Local Foods

IMPROVING THE COMMUNITIES

Cerro Gordo, Floyd, Franklin, Mitchell, & Worth Counties

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Steve’s Sweet Corn

Leroy Zimmerman
Log Cabin Produce

IOWA STATE UNIVERSITY
Extension and Outreach
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This plan was produced as part of the Iowa State University Extension and Outreach Rising Star Internship. Iowa State University Extension and Outreach does not endorse any specific product of producer highlighted in this plan.

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*Clark Street Community Gardens*
During the Summer of 2017, Iowa State Extension and Outreach worked in Region 3 to create an educational strategy that will benefit local producers in the area. Region 3 includes Cerro Gordo, Floyd, Franklin, Mitchell, and Worth counties.

This report includes interviews from local producers, programs already used in each county, suggestions on future programs, and steps to complete each suggestion.

**Objective**

The objective of this project is to obtain research from local producers to help shape a strategic education plan. The goal is to identify where each county in Region 3 should develop to help further educate and serve producers.

**Process**

The process to develop this plan was as followed:

1. Students of the Rising Star Internship met with Courtney Long, member of the Local Foods Program team at Iowa State University, Donovan Olson, regional director, and John Sjolinder, county director, to develop the scope of the project.
2. Rising Star Interns put together a list of local producers from each county, reached out to each, and scheduled interview times.
3. Erin McDonald reached out to Ray Hansen, director of Agricultural Marketing Resource Center, to learn more about Market Maker.
4. Interviews with producers were conducted and documented from June-July 2017.
5. Information was reviewed, analyzed, and made into a plan with the help of Donovan Olson and the county directors.
PREVIOUS PROGRAMS

The following is a list of previous programs and events. These were all found on the ISU Extension and Outreach regional event calendar. The programs chosen specifically affect producers. Each county has many more programs based on other areas.

Some events are repeated from county to county. Others are state wide programs. It seems as though all of the counties take turns hosting farm field day visits. Crop Advantage, Start to Farm Networking (a new farmer learning group), and 4-H programs are statewide efforts. It seems all counties offer some sort of ServSafe event.

**Cerro Gordo**

Webcast series  
- Once a month in summer  
- Horticulture topics  
- Also one for specialty crops  
Quarterly newsletter  
Community Gardens  
- Two in town  
- Two sized plots to choose from ($40/$60)  
Gardner’s Bus Tour  
- Visit different centers  
- Horticulture  
Manure Applicator Certification Trainings  
- 3 hours long  
- Download-able link  
- Agricultural  
- Other pesticide applicator training  
Woman, Land, and Legacy Meetings  
- Women involved in farming invited to attend  
- Programs on a variety of topics are taught  
Farmland Leasing Meeting  
Live programs on topics of interest  
- Garden Club/Community Garden members  
Master Gardener Certification Program  
Beginning Farmers Program  
Annual Crop Clinic

**Floyd**

Annual Spring Field Day  
Nitrogen and Water Field Day  
Private PSEP training  
Manure Training/Seed Treatment Training  
Cover Crop Workshop  
Fumigation  
Commercial Ag Weed, Insect, Disease  
Roadside, Forest, Aquatic Pest Training  
Mosquito/ Pest Management certification  
Freezing Your Garden Produce workshop  
Growing Seasons Webinar  
- Getting to the Bottom of Tree Problems  
- What to look for in terms of symptoms  
- Got Shade?  
- What’s all the Buzz About?  
- And others  
Farmland Leasing Meeting  
- Explain leasing process to farmers  
Iowa Drainage School  
Summer Horticulture Showcase  
Weeds Week  
- Long term weed management
Franklin

Link to ISU Extension and Outreach blogs
- Current topics
- From staff

2015 article on helping farmers deal with stress

Ornamental and Turfgrass Applicator Training
- Commercial ag pesticide, confinement site manure applicator workshop, applicator recertification

