Dietmann, Compeer Financial*  
Just as a new specialty crop grower can't learn everything about growing and marketing in the first year or two, it's impossible to fully understand all aspects of farm financial management. In this workshop, we'll introduce a few key concepts and financial statements that will put a new grower on the path to success. We'll discuss balance sheets, enterprise budgets, and cash flow, offer tips on managing your farm's money, and answer your questions about farm finances.
- **Building Your Farm Brand**, *Audra Wyant, Finding Eminence Farm*  
Building your brand and identity can be crucial as you begin your specialty crops operation. Audra Wyant, of Finding Eminence Farm, will provide an overview of the decisions you need to make and what you need to think about when it comes to branding, logos, and marketing.
- **Flower Girls-Small Plot Successes From Farmer's Market to Wedding Bouquets**, *Christina Lueking, Flower Girls*  
There is a great deal of information and excitement in starting a flower farm. But not every piece of information or picture-perfect bouquet works for every farm. We would like to share some of our successes and how we found our niche in the flower farming community.
- **The Basics of High Tunnel Vegetable Production**, *Bronwyn Aly, University of Illinois Extension*  
Whether you have been raising field-grown vegetables for a number of years or just getting started in vegetable production, growing vegetables in a high tunnel involve some different management considerations. This presentation will highlight high tunnel management considerations including structural concepts, irrigation, crop rotation, integrated pest management (IPM), and fertility.
- **Considering a Vineyard: Where Do I Start?**, *Annie Klodd, University of Minnesota Extension*  
In choosing new crops to grow on your farm, have you considered planting grapevines? This presentation will help you decide if grapes are the right choice for your farm, discuss ways to market and sell this crop, and go through the steps of starting a new vineyard.

### POLLINATORS

- **Who are the Pollinators?**, *Ken Johnson, University of Illinois Extension*  
Pollinators are vital to the production of many specialty crops. Learn about the different types of bees and other insects that will pollinate crops.



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- **Beekeeping Essentials I**, *Dr. Dewey Caron, University of Delaware, Emeritus*  
So, are you thinking of adding bees to your operation? Part I: What do you need, how much time and what will it cost? What can you expect in return? Part II: Keeping your livestock healthy and productive beyond the start.
- **Beekeeping Essentials II**, *Dr. Dewey Caron, University of Delaware, Emeritus*  
So, are you thinking of adding bees to your operation? Part I: What do you need, how much time and what will it cost? What can you expect in return? Part II: Keeping your livestock healthy and productive beyond the start.
- **Fitting Flowers into Your Farm to Boost Beneficial Bugs**, *Rufus Isaacs, Michigan State University*  
Many pollinators and insect natural enemies require access to pollen and nectar to be healthy, yet modern farm landscapes can be devoid of flowers through intensive weed control. This talk will discuss the benefits of making some space for flowering plants that can support these beneficial insects, and strategies to ensure the effective establishment of pollinator habitat.
- **Pollination of High Tunnel Crops for Maximum Yield and Quality**, *Lewis Jett, West Virginia University*  
High tunnel crops including vegetables and fruits require efficient pollination for maximum yield and quality. High tunnels present both a challenge and opportunity for growing self-pollinated and cross-pollinated crops. Specific cropping systems and the effect of pollination will be discussed.
- **Pollinators and Specialty Crops: A Match Made on the Farm**, *Stephanie Frischie, Xerces Society*  
Stephanie Frischie discusses where we are at in terms of invertebrate conservation and what actions individual growers can take to support insects and the beneficial services they provide. In addition, Stephanie discusses resources for program support through USDA-NRCS and from the Xerces Society.

### TOMATOES AND PEPPERS

- **Updates on Occurrence and Management of Tomato and Pepper Diseases in Illinois**, *Mohammad Babadoost, University of Illinois*  
The most prevalent tomato disease in Illinois is bacterial spot. In the past three years, we investigated the causal agents of this disease and its management. We found that the disease is caused primarily by *Xanthomonas perforans* in southern Illinois and *Xanthomonas gardneri* in northern Illinois. In addition, our research showed occurrence of copper-resistance isolates of both pathogens. Phytophthora blight, caused by *Phytophthora capsici*, is the most important disease of peppers in Illinois.



