Good-Bye Conventional Check-Offs!  Hello Organic Check-Off?

All organic farmers and businesses will be able to say “good-bye” to federal conventional check-off programs, thanks to changes approved in the 2014 Farm Bill.

The United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) issued proposed rules in December, which will allow certified organic farmers and businesses paying into federal check-off programs to get their money back.

The USDA estimates certified organic operations currently pay into 12 of the 22 federally mandated programs. More than $13.6 million could be pulled out of conventional check-off funds; beef, dairy, and fluid milk represent almost 85 percent of that projected amount.

A previous Farm Bill allowed 100 percent organic operations to request their assessed monies back. The 2014 Farm Bill clarified that an entire operation does not have to be organic to be refunded an assessment. Instead, any assessment based on organic sales can be requested back.

(continued on page 20)
The Ohio Ecological Food and Farm Association news is published quarterly as part of the educational mission of OEFFA, to create and promote a healthful, ecological, accountable, and sustainable system of agriculture in Ohio and elsewhere. OEFFA shall be a democratic association of chartered grassroots chapters, existing within state bylaws, working together as a charitable contribution to the fullest extent of the law. OEFFA is recognized as a nonprofit organization by the Internal Revenue Service, and donations to OEFFA are deductible as a charitable contribution to the fullest extent of the law.

OEFFA is a nonprofit organization for farmers, gardeners, and citizens interested in ecological agriculture and creating a sustainable food system. Members receive the newsletter as part of annual dues of $10 (student), $35 (individual), $50 (family), $50 (family farm), $50 (nonprofit), $100 (business), or $1,000 (individual lifetime). Newsletter subscription only is $20/year. Membership information is available on the OEFFA website at www.oeffa.org or from the OEFFA office.

OEFFA is a nonprofit organization and all mail correspondence is handled directly by the OEFFA office or www.oeffa.org.

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OEFFA News Winter 2015

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OEFFA provides materials and resources for members and the general public. To learn more about OEFFA or to become a member, visit www.oeffa.org.
Moving research forward together . . . for the benefit of us all.

The Organic Food and Farm Education and Research (OFFER) Program, housed on the Ohio Agricultural Research and Development Center (OARDC) campus in Wooster, was established in 1998 in response to a request by organic farmers—led by OEFFA—to provide science-based information to Ohio’s organic farmers. Since then, OEFFA and OFFER have enjoyed a close working relationship, as evidenced by the prominence of OFFER researchers at the OEFFA conference, collaboration on grants, and the frequent partnerships between OEFFA members, staff, and OFFER researchers.

Now, we’re taking the next step in our partnership. We have an immediate need to recruit organic farmers as research partners for a project looking at soil balancing, but we have a longer-term goal of building a durable network of university researchers and farmers who exchange information freely, guide each other in the search for answers, collaborate on research, and continuously learn from each other.

This is a model to which OEFFA has long been committed: we value the information and perspectives generated by scientific research, but farmers also generate information and have perspectives that are valuable to researchers.

OEFFA and OFFER will be creating the Ohio Sustainable and Organic Growers Research Network, OSOGRN (We’re still working on the name—ideas are welcome!). We envision a stable, engaged, high functioning network of cooperator farmers working along with researchers to identify and answer critical research questions.

When farmers and researchers work together, it’s a win-win. Farmers can help identify pressing research needs; experiments can happen in the real-world context of operating farms in addition to test plots; and researchers can help farmers with the design of their own on-farm experiments, to name just a few of the benefits.

For a better and more sustainable future in Ohio agriculture, we think it’s time to bring everyone closer together. If you are interested in being a founding member of this network and/or being part of the soil balancing study, please contact Eric Pawlowski, our Sustainable Agriculture Educator, at (614) 421-2022 Ext. 209 or eric@oeffa.org or me at (614) 421-2022 Ext. 202 or cgoland@oeffa.org.

### Farm and Business Nominations Wanted for 2015 Farm Tour Series

For more than 30 years, OEFFA has organized a summer farm tour series to highlight great examples of sustainable and organic agriculture in Ohio. Planning is underway for the 2015 farm tours and we need your help. Please consider hosting a tour of your farm this summer, or let us know what farms you’d like to visit. To suggest tour locations, please contact Eric Pawlowski at (614) 421-2022 Ext. 209 or eric@oeffa.org.

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**OEFFA Apprenticeship Program:**
**Linking Green Thumbs with Green Hands**

OEFFA encourages you to consider our Farm Apprentice Program, where host farms and apprentice farmers can connect. Whether you’re a farmer or an apprentice, pre-planting season is an excellent time to consider listing your facility as a host farm or to connect with farmers planning for the 2015 season.

To create an apprentice or host farm profile, go to www.oeffa.org. Host farms simply create a listing through the Good Earth Guide, then create a profile in the Apprenticeship Program, both of which have links on the home page. Apprentice applicants can create a profile through the Apprenticeship Program link, and approved profiles will be posted for viewing only by registered host farms. Contact Eric Pawlowski at (614) 421-2022 Ext. 209 or eric@oeffa.org for assistance or to find out more.

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**OEFFA is Invested in Agriculture!**

Helping mobilize additional sources of capital is, for OEFFA and for everyone who supports a healthier food system, an opportunity to build the supply and availability of local, sustainably grown fresh food in Ohio, enhance farm and farm-related business viability, and encourage expansion of ecological agricultural practices.

We operate two programs that help farmers and others working in sustainable food enterprises access the capital they need to grow their business:

- The **OEFFA Investment Fund** promotes sustainable agriculture in Ohio by making flexible and affordable capital available to farmers and farm-related businesses.

OEFFA has also partnered with Kiva Zip and is able to serve as a Trustee to endorse 0 percent interest loan requests from individual borrowers to Kiva’s community of lenders. The purpose of this program is to help entrepreneurs access the financial services and lower fees and interest rates they need to make borrowing affordable, and cultivate community between borrowers and lenders.

For more information, or to apply, go to www.oeffa.org/invest or contact Carol Goland at (614) 421-2022 Ext. 202 or olinfo@oeffa.org.
OEFFA’s 36th annual conference, Sustainable Agriculture: Renewing Ohio’s Heart and Soil, February 14-15, 2015 in Granville is right around the corner! The state’s largest sustainable food and farm conference, the event draws more than 1,200 attendees from across Ohio and the country. This year’s conference will feature keynote speakers Alan Guebert and Doug Gurian-Sherman, nearly 100 educational workshops, three full-day pre-conference events on Friday, February 13, a trade show, fun and educational activities for children and teens, locally-sourced and organic from-scratch meals, and Saturday evening entertainment.

Silvia Abel-Caines, DVM, Ph.D.—Veterinarian and certified grazing planner Silvia Abel-Caines is a ruminant nutritionist for Organic Valley’s CROPP Cooperative. Join her on Sunday for workshops on balancing organic dairy rations and nutrition for all grass-fed dairies.

Andy Clark, Ph.D.—Andy Clark, of the Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education (SARE) program, has worked with cover crops for almost 30 years. Join him on Saturday, along with OSU Extension educator Alan Sundermeier, for an advanced session on cover crops for grain production.

