Michigan Organic Connections

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In This Issue:

Greetings—

Fortunate ones we are—to be free from serious want while experiencing this autumn on a spectacularly beautiful slice of planet earth. Each of these days is a gift to cherish and share.

Have recently returned from an inspiring weekend in Detroit attending the Great Lakes Bioneers Detroit Conference – www.glbd.org, www.bioneers.org. A gem of a gathering, unfortunately very “off the radar”. Underappreciated, but worthy of your attention; calendar for 2016?

Very few endeavors in life equal the satisfaction and fulfillment derived from beginning life anew with seeds one has grown, harvested, cleaned and saved. Continuing the lineage from one season to the next—while cradling the possibility of perpetuating a generational flow. There are some very compelling and eloquent seed saving articles within this autumn newsletter!

As one of the truly wonderful beings of our time sang “All things must pass - All things must pass away”. Very appropriate words to phrase the end of my tenure as chair of your MOFFA board of directors at year's end. Without any hesitation to proclaim, it has been a true honor and privilege to serve these last few years in this capacity. Immediate responsibilities and needs, both personal and family related, must now take precedence. I will continue to serve as an active board member.

Positive change is good and essential. For a time now new vision and new energy have been in order. Circumstances now force what a hesitant nature was reluctant to admit. Michigan Organic Food and Farm Alliance will always be an integral part of this individual’s life. MOFFA is, and has been for decades, an organization with an notable catalogue of accomplished work by a wonderful collective of many, many talented and dedicated persons.

Masanobu Fukuoka, the One Straw Revolutionary philosopher, when initially approaching a particular piece of land would pose the question—"What does the land need?" In parting, a simple thought for all to contemplate—What does MOFFA need? Your input and insight will carry us forward!

Enjoy,
John

For 40 years John Hooper has been an advocate and practitioner of the organic method of food production. He joined MOFFA's Board of Directors in 2009 and currently serves as Chair.

On Farm Seed Selection: Growing Toward Resilience

by John Edgerton and Amy Newday

We each began saving seeds long before we met and for somewhat different reasons: John out of a concern for the diminishing diversity of our food crops and Amy mostly just for fun. In the years that we've been growing vegetables together, though, seed selection and saving has become increasingly important to our small community-supported farm. We have several reasons for spending time and energy on seeds. As small-scale growers, it is important for us to keep our expenses low and saving our own seeds helps with that. We've also found that our seeds have higher germination rates and produce more vigorous seedlings than many of the seeds we purchase. This saves us time we might otherwise spend in reseeding or nursing weak seedlings.

Saving seed also allows us to select for traits we like and to ensure that we've got a secure supply of seeds of our favorite rare varieties. As organic growers, we rely heavily on varietal resistance to contend with pests and diseases. The less we have to coddle a crop through a pest or disease outbreak, the more time and energy we have for other things. Planting organically grown seeds that are likely to produce crops which will exhibit resistance under organic production is important, of course. Saving our own seeds allows us to take this principle a step further and select seeds from plants that thrive under the specific conditions at our farm and that possess multiple traits we value.

All this is not to say that integrating seed saving into an already-complicated CSA production plan is easy! We're far from producing a majority of our seeds, but each year we save a few more. There are many resources available for learning the technicalities of seed selection and saving (Suzanne Ashworth's Seed to Seed and Carol Deppe's Breed Your Own Vegetable Varieties are two of our favorites), so we won't go into those in this article. But here are a few general strategies that have worked for us as we've included seed saving in our yearly farm plans:

1. **Start with self-pollinating plants.** Saving seeds from self-pollinating plants was an obvious place to start. Tomatoes, peppers, and beans topped our first list of seeds to save.