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- **Tomato Fertility: Providing Potassium Through Fertigation**, *Katie Bell, University of Illinois Extension*  
Tomato fertility is not only important for good yields it also can influence fruit quality and overall plant health. Review the basic soil fertility of field-grown tomatoes and research on fertigation techniques to improve production and quality.
- **Tomato and Pepper Insect Pests in Open Fields and High Tunnels**, *Kacie Athey, University of Illinois*  
Insect and mite pests are quite diverse in tomatoes and peppers. This presentation will explore both chemical and biological control of these pests.
- **Heirloom Tomato Variety Selection**, *Katie Bell, University of Illinois Extension*  
Heirlooms tomatoes can add diversity to your tomato offerings for markets. Learn about variety performance from an heirloom tomato trial from southern Illinois.
- **2020 High Tunnel Bell Pepper Spacing Trial**, *Bronwyn Aly, University of Illinois Extension*  
Learn more about how your plant and row spacing can affect your yield and fruit quality on high tunnel grown bell peppers.
- **Exploring Cover Crops & No-Till in Tomato & Pepper Production Systems**, *Nathan Johanning, University of Illinois Extension*  
Our soil is at the heart of our production systems. Learn from current research evaluating the use of cover crops in no-till, plasticulture, and bare ground production to understand how to apply these practices to your field production.

### BERRIES & BEYOND

- **Putting Trees to Work: Practical Agroforestry for Illinois Farmers**, *Katie Adams, Savanna Institute*  
This session will cover how agroforestry (combining trees and agriculture) can help build more diverse, resilient, and profitable farm businesses. Using examples from farms across the Midwest, Kaitie will cover: the basic practices of agroforestry, (windbreaks, riparian buffers, silvopasture, alley cropping, and perennial polycultures), cost-share and funding opportunities, and how the Savanna Institute is helping build markets for perennial crops. Learn how perennials and trees, from pawpaws to Chinese chestnuts and everything in between, are transforming the agricultural landscape.



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- **Insect Pests of Berries**, *Donald Lewis, Iowa State University*  
Spotted wing drosophila is the latest in a list of insect pests that reduce fruit yield and quality. This session will review the recognition, biology, habits and management of SWD, Japanese beetle and other insect pests of cane fruits.
- **Establishing and Growing Profitable Blueberries**, *Mark Longstroth, Michigan State University Extension*  
In this informative full-length video Mark Longstroth will teach you about all facets of blueberry production. From beginners to experts, definitely watch this entire video so you start growing high yielding blueberries the right way from the beginning.
- **Elderberry Cultivars**, *Pat Byers, University of Missouri Extension*  
Get an overview of elderberry cultivars that are suitable for Midwest production.
- **Blueberry Cultivars for Illinois**, *Mark Longstroth, Michigan State University Extension*  
With so many blueberries cultivars to choose from making a poor choice can have lasting impacts on your operation. Join Mark Longstroth from Michigan State University Extension as he discusses his top selection of cultivars to help you make a more informed choice.
- **Understanding Small Fruit Root Requirements**, *Elizabeth Wahle, University of Illinois Extension*  
Key characteristics of the root system of blueberry, raspberry, blackberry, and strawberry crops will be highlighted as well as what can be done to make them more adaptive to our native soils and maximize root efficiency.
- **Disease Management of Blueberries, Strawberries and Raspberries**, *Dr. Timothy Miles, Michigan State University*  
This talk will cover the main diseases in blueberries, strawberries, and raspberries that are actively managed during the growing season such as gray mold and anthracnose fruit rot. The talk will focus on commercial production, appropriate cultural practices for controlling diseases, and the synthetic fungicides commonly used for management. Additionally, we will discuss fungicide resistance management and how prevalent this resistance is in systems to specific FRAC codes for blueberries and strawberries.

### DIGITAL BUSINESS

- **E-Commerce: An Overview**, *Taidghin O'Brien, The Land Connection*  
There are so many e-commerce platforms out there, sometimes it can be overwhelming. Plus, you need to determine how your e-commerce platform fits in with your overall online business strategy. You want it to be an e-commerce solution; not another problem. We'll cover a variety of ways to build your digital business, from websites to online stores, so that you're comfortable with your business choices.



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- **E-Commerce: Farmer-Focused Solutions**, *Taidghin O'Brien, The Land Connection*  
Picking up where “E-commerce: An Overview” left off, we’ll take more of a deep-dive into the ever-expanding world of farmer-focused e-commerce solutions. There was quite a diverse set of offerings before the pandemic, and now there are even more to sift through. We’ll review some helpful resources, the pros and cons of the platforms, and review some guidelines to consider when you make, or change, your choice for an e-commerce provider.
- **Social Media for Farmers**, *Natalie Kenny Marquez, Grow Marketing*  
Does social media have you running for the hills? Then this is the presentation for you. During this interactive presentation, you’ll hear how social media is key in attracting the customers you want, while engaging the customers who already follow you. Compiled just for farmers, this presentation will walk you through examples, offer tips and tricks, and have you on your way to establishing a solid digital platform to complement your marketing strategy.

