



## Great Plains Growers Conference Slated For St. Joseph Mo.

BROOKINGS — Growers from across the Great Plains are invited to attend the Great Plains Growers Conference and Trade Show Jan. 10-12 at the Fulkerson Center on Missouri Western State University campus in St. Joseph, Mo.

"Interesting and useful information will be presented on production and marketing of vegetables, cut flowers and fruit," said Geoffrey Njue, SDSU Extension Specialty Crops Field Specialist. "It doesn't matter if you are an experienced commercial vegetable grower or someone with just a dream about starting to grow and sell produce, there will be something for you."

The conference and trade show is a collaborative effort of growers associations and University Extension from South Dakota, Iowa, Kansas, Missouri and Nebraska. Each year this conference draws hundreds of producers from the region and beyond.

On Jan. 10 the conference kicks off with six day-long workshops that growers can choose from.

The high tunnel workshop features presentations by experienced growers, and research and extension specialists from our region. High tunnels provide critical crop protection and season extension. Come and hear the experiences of high tunnel growers, energy ideas, building a Chinese greenhouse, and updates on high tunnel research.

The soils and irrigation workshop features Neal Kinsey, soil fertility specialist, along with keynote speaker Jeff Lowenfels, author of "Teaming With Microbes: The Organic Gardener's Guide to The Soil Food Web." Rounding out the afternoon are Craig Pisarkiewicz, certified irrigation designer, and research updates on compost, soil health and vegetable irrigation.

This year's fruit workshop features Greg Lang, Michigan State University, specialist on cherry and high tunnel fruit production. Craig Pisarkiewicz, certified irrigation designer, will discuss orchard irrigation systems and equipment.

This year's honeybee workshop will address advanced beekeeping topics, including anatomy of honeybees, pollination requirements, varroa mites, colony collapse, pesticides, drought and introduction to queen rearing. Come prepared to learn, discuss, and ask

questions. The advanced workshop will be of interest to all, no matter what your level of expertise. A short basic beekeeping session will also be offered on Friday for those who are new to beekeeping.

New this year is an Introduction to Vegetable Production workshop for Spanish speakers — presented in Spanish. Topics to be covered include site selection, preparation and maintenance; marketing; working with other producers; introduction to integrated pest management; incorporating small animals into specialty crop farms; and considerations for small fruit production.

Finally, and also new this year, is a Farm to School workshop, presented by experienced Farm to School growers and state program leaders. Learn the basics of the program, along with business opportunities, and what school food service directors need from growers.

Six concurrent sessions on Jan. 11-12 provide more than 60 presentations on a wealth of subjects related to organic and conventional crop production. In addition to presentations on vegetable production and marketing, there will be tracks on small fruit, tree fruit, cut flowers, beginner and advanced organic, marketing, beekeeping and sessions on urban horticulture and community gardens.

"The trade show is a big draw for conference participants" said Tom Fowler, Buchanan County Extension Specialist. "We had 50 booth spaces last year that filled the Fulkerson Conference Center and expect the same this year."

The conference is going to be held at the Fulkerson Conference Center on the Missouri Western State University campus in St. Joseph, Mo. The headquarter hotels are the Ramada Inn, 4016 Frederick, 816-233-6192 or Stoney Creek Inn, 1201 Woodbine 816-901-9600.

A full program, registration information and updated details of the conference can be found at the conference website: <http://www.greatplainsgrowers.org> for more information about the program and a registration form, contact Mary Beth Alpers at [alpersm@missouri.edu](mailto:alpersm@missouri.edu) phone (816) 279-1691.

BY RITA BRHEL  
P&D Correspondent

Getting into farming is not cheap. The average farm tractor, even used, can cost as much as a house. Not only are beginning farmers contending with a lack of experience and knowledge but they also typically have very little capital to make needed purchases or the collateral to get loans.

Brian Bagge knows this all too well.

The 24-year-old from Worthington, Iowa, pays his bills by truck-driving but his heart is in farming. He grew up on his parents' 170-acre diversified crop and livestock farm, and while his parents provide guidance, they aren't planning on retiring any time soon so Bagge is largely on his own financially — the biggest barrier to beginning farmers today. So far, Bagge has acquired 20 acres of crop ground and a combine for a custom corn and soybean harvesting business. He also buys dairy steers as bottle calves to sell as feeders.

Bagge has a long wish list of farm machinery — a 15-foot stalk chopper and grain cart for his custom work, as well as a tractor and field cultivator for his own use. In his long-term plans are a land purchase and leasing, and starting a commercial dairy operation.

One of Bagge's mentors, Jeff Olson of Winfield, Iowa, has been farming diversified crops and beef cattle for the past 35 years. After the crops are harvested, Olson builds grain bins and equipment sheds for area farmers for supplemental cash until the next growing season. Olson commends Bagge for setting goals and fitting future purchases in with his plans, but he warns that succeeding as a beginning farmer takes more than avoiding impulse purchases. Beginning farmers also need to learn how to navigate used farm machinery sales.

"Most machinery sales are either a farm sale, where someone is selling out, or an estate auction, where someone died," Olson said. "Either way, you might find out you're buying someone else's problems."