2. **Isolate through distance and/or staggered plantings.** Our gardens are surrounded by conservation plantings and pollinator populations are high. Since we were concerned that even some of the self-pollinating crops might be crossed by heavy insect activity, we used time and distance to separate varieties. For example, we planted two varieties of pole beans along the same long trellis, then selected seeds from plants at either end where they were furthest from the other variety. Since corn can so easily be crossed by wind, we isolated it by time rather than distance. We planted our sweet corn and popcorn in the same block, but staggered the planting dates so that each crop would pollinate at a different time. (In addition, we made sure our planting was a good distance from GMO corn and further separated from it by woods and several hedgerows.)

3. **Hand-pollinate when necessary.** We had planned to isolate the squash varieties we wanted seed from this year by planting them in distant gardens. Unfortunately, the rains this past spring made one of our main gardens inaccessible and an emergency reshuffle of the production maps left all of the squashes in one block. Rather than give up on squash seeds for the year, we decided to hand-pollinate. This took an extra commitment of time and energy, but it also increased the quality of our attention to the squash crop, as we were in the field on regular mornings and evenings to monitor blooms and fruit set.

4. **Overwinter a few biennials each year.** The importance of having a secure seed source for our favorite varieties hit home two years ago when we couldn't find a commercial source for one of our staple heirloom kales. Fortunately, we had a bed of it overwintering in our hoophouse, so we let it flower and produce seed. Since then, we've picked one kale variety each year to overwinter for seed production. A side benefit is that those first spring kale shoots are super-tasty!

5. **Set aside time for observation and selection.** In order to make seed selections that will improve the varieties we grow, we try to set aside regular times to examine the plants we are growing for seed and to make note of those exhibiting characteristics we like. We've found that it works best if we don't try to combine this with other production-oriented tasks like cultivating or harvesting, since we usually get distracted and fail to make good observations.

6. **Enjoy the surprises.** When late blight swept through our heirloom tomato patch in September 2014, we were surprised to look down a tomato trellis hung with brown vines and see a patch of green. It was the Ruby Gold tomatoes, cheerfully ripening a few last fruits. This year, two anomalous plants showed up in our row of open pollinated red slicing tomatoes. One had tomatoes that looked like Ruby Golds, just slightly redder. The other plant had fruits the same size and shape as Ruby Gold, but pink rather than marbled gold and red. The pink tomatoes had a wonderful, sweet flavor and both plants showed some resistance to late blight. What happened? Did we mix up our seeds? Entirely possible, but where did that pink tomato come from? Did last year's Ruby Golds, which tend to have extended pistils, cross with a red slicer? We don't know, but it will be fun to grow these seeds out for a couple of generations to see what we get. We're hoping for more of those delicious pink tomatoes!

7. **Collaborate and Cooperate.** This past summer we were fortunate to be participants in two Northern Plains Sustainable Agriculture Society Farm Breeding Club projects: one aimed at producing an early, flavorful zucchini with powdery mildew resistance and the other at creating an early, determinate, tasty paste tomato. Along with thirty other participants across the country, we grew out the seeds sent to us according to project coordinator Frank Kutka's instructions and selected seeds to return to him for next year's round of grow-outs. We found sorting through the phenotypic diversity of the F2 tomatoes especially interesting and it was fun to share experiences and photos with the other growers. We like the idea that our collaboration with thirty strangers might lead to new and valuable plant varieties.

Maybe this last point on collaboration and cooperation helps us consider some closing thoughts. With climate change, we face some big unknowns. But most of us care about the health of our soil food web and we know that it is one feedback loop that we can influence. We honor our seeds by remembering that when we release them into the soil they immediately begin cooperating and collaborating with microbes and fungi. So maybe we should ask ourselves: is there a deeper dialogue that we as farmers need to undertake around seeds and genetic diversity? How might we collaborate with our crops and with each other to prepare to meet the challenges of the future? What could we do in Michigan to increase the varieties well-suited to growing organically in our region and to ensure that we have access to the genetic material necessary to adapt these crops to future conditions?