Jill Clark, Ph.D.—Jill Clark is an assistant professor of food policy at the John Glenn School of Public Affairs and leads the Ohio Local Food Policy Council Network. Join her for a Saturday workshop with OEFFA board member Bryn Bird to learn about engaging in food policy.

Jim Fullmer—Biodynamic farmer Jim Fullmer has been Executive Director of the Demeter Association since 2004 and has been practicing Biodynamic farming for 25 years. Join Jim and the Demeter Association’s Erin Agostinelli for an in-depth look at Biodynamic farming.

Don Kretschmann—Don Kretschmann has been growing organic vegetables and fruit for 35 years in western Pennsylvania. Join him along with Kretschmann Organic Farm’s Tim Gebhart for two Saturday workshops to learn about planning and managing your organic orchard.

**Principles of Regenerative Agriculture**

Join John Kempf of Advancing Eco-Agriculture to learn the principles which support regenerative farming systems and what’s possible when plant health is approached from a fundamentally different perspective. Discover the differences between healthy and unhealthy plants and find out how you can produce disease- and pest-resistant crops.

**Slow Poultry: Sustainable Poultry Production**

Join Jim Adkins of the Sustainable Poultry Network to learn about effective and profitable strategies for sustainable poultry production. Walk away with an understanding of the breeding, feed, forage, facilities, and care required for different size production models, and how to make your poultry business profitable.

**Udder Health and Mastitis Control in Organic Dairies**

Join veterinarians Dr. Päivi Rajala-Schultz and Dr. Luciana da Costa from the OSU College of Veterinary Medicine and Organic Valley Cooperative staff veterinarian Dr. Guy Jodarski to learn the basic requirements for good udder health, strategies for managing clinical mastitis, and more.

All pre-conference events will take place on Friday, February 13 from 10 a.m.—4 p.m. at Granville High School, 248 New Burg St. in Granville. Pre-registration is required. Check-in opens at 9:30 am.
WORKSHOPS

The conference will feature more than 100 educational workshops on sustainable farming, gardening, green living, livestock, business management, farm policy, and more. Whether you're a full-time farmer, backyard gardener, or local food enthusiast, OEFFA's conference has something for everyone to love. For a complete list of workshops, including times, speakers, and descriptions, go to www.oeffa.org/conference2015.

EXHIBIT HALL

The Exhibit Hall will feature dozens of businesses, non-profits, and government agencies offering an array of food, books, farm and garden products, tools, information, and services.

BOOK ROOM

The Book Room will include a raffle; book signings by Gene Logsdon, Mary Lou Shaw, Debra Knapek, and Dawn Combs; and OEFFA merchandise. OEFFA Certification staff will be on hand to provide one-on-one assistance to organic and transitioning farmers.

SATURDAY EVENING ENTERTAINMENT

On the evening of Saturday, February 14, enjoy music and dancing with The Back Porch Swing Band and a screening of the movie, GMO OMG, presented by Chipotle Mexican Grill.

DONATE TO OEFFA'S CONFERENCE RAFFLE

Support OEFFA and introduce our members to your products and services by donating to the OEFFA conference raffle. To donate, please contact Kristen at (330) 527-3647 or blackdogacres@gmail.com.

GENTLY USED BOOKS NEEDED

Donate your gently used food and farming books to OEFFA. Drop off your books at OEFFA's book table at the annual conference or to the office before the event. All proceeds from used book sales benefit OEFFA. For more information, contact Renee Hunt at (614) 421-2022 Ext. 205 or renee@oeffa.org.

REGISTRATION UPDATE

At the time of this writing, a limited number of Saturday and Sunday registrations and meals are still available. Pre-conference registration remains open. For the latest news or to register, go to www.oeffa.org/conference2015 or call (614) 421-2022 for a mail-in registration form.

LEARN MORE

For more information about the conference, including maps, directions, workshop descriptions, speakers, hotel options, meal menu, a schedule, and more, go to www.oeffa.org/conference2015. For additional questions, call (614) 421-2022.
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Winter is non-grazing season on most farms, and rations should be evaluated to ensure the cows' nutrient requirements are satisfied and the quantity and quality of forages are sufficient to meet their daily intake demand.

How do you know you are feeding your dairy cows a balanced ration with your existing farm-grown forages? We can use two basic “meters” to answer that question:

**Assessing the Nutrients Supplied by Your Farm-Grown Forages**

Lower winter milk production is the direct result of cows being fed lower quality forages. The nutrient or chemical composition of forage largely determines its quality. All forages should be analyzed for nutrient composition before being fed. The value of analyzing farm-grown feeds is two-fold.

First, analysis will determine the level of nutrients present in your current forages, the quality of which is impacted by your current soil condition and the timing of the harvest. This information should influence your decisions for soil improvement and harvest management for the following growing season. In other words, it should be a “teaching tool” for improving your cows’ nutrition from the ground up.

The second benefit of analyzing the nutritional quality of farm-grown forages is that it will help you to determine more precisely the level of off-farm feeds needed to supplement the cows. It will help you avoid under-supplementation, which usually limits the cow’s best performance, and over-supplementation, helping you to save money.

Challenging weather conditions in 2013 led to low quality forages since they were directly affected by the most important factor influencing forage quality: the maturity at which the plant is harvested.

Let’s use alfalfa as an example. Research has shown that for every day alfalfa is allowed to mature past late bud stage, the amount of concentrate needed in the diet must be increased one percent to produce the same amount of milk as when cows are fed late bud alfalfa.

Increasing the amount of grain in the diet will not completely overcome the detrimental effects of maturity on forage quality. Research has found that Wisconsin dairy cows fed a diet of 70 percent forages (with legumes harvested at late bud stage) produced more milk than cows fed a diet of lower quality forages (legumes harvested at full bloom) and higher concentrate.

The effect of forage maturity is even more pronounced with grasses. Grass harvested in the vegetative stage will have approximately 30 percent more available energy than grass harvested when heads are emerging. In general, the interval between the vegetative stage and head setting is only about seven days for most grasses.

Maturity affects quality of corn and similar silages, but to a much smaller degree than for hay crop forages. Immature corn is generally 5-10 percent more digestible than mature corn; however, yields per acre are substantially less. Immature corn harvested due to late planting or early frost will still be of high quality if ensiled at the proper moisture content. Small grain silage should be harvested in the boot stage of maturity. Available energy decreases significantly as small grains mature from the boot stage to soft dough stages.

**Determining the Average Milk Production Your Forages Can Support**

Once you know the energy, protein, and fiber digestibility levels of your forages, you’ll need to decide what kind of forages should be fed when cows are in the first 90 days of lactation, mid-lactation, or dry period. All cows do not need the same quality of forage. Early lactation cows should be fed forages with at least 160 relative forage quality (RFQ). Medium producing cows can be fed forages with a RFQ of between 120 and 160. Late lactation cows can usually be fed forages with a RFQ of around 120. Choosing the right forage for the right cow will ensure supplementation is kept to a minimum.