This presentation is for businesses with developing social media accounts or for businesses looking to expand their social media presence.

### VEGETABLE PRODUCTION

- **Media Nutrient and Plant Nutrient Uptake Status: Using Saturated Media Extract and Petiole Sap Testing with Handheld Selective Ion Electrodes to Monitor Plant Nutrients in Different Vegetable Production Systems**, *Zach Grant, University of Illinois Extension*  
Saturated media extract testing for greenhouse media and petiole sap testing have long been tools for producers to monitor media nutrient status and plant nutrient uptake. In this presentation, I will cover an Extension pilot project to determine the feasibility of this as a service to growers using handheld selective ion electrode meters.
- **Pest Management Recommendations on the Go!**, *Ben Phillips, Michigan State University*  
Choose a crop, choose multiple pests, get answers. This is just one of 3 ways to use the Midwest Veg Guide online!
- **Biodegradable Mulch for Vegetables: Current Applications and Emerging Possibilities**, *Sam Wortman, University of Nebraska-Lincoln*  
Biodegradable mulch films and fabrics are a practical and sustainable alternative to polyethylene plastic mulch film because they can be incorporated in the soil for decomposition at the end of the growing season. In this presentation, I will discuss: 1) current cropping system applications and performance of commercial products available to growers; 2) our research on the possible effects of management and location on biodegradation rates of mulch in the soil; and 3) our ongoing work to develop value-added biomulch products for high-density plantings of lettuce, spinach, and carrots.



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- **High Tunnel Carrot Production & Variety Trail**, *Nathan Johanning, University of Illinois Extension*  
Learn more about carrots as an over winter crop in the high tunnel and recent variety trials.
- **What We Need to Know on Managing Cucurbit Diseases in 2021**, *Mohammad Babadoost, University of Illinois*  
Many biotic and abiotic diseases occur in cucurbits in Illinois. However, our research studies showed that we can effectively manage cucurbit diseases. Currently, management of bacterial spot, caused by *Xanthomonas cucurbitae*, is the most challenging disease in pumpkin and winter squash production. We are intensively investigating the etiology and epidemiology of this disease and making progress on its management.
- **Control of Vegetable Insect Pests with an Emphasis on Cucurbit Crops**, *Kacie Athey, University of Illinois Extension*  
Illinois has a diversity of specialty crops. My previous research has been in insect exclusion in squash and melon and will explore this here. Additionally, I will be talking a bit about other vegetable crops.
- **Soil Health for Vegetable Production**, *Grant McCarty, University of Illinois Extension*  
Soil health remains a cornerstone of many successful vegetable operations. In understanding soil health, you can determine what strategies you need to implement, opportunities you have to address on-going problems, and potential to put your operation on the right path towards long-term soil health benefits. While you may already be implementing many practices, this presentation will further help you understand what soil health is and what your next steps can be in getting the most from your soil.

### TREE FRUIT PRODUCTION

- **Invitation to the 2021 Summer Hort Day**, *Andy Smith, Illinois State Horticulture Society*  
Andy Smith, president of the Illinois State Horticulture Society invites you to attend the 2021 Summer Hort Day. Get a sneak peek at what you will see at Edwards Apple Orchard West this coming June.
- **Updates on Occurrence and Management of Bitter Rot of Apples**, *Mohammad Babadoost, University of Illinois*  
Currently, bitter rot is the most important disease in apple orchards in Illinois. Bitter rot is a disease complex and can occur in all apple cultivars. However, 'Honey Crisp', 'Empire', 'Jonathan', and 'Gala' are more susceptible. Application fungicides are essential for managing the bitter rot of apples. We have tested several fungicides and determined the most effective fungicides for managing these diseases.
- **Crop Land Management in Apples**, *Phil Schwailler, Michigan State University*