There are some terrific models of farmers, gardeners, and researchers working together on developing seeds for organic growing conditions in different regions of the country that we could re-imagine to meet our needs here in Michigan. And certainly there is much wisdom to learn as well from the people indigenous to this region. We recently attended the Gun Lake Potawatomi Community's Fall Harvest Festival, which included a seed exchange of traditionally-grown varieties. The reverence and care we saw demonstrated toward the seeds of these crops reminded us of botanist Robin Wall Kimmerer's description of the farmer as the fourth sister in the traditional Native American "three sisters" plantings of corn, beans, and squash. "We are midwives to their gifts," she writes.

There is good and exciting midwifery to be done. We need more focus on biennial vegetables and there are perennial varieties that have great potential for selection as well. The rising demand for specialty cereal grains could open opportunities to trial and select those best suited for our region. The list could go on. Perhaps the time is right for Michigan farmers, gardeners, and plant breeders to come together and create a new vision concerning the sacred seed.

John Edgerton and Amy Newday are MOFFA members and operate Harvest of Joy Farm LLC in Shelbyville, Michigan.

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Saving Seed: Getting Started

by Leah Smith of Nodding Thistle

Why save seed? They say the bottom line is money, and you certainly can save that if you save seed. Some seed can be costly indeed and the saving of even a portion of the money spent on seed can be useful. But before you get down to the bottom line, there are many other reasons for seed saving that make it a worthwhile pursuit.

One can be forced into the need to save seed so that you can raise a variety of crop that isn't available elsewhere and that you are particularly fond of. For example, we have a variety of sweet pepper we grow that we have to save seed for simply because it is a scarce heirloom variety that was no longer available for sale in the United States the last time we looked. Some of the tomato varieties we grow came to us from Mom's family and so are unique to our family. I am sure that somewhere there is a similar tomato being handed down another family line and going by another name, but to have our family's tomato seed, we must save it ourselves.

Another reason to save seed could be you particularly wish to select and improve on a variety, and to hopefully create a product with superior traits, such as taste, size, appearance, growth speed, tolerance of various weather conditions, or better productivity, under your local conditions. In other words, you don't yet have the variety you want, but you are on your way to creating a variety tailored to your region. Even with tomato varieties we already like very much, it is always the case that you select the nicest looking, preferred size, and earliest ripening tomatoes as you save your seed.

An additional motivation may be you would like to further diversify your farm plan by not only selling produce but selling seed as well. There are a lot of produce growers out there, or at least that is the way it can seem at times. You don't always need to put all of your eggs in one basket. And after all, urban gardens are booming and people have to get their seed somewhere. You also have an edge in selling if you can offer up tried and true varieties with a little bit of first hand experience.

Or perhaps you want to save seed because you like a challenge. It provides an extra level of satisfaction for a gardener and another component to your self-sufficiency (for those interested). You thought getting a good crop of produce was tricky? It is only the first step on the way to getting a good seed crop. Your seed crop must grow and have desirable traits, the seeds must be fully mature before you harvest them, you must separate the seed from its surroundings successfully and appropriately, dry the seed, and store it correctly. Bear in mind that the difficulty of seed saving can vary greatly from crop to crop. Is your target crop self-fertile? Does it produce viable seed in one season or is it, for example, a biennial like carrots and lettuce that needs more than one growing season before you get seed? Are insects required for successful pollination, in which case you will probably want to use a physical barrier to prevent visiting bugs from carrying in unintended pollen? Just how challenged do you want to be!

The prospect of saving seed may seem intimidating. Knowledge will be a great comfort here. If you plan to save seed to sustain a meaningful portion of your seed stores or for sale, and not just as a novel exercise, make sure you read up on the subject with a book that details the requirements for every plant in turn. There are many things to keep in mind. For example, location is important as isolation is required to prevent contamination of your seed stock. That is isolation of your target variety from other varieties of the same plant species (both yours and your neighbors', depending on proximity), other species of the same plant family (both yours and your neighbors', depending on proximity), and wild plant relatives. Timing is important. The seed you save must be fully mature to be viable. You must be ready to protect your seed crop for a very long season. What else? You'll find out.