Adjustment to these recommendations should be made to account for body condition and lactation number. Cows losing condition during the winter months due to a low nutrient ration will lose body reserves and be more prone to metabolic issues when high quality pastures are introduced in the spring.

Dr. Silvia Abel-Caines is a veterinarian with a Ph.D. in ruminant nutrition. She is a certified grazing planner, helping farmers address animal health and productivity through balanced nutrition. She is currently the staff ruminant nutritionist for Organic Valley. She may be reached at silvia.abel-caines@organicvalley.coop.

**Editor’s Note:** Join Silvia at OEFFA’s 2015 conference for Sunday workshops to learn how to successfully transition from a conventional or organic grain-based dairy to no-grain dairy production. For more information, see pg. 4.
Discover the Cover
By Andy Clark, Ph.D.

Cover crops slow erosion, improve soil health, smother weeds, enhance nutrient and moisture availability, help control pests, and bring a host of other benefits to your farm. They have been shown to break through a plow pan and attract pollinators. There is a growing body of evidence that cover cropped fields are more resilient in the face of erratic and increasingly intensive rainfall.

So if you haven’t started growing cover crops yet, what’s holding you back? If you have experimented with cover crops but were not impressed, don’t get discouraged! Farmers with one to three years of cover crop experience recorded smaller corn and soybean yield increases than those cover cropping for four or more years.*

Let’s take a closer look at some of the benefits.

Ground Cover
Cover crops protect the soil. Bare soil gets pummeled by rainfall, destroying the surface structure. In the worst cases, this causes a surface seal that reduces water infiltration resulting in less water for your crop. Since the water can’t infiltrate, it runs off, usually carrying soil and nutrients off your farm and into waterways. This is a major cause of phosphorus loss.

Soil Health
Soil biology and soil health really benefit from year-round plant cover. Most of the soil microbial life depends on plant matter, whether living, dying, or dead. Feeding this soil life a regular diet of plant material is the basis of soil health. Carbon is the main building block of soil organic matter and ultimately soil health. Growing cover crops and leaving them in place is a great way to add carbon to your soil. The effect is greater with grass cover crops or with cocktails than with legumes alone.

Soil Moisture
The soil moisture benefits of cover-cropping almost always outweigh potential detrimental effects. What can go wrong with moisture and cover crops? In a very dry spring, a vigorously growing cover crop can deplete soil moisture, adversely affecting cash crop germination and early growth. Why is this usually not a problem? As soon as you realize that it is really dry, you should have no problem getting into the field to terminate the cover crop, and it almost always rains in spring to replenish soil moisture. Experiencing a wet spring? Cover crops take up water via evapotranspiration and usually allow you onto the field earlier than if you did not have a cover crop growing.

It is what can go right with cover crops and soil moisture that is most convincing. If you no-till, the cover crop mulch increases water infiltration and conserves moisture into the summer. Added Carbon, root channels, and increased soil pore space all help improve soil water-holding capacity—in any tillage system. Cover crops help when it doesn’t rain, they help when it rains, and they help when it pours!

Increased Yield
In the 2012 drought, cover crops increased corn yield by 9 percent and soybean yields by 11 percent as reported by farmers who had comparable fields with and without cover crops. The effect was greater in Midwestern states with the most severe drought conditions. Even in the favorable 2013 growing season, cover crops on average increased corn yields by 5 bushels and bean yields by 2 bushels per acre, with reported ranges in the Midwest of 2-8 percent for corn and 3-8 percent for beans.*

Seeding Innovations
Timely seeding is critical to success and the benefits decline rapidly the later the cover crop is seeded. Don’t have time to get your cover crop seeded early enough? This is no longer an excuse. There are many proven ways to ensure timely seeding. Seeding into standing cash crops, shorter-season crops, and alternate crop rotations are among the innovations being made by producers who have seen the benefits and have committed to planting cover crops on as many acres as they can.

Regardless of your objectives, there are many viable and tested cover crop options for you to try. Consult SARE’s resources, talk to other farmers, and start with small plots as you fine-tune your system. What are you waiting for? Discover the cover!

Dr. Andy Clark is the national communications director for the Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education (SARE) program and has been working with cover crops for almost 30 years. He is the editor of several editions of the SARE book, Managing Cover Crops Profitably. For more information, go to http://www.sare.org/covercrops.

Editor’s Note: Look for Andy and OSU Extension educator Alan Sundermeier at OEFFA’s 2015 conference where they’ll be digging deeper into cover crops with a focus on grain production as part of a Saturday afternoon workshop. For more information, see pg. 4.

* Data from a 2014 survey of 2,900 farmers conducted by the Conservation Technology Innovation Center and SARE
Farm Taxes Spike
Established by Ohio law in 1974, the Current Agricultural Use Valuation (CAUV) taxes farmland based on its value as farm ground rather than as development property. This voluntary program has proven critical to farmers, but during the most recent CAUV re-evaluation, many farmers’ taxes increased by 100-200 percent. High corn and soybean prices in previous years combined with record low interest rates contributed to the spike in CAUV values. Both the Ohio Farmers Union and the Ohio Farm Bureau Federation have proposed changes to the formula to allow for greater stability in the reassessment process.

Neonicotinoid-Coated Soybean Seeds Provide Little Benefit
A peer-reviewed report by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) has concluded that genetically engineered (GE) soybean seeds coated with neonicotinoid pesticides offer no increase in yields compared to untreated seeds. Research has demonstrated that exposure to neonicotinoid pesticides is harmful to non-pest insects, such as bees, and a new study published in the journal Nature suggests that neonicotinoids are contributing to declining populations of insect-eating birds.

USDA Approves More GE Crops, Chemical Treadmill Continues
In September, the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) issued a decision to fully deregulate Dow Chemical's Enlist corn and soybeans. These GE seeds are designed to withstand the Enlist Duo herbicide, which is a blend of 2,4-D and glyphosate, since approved by the EPA for restricted application in some states, including Ohio. Although Dow claims these new crops are part of the solution to the 70 million acres of U.S. farmland infested by herbicide-resistant superweeds, opponents, including OEFFA, argue they are just setting the stage for the next generation of superweeds. The USDA has also recently approved a new GE alfalfa variety developed by Monsanto and deregulated J.R. Simplot's GE potato which is resistant to bruising.

Federal Crop Insurance Lines Pockets of Insurance Companies, Mega-Farms
According to white papers released by the Land Stewardship Project (LSP), crop insurance companies received returns of 17 percent between 1989 and 2009, costing federal taxpayers $58.7 billion. Insurance companies are able to offload their liability for the riskiest policies to the federal government and keep the most profitable policies for themselves. LSP also found that 10 percent of crop insurance subsidy recipients took in more than half of all premium subsidies. These mega-farms represent only 2.3 percent of all farms; roughly three-quarters of farms are not enrolled in the crop insurance program.

GE Labeling Ballot Initiatives Defeated in Colorado, Oregon
Both Measure 92 in Oregon and Proposition 105 in Colorado calling for mandatory labeling of GE foods were defeated in November’s elections, although the vote in Oregon failed by less than a one percent margin. Opponents spent more than $20 million in Oregon to prevent passage.