Another beginning farmer that Olson mentors said his uncle learned this the hard way: "He thought he got a good deal on a tractor at \$22,000," said Ryan Sieck of Toddville, Iowa. "He had to put \$20,000 into it to rebuild all the guts."

Bagge laughed, saying that his father tells him the same thing. "He calls it the 'used equipment' expense. Instead of paying for a new combine, I'm paying the difference in repairs and parts," Bagge said.

On a serious note, Olson said this not only wastes time and money for farmers but "when considering older equipment, such as used tractors, you have to keep in mind the safety factor. You have to look out for broken welds or other weak spots, so you don't get hurt, because you're the most important thing on the farm."

But if farmers know what to look for in used machinery purchases, they can get some great deals, Olson said. Here are some tips:

- Research options. Machinery sales can be through local auctions or private sales, but many farmers find what they're looking for online. Try these sites for starts: TractorForum.com, TalkNewAgTalk.com, TheCombineForum.com, Farmchat.com, and USFarmer.com.
- Settle for an older-style piece when everyone else is up-

# Getting Started

## For New Farmers, The Right Equipment Is Vital – And Costly

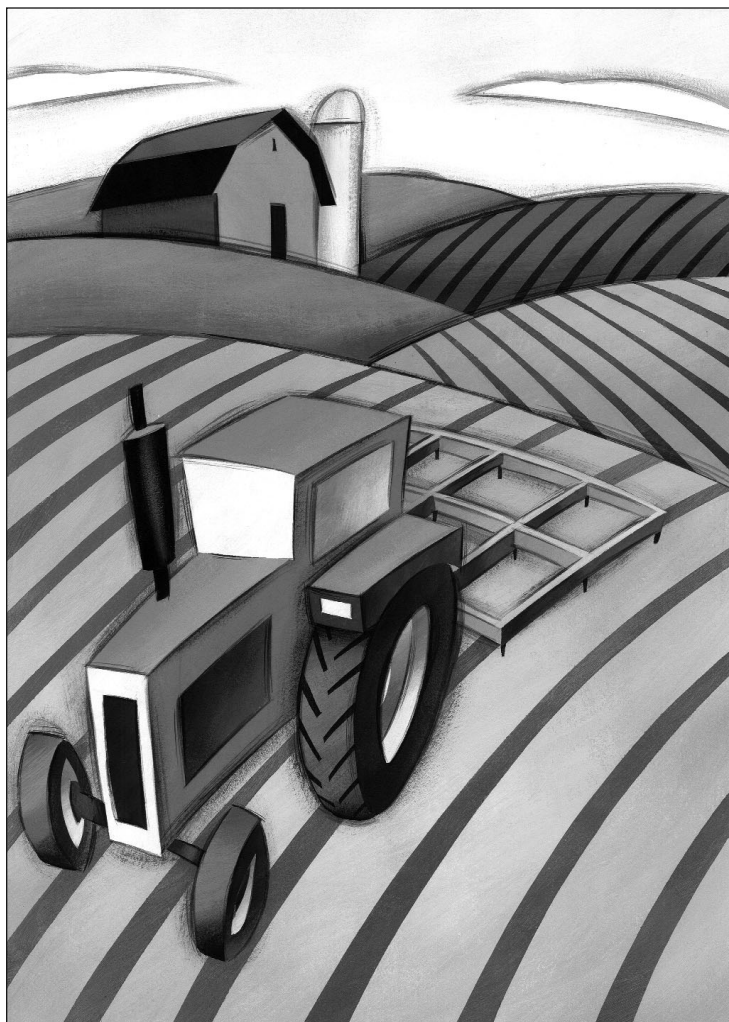


IMAGE: METRO GRAPHICS

grading their equipment. When his neighbors went to 24-row planters, Olson got a 16-row at a cut rate that worked just as well for his operation. "There's an old saying to run when everybody's walking and walk when everybody's running. I think that might be a good way to go with equipment," he said.

- Balance custom work with own needs. Custom work provides added income, but the equipment is as expensive for custom work as for the home operation, so farmers need to be sure that they have time to do the custom work. And that there is even a need for that custom work; purchasing equipment for a custom job without having any client interest would be a poor decision. "As with custom work in your area, look for a niche," Olson said. "If everyone owns a baler, it's not a good fit for you to buy a baler."
- Consider what others can do for you. Just as those who do custom work, beginning farmers looking to buy equipment should first consider whether it's more cost-effective to hire the work done custom or to share-cost versus spending years to pay off their own purchase. In the same way, farmers may be more keen

to hire custom work if their other operating costs would make it difficult to make payments or if they do not yet own the appropriate storage shed and tools to work on machinery.

- Don't be fooled by fresh paint. Beginning farmers may think that if a piece of equipment is cleaned up, that it's a good buy. They need to be sure to inspect that machinery as thoroughly as they would if it still had dirt from the field or a little rust. "Sometimes when it's all painted up nice, that's a bad sign," Olson said. "Or if it has brand-new oil, you might be suspicious whether they changed it to get the water out of it."
- Don't necessarily discount equipment if need of repair. Farmers can save a lot of money if they can do their own repairs, but they also need to bypass machinery that is beyond their repair knowledge or for which parts are not locally available. "If you know your way with a torch, you can fix bearings," Olson said. "Broken bed frames are a little tough."

