



FARM AND HOME NEWS



CHARLIE BAIER, Iowa State University Howard County Extension Education Director

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2005 Flax Production Opportunities Highlighted

Producers interested in organic flax production and marketing opportunities for 2005 are invited to attend one of a series of informational meetings located throughout Iowa on Feb. 1, 2, 3 or 4. The meetings are sponsored by Iowa State University (ISU) Extension, the Iowa Alliance for Cooperative Business Development and Practical Farmers of Iowa. "Demand in the United States is increasing for flax, for both human consumption and animal feed. While flax has been used in human nutrition for approximately 5,000 years, seed flax has recently developed into an attractive high-nutrition crop due to being rich in dietary fiber, very high in essential fatty acids and high in vitamins and minerals," said Margaret Smith, ISU Extension, value-added agriculture specialist. Meeting topics include an overview of the flax market and market trends in North America, marketing opportunities for 2005 with two companies, flax production techniques in Iowa, flax and farm program requirements and research plans and opportunities for 2005. All meetings are from 1 to 4 p.m. The Feb. 1 meeting will be held in Cherokee, at Western Iowa Tech Community College. The Feb. 2 meeting is offered at the Northeast Research and Demonstration Farm near Nashua. The Feb. 3 meeting will be located in Lewis, at the Iowa State University Southwest Area Extension Office and the Feb. 4 meeting is scheduled for Crawfordsville, at the Southeast Research and Demonstration Farm. Pre-registration is not required. Funding for the meetings is provided by the Bioeconomy Working Group of the Value-Chain Partnership for Sustainable Agriculture grant program of the Leopold Center for Sustainable Agriculture and the Iowa Alliance for Cooperative Business Development. For more information, contact Smith at Iowa State at (515) 294-0887 or mrgsmith@iastate.edu or Fed Iutzi at Practical Farmers of Iowa at (515) 294-8512 or iutzi@iastate.edu.

Mulch Options

Lava rock, crushed brick, river rock, granite chips, can be used as inorganic mulches. Organic mulches include shredded bark, wood chips, cocoa bean hulls and more. They all have strengths and weaknesses. Plastic sheeting or landscape fabric is often used as a base to prevent weeds from sprouting regardless of the type of mulch used. Plastic is very effective at stopping weeds, but doesn't allow for air and water to infiltrate into the ground. Landscape fabric does a reasonable job of controlling weeds and allows air and water to pass through it. But neither plastic nor fabric will keep weed seeds from sprouting on top of the surface, of the mulch. The only solution is to remove new weeds as they grow. A special thanks to our ISU Horticulture Program Assistant Bob Hauer for this information. Personally I like to use organic mulch in my garden and landscape plantings, and forget about the fabric. I place a layer of newspaper down as weed control and then my organic mulch. The newspaper helps prevent weeds already there from coming back and then it decomposes and allows the decomposed organic matter to filter into the soil. The mulch will reduce weed germination and the increased organic matter will benefit the plants. Weeds that do make it through the mulch can be pulled or sprayed with a contact weed killer.

Tools for Battling Weeds in 2005

Iowa State University (ISU) Extension has a couple tools that will help producers and other ag professional manage weeds during the 2005 crop season. "Issues in Weed Management for 2005" (PM 1898) addresses conventional soybean weed management, protecting crop yields with postemergence herbicides, and the return of giant ragweed. The "2005 Herbicide Manual for Agricultural Professionals" (WC 92) is available on CD this year. This publication provides information on most herbicides currently registered in Iowa for corn, soybean and forage crops. The new CD format allows users to print only the material they need to take with them into the field instead of having to carry a book. "These publications are useful tools for Iowa growers and important sources of objective information that will improve the profitability of agriculture" said Micheal Owen, professor of Agronomy and co-author. 'Issues in Weed Management for 2005' is a collaborative effort with the Iowa Soybean Association and addresses several important topics for growers to consider." "WC 92 has specific sections that discusses the management of problem weeds, reviews some of the chemical characteristics of many herbicides, and provides useful information about how herbicides work to control weeds," said Owen. Both items can be ordered from ISU Extension Distribution online at <https://www.extension.iastate.edu/store/> or by calling (515) 294-5247. Both publications are also available on the Web at <http://www.extension.iastate.edu/pubs/>.