Improving Margins in the Cow Calf Enterprise workshops

Mosquito/Public Health Pest Management certification

Farmland Leasing Meeting

Soil Fertility workshop

North Iowa Beef Conference

Mitchell

Enhancing Pollinator Habitat Workshop
  - Hosted by ISU Extension and Outreach

Pesticide Safety Education Training
  - Ornamental & Turf grass Applicators
  - Commercial Ag Weed, Insect and Plant Disease Management
  - Seed Treatment
  - Mosquito/Public Health
  - Aquatic, Forest, and Right-of-Way

Pest Control Operators

Fumigation

Evaluating Your Estate Plan

Master Gardener program Summer Webinar Series 2016

Tree Walk
  - Explore tree identification, health and care
  - Determine pest damage and diseases

Farmland Leasing Meeting
  - Explain leasing process to farmers

Farmland Drainage Workshop

Mitchell County Ag Breakfast with Dean Wendy Winterseen

NRCS partner meeting “Soil Health”

Dairy Days at Riceville

Commercial and Confinement Manure Applicator meetings

Worth

Applicator Training
  - Pest Control Commercial Applicators

Recertification
  - Ornamental and turf commercial applicator

Recertification
  - Fumigation Commercial Applicator

Recertification
  - Commercial Ag Weed, Insect and Plant Disease Management

- Roadside, Forest and Aquatic Pest Management

Corn & Soybean Clinic

North Iowa Fall Poultry Expo

Ag Fair
  - For kids

Farmland Leasing Meeting

Worth & Winnebago County Women, Land and Legacy Meeting

Pro-Ag Outlook Meeting

Flowers, Landscape and Tree Meeting
  - Master Gardener Rick Pleggenhuhle lead the workshop with Becky Hanson, who discussed what trees could be planted on the fairgrounds (2015)
The following is a list of current programs and events for producers. It is put in calendar form from August 2017 to December 2017. This time period was chosen due to the volume of events in this period. The events were found from ISU Extension and Outreach websites, Chamber of Commerce websites for each town, the Healthy Harvest website, and the Practical Farmers of Iowa Field Day Guide 2017.

Another current avenue for producers is Market Maker. Marker Maker is a free website funded by the Leopold Center for Sustainable Agriculture, the Agricultural Marketing Resource Center and the Iowa State University Extension Value Added Agriculture Program. It is a social media site that aims to connect producers, restaurants, buyers and everyone in between. Users search for specific products in their area and Market Maker connects them to a seller that fits their search. This tool can be a valuable resource for both consumers and sellers.

Community leaders should help spread the word about this website so that the information can be accurate and up to date. The more producers on the site, the more information available. The Rising Star interns have created a document that helps explain the sign up process. Use this document to help spread awareness.
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<td>Ames ISU Fruit and Veg Field Day 2pm-6:30pm <a href="mailto:nairajay@iastate.edu">link</a></td>
<td>Cerro Gordo Summer Webcast Series-Urban Tree Selection 2pm-4pm <a href="http://www.extension.iastate.edu/calendar">link</a></td>
<td>Mason City Ignite Your Marketing 6pm-8pm <a href="http://www.extension.iastate.edu">link</a></td>
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<td>Charles City ServSafe AD (Food Safety Training) 9am-6pm (<a href="http://www.extension.iastate.edu/calendar">http://www.extension.iastate.edu/calendar</a>)</td>
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<td>Clear Lake Pathways to Success Luncheon 11:45am-1:30pm (<a href="http://members.clearlakekcaud.com/events/calendar">http://members.clearlakekcaud.com/events/calendar</a>), MC North Iowa/Hampton Farmers Market</td>
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<td>Clear Lake Winery &amp; Brewery Tour (<a href="http://members.clearlakekcaud.com/events/calendar">http://members.clearlakekcaud.com/events/calendar</a>), Charles City Bremfest 8pm-9pm (<a href="http://www.charlescitychamber.com/events">http://www.charlescitychamber.com/events</a>), Clear Lake Farmers Market 9am-12pm (<a href="http://www.clearlakefarmersmarket.com">http://www.clearlakefarmersmarket.com</a>), Hancock Wild Furry Farm 1st Year of Farming 3pm-5pm (<a href="mailto:jenny.furpel@gmail.com">jenny.furpel@gmail.com</a>)</td>
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<td>MC North Iowa Farmers Market 4pm-6:30pm (<a href="http://www.northiowafarmersmarket.com">http://www.northiowafarmersmarket.com</a>), Hampton Farmers Market 4:30pm-6:30pm (<a href="http://www.hamptoniowa.org">http://www.hamptoniowa.org</a>)</td>
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How To Sign Up On Market Maker
For Farmers & Ranchers