GE Crops Responsible for Decline in Monarch Butterflies
A study published by researchers in the Journal of Animal Ecology reports that the use of herbicide-resistant GE crops is largely responsible for declining monarch butterfly populations. The study found that almost 70 percent of milkweed plants—the only food of monarch butterflies—are found in agricultural landscapes, and that the increased use of GE crops and companion herbicides over the past two decades has led to a 21 percent decline in the number of milkweed plants. Monarch butterfly populations have declined by more than 90 percent in the last 20 years.

Monsanto to Pay Settlement in GE Wheat Lawsuit
Monsanto has reached a settlement with farmers raising white wheat who sued the company after their markets were disrupted following the 2013 discovery of unapproved GE wheat growing on an Oregon farm. Monsanto did not admit any liability but agreed to pay $2.13 million to farmers in Washington, Oregon, and Idaho and $250,000 to wheat growers’ associations, including the National Wheat Foundation. This year, Monsanto’s experimental GE wheat was also discovered at a test site in Montana where field trials were conducted in 2003.

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We're here to grow quality!
The majority of Americans are concerned about the health impacts of genetically engineered (GE) food and support clear and transparent labeling. And with good reason. GE crops have led to the increased use of herbicides, the rise of superweeds, non-GE crop contamination, and reduced consumer choice, and their long-term effects on our health are largely unknown. The public has a right to know what they eat and feed their families!

What many people may not realize is that we actually have very clear labeling right now: the certified organic label.

Not only are organic producers prohibited from using GE seed or animal feed, but they also farm holistically, with the knowledge that they are farming within a complex biological system. They work with nature to produce healthful food while improving soil and water, providing habitat for beneficial insects, and protecting our environment from dangerous synthetic pesticides, herbicides, and fertilizers.

Although “non-GMO” certified producers do not use GE seed, they often rely on the same conventional production practices as GE farmers which are so damaging to the environment and public health. If you and your family are looking to avoid GE foods, buy organic, and you’ll get that benefit and so much more.

There are several other ways you can be part of the shift away from large-scale industrialized GE food and toward a holistic and healthful agriculture.

1. Visit http://bit.ly/1wxVL1Q and sign our petition to Ohio lawmakers. Many think you don’t really care about this issue. Let’s send a strong message that Ohio voters do care. Tell them, “If GE food is safe for the table, put it on the label!”

2. OEFFA is developing educational outreach materials to let the public know that certified organic food is the best way to purchase GE-free food. Help us tell the organic story. Please send in your ideas for a tag line. The theme is: the organic label is GE-free and much, much more. Send your ideas to Amalie Lipstreu at policy@oeffa.org or call (614) 421-2022 Ext. 208.

The person who submits the winning tag line will be featured in our next newsletter. If this sounds like an effort you would like to be involved in, please provide your contact information as well. We would be glad to have your input!

To reduce the impact of weeds on your farm, it is important to understand the conditions needed to germinate weed seeds. The goal is to encourage weed seeds to germinate when we want them to and not to germinate when we don’t want them to. My main tool for manipulating the environment for weed seeds is a 21 day period between setting up raised beds and the actual planting called staling. Let’s address germination factors so we can break down the staling practice and its seasonal variations.

WATER
Water is the most important ingredient in this mix. Weeds will not germinate without water. This is why you see the worst weed problems starting in your field three to 10 days after rain or irrigation. You can manipulate this by well-timed irrigation so the weeds will primarily germinate before you begin seeding. Generally, I try to irrigate twice before planting, 21 and 10 days out, and then cultivate nine days after each irrigation. Ideally, I give the weed seeds exposure to 18 days of good soil moisture before I plant.

TEMPERATURE
Different weeds require different temperature ranges. Some weeds germinate best while the soil is warming in the spring, others while the soil is hot in the summer. There are also winter annuals which you will see beginning to germinate in the fall, going dormant over the winter, and then setting seed in the spring. I try to start my weed control regime in the fall with winter annuals.

You can control winter annuals using shade cloth to cool the soil in August and early September to encourage pre-germination before the last crop plantings in late-September and early October. The winter plays a role in breaking the dormancy of hard seeds and drawing some seeds into the germination zone. We can take advantage of this by pre-forming and fitting our garden in September and October.

(continued on page 16)
Streamlined Procedures for Non-GE Labels Announced
Organic meat and poultry producers, who are prohibited from using genetically engineered (GE) seed or feed, can now take advantage of a streamlined procedure released by the U.S. Department of Agriculture’s (USDA) Food Safety and Inspection Service (FSIS). It allows organic producers to obtain approval of non-GE label claims based on their organic certification by sending a letter with a reference to a prior organic label approval to FSIS. The expedited process will save time and expense for organic producers and enable them to more easily communicate with consumers.

New NOSB Members Announced
In January, four new members will join the National Organic Standards Board (NOSB). Ashley Swaffer of the Arkansas Egg Company in Arkansas, Tom Chapman of Clif Bar in California, Lisa de Lima of MOM’s Organic Market in Maryland, and Paula Daniels, Senior Advisor on Food Policy for the city of Los Angeles, will replace outgoing board members Joe Dickson, Jay Feldman, John Foster, and Wendy Fulwider.

More Organic Data Released from 2012 Agriculture Census
The USDA’s National Agricultural Statistics Service has released more organic data from the 2012 Census of Agriculture. The data show that when compared to conventional farmers, U.S. certified organic producers are more likely to sell directly to consumers, produce on-farm renewable energy, be women, and be younger, beginning farmers. They’re also far more likely to claim farming as their principal occupation.

National List of Allowed and Prohibited Substances Amended
A final rule has been published to amend the USDA’s National List of Allowed and Prohibited Substances, effective October 30, 2014. Based on recommendations from the NOSB, biodegradable bio-based mulch film will be added to the National List and allowed in organic crop production. Two expired substances, nonorganic hops and unmodified rice starch, have been removed from the list.

Organic Farms Provide More Food for Young Songbirds
In a study published in the journal *Agriculture, Ecosystems, and Environment*, researchers tested whether organic farms provided more food for young songbirds than conventional farms. After surveying insect populations in organic and conventional soybean fields, they found there was 43 percent more food available for young songbirds in organic fields.

Organic Crop Yields Stack Up Against Conventional Farming
A meta-analysis of 115 studies comparing organic and conventional farming suggests that organic farming can be a very competitive alternative to industrial agriculture. The study, conducted by University of California Berkeley researchers and published in the *Proceedings of the Royal Society*, found organic yields are about 19 percent lower than conventional ones, a smaller difference than in previous estimates. For some crops, such as beans and peas, no yield difference was observed. However, the researchers note that if methods that optimize the productivity of organic agriculture, such as multi-cropping and crop rotation, were taken into account, the gap between organic and conventional yields would be substantially reduced.

“In terms of comparing productivity among the two techniques, this paper sets the record straight on the comparison between organic and conventional agriculture,” said the study’s senior author, Claire Kremen. “With global food needs predicted to greatly increase in the next 50 years, it’s critical to look more closely at organic farming, because aside from the environmental impacts of industrial agriculture, the ability of synthetic fertilizers to increase crop yields has been declining.”

