



Chamber To Host 10th Annual Ag Gala

The Yankton Area Chamber of Commerce Agri-Business Committee is holding the 10th annual Ag Gala on June 30 at the Pine Acres Kiwanis/4H Ice Arena at 709 Whiting Drive.

The Farm Family of the Year Award will be announced along with the eight P.A.Y. Scholarship recipients for 2015 from Crofton, Gayville-Volin, Hartington, Irene/Wakonda, Menno and Yankton.

Lt. Gov. Matt Michels is the master of ceremonies and South Dakota Secretary of Agriculture Lucas Lentsch is a speaker.

The Ag Gala begins at 5 p.m. and features a social hour, a Prime Rib dinner catered by Rollin' Smoke BBQ, a raffle, and a musical program by Vern Kaul, the East River Cowboy.

Sponsorships for this event are still available.

To register for tickets and/or tables of eight or if you are interested in a sponsorship, contact Carmen Bodden at Chamber@yanktonsd.com or 665-3636.

2015 Rural Dakota Pride Noms Sought

HURON — Helping women in her community has been Cindy Wilk's calling for more than 30 years. It began when her mother, Jan Manolis, was among a group of women to open a domestic violence shelter in Huron.

"Domestic violence is something that is very dear to my heart. Years ago there was no place for women to go for help. If they didn't have help from family or friends, there was nothing — no shelters or no counseling," explains Wilk, who serves as a volunteer advocate.

Today, thanks to the Jan Manolis Family Safe Center and numerous volunteer advocates, not only do victims and their children (the shelter also helps men who are abused) have a safe place to stay if they are in an abusive situation, but they also have an advocate to help them move forward. "We make sure they are not alone," Wilk says.

As an advocate, she carries a shelter cell phone for two weeks at a time, answering calls from victims and helping them with anything they need. "We are there to let them know we are on their side."

In 2014, Farmers Union recognized Wilk with the Dakota Rural Pride Award.

"Rural communities depend on these unsung heroes. They are the people who do what needs to be done," says Karla Hofhenke, Executive Director of South Dakota Farmers Union.

Each year, the Rural Dakota Pride Award recognizes five individuals who give back to their rural communities.

As an organization which supports South Dakota farmers and ranchers, Hofhenke explains that Farmers Union understands the integral connection between those who work in South Dakota's number one industry and their rural communities.

"One survives with the other," she says. "Without thriving communities, it's difficult to encourage young people to return to their family's farm or ranch. Rural communities are key to the future of South Dakota's agriculture industry; which is why we like to recognize those individuals who help them thrive."

The 2015 Rural Pride nominations are due July 1.

South Dakota Farmers Union is currently accepting nominations for the 2015 Rural Dakota Pride Awards. Nominations can be submitted via the Farmers Union website, www.sdfu.org, or by contacting Hofhenke at 605-352-6761 ext. 114. The five awards will be presented during Farmers Union Day at the 2015 South Dakota State Fair.

USDA Funding For New Products Offered

WASHINGTON — Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack has announced that USDA is making \$30 million available to farmers, ranchers and food entrepreneurs to develop new product lines. Funding will be made available through USDA's Value-Added Producer Grant (VAPG) program.

"Farmers and ranchers are creative people who, with a little help, can put that creativity to work and improve the bottom line for their operations," Vilsack said. "Value-Added Producer Grants enable them to develop new product lines to grow their businesses and expand their contributions to our nation's economy. This support is especially important for beginning farmers, military veterans engaging in farming and smaller farm operations participating in the local and regional food system."

More information on how to apply is on page 26528 of the May 8 Federal Register. The deadline to submit paper applications is July 7. Electronic applications submitted through grants.gov are due July 2.

VAPG grants can be used to develop new product lines from raw agricultural products or additional uses for already developed product lines. Military veterans, socially disadvantaged, and beginning farmers and ranchers; operators of small- and medium-sized family farms and ranches; farmer and rancher cooperatives; and applicants that propose mid-tier value chain projects are given special priority in applying for VAPGs. Additional priority is given to group applicants who seek funding for projects that "best contribute" to creating or increasing marketing opportunities for these type of operators.