WHERE TO GO
Visit Market Maker Iowa, or https://ia.foodmarketmaker.com to get started. At the top of the screen, near the logo is a link that says “Register”. Click here.

CHOOSE YOUR BUSINESS
Pick from a variety of business types-from restaurants, to food banks, to farmers or ranchers and everything in between. If filling out for a farming business, choose the product type, product form, method of sale, product attributes, markets served, and other similar categories. Click save when this has been completed.

ENTER YOUR INFORMATION
After completing the business type, scroll down the page to fill out personal information. This includes the business name, address, phone number, and the farm’s website (if you have one). Then, choose the account preferences for alerts and newsletters. Click continue when finished.

AFFILIATIONS
Next, there is an option to choose affiliations based on your location. Some include Practical Farmers of Iowa, Hometown Harvest, and NE Iowa Food & Farm Coalition. Click submit when you have finished your list.

CONGRATULATIONS
Your account has been created! Now you will have the option to fill out another profile under the same account, which is applicable if you run more than one business.
Encourage new producers in the area.

CERRO GORDO
Improving Farmers Markets
Facilitate more growth by improving the current market.

FLOYD
CSA Produce Boxes
Help producers connect with the community through produce boxes.

FRANKLIN
Horticulture Workshops
Supply more educational resources by providing horticulture workshops.

MITCHELL
Community Gardens
Create a community environment where all ages can get involved with local foods.

WORTH
New Producers
Encourage new producers in the area.
The information used in this plan was influenced by producer interviews and the assessment done by the North Iowa Local Food Coalition (2015). The main goal identified is getting younger generations involved in producing food and being involved at farmer’s markets.

Step one includes making the farmer’s market a more desirable organization to be a part of. The market itself is located at the Corner of 1st St NE & Delaware, Mason City, IA 50401. In recent years, it has seen lower sales and some vendors pulling out. According to a report conducted by the John Pappajohn Entrepreneurial Center (2016), some of this is due to the moving of the market from Kmart’s old parking lot. Another factor is marketing. According to this report, “Most of the customers either learned about the market or were reminded about the market by driving past it, signs in town or just that it was a habit to visit the market”.

Market
In order to create more business, more marketing is needed. Investigate how to get people involved. Brochures can be made and handed out at other businesses. Maybe more signage is needed. As discussed in the Iowa report, hold a free class for the vendors about social media. This will help both farmer’s markets and vendors visibility. See if there is a high schooler along with an adult interested in teaching the ins and outs of posting on different platforms. Getting youth involved can help spread interest and facilitate relationships.

Explore More Entertainment
Another avenue to improve is entertainment. Other farmers markets in the area, according to the John Pappajohn Entrepreneurial Center report, have two days planned for their markets. One is purely selling produce and the other includes more general sales (baked goods and other products) paired with live music. Adding entertainment such as live music creates an event atmosphere and makes more people want to get involved and visit.

Organize Food Demonstrations
Extension can investigate opportunities for food demonstrations. Perhaps Kelsey Warner can gauge interest in a workshop for high school aged kids to teach the demonstrations. Emphasis can be put on the opportunity of service hours for these kids. Recipes could be simple and similar to recipes Rising Star interns in other regions put on their blogs. Recipes would include produce from the market. Another possibility is getting the nutritionist from HyVee involved. Doing this can help entertain the kids who come with their parents. Teaching them these recipes may also aid in purchasing product and healthier eating at home.