NOP Releases Information on Organic Standards Enforcement
The National Organic Program (NOP) has announced it levied nine civil penalties totaling $81,500 between October 2013 and September 2014 for willful violations of national organic standards. In addition, it initiated more than 200 investigative and enforcement actions during that time. The NOP considered reinstatement requests from 62 suspended operations, and reinstated more than 90 percent of these applicants after verifying full correction of non-compliances.

Peer Review Report of NOP Now Available
The American National Standards Institute (ANSI) has conducted a review assessing the NOP’s accreditation process, surveillance and renewal activities, and management system. ANSI identified 14 opportunities for improvement, which the NOP is taking actions to resolve. Read the report at http://1.usa.gov/1GqRv5U.
New OEFFA Organic System Plans: Sound, Sensible, and Time-Saving

Do you wish your Organic System Plan (OSP) felt more like a description of your operation, and less like a tax form? Do you wish you didn’t have to repeat yourself year after year, listing the same information when your practices remain the same? We are happy to tell you that a solution is in sight!

In response to your feedback and in the spirit of the NOP’s new Sound and Sensible initiative, OEFFA is welcoming the new year with a redesigned application process aimed at client convenience, efficiency, and waste reduction. OEFFA will send out new “modular” OSP forms to all of our certified operators and new applicants in January.

The modular form is broken into sections that can be recombined over the years as your operation changes. Each section addresses a different piece of the organic operation, such as seeds, water quality, feed, pest control, and sanitation. One aspect of your system might change, whereas other parts of your management remain the same. While we need to know when these changes occur, we do not need you to describe practices approved in a previous OSP at length anymore.

Here’s how it will work:

» In 2015, everyone will complete a full “baseline” modular OSP that covers all aspects of the operation.

» In 2016, only items that change frequently (such as field activity, seeds, inputs, etc.) will be required each year. You will only need to update the rest of the OSP if your management practices change. In other words, if nothing changes from year to year, you will only be asked to complete about 25 percent of the application form. If one of your management practices changes, you can update just that section and send it to OEFFA along with the required information.

» OEFFA staff will take the updated portions of your OSP and replace the outdated sections in our files. There will always be one complete and current version of your OSP, which we will send to you annually to review when you are completing your updates for the year.

We hope that you will find the modular OSP to be user-friendly and clear. We believe these changes will result in less paperwork for clients and more timely service. If you have questions or feedback, please contact the OEFFA Certification office at (614) 262-2022.
Jorgensen Farms is thrilled to present “A GARDEN FOR EVERY SPACE” featuring author Stacey Hirvela. A former member of Martha Stewart Living Magazine’s garden editorial board, Stacey is the author of Edible Spots and Pots: Small-Space Gardens for Growing Vegetables and Herbs in Containers, Raised Beds, and More (Rodale Books, March 2014). She will present an all-day workshop featuring techniques from her book for growing food in containers and tight spaces.

**Lineup**
- Continental breakfast
- Morning Session
- Lunch
- Afternoon Session
- Book Signing

Early bird registration: December 1, 2014 – February 15, 2015  $90
Standard registration: February 16, 2015 – March 15, 2015  $105
Final week registration: March 16, 2015 – March 21, 2015  $115

Breakfast, lunch, and a copy of Edible Spots and Pots is included in the cost of the workshop

Reserve your space now!

http://jorgensen-farms.com/garden_for_every_space.php
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jorgensen-farms.com
Savoring the Seasons

This is the planning part of the year. While you are up to your elbows in seed catalogs I’d like to put in a suggestion for your garden plot: the humble sugar beet. Currently, it doesn’t have much appeal outside of sugar plantations and livestock forage, but it could be an exciting new addition to your garden and kitchen repertoire.

Its cultivation is simple. Plant it just as you would any other beet. Plant the crown-shaped seed about one-quarter inch deep in the spring. Allow six inches between each plant and keep the soil moist. Harvest when the greens are 18 inches tall and the root is about six inches deep.

So why grow this unsung behemoth in your kitchen garden?

It’s an Ohioan coconut.

I grew up in Hawaii. One of my favorite memories is of husking green coconuts. The evening air was alive and cool. My cousins and I slammed the coconuts onto the end of a piece of rebar. My fingers chaffed from the rough husk, but the lure of fresh coconut was worth the burn. We cracked the hard inner shells with hammers, and we made candy from the strips we carved out of the shell with spoons, knives, and desperate fingers.

As a person committed to local, sustainable, fresh food, I find it hard to get good coconuts and keep a clean conscious. What’s a tropicavore to do?

Enter the sugar beet! Grated and dried in an oven, it has filled the niche that coconut had left vacant.

To process your sugar beets, after harvesting, remove the tops and the long, twisting portion of the root. Wash and grate it by hand or using a food processor. Spread the grated sugar beets evenly over a parchment paper-lined cookie sheet. Toast in the oven at 200 degrees until fully dry. This may take up to twelve hours. The shredded beet will blacken but this is normal. The fully dried product can be stored in an airtight bag for up to three months in a dark cool place, or much longer in the freezer.

My favorite recipe to show off the sugar beet is in a macaroon-like cookie. They make a sophisticated, chewy snack, and once you have a stash of dried sugar beet, they are quick to make.

In late July, we serve this cookie with homemade lemon lavender ice cream and warm blueberry compote. The cool tang of the ice cream and warm blue gooiness are perfectly complimented by this crisp, yet yielding, cookie.

Sugar Beet Macaroons
(Adapted from Ripe for Dessert by David Lebowitz)

¾ c. dried shredded sugar beet ½ tsp. vanilla extract
5 Tbs. sugar 5 Tbs. unsalted butter
2 tsp. flour 2 lg. eggs, whites only

Mix all ingredients. Chill for 30 minutes. Preheat the oven to 350 degrees and position an oven rack in the center of the oven. Line a baking sheet with parchment paper. Plop tablespoons of batter onto the parchment paper, leaving plenty of space between the cookies. Flatten the batter lumps with your fingers to ensure even baking. It is a sticky job. Bake for 10 minutes until golden and firm. Rotate the cookie sheet part way through baking to promote even browning.

Serve warm, or let the cookies cool and create an ice cream sandwich.

Chelsea Gandy farms and feasts at Fox Hollow Farm in Fredericktown, where she offers a series of farm-to-table meals served on the farm. Her current quests are to find uses for pugging in high density grazing and to make the perfect sandwich. For more information, go to www.foxhollowfarmnaturally.com.
Weeds that germinate as the soil warms can be tricked into germination with re-may, a germination blanket, or a sheet of old greenhouse plastic applied floating over the ground to bring the soil temperature into the germination range in the lead up to planting. To target these weeds, I begin covering the growing beds in March and April before the soils would normally warm into the 50s and 60s to germinate them. When using this method, I don’t cultivate in the middle of the staling period or irrigate a second time because of the added labor cost to remove and reapply the plastic.

I target hot germinators in early-May through early June using the same methods as with the warm germinators. After mid-June, I don’t normally need to use the remay to warm the soil as it will be approaching its peak warmth.