If this all sounds a bit scary, remember that there is a difference between maintaining a pure seed line to preserve a variety and to possibly sell it as such, or simply to give yourself a mostly pure seed line for your own use. For resale, seed plots require greater isolation and you will need the space and/or physical barriers to achieve this. Seed for yourself alone does not need to be as strictly maintained. If a little bit of stray pollen gets in and you have a small percentage of untrue seed, no great tragedy will befall you, you haven't guaranteed a variety to anyone. Save your seed from the specimen you want and eat the rest. Or maybe you will discover something new and different and worth keeping as well.

Here are a few ideas of baby steps that you can try as you break into seed saving to help make the leap less scary, all of which are done on our farm. Get into the habit of seed saving with some "non-essential" crops. Cosmos and zinnia flowers or dill, for example. If you manage to mess up, the results won't be dire for your pantry and the pressure isn't so great for you. Besides, they are really easy to collect seed from. There are ways to save seed without saving "seeds" at all. Saving planting stock for the asexual reproduction of potatoes, shallots, multiplier onions, topsetting onions, or garlic can help get you into the right mind set without the required expertise. Another way is to let your plants do the seed saving themselves. Leaf crops are particularly good for this. Lettuce, kale, mustard greens, and arugula, for example, can be left out in the field to go to seed when you are done harvesting off your planting. They can self seed and come up later. You can dig up plants and replant these volunteers into rows, or treat your area as a perennial bed. Thanks to this method, we never need to plant claytonia or mache in our hoophouse anymore, but we still have it every year. After all, this method of "seed saving" certainly works for the weeds!

So remember, why you are saving seed affects how you do it. Is it for yourself or for resale? Is it meant to be a great challenge or a fairly doable procedure? Bear your motives in mind while you are deciding which seeds you will save for financial gain, for better production, and for posterity's sake!

—Leah Smith

Leah Smith is a Michigan State alumna (B.S., Crop and Soil Sciences) and a MOFFA member. She works at Nodding Thistle, her family's farm, which has a history of organic gardening and farm marketing since 1984.

Legacy of Saved Seeds

by Jessie Smith of Nodding Thistle

On our farm, seed, or planting stock, is saved in many ways from many crops. The fields easily produce enough grain to feed the livestock for a year and plant next year's crop. This forms a landrace of wheat and oats adapted to our land and growing practices. In the garden, more attention is required but again it is easy to produce a crop for sale and seed for the next year. Garlic planting stock is easily selected. As the dry stalks are cut off, the largest and most beautiful heads are set aside for replanting. Planting garlic cloves doesn't involve seeds, of course, but the result is the same. Seeds from flowers are easily collected in the fall. As the days shorten, the rows of cosmos, zinnias, and calendula begin to mature their seeds and dry. It is merely a matter of waiting for the dew to dry and then pinching the seeds off the large heads, usually between noon and 1 p.m. Dill seed is collected this way, too, but we needn't wait for fall for the dill seed to mature.

The other plants we save seed from are peppers and tomatoes. As you know, this is a family with a large number of species and varieties. We have a rotation with which certain pepper variety seed stocks are maintained, and when it is their seed year the plants are isolated and the fruit allowed to mature. The seed is then dried indoors and put away for next year. Some of these varieties can be found in seed catalogs and the names may be familiar to you. Ho Chi Minh, for example, is often in Fedco seeds, but during the times when they have a crop failure we already have our seed. Sometimes the motivation to save our seeds is simply that the variety we want cannot be found through commercial channels. Doe Hill is a sweet, orange pepper with thick walls we got from a grower in Canada, before the border was closed to seeds. This is a pepper we love to eat, and to keep it going we have to maintain the seed ourselves.