Plan With Members
According to the John Pappajohn Entrepreneurial Center report, all vendors were opened to helping plan an event with the help of board members. Use participants of the farmer’s market as assess when it comes to events. A variety of ideas and point of view will help create an event that is inclusive and fun. A kick off event the first weekend of the market could help get the word out and is worth exploring.
Explore Options

Something else to be investigate is the fourth of July celebration. With so many events and draws during Clear Lake’s fourth celebrations, it’s a wonder why the farmer’s market isn’t involved in some way. Clear Lake farmer’s market should poll vendors to gauge interest in setting up on the fourth. Is there no interest in doing so? Is that why it hasn’t been pursued? The events get enough traction during the whole day that having something from the farmer’s market in the morning seems feasible.

Get Kids Involved

One thing to note from Clear Lake’s farmer’s market is a program they do for children. As the City of Clear Lake (2017) explained on their website, it states “Young people, up to 18 years of age, will be given the opportunity to sell handcrafts and homegrown produce at the second market of each month, beginning in July. In offering local youth this opportunity, we hope to introduce them to various skills, including marketing, decision-making, record-keeping/monetary skills, interpersonal skills and building their knowledge of the farmers market and local food community”.

This helps children and teens not only grow and produce their own food, but also begin to learn what goes into selling their goods and creating a business. This program can be adapted into other counties in order to get youth involved.

In order for youth to take over the farmers markets in the future, it is helpful to instill interest in producing now. The 4-H program has a Hot Sheet over Horticulture (Iowa State University Extension and Outreach, 2017). Use this as a guide to create a more structured workshop.

The larger community garden in Mason City has unused spots. Dedicate one to a club. Here, kids can grow, maintain, fertilize, and learn about pests and diseases. Determine how often to meet. Give the youth a hands on way to experience and learn about gardening. Take it further and sell produce at the farmers market or donate to the food pantry. Discuss partnering with the school as a joint program.

It is great that there is an avenue to do these activities through 4-H, but there needs to be a more community organized program. Getting together in groups helps youth create relationships and continues their excitement about the project. Create social media around the project and get the word out.

Log Cabin Produce
The goals established from interviews and Health and Food System Assessment (North Iowa Local Food Coalition, 2015) is to educate younger producers and connect existing producers to the community. By doing this, Floyd County can help combat unhealthy food practices.

Similar to Cerro Gordo’s mission, emphasis should be put on involving younger producers. The high school plans to start a class on growing. This is an important stride to get people interested. One step that can be taken is getting people in the class involved with the new gardens. Consider letting kids use the gardens at a discounted rate. Perhaps, like in the Clear Lake program mentioned in the Cerro Gordo document, they can than sell produce at the farmers market. This can give them experience not only in growing but selling and economics. Have them involved once a month or so over the summer.

A program that was first brought up in the Health and Food System Assessment is the idea of a CSA, or Community Supported Agriculture, produce box program. As North Iowa Local Food Coalition (2015) describes, members sign up for a share of the crops and pay a fee. This entitles them to a variety of produce compiled in boxes or bags and delivered to a drop off location. Members then pick it up at determined times, such as weekly or bi-weekly. Members can also choose to help in the growing process. An overall strategy for setting up a CSA produce box program, which is informed by Helmer (2015, October 01), is below.

**Think Structure**

First, determine what your operation will look like. You will need to determine the number of weeks in a season. It is wise to only start with the summer season, until the program is more established. According to Helmer, (2015, October 01) most operate for 20 weeks, with 10 week shares. Determine if members will pick up products weekly or bi-weekly.

**Prepare**

There are a couple of things that need to done in the beginning stages. When determining your delivery site, you will need to keep local zoning laws in mind. If you are selling directly out of a farm, garden, or something subject to HOA, you will need to check if selling on site is allowed for your location.