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- **Apple Insect Pests**, *Kacie Athey, University of Illinois*  
Kacie Athey, UI Extension Entomologist, will discuss the key and secondary pests of apples that growers may encounter in Illinois. These will include codling moth, plum curculio, apple maggot, oriental fruit moth, leafrollers, stink bugs, periodical cicadas, aphids, mites, San Jose Scale, and borers. She will go over phenology, damage, and control of these insects.
- **Factors Causing Collar Canker of Apples**, *Mohammad Babadoost, University of Illinois*  
In the past three-year, collar cankers and tree death was observed in several apple orchard in Illinois. We investigated this problem and will present our findings. In addition, management of annually occurring apple disease in Illinois will be discussed.
- **Thinking Through Peach Training System Options - What Makes Sense?**, *Bill Shane, Michigan State University Extension*  
Peach growers have a wide range of peach system options—open center, central leader, Y, quad, palmette, tree wall, and others. Peach specialist Bill Shane will explain the pros and cons of these systems to help you decide what is best for your farm.
- **Peach Insect Pests**, *Kacie Athey, University of Illinois Extension*
- **Starting a Small, Direct-Market Apple and Peach Orchard: Unvarnished Observations from a New Grower with 30 Years of Experience**, *Rick Weinzierl, Weinzierl Consulting and Fruit*  
In 2016 (in retirement?) I started planting apple and peach trees in east-central Illinois and have added trees each year since; now there are about 500 apple trees and 120 peach trees on 2 acres. I'll describe variety selection, training systems, management practices, and cold storage and marketing. I'll also talk about winter kill of peach blossoms, spring frost losses, fire blight, and high winds ... reasons to diversify income streams.
- **Midwest Apple Improvement Association (MAIA) - New Apple Varieties for Everyone**, *Bill Dodd, Hillcrest Orchard*  
News and updates from the MAIA.
- **New Look for Illinois Pest Degree Calculator Provides More Options for Specialty Crop Growers**, *Kelly Estes, University of Illinois, Natural History Survey*  
The University of Illinois Prairie Research Institute will roll out new pest degree-day tools in 2021 to help producers detect pest presence, predict pest development, and make improved pest management decisions. The updated calculator will include historical and forecast degree-day information along with pest development.



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### HERB & CUT FLOWER PRODUCTION

- **Pricing: The Never Answered Question**, *Drew Groezinger, Clara Joyce Flowers*  
Dive into and answer questions about pricing our specialty cut flowers for the wholesale, retail, and wedding market. Be sure to "attend" this session to learn how to price yourself and your product competitively in our ever-changing market.
- **Succulent Success: Learn How to Integrate These Slow Growing Showstoppers into Your Crop Production Plan**, *Drew Groezinger, Clara Joyce Flowers*  
Drew Groezinger has been growing, propagating, and selling succulents for the past 10 years and will show you all of his tips and tricks on how to make these seemingly temperamental plants work for you! During your time together, you will learn about propagation, cultivation, harvesting, and selling.
- **Diversify Your Revenue Streams and Continue to Thrive Through Tough Times**, *Maggie Taylor, Delight Flower Farm*  
In nature, diversity is what makes for healthy systems: a variety of plants attract a variety of insects to combat the overpopulation of particular pests, etc. We can parallel nature in our farm businesses and stay afloat even with reduced wedding sales and farmer's markets with limited attendance. This presentation by Delight Flower Farm owner, Maggie Taylor, will discuss some creative options for diversifying your flower farm revenue streams.

### AGRITOURISM & DIRECT-TO-CONSUMER MARKETING

- **Agritourism Liability Legislation to Protect Your Farm**, *Zach Schmidt, Illinois Farm Bureau*  
Join us to learn about the legislative efforts surrounding Agritourism Liability Protection. Learn what has been done in other states and Illinois. Hear about the desired legislative actions moving forward. Discover how you can get engaged in this vital industry effort.
- **Providing that On-Farm Experience**, *Drew Groezinger, Clara Joyce Flowers*  
Join Drew Groezinger, from Clara Joyce Flowers, as he dives into the details of his "On-Farm Experience" program. This program at Clara Joyce Flowers facilitates experiences for clients to pay-to-work. That's right, clients PAY to come work among the flowers. Learn how to market, sell, and implement this program on your own farm!
- **Centennial Farm Diversifying and Growing Direct-to-Consumer Opportunities**, *Michelle Sirles, Rendleman Orchards*  
Learn how Rendleman Orchards has expanded with direct-to-consumer experiences like no other. Rendleman Orchards saw an opportunity and benefit in diversifying their primarily wholesale operation. Pick-Your-Own Flower fields, a remodeled farm store, and direct shipping peaches are a few of the latest ventures keeping this 5th generation family farm looking to the future. Learn how they took the least expected and turned it into Southern Illinois' most unique on-farm experience.