The subject of variety names is a good way to introduce the final crop we save seed for, tomatoes, and this is really where the story of seed saving on our farm began. At last count we grow about 24 tomato varieties and we save seed from them all. Paste and canning, currant and cherry, red slicers and heirlooms. Kellogg's Breakfast, Heinz 1350, Pruden's Purple, San Marzano. Many are varieties we bought and now we maintain the varieties as

they adapt to our farm. However, the names that really tell the story are Mr. Patterson, Grandma Prall, Johnny Sutton, and Grandma Oliver. These are all different tomatoes named for the people who saved the seed and passed them on. Grandma Prall was my great-great-grandmother and Mr. Patterson her neighbor; Grandma Oliver was her daughter and my great-grandmother, and the person who passed these four varieties on to my mother, who has been maintaining them for the past 30 years.

The tomatoes are as different as the people who loved them and passed them on. Grandma Prall and Mr. Patterson are both large yellow tomatoes with pink in the middle, but Grandma is large and lighter of color while Mr. Patterson has a darker pink streak. Grandma Prall lived on a farm in southern Indiana where she raised 4 children. In photos she was seldom out of a cotton dress or off the farm. I have never seen a photo of Mr. Patterson but I can assume that his similar tomato binds him to Grandma Prall with a mutual love of tomatoes and a life in the country. Johnny Sutton's seeds were found in a small bottle in Grandma Oliver's house where they had been kept for a long time. Mom, upon finding these seeds, asked Grandma Oliver who she got them from and she provided the name Johnny Sutton. When grown out it was found to be a large pink tomato with potato leaves and, most likely, a Jeff Davis tomato. But this was the tomato that Mr. Sutton wanted to share with a friend. Last, but not least, is Grandma Oliver. A very surprising fruit, much like the grandmother I never knew. This tomato is green when ripe and so very sweet. An unusual tomato, its namesake was an unusual woman and she liked to eat many unusual things. Her husband once joked that he could let her out of the house in the spring to graze across the lawn as she went after the first dandelion greens. My mother has told me that she could eat all parts of a chicken leaving behind only the feathers and the feet and that she carried her paring knife in her purse, honed down to a narrow blade after many years of use. Sensing a kindred tomato-loving spirit in her granddaughter, she presented Mom with the seeds of her tomato one day saying, "Here you'll like this. It's a green tomato."

As we plant these tomatoes year after year these are the things that I think of. The repetition brings people that I never knew to life. They were passing on something that they thought was worthwhile or special, but they also passed on a part of themselves. This is the legacy I have received from heirloom tomatoes that are actually family heirlooms. All seeds that are saved can provoke this same experience if you stop to think about the people who put their time into that seed. More than the actual seeds, it also preserves an independent spirit that is the backbone of sustainable farming.

—Jessie Smith

Jessie Smith is a Michigan State alumna (B.S., Crop and Soil Sciences; M.S. Entomology) and a MOFFA member. She works at Nodding Thistle, her family's farm, that has a history of organic gardening and farm marketing since 1984.

Seed Selection and Saving: How Do We Learn?

by John Biernbaum

I hope you enjoyed the previous articles about the "why" and "how" of seed selection and saving as much as I did. On the one hand, my perception is that as citizens of the United States, we are very fortunate to have access to high quality and reasonably priced grain, vegetable, herb and flower seed. Access to certified organic seed is perhaps not where we would like it, but it appears that availability is increasing. On the other hand, there are many reasons why we still need to be concerned about the very limited availability of locally saved seeds.

Given all the tasks, responsibilities and priorities of the small scale diversified farmer or home gardener, one might wonder whether there is room to add the task of seed selection and saving to the list. Isn't that something that we can just let the seed companies do? Isn't a farmer's time better spent on income generating tasks and spending money to purchase seeds from the experts? Or a gardener's time better spent gardening?