Follow state and federal guidelines when it comes to safe food handling and storage.

Research insurance options in case someone gets sick off of the produce or gets injured when picking up a box at the delivery site.
Plan ahead for harvest. You will need to know what you will be planting ahead of time in order to have enough food to deliver. Variety will be an important factor. Helmer (2015, October 01) suggests having each box/bag contain 10-20 pounds of 5-12 different types of produce. Consider growing different varieties of some fruits or vegetables. The amount of room and ability of your area will determine how many members you can support. Use these measurements to help figure out that scope. Consider partnering with other gardeners or different producers. For example, if someone in the area raises chickens, consider adding dairy or eggs to substitute some produce. You could also utilize the meat.

Set Prices

Setting your prices should be pretty straightforward. The easiest way is to determine the market price of everything you are including in the box/bag. Multiply this amount by the length of the season.

Consider Delivery

There are different ways to set up how members receive their produce. One way is on location pick up on designated days. There could also predetermined locations set up. Farmers markets are also possible sites. Depending on the labor available, house delivery is also an option. An extra fee can be charged for this one.

Produce should be picked as close to pick up time as possible. Depending on time, food may have to be stored in refrigeration.

Another consideration is packaging. Who will pack the boxes/bags and when? Consider giving a discount to members who volunteer to divide fresh produce and package it. How will the food be packaged?

One way to cut down on costs is to require members to bring back the previous weeks packages to reuse. Another possibility is to have members bring their own packaging and fill it at pick up sites.

Create a Customer Agreement

Clearly state out the price, season length, pick up times, pick up locations, and included produce in a written agreement. You may also want to notify members of risks that go along with the CSA exchange. Some crops may fail and others may thrive, which could effect what if given out. Online there are models available for download. Use these models as a guide.

Reach out For Guidance

If you are finding you are running into problems and need guidance from a seasoned professional, consider contacting Jan Libbey and Tim Landgraf. They set up One Step at a Time Gardens, which serves Belmond, Clarion, Clear Lake, Garner, and Mason City. Updated information is always available on their website, One Step At a Time Gardens (2017), along with FAQ.

Link To Families

This program can be linked to programs Julie Mayhew runs with families who have limited resources. The recipes Julie teaches can play hand in hand with the produce the families receive in each particular box.
Franklin County is super active in their farmers market which is one of their strengths. One area that does need improvement is horticulture programing. Producers have said this specific subject is something they’d love to see improvement on. Horticulture programs can be relatively simple to start up, especially with help from surrounding counties. John Sjolinder (personal communication, July 11, 2017) informed the information in this plan.

**Preparation**

Get an outline of what people are interested in. This can include visiting with the local garden club. Ask if there are any specific topics they’d like to hear about. Another potential avenue is using the farmer’s market to gather information. Ask producers what they’d like, or even set up a suggestion box for customers to participate in.

**Plan Ahead**

One thing to note about horticulture programs is that they are often seasonal. The class needs to be set up before a specific topic actually happens. For example, if growing plants from seeds is a potential topic, a prime time to host is in February, so that growers have enough time to do the task by the ideal weather. Examine the calendar to identify optimal times for workshops.

**Find Resources**

As far as presentations go, the Master Gardener website has lots of resources on horticulture topics. They have powerpoint presentations and videos to help supplement workshops. To find these resources, visit the Iowa State Master Gardener website, visit the “For Staff” tab, scroll down to Promotional Materials, and click on “CyBox Folder for Master Gardener Coordinators”. After signing in to your ISU account, you will have access to these documents on CyBox (Iowa State University Extension, 2017).

Extension staff members are also great resources. John Sjolinder has done many classes at the Cerro Gordo office. John has already expressed interest in helping behind the scenes with any questions. He could also come and run a workshop.

Another resource is Lesley Mehmen Milius. Lesley has experience with running smaller workshops on subjects like planting bulbs.