SOIL TO SEED CONTACT Tamped, crusted, or compacted soils will germinate seeds at a much higher rate than loose soils. By tamping the surface of the soil, you can encourage weeds to germinate when you do not have crops in the field. A lawn roller or irrigation work well for this purpose.

By leaving the soil loose, we discourage weeds from germinating. It’s important to be disciplined about cultivating after rainfall to keep the surface loose. Three days after a rain, I try to get into the field with a shallow cultivator that will loosen the soil in the row or that will throw soil into the row to keep loose soil on the surface.

LIGHT EXPOSURE AND SEED DEPTH Most weed seeds will only germinate if they are within the top two inches of soil and many will only germinate if they are exposed to sunlight in the top half inch of soil. In concept, you should try to keep the top two inches of soil on top under most circumstances, rather than bringing deeper soil to the surface. In a home or small market garden, I recommend a stirrup or wheel hoe. As your scale gets larger, you will need to look into cultivation tooling for your tractor.

Using a rototiller for weed control is often counterproductive. It kills weeds effectively, but mixes the soil layers, which creates future weed problems. I do use a rototiller for incorporation of cover and certain vegetable crops, and for weeds that have grown more than 12 inches tall. However, when I do this, I know I will have to go through a full staling period when the beds are reformed. If you can avoid mixing the layers of soil, seeds that are buried below the germination zone should decay within five years if you have good organic matter and healthy soil.

NUTRITION Many weeds will germinate in response to nutrition. I apply fertilizer and compost at the beginning of the staling period immediately before first irrigation. This will also give any seeds in your compost a chance to germinate.

ADEQUATE GERMINATION TIME To maximize the effectiveness of weed management, allow plenty of time for germination to occur. In general, I expect to see most seeds germinate within 15 days of reaching the correct conditions. The exception is dormant and hard seeds which can be up to 20 percent of the total weed seed bank. Even dormant seeds can be coaxed into germinating over the course of a season, provided that you don’t mix soil layers.
Our Organic Apple Story
By Don Kretschmann

Decades ago when my wife, Becky, and I were beginning our farming adventure, nearly every family farm had a small orchard. It was also common to see big standard apple trees in front or backyards. It’s been sad to see these friends—productive old trees—disappear over the years and to see only lawns and ornamentals on new home sites. In those early years, as our veggie season wound down, we would harvest this fruit and make cider at nearby cider presses. We had many small orchards and trees we could also count on harvesting for free or in trade for a few gallons of cider. We called it our “cider conspiracy.”

Our Own Orchard
We bought our farm in 1979 and in 1985, we planted our own trees with the idea that we would be happy to have apples good enough for cider. At that time, there didn’t appear to be much hope for growing organic table apples in the east because of insect and fungal disease pressure. However, breeding research programs at a number of major universities had yielded their first fruits—several scab immune and resistant apple varieties. These were the varieties we selected, and continue to select, because scab is the most common pome fruit disease in the east. Our first planting was of Prima, Priscilla, Liberty, and Jonafree on dwarf rootstock. We were very surprised to see that some of these apples were good enough for table use.

More Trees in 1996 and 2006
Having seen which varieties were successful, and with even more scab immune varieties available on the market, in 1996 we planted another block of trees. About half of these were Libertys, which we had seen were the most reliable of the original scions. New additions were Williams Pride, Pristine, Redfree, and Goldrush.

In 1999, we had noticed the first fire blight in our orchard. This disease, which slowly debilitates the tree, is the bane of apple growers, organic or not, because it can only be slowed and never eradicated.

By now, we were beginning to see that the dwarf rootstocks had a finite productive life—about 25 years—and that we had to plant more trees periodically for continued productivity. For our new planting in 2006 we got some of the first fire blight resistant rootstocks developed by Cornell University with our preferred scab immune varieties grafted on. We really liked two yellow varieties from the 1996 block—Pristine and Goldrush—which extended our season both early and late. In 2006, we also planted some Enterprise and Dayton.

One of the Oldest Forms of Agriculture
Humans realized very early on the potential for tree fruit; orcharding is one of the oldest forms of agriculture. Today, permaculture growers and sustainable farmers embrace fruit tree production because it minimizes soil disturbance and allows soil life free rein to colonize, attain balance, and maximize site specific genetic evolution. Apples have an extremely high genetic variability which means there’s virtually no chance you’ll get the same apple by planting one of its seeds. Thus apples have long been propagated from cuttings of an existing tree. With all that genetic variability, there’s hardly anywhere apples won’t grow well.

Opportunity
Over the last several decades, we have seen a tremendous growth in the number and popularity of organic vegetable farms—but not organic orchards. Statistically, fruit sales match vegetable sales at conventional produce outlets. Organic farmers are missing out on a tremendous opportunity to double their sales with no increase in customers. For those familiar with the urgency of nearly every aspect of growing annual vegetables, apples and fruit offer stability. Apples can tolerate inconsistent moisture. Harvest and sales windows are wide. Orchard tasks are spread well throughout the year.

There’s more to life than bending over harvesting lettuce and tomatoes. Stand, straighten your back, and join me in picking fruit as we look up at those puffy white clouds just beyond. We’ve heard it called “the last frontier.” Let’s explore the territory.

Experienced orchardist Don Kretschmann has been growing organic fruit and vegetables for 35 years in western Pennsylvania at Kretschmann Organic Farm. For more information, go to www.kretschmannfarm.com.

Editor’s Note: Join Don at OEFFA’s 2015 conference for two Saturday workshops to learn about planning and managing your organic orchard. For more information, see pg. 4.
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RESOURCES

OEFFA YouTube Channel—OEFFA’s YouTube channel is home to more than 15 webinars on specialty crop and organic livestock production on topics including dairy herd health, farm machinery, high tunnels, food safety, and more, along with other videos. New content is added regularly.

www.youtube.com/OEFFAeducation

Whole-Farm Insurance—A new Whole Farm Revenue Protection insurance policy pilot program is now available through the Federal Crop Insurance Program for the 2015 crop year. The policy allows producers to insure between 50-85 percent of their whole farm revenue and makes crop insurance more affordable for diversified fruit and vegetable growers.

www.rma.usda.gov/policies/wfrip.html

Farm Bill Program Guide—The Michael Fields Agricultural Institute and the National Sustainable Agriculture Coalition recently published a comprehensive guide to federal programs for sustainable agriculture, conservation, forestry, entrepreneurship, food systems, and community development, Building Sustainable Farms, Ranches, and Communities.

http://sustainableagriculture.net/publications

Cover Crop Report—The North Central Region Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education program has released the results of its 2013-2014 Cover Crops Survey Analysis, which shows that farmers are seeing multiple benefits from cover crops, including increased yields.

www.bit.ly/1u28M10

FSA Microloan Program—The Farm Service Agency (FSA) borrowing limit for microloans increased in November from $35,000 to $50,000. The change allows beginning, small, and mid-sized farmers to access an additional $15,000 in loans using a simplified application process with up to 7 years to repay.