There are many tasks that not everyone needs to know how to do, but more of us need to know how to select and save seed. Is not selecting and saving seed a basic food and farming sacred right and responsibility along with access to and caring for land and water? Is it something that we can just leave to someone else to do?

If you can find the time to select and save some seeds, a first step is to learn more about how to select seeds with the traits you want and with appropriate genetic diversity. A second step is to allow the seed to mature to the

proper stage and harvest the appropriate fruiting structure. For most of us that means scheduling some discipline/study time.

For those who like to read, ***The Organic Seed Grower: A Farmer's Guide to Vegetable Seed Production*** by John Navazio is a good source of information (1st edition, 2012, 388 pages, available from Chelsea Green Publishing for $49.95). There are also some free on-line resources at the sites that follow. You can support organizations and companies that intentionally select and save seed and make them available for others.

Seed Savers Exchange is a tax-exempt, 501(c)3 non-profit organization dedicated to the preservation of heirloom seeds (www.seedsavers.org). As the name suggests, the organization started as a resource for seed-saving members to exchange seeds with others like-minded growers. Today, members can interact with and procure seeds from "hundreds of 'Listed Members' who grow and save over 13,000 fruit, grain, and vegetable varieties to offer to other members." The organization also grows and sells a wide variety of heirloom seeds at the Heritage Farm headquarters in Decorah Iowa. Under the education tab on the website there are links to webinars about seed saving, and a drop down menu of many crops with basic seed saving recommendations.

The Organic Seed Alliance (www.seedalliance.org) "advances the ethical development and stewardship of the genetic resources of agricultural seed. We believe seed is part of our common cultural heritage – a living, natural resource that demands careful management to meet food needs now and into the future. We accomplish our mission through research, education, and advocacy." Under the publications tab they offer many useful publications including A Seed Saving Guide for Gardeners and Farmers. They are seeking to build regional seed expertise and organizations have been formed in three regions. The Midwest does not have a regional seed system yet but there is no reason one could not start here in Michigan.

The Organic Seed Growers and Trade Association (www.osgata.org) is "a national non-profit membership organization committed to protecting, promoting, and developing the organic seed trade and its growers, thereby assuring that the organic community has access to excellent quality organic seed, free of genetic contaminants and adapted to the diverse needs of local organic agriculture." At their website there is information about members and links to publications that identify sources of organic seed.

The 8th Organic Seed Growers' Conference, co-sponsored by Organic Seed Growers and Trade Association and Organic Seed Alliance is scheduled for February 4-6, 2016, in Corvallis, Oregon.

Are we ready for an educational program about seed selection and saving here in Michigan? Sounds like the authors of the earlier newsletter articles think so. Let us know if you are interested in helping organize a session or attending a session.

— John Biernbaum

Dr. John Biernbaum is Professor of Horticulture at MSU, one of the founders of the MSU Student Organic Farm, and Vice-Chair of MOFFA's Board of Directors.

The Great Lakes Expo: From Organic Production to Markets to High Tunnels … Something for Everyone!

by Vicki Morrone

If you have never been to the Great Lakes Fruit and Vegetable and Farmers Market Expo you should really try and attend! Whether you are a beginning or established farmer, farming sustainably or certified organic, there are sessions for you. On December 8th to 10th at the DeVos Center in Grand Rapids you can choose which sessions to attend—and the decision will not be easy. It offers so much information on fruit and vegetable production, business management, marketing strategies, pest management, food safety ... and the list goes on. The program is designed for farmers and agriculture entrepreneurs seeking new and better ways to manage their farm, farm markets, hoophouses, and even food safety. The registration price is very reasonable too. While the price does not include food or parking it offers 3 days of incredible sessions that you do not have to choose in advance! When you are not attending an educational session you can tour the HUMONGOUS trade show. It offers displays of small and large farm equipment, testing facilities, farm market goods (as well as MANY tastings), and of course non-profit organizations—including MOFFA.