**Partner Up**

Partnering up with other organizations may be an option for this project. Consider partnering with a greenhouse in the area. Make sure to lay down some ground rules with them. Because the workshop would be part of Iowa State Extension and Outreach, it must be research based. Be clear that the workshop is about learning, not about pushing their products. Be careful not to endorse a specific producer or play favorites.

There are also specific people that you can reach out too. John Sjolinder has suggested contacting Rick Plaggenborg, who used to work for Bonnie Plants. He still does some classes at the ISU Extension and Outreach office in Mitchell County. Becky’s Greenhouse in Dougherty may be interested in participating in some way.
Consider Master Gardeners

Master gardeners need 10 hours of education per year and 20 hours of service (Iowa State University Extension, 2017). Because of this, they could be a great resource for leading a class. Express to the gardener that they would essentially be double dipping in hours, because their research for the class would be considered education hours while leading the class is service hours. This could be very desirable for local Master Gardeners.

Choose Topics

Start out slow. Choose topics people are interested in based on previous discussions. Also consider workshops on topics that are typically successful, like fertilizer or pesticides. Do a couple of smaller workshops, aimed at a group of around five people. Expand as you see fit in the future. You can even choose to show a webinar. A lot of times, gardeners are looking for an avenue to learn and be social. Doing classes gives them an environment to gather and discuss issues that affect them all. It also keeps them active in the community.

Determine Logistics

Once you have the ball rolling, decide some specifics. How much will you charge for this event? Places like Mason City often charge a small fee of $5, which they then use to throw fun potlucks or such for the gardeners in the future. Putting together these classes without spending any money is tricky. Although there will probably be costs involved, it shouldn’t be much. Often you’ll have to pay for mileage for visiting speakers and other miscellaneous things, but that should be all. You must also determine the location. Will you do it at the office? Or will it be on site at a greenhouse? This may determine on the topic and what kind of demonstration will be done.

Have the Class

All the work is done! The last step is to simply have the workshop. Use the first one to determine what to improve for next time.
The Mitchell County project will focus on the development of a community garden. This project was identified by the county, but not started. Because of this, a plot of land was already chosen, obtained, and approved by the city of Osage. The information in this plan is informed by the City of Des Moines Parks and Recreation (2012 December). Names and other specifics were provided from Darla Olson and John Sjolinder (personal communication, June 27, 2017).

**Form a Garden Group**

Starting a garden involves lots of decision making. You will need a group to make these decisions and start community involvement. Appoint at least two interested people to lead the project. After the start, annual elections can be held for group leaders.

**The Land**

To the left is a diagram of the land. It is located on Pleasant Street. The plot is 5,000 sq ft. It has a driveway on the south end. Trees sit at the top point and bottom left point. There is a hydrant in front of the bottom trees, closet to the road. A railroad frames the right side of the plot. There is also a manhole cover type structure at the top right, along with a pole below the trees at the top.

In 2016, city hall approved a community garden in this location. The city should be re-approached to make sure this is still the plan.

**Find a Water Source**

On the site, there is a fire hydrant. This is a positive, meaning there is already water on the location. There is a variations on how to set up water for the gardens.

Contact the city to gauge their interest in providing water. In Mason City, the community gardens does not pay for water, because the amount of water used in a growing season is less than the amount of water leaked in a day by the city. The city of Osage may feel a similar way. If they choose to charge for water, dues can be calculated to cover this cost.

Putting a meter on the valve is important. Jerry Dunlay from the city office may be a resource to contact for this. A padlock can be put on the meter so that the valve is lockable. The key to unlock this can be the same key used to unlock a future shed.

The area may be too big for just one hose. Getting a hose long enough to reach the other end can prove to be troublesome and too heavy for some participants to handle. In this case, water sources may have to be spread throughout the gardens. Hoses can either be chained to the source itself or can be locked in the shed.
Get Soil Tested

Before getting started, you’ll need to know how much nutrients are in the soil and what the pH levels are. Knowing this will help inform what preparation needs to be done. This can be done with a soil test. Follow the sheet on ISU