www.1.usa.gov/10HMSpu

Food Nonprofit Guide—The James Beard Foundation and Food Tank have released the first annual Good Food Org Guide. This guide highlights U.S. nonprofit organizations, including OEFFA, working in the areas of food and agriculture, nutrition and health, hunger and obesity, and food justice.

www.bit.ly/1xtOvQe

Food Policy Database—The “Growing Food Connections Policy Database” is a searchable collection of local public policies that support community food systems. This database provides policymakers and others interested in food policy with concrete examples of local public policies that have been adopted to address a range of food systems issues.

www.growingfoodconnections.org/tools-resources/policy-database

Food Scores Database—The Environmental Working Group has launched “Food Scores: Rate Your Plate,” a database and mobile app for grocery shoppers that rates 80,000 foods and 5,000 ingredients from 1,500 brands.

www.ewg.org/foodscores

NRCS Soil Health Videos—A new series of videos by the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), called “The Science of Soil Health,” includes interviews with some of the nation’s leading experts in soil biology, agronomy, entomology, and soil ecology.

www.bit.ly/13uMavP

Midwest Cover Crops Guide—Soil researchers and educators have collaborated on a newly updated 161-page guide which includes information on using cover crops in field crop production, common types of cover crops to plant, seeding rates, and more. The guide is available for $5 from OSU Extension county offices.

www.extension.osu.edu/lao#county

Federal Conservation Program Guide—A new publication, Federal Conservation Resources for Sustainable Farming and Ranching, from the National Sustainable Agriculture Information Service provides an overview of major federal conservation programs and helps users navigate the application process.

www.1.usa.gov/1DHM5ou

Want to learn more? OEFFA’s online Resources section includes links to dozens of websites, publications, and organizations on a wide-range of topics including organic production, food safety, livestock, soil fertility, and more. Go to www.effoa.org/resources.
While there are many reasons for choosing specific varieties, large acreage crops like corn, soybeans, wheat, and other small grains are typically selected for yields. Finding those varieties that perform best on your farm can mean more money in your pocket. Multi-site variety trials provide a helpful tool for growers deciding on what seed to plant. Such trials are typically conducted by land-grant universities, and increasingly include organic seed and examinations of performance on certified organic land. Additionally, for the past few years, Organic Valley has been running a multi-state organic corn variety trial. The data produced by such trials can be extensive, but how should an individual grower best use the information?

First, one needs to recognize that there are substantial variations in annual planting conditions across locations and across years at the same location. Every experienced farmer knows that yield results in one year rarely repeat the following year. For example, at the Ohio Agricultural Research and Development Center’s (OARDC) West Badger Farm we obtained yields of 130 bushels per acre (bu/A) in 2013 and just 83 bu/A in 2014 for the same hybrid, largely due to differences in weed pressure. That hybrid averaged 166 bu/A across 13 locations in 2013. Because of such variation, growers should be cautious about over interpreting individual trials. Smaller trials with fewer than six sites do not typically provide enough data to make projections regarding performance of a particular hybrid.

Second, because crop breeding and seed production are continuous processes, seed companies regularly change their offerings. Specific hybrids are typically offered for only three to five years. If one examines multiple years of variety trial data, you will see that few appear more than two or three times. For example, in the two years of the Organic Valley trial, just about one-third of the hybrids were tested both years. Because of this, growers need to ask their seed suppliers about which new hybrids are most closely related to those tested in the past. By doing so, one can access the hybrids that are most likely to perform well in the coming year.

Growers can get the latest variety trial data for their state from the region’s agronomic crop Extension teams. For the latest results from Ohio’s crop variety trials, go to http://bit.ly/1Ar4hNm.

Other useful resources include:

- The Ohio State University Agronomic Crops Network
  - http://agcrops.osu.edu
- Purdue Crop Performance Program
- The University of Kentucky
  - http://www.uky.edu/Ag/GrainCrops/corn.htm
  - http://organic.ksu.edu/

**Research in Focus:**

**Making Sense of Variety Trial Data**

By Brian McSpadden Gardener, Ph.D.

Check-offs, formally known as Mandatory Federal Research and Promotion Programs, are assessments made on sales of commodities, such as pork, soybeans, and cotton, which are used to fund promotion and research.

The benefit of these check-off programs to organic farmers has been questioned for years. In fact, since most check-off funds are used for commodity promotion and research that serves conventional production, organic farmers and businesses have been paying into programs that often work against their interests.

While withdrawal from the conventional check-offs will be welcomed, will organic operations support a federally mandated organic check-off?

The Organic Trade Association (OTA) hopes so. OTA is expected to submit a federal organic check-off program application early this year. The trade association projects more than $40 million will be collected annually, since this assessment would cut across the organic industry.

In 2014, OTA sent out educational materials to more than 18,000 U.S. organic certificate holders, and conducted phone surveys to gauge support for an organic check-off.

OEFFA’s August survey of the organic farmers and businesses it certifies found outright support for an organic check-off is low. Those open to the idea of a mandatory check-off were not confident the program would be run properly or benefit them. Further, there was a strong distrust in government’s involvement in the program.

At press time, farms and businesses earning $250,000 or less in organic sales would be exempted from the check-off program. The OEFFA survey revealed that 58 percent of respondents did not support an exemption.

Farmers and businesses earning less than $250,000—approximately two-thirds of all organic certificate holders—will not be allowed to vote in the referendum to establish an organic check-off if the sales threshold stands.

OEFFA and other farm organizations question the need for the exemption, given OTA’s proposal to make the assessment “broad and shallow” with a 1/10 of one percent assessment on net organic sales. A farmer with $50,000 in organic sales per year would pay $50, less than the $100 voluntary membership OTA is proposing for exempt certificate holders.

It’s also questionable whether it’s legal to have a check-off that excludes a super-majority of those in the industry. The Commodity, Promotion, Research, and Information Act of 1996 states generic promotion activities need to be of “particular benefit to small producers who lack resources or market power to advertise on their own.”

OEFFA presented its survey results to OTA, and encouraged, at minimum, a change to allow every organic certificate holder to vote on the check-off referendum.

Following OTA’s submission, the USDA is expected to take several months to review the application.

A workshop, moderated by keynote speaker Alan Guebert, to review and discuss the latest proposed organic check-off developments will be part of the OEFFA conference on Saturday, February 14.
Upcoming Events
For a complete calendar of events go to www.oeffa.org/events

OEFFA Lake Effect Chapter Meeting:
Sustainable Communities in Northeast Ohio
Tuesday, January 27—6:30 p.m.
Kent State University Geauga Campus • 14111 Claridon-Troy Rd., Burton, OH
Join OEFFA’s Lake Effect chapter for a meeting with guest speaker Hunter Morrison of the
Northeast Ohio Sustainable Communities Consortium to learn about efforts to improve
quality of life in northeast Ohio. Free and open to the public. Bring a potluck dish to share.
For more information, email lake.effect.oeffa@gmail.com.