Guaranteed something for everyone! If you want to attend the full program it's only $80 (Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday). If you wish to attend only on Thursday, which offers information tracks on organic production, biological control of insects, and farm marketing then the cost is only $45. **You can check out the specific sessions and register online at glexpo.org. Preregister by Nov 18 to get this discount and have your registration mailed to you.**

The organic track this year offers experienced farmers sharing their successes and challenges, and researchers providing descriptions of their research and how it can help improve farming systems. In the table below are the organic sessions for Thursday. But remember, there are other sessions throughout the week that have relevance to organic farming too. Check out the full agenda at glexpo.org.

Here are the organic focused sessions for Thursday. We hope to see you during this great program!

Thursday morning 9:00 am		Thursday morning 9:00 am	
Getting Started in Organic Vegetable Production		**Organic Opportunities and Markets**	
9:00	**Tillage Practices and Perceptions on MI Organic Farms: Results from A Grower Survey** with Carolyn Lowry, Horticulture Dept., MSU. The results of farmers from Michigan will be shared and summarized to demonstrate approaches certified and non-certified farmers are using to manage their weeds.	**9:00**	**The Story of Building Monroe Family Organics** with Fred Monroe, Monroe Family Organics, Alma, MI. The experiences, challenges, and successes of taking a wet grass field and turning it into a successful self-sustaining certified organic farm in Alma, MI. This presentation will discuss the values, business structure, and farming techniques that we have used to make our farm and our hopes for the future.
9:45	**Identifying New Markets and Meeting Their Demands**–Farmer Panel: What markets (market types) do they sell their produce? Panel members will share their unique approaches to marketing and the story behind this: • How did you secure that market? • What do you grow for that market? • How did you choose the crop and variety? • What are the expectations for the market (product, delivery, paperwork, logistics)? With Chef Ryan Reynolds, Buyer of Organic Produce for Hospitals in Grand Rapids, MI; Pooh Stevenson, Direct Sales (including flowers), Owosso Organics, Owosso, MI; Anthony Cinzori, Wholesale Market Sales, Cinzori Farms, Ceresco, MI	**10:15**	**Four Season Farming at River Root Farm** with Mike Bollinger, River Root Farm, Decorah, IA. River Root Farm is a family-owned certified organic vegetable farm nestled in a hillside within the city limits of Decorah, Iowa, with a focus on small scale intensive vegetable production, seedling sales, fall/winter CSA, seed production, and our specialty - MICROGREENS! We believe that healthy soil makes healthy food, which in turn creates healthy communities.
11:25	Session Ends	**11:30**	Session Ends

Thursday afternoon 1:00 pm		Thursday afternoon 1:00 pm	
Current Issues in Organic Fruit Production		**Organic Vegetable Production and Management**	
1:00	**Building Fruitful Soils in the Steppes of the Rockies** with Steve Ela, Ela Family Farms, Hotchkill, CO	**1:00**	**Insect Pest Management and Organic Pest Product Evaluation for Organic Vegetables** with Alan Schreiber, Executive Director, Washington Asparagus Commission. Researcher will share results of field studies to identify best management practices to reduce pest problems in vegetables, including an evaluation of organic insecticides. As an organic farmer and ag consultant he will share how he successfully manages most pests in his organic wholesale and retail operation, selling to organic markets across the State of Washington.
2:00	**Unraveling Decay Cycles in Orchard Soils** with Jason Matlock, Entomology Dept., MSU and Matt Grieshop, Entomology Dept., MSU.	**1:40**	**Evaluation of Biodegradable Mulches** with Carol Miles, Horticulture Dept., Washington State University. Learn how different biodegradable mulch films are effective to prevent weeds, their ease of use and ability to degrade after they have been tilled into the soil, as their name implies. Data will be shared from field research studies, and discussion will include the current status of NOP regarding bio-degradable mulches.
2:20	**An Overview of Organic Pesticide Options for Spotted Wing Drosophila Management** with Alan Schreiber, Executive Director, Washington Asparagus Commission.	**2:20**	**Weed Management Approaches in Organic Systems** with Dave Mortensen, Weed and Applied Plant Ecology, Pennsylvania State University. Balancing the pros and cons, based on levels of management intensity and effectiveness. Practices will be discussed based on recounts of different systems from organic farmers in Pennsylvania.
3:00	Session Ends	**3:00**	Session Ends

Vicki Morrone is organic field crop and vegetable outreach specialist with the Center for Regional Food Systems at MSU, and has been a MOFFA board member since 2009.