- Network with neighboring farmers. The best sales, discounts, and value come from retiring farmers that a beginning farmer has gotten to know over the years. "I've been making a lot of connections with older farmers, and this has been helpful in getting used equipment that I can trust," Bagge said.
- Don't put too much faith into auctioneers. Beginning farmers need to know what they're looking for in equipment, as well as the value of the piece they're trying to buy. "The auctioneer might have it projected, and you figure out that you've been bidding against yourself for a while," Olson said. "Used equipment value can be told by its weight for every single piece of machinery except combines, as that's a more complex, intricate piece."
- Weigh the benefit with the cost. "Sometimes, things come along that you could make a lot more money at, but it's not cheap to invest in the equipment for it," Bagge said. Or, Olson added, "Sometimes, I think I should be growing corn, too, but it's the 'I can't do everything.'"
- When buying new, consider the resale value. With most pieces of equipment, farmers will eventually want to upgrade and then will need to find a way to offload their older machinery. For example, "grain carts are a hot item," said beginning farmer Drew Lietz of Alta, Iowa. "My dad sold his for more than he paid for it after using it for 15 years with very low maintenance." Or, said another way by Olson: "One key with machinery is that, one day, it'll be sold. You have to get your money back some way, so look at the resale value or else you just get the salvage value."
- Look around and decide what would be the best buy first, before jumping down the wish list. This depends on the farm's specific needs to match its goals. For example, Bagge is putting in fence by hand, so the top piece of equipment he's looking for is a post hole digger. Olson, on the other hand, has all of the machinery he needs but his tractor grapple needs a lot of repairs, so he's looking to upgrade. "Don't spend money on stuff that doesn't make you the most money," Olson added. "Everybody's situation is different."
- With all that said, what is the most important equipment for a beginning farmer? According to Olson, a combine and a good tractor.

**Been thinking about getting a will, living will or power of attorney?**

**There is no better time than now.**

**Shreves Law Office**  
General Practice Law Firm  
806 Belfast • Yankton, SD

Brian J. Shreves  
Attorney at Law  
Office: 605-665-2535  
Mobile: 605-215-11AW

South Dakota  CattleWomen

**BEEF GIFT CERTIFICATES**

**ARE ON EVERYONE'S LIST**

- Redeemable anywhere in the U.S. at supermarkets, meat markets & restaurants for American Beef.
- Convenient! Just mail. Send beef certificates and your shopping is done.
- Perfect for gifts to business acquaintances, friends, employees and for Christmas bonuses.
- Available in \$5, \$10, \$20 and \$25 Certificates.
- Also, available at local banks.

Order by mail by sending check to  
SD Cattlewomen, PO Box 451, Winner SD 57580  
Call: 605-842-9066 or email at: [beefcertificates@yahoo.com](mailto:beefcertificates@yahoo.com)

## Winter Beef Show Hosts Beef Skill-A-Thon

BROOKINGS — The Davison County Winter Beef Show will host the second annual Beef Skill-a-thon on Dec. 27, running from 4-6:30 p.m. Youth interested in learning more within the beef project are encouraged to participate in this free event held at the Davison County 4-H Fairgrounds, 3200 West Havens Ave. Mitchell. No pre entry is required.

The Beef Skill-a-thon will test and showcase youth's hands-on knowledge of beef production by having them demonstrate basic cattle handling practices. Youth will complete four stations ranging from (but not limited to) breeding and selection, carcass evaluation, reproduction and animal health.

Top Beef Skill-a-thon scores will be recognized from three age groups following 4-H rules for beginners, juniors, and seniors. Prizes sponsored by local Ag Business will be awarded during the No Fit Showmanship Jackpot Contest that evening.

For more information about the Beef Skill-a-thon contact Megan Nielson, SDSU Extension Youth Livestock Field Specialist, ([megan.nielson@sdstate.edu](mailto:megan.nielson@sdstate.edu)) or the Davison County Extension Office for Davison County Winter Beef Show information ([davison@sdstate.edu](mailto:davison@sdstate.edu)).



**Tanya Hacecky**

"With sincere thanks and gratitude, I'd like to wish you and your families a memorable holiday season! Thank you for your loyalty, trust, and confidence in me. Best wishes to you in the new year!"



**Vision**  
REAL ESTATE SERVICES  
www.igotvision.com  
4th & Walnut • Yankton, SD • 664-5555



**Share the Spirit**

Left to Right: Cal, Devin, Pat, Stacy, Jennifer, Sheila, Wayne

*Happy Holidays from Edward Jones in Yankton*

508 W. 23rd #1  
Yankton, SD  
665-7912

[www.edwardjones.com](http://www.edwardjones.com) • Member SIPC

220 W. 3rd  
Yankton, SD  
665-4567



**Edward Jones**  
MAKING SENSE OF INVESTING