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- **COVID Impact on Agritourism: Study Results**, *Dr. Breanna Ellison, University of Illinois*  
University of Illinois collaborated with Illinois Specialty Growers Association and Illinois Farm Bureau to assess the initial impact of COVID on Agritourism business. Hear what changes farms made and the effect this had on their bottom dollar. Learn about the survey results and what is next.
- **Using Social Media Marketing to Connect with Consumers**, *Debbie Graham & Michael Ryan, Curtis Orchard & Pumpkin Patch*  
Hear how one farm created a social media following, educational videos, and an online presence that created new customers on the farm.

### BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT

- **Marketing Your Digital Business**, *Taidghin O'Brien, The Land Connection*  
Starting an online store or digital business for your farm is great, but with a lot of farmers and food businesses forced to move sales online, you need to make sure that you're making smart choices when it comes to marketing your digital business. From sharing your story to developing social media posts, to selling your product, we'll talk about it all.
- **Effective Marketing & PR Strategies for New and Developing Businesses**, *Natalie Kenny Marquez, Grow Marketing*  
Whether you are a new business owner or have been at it for a while, a marketing strategy is an important part of your business plan. In this presentation, Natalie will walk you through the basics of advertising, branding, marketing, and public relations. You'll discover ways to balance a plan with your advertising budget, talk through metrics and marketing insights, and walk away with a strategy to develop your own marketing and public relations plan.  
  
This presentation is perfect for new business owners as well as seasoned business owners incorporating new products into their mix or who need to pivot to keep up with consumers during COVID.
- **Navigating Safety of Your Employees During COVID: Lessons Learned**, *Austin Flamm, Flamm Orchards*  
Hear what one farm did to keep employees safe, remain efficient, and improve worker satisfaction.
- **Agricultural Energy Audit**, *John Bientema & Larry Erwin, Ameren Illinois*  
Ameren Illinois is offering a Free Energy Audit for Agricultural Facilities, providing a great step towards a more cost-effective operation. In addition to the Free Energy Audit, participants in this program will receive both technical and implementation support so that energy-efficiency opportunities identified during the audit can be implemented successfully to save both energy and money.



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- **COVID Resources for Agri-Business Operators**, *Scot Gunderath, COUNTRY Financial*  
Keeping up with best practices to protect your employees and customers while operating in a world with COVID-19 can be challenging. Join us as we review recommended practices from a variety of national resources, all in one easy spot.

### OF SPECIAL INTEREST

- **How the Farmers to Family Food Box Program Benefited Local Illinois Based Companies**, *John Rollins, Central Illinois Produce*  
Hear first-hand about the Farm to Family Food Box Program in Illinois. How partnerships were built and the impact it had on farms and families.
- **Planning for Success at Farmers Markets During COVID-19**, *Janie Maxwell, Illinois Farmers Market Association*  
Join the Illinois Farmers Market Association, ILFMA, as we discuss COVID-19's impact on farmers markets and preview the 2021 season. The 2020 season was difficult, but many farmers markets and vendors reported higher sales and new customers. ILFMA will also cover vendor marketing and display strategies to ensure success for the 2021 season.
- **NASS Chemical Use Survey For Vegetables**, *Mark Schleusener, USDA NASS*  
Mark Schleusener is the Illinois State Statistician for USDA - NASS. He will describe the 2020 Vegetable Chemical Use Survey that NASS is currently conducting in Illinois and other states. He will describe the survey design, data collection procedures, and uses of the data.
- **NASS Organic Survey Results**, *Mark Schleusener, USDA NASS*  
Mark Schleusener is the Illinois State Statistician for USDA - NASS. He will present some results of the 2019 Organic Survey including statistics for Illinois and the US. NASS conducted the survey in all 50 states during the first half of 2020. Results will include farm counts, acreage, and sales data.
- **Food Co-ops in Illinois Pt 1: What is a Food Co-op?**, *Jessica Buttimer, Prairie Food Co-op*  
Food Co-ops are an important piece of the local food system and Illinois is on the verge of doubling the number of co-ops in the state. Learn about Illinois co-ops and how farmers, food producers, food hubs, market managers, and community leaders can be part of the solution and share in the benefits.
- **Food Co-ops in Illinois Pt 2: Why Do We Need More?**, *Jessica Buttimer, Prairie Food Co-op*  
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- **Food Co-ops In Illinois Pt 3: Where are They?**, *Jessica Buttimer, Prairie Food Co-op*  
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- **Food Co-ops in Illinois Pt 4: How Can You Help?**, *Jessica Buttimer, Prairie Food Co-op*  
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