MOFFA Meet and Greet at GLEXPO

Wednesday, December 9, 2015
4:30 pm to 6:30 pm
Vandenburg Room, Amway Grand Plaza Hotel, Grand Rapids

All attendees at GLEXPO are invited to join this fun event. You will have the chance to meet organic farmers and representatives of organic businesses, and learn about upcoming organic events. MOFFA is sponsoring this event to encourage established organic farmers to share experiences, new farmers to explore, and ag businesses to embrace organic production needs. Of course, there will be samples of local organic food and cider for you to enjoy, as well as a cash bar! Please join us for this fun (and a little bit educational) event just before the EXPO banquet.

MOFFA will also be in booth #1413 in the exhibition hall all three days (December 8-10). Stop by and see us, take a look at the Farm Guide, and have the opportunity to buy from a selection of great books about organic farming and food.

A Farewell to Ivan Morley

by Vicki Morrone

Many of you may have known Ivan Morley, an ambitious organic field crop farmer from Standish, Michigan. He passed away August 31, 2015, at age 71, at his home in Standish with his wife Diane and other family members by his side. He was a fun loving guy and took great pride in his crop yields, often surpassing his conventional neighbors. He will be missed by all of us for his ideas, energy, wit, and of course strong opinions. You could count on Ivan to always cut to the chase when he had a position about anything, whether it was farming, the government, Michigan State University, or the color of the walls!

I got to know Ivan when I rounded up him and two other organic farmers to be part of a Farmer/Rancher SARE grant to test organic soybean and corn varieties. A few years later I asked him to give a talk at the Organic Reporting Session, an annual program that shares research that relates to Michigan organic production. He gave a talk that I will not forget, expressing how he managed the medium red clover, often called Michigan red clover. Of course when I asked if he wanted any help to put it together, I expected to get an email. Well emails were not his thing. If he needed help he may call you, but I didn't count on it so I persisted to call him until I was lucky enough to get him, often on the combine when neither of us could hear one another. His presentation was all written out by hand, probably on his grandkids' school paper. He shared a good account of building his soil and how "hurting" the clover in the winter allowed him to get it incorporated sooner in the spring, as soon as Mother Nature would let him get on the field.

So Ivan created a fun memory for me as a rabble rouser, always game for a lively conversation and a chance to share his passion for his farming, his family and for Michigan State University. He was a graduate from MSU's Agriculture Short Course and was very proud to be an alumnus of the home of the Spartans.

MOFFA News

MOFFA Vice-Chair John Biernbaum has been appointed to a 16-member NOP task force to explore hydroponic and aquaponic production practices and their alignment with USDA organic regulations. You can read more about this at the NOSB Task Forces page.

Dr. George Bird, who served on MOFFA's Board of Directors from 2002 to 2010, has been honored as one of two “NCR-SARE Heroes” for 2015. This recognition honors the leadership, vision, contributions, and impact that these heroes have made in the field of sustainable agriculture in the north central region. Read more about this award, and Dr. Bird, at the North Central SARE website.

Newsletter – The next issue of the newsletter will focus on the economics of organic farming. If you'd like to contribute an article on that or any other topic, or if you'd like to be alerted of future opportunities to contribute to the newsletter, please let us know.

Keep up with MOFFA on our website: www.moffa.net, or email us at moffaorganic@gmail.com.

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