Panel Set For Governor's Ag Summit

PIERRE — Four South Dakota agricultural operations will be represented on a producer panel during Session 3 of the Governor's Agricultural Summit on Friday, July 10, from 1:15-2:45 p.m. in Pine Crest Rooms C and D at the Lodge in Deadwood.

South Dakota's farms and ranches are as varied as the individuals that contribute to the state's agricultural industry. Producers will share details of their unique operations through a panel discussion led by long-time agricultural lender Denny Everson. Conversation will include business successes regarding specialty crops, risk diversification, management decisions and multi-generational operations.

Producers present at the session will span from berry growers to sheep producers.

Panelists are:

- Joshua Kitzan, JHK Sheep, Nisland;
- Jon and Breezy Millar, Millar Angus, Sturgis;
- Brad Nussbaum, Brittany Nussbaum, Cottonwood Ridge Dairy, Garreston;
- Jeff and Jolene Stewart, Stewart's Aronia Acres LLC, Wagner;

Pre-registration is required to attend the Summit and space is limited. To register, and for more information, visit SDAgSummit.com or contact Dani Hanson at danielle.hanson@state.sd.us. This event is free and open to the public. The event will also be livestreamed for those unable to attend via sdda.sd.gov.

"Landowners do not want this invader. It is difficult to control once established. Control yellow flag iris when the infestation is small."

JASON RUST



PHOTO: ANN MURRAY/UNIVERSITY OF FLORIDA

Yellow Invader

Landowners Advised To Watch For Yellow Flag Iris In Their Riparian Areas

BY RITA BRHEL
P&D Correspondent

In the very northwestern corner of Nebraska, in Sioux County, a favorite of many gardeners and florists has seemingly turned bad.

The yellow flag iris, now on the watch list statewide, is a relative of the same irises found in flower beds around homes and businesses across the United States. Yet, the yellow flag iris — also known as the yellow flag, yellow iris or water flag — is distinctly different than the varieties Grandma picks from her garden to set in a vase on the mantel.

"Landowners do not want this invader," said Jason Rust, owner of Midwest Vegetation Management in Highlands Ranch, Colo. "It is difficult to control once established. Control yellow flag iris when the infestation is small."

While Sioux County is the first and only report of yellow flag iris in an invasive setting in Nebraska, the Lincoln, Neb.-based Nebraska Invasive Species Program requests landowners across the state, including the Yankton area, with riparian property to be on the watch for this plant and to report any sightings to 402-472-3133 or invasives@unl.edu.

While the yellow flag iris is a known weed in Nebraska and much of the remaining United States, South Dakota is one of the few states that are thought to not have a wide distribution of yellow flag iris.

The iris family is large, and some irises are native to the United States

while others are not but are well-controlled as ornamentals and therefore do not pose a threat in their potential spread, and harm, to native ecosystems. The yellow flag iris, however — a native to Europe, Asia and Africa and widely planted as an ornamental — is now viewed as an invasive species of riparian areas with great potential to harm native ecosystems.

The yellow flag iris is a water-loving plant that forms dense mats of roots on streams. So far, it has only been found on the Niobrara River and other minor river corridors in Sioux County, Nebraska. But the iris has already had far-reaching impacts: Not only has the iris pushed out native plant species, but its toxin-producing roots have turned a once-vibrant fish population into virtually nothing within a few years.

"Numerous phytotoxins can be found in the roots and leaves of the yellow flag iris," said Katy Kuhnel, shortgrass prairie biologist with the Nebraska Game and Parks Commission in Chadron, Neb. "The toxins can affect a fish's balance system. The toxins have also been shown to kill larvae and mollusks."

Last summer, Sioux County Weed Control in partnership with the Nebraska Game and Parks Commission, the Panhandle Weed Management Area, the Agate Fossil Beds National Monument and local landowners began an effort to control the yellow flag iris. The first step in attempting control of the iris was a herbicide application, but the challenge was accessing the area where

the plant grows. The final decision was to use an amphibious ATV, which moves with an eight-tire track, to get into waterways with minimal damage to the natural environment.