OEFFA’s 36th Annual Conference:
Sustainable Agriculture: Renewing Ohio’s Heart and Soil
Friday, February 13-Sunday, February 15
Granville High School • 248 New Burg St., Granville, OH
Ohio’s largest sustainable food and farm conference will feature nearly 100 workshops, a
trade show, full-day pre-conferences, and more. For more information, see pg. 4 or go to

2015 Permaculture Design Certification Course
Saturday, February 14-Sunday, April 19
Cleveland, OH
Taught by instructors Peter Bane, Mark Cohen, Jonathan Hull, Marilyn McHugh, Chris Kenne-
dy, and Allison Hurley, this course will teach students core permaculture principles and tech-
niques. It runs for seven weekends and costs $1,050. Financial aid available. For more informa-
tion, call (267) 423-0340 or go to www.greentriangle.org/permaculture-design-certification.

Ohio Heart of Ohio Chapter Meeting:
Developing a Planting Schedule, Greenhouse Work, and
Succession Planting
Monday, March 9—7-9 p.m.
Alexandria Public Library • 10 Maple Dr., Alexandria, OH
OEFFA’s Heart of Ohio Chapter will welcome Erin Harvey of The Kale Yard to help mem-
ers plan for the 2015 growing season. The event will begin with a short business meet-
ing. Free and open to the public. For more information, call (740) 877-8738 or email
sunbeamfamilyfarm@gmail.com.

Dormant Pruning Workshop
Wednesday, March 18—9 a.m.-12 p.m.
Secrest Arboretum • 2122 Williams Rd., Wooster, OH
This workshop offered by Ohio State University will offer guidance on pruning. Cost: $50. Pre-
registration is required; space is limited. For more information, go to www.secrest.osu.edu.

A Garden for Every Space
Saturday, March 21—8:30 a.m.-4 p.m.
Jorgensen Farms • 5851 E. Walnut St., Westerville, OH
Jorgensen Farms presents a workshop featuring author Stacey Hirvela who will discuss her
techniques for growing food in containers and tight spaces. Pre-registration is required;
space is limited. For more information, go to www.jorgensen-farms.com.

Ohio Heart of Ohio Chapter Meeting: Pruning Fruit Trees
Wednesday, April 15—7-9 p.m.
Alexandria Public Library • 10 Maple Dr., Alexandria, OH
Join OEFFA’s Heart of Ohio Chapter and Andy Lynd of Lynd Fruit Farm for a discussion on
pruning fruit trees. The event will begin with a short business meeting. Free and open to the
public. For more information, call (740) 877-8738 or email sunbeamfamilyfarm@gmail.com.

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OEFFA BOARD ELECTIONS 2015

OEFFA members will have the opportunity to vote on candidates to fill two open positions on OEFFA’s Board of Trustees at the business meeting in Granville on Saturday, February 14 from 5:15-6:15 p.m. The meeting will be held on-site at the OEFFA conference and will be open to all members at no cost.

The following individuals are seeking election to OEFFA’s Board of Trustees as at-large representatives. Nominations will also be accepted from the floor at the time of the election. Board members serve three year terms, and the Board of Trustees will elect its own President, Treasurer, and Secretary.

John Sowder (current OEFFA Board Treasurer)
John Sowder first joined OEFFA in 1992 after meeting organic farmer Mike Laughlin when he was selling produce at Columbus’ North Market. That fall, he was elected to the board as a regional representative. He has served on OEFFA’s board ever since. In his role as Treasurer, John helped move the organization from shaky financial ground in its early years and hopes to continue contributing to OEFFA’s growth and successful future.

Rachel Tayse Baillieul
Rachel Tayse Baillieul is a urban homesteader living with her family on two acres in Columbus. She teaches classes on cooking and growing topics throughout central Ohio and writes the popular blog HarmoniousHomestead.com. She is also part of certified organic Swainway Urban Farm, growing and selling mushrooms, microgreens, and specialty vegetables. Rachel can bring the perspective of a young, urban farmer and her social media experience to the board.

Mardy Townsend (current OEFFA Board Secretary)
Mardy Townsend of Marshy Meadows Farm in Ashtabula County, has a certified organic farm and produces U.S. Department of Agriculture certified grass-fed beef. She is a long-time OEFFA member and active on the OEFFA policy committee.

CHAPTER SPOTLIGHT

Lake Effect Chapter
The Lake Effect Chapter held two events in 2014. The first was a roundtable meeting where growers had the opportunity to share their 2013 growing season experiences. The meeting was held at Andy and Laura Miller’s farm in Middlefield and attended by more than 30 people.

A roundtable meeting and potluck was also held at Jake and Dawn Trethewey’s Maplestar Farm in Auburn Township in November. The nearly 40 people in attendance, including several Amish growers from Geauga Family Farms, discussed fall season extension tips and techniques and toured the farm, which includes three mobile high tunnels. Mardy Townsend of Marshy Meadows Farm led a discussion on the proposed organic check-off initiative. Chapter members agreed to hold a spring roundtable discussion, as they have in the past, with the date and location to be determined.

At 6:30 p.m. on January 27 at the Kent State University Geauga campus, the chapter will host Hunter Morrison of the Northeast Ohio Sustainable Communities Consortium to discuss strategies for improving quality of life in northeast Ohio. All are welcome to attend.

For more information about the Lake Effect Chapter and OEFFA’s other chapters, see pg. 2 or go to www.oeffa.org/chapter.
Daniel and Ann Trudel met in college. They never thought they’d be farmers. But one day, when visiting a friend in Ohio, they drove down Blair Rd. in Fredrick-town and saw a house for sale. When they drove up the driveway, got out of the car, and took in the beautiful view, they knew this would be their new home.

Fast forward 10 years and Ann’s Raspberry Farm has three high tunnels that are home to 300 raspberry plants each. In response to growing demand, they now have 7,000 Brussels sprout plants as well. The farm is “Certified Naturally Grown” but what really sets them apart is their value-added operation.

Daniel and Ann have created a variety of raspberry jams, a Brussels sprout relish, Hungarian hot pepper mustard, and a hot pepper jelly, all from produce they raise themselves. In fact, their preserves have garnered them six Good Food Awards since 2011 and their savory Brussels sprout relish and petite pickled Brussels sprouts are finalists for the 2015 Good Food Awards.

After attending their first food show in Cincinnati, they started to consider applying for the U.S. Department of Agriculture’s Value-Added Producer Grant (VAPG). Daniel realized that the VAPG could help offset the costs of participating in food shows so they could maximize attendance and help their diversified business reach new markets.

What is the key to success with a VAPG? Daniel says you really have to invest the time in completing a thorough and compelling application. He wrote 25 revisions and estimates that he spent at least 80 hours on the grant application and developing sales forecasts for attending the shows. “You must be able to show that you are going to grow your business,” said Daniel. “The benefits are definitely worth the time investment.”

Daniel’s 80 hour investment paid off in almost $20,000 in grant funds. Ann’s Raspberry Farm was the only Ohio producer awarded a VAPG grant in 2014.

There is tremendous opportunity for more Ohio producers to tap into this funding and grow their value-added businesses. Now is the time to start asking questions and planning to submit your application. The announcement for new VAPG applications is expected in January. For more information, visit http://www.rurdev.usda.gov/BCP_VAPG.html.