"Using the Argo [ATV] was ultimately the only choice for control in the difficult areas, especially where the river channel would range from five to 10 feet deep," said Nick Sanderson, weed superintendent for Sioux County in Harrison, Neb.

GPS mapping was also done on the impacted areas of the Niobrara River to track the yellow flag iris's infestation and management over time.

"Much of the river was hard to access," Rust said. "I spent long days covering essentially all of the infestation along 19 miles."

Research is being conducted on the Sioux County infestation to determine other control options of yellow flag iris. Test plots are being assessed on the effectiveness of not only herbicide application but also stem cutting, a combination of the two and introduction of desirable vegetation. In addition, lab tests are looking at the effects of seed scarification, temperature and light on iris germination rates to seek out additional management methods to consider for the test plots.

"Our research is moving along," said Jordan Spaak, rangeland science graduate student at Colorado State University in Fort Collins, Colo. "It will be exciting to see what the yellow flag iris density counts are."

Commentary

Weeds and Childhood Memories

BY RITA BRHEL
P&D Correspondent

I happen to love weeds. I really do. There's just something about biodiversity that really clicks for me, and while I'm a farm girl through and through and absolutely relish these summer sunsets on field after field of corn and soybeans, I also really like the ditches full of weeds, too.

I grew up on a livestock farm. My dad would plant some fields to provide for winter grazing, but for the most part, our acres were covered in native prairie fauna. I would spend my afternoons — between working with 4-H lambs and calves, sewing an outfit for the county fair and helping my mom with the garden and my siblings — taking long walks through the pastures, following the cattle paths meandering around clumps of big bluestem and prickly pear cacti.

One of our pastures had an old spur of the Oregon Trail go through it, and I liked to imagine what it was like for the pioneers who traveled it. One time, I found an old glass medicine bottle.

Another pasture had an old railroad bed going through a deep, dark ravine far beneath the towering tree canopy of the Little Blue River bluffs. At the edge of the ravine, at the top of the bluffs, there were several coyote dens. This part of the pasture was like another



Rita BRHEL

world, so different from the rest of the ranch. Because we were close to the river, the soil in some of the pastures was sandier than the loam in other pastures. In one sandy pasture, there were little lizards that lived in holes in the sand. My mom would sometimes help me catch one by hand, although more often than not, their tails broke off as their normal biological defense. The tails would wiggle like little worms, which was meant to keep predators at bay while the lizard ran to its home.

Another pasture had a tiny stock pond with cottonwood trees that the previous owner had planted all around it. There were no fish in the pond but millions of snails. It was a welcomed shady oasis in the hot summer afternoons, and I liked to collect snail shells.

Ash Creek wound through another pasture on its way to join the Little Blue River. There were beavers lived in one section, making a dam, and tall reeds on which crowds of red-winged blackbirds clung and sang their songs.

In another pasture, there were several mulberry trees, which provided

a nice — though messy — snack during my walks. There was also an enormous lilac tree leftover from a time when a house was on site, and my mom would cut bunches of the flowers to put in a vase in the house. To this day, I can't help but slow down as I drive by lilac bushes, letting the sweet smell bring me back to my childhood. Unfortunately, I have not had much luck growing my own lilac bushes.

Because the ranch included land near the river, the bluffs and up on the highland, we got to see a rather wide variety of native prairie plants. The lawn around the house was planted Kentucky bluegrass except for a patch of buffalo grass near the driveway where the cars parked, but the rest of the ranch was generally allowed to grow wild.

Now, I am grown up. I live on my own livestock farm. My lawn is mostly fescue and Kentucky bluegrass, but the rest of the place — including the pastures and barnyard — is allowed to grow wild. I even encourage weeds in some cases, deliberately planting milkweed for monarch butterflies, big bluestem around my mailbox and a patch of purple poppy mallow in the front yard.

To me, weeds aren't unwanted. They're a connection to my childhood memories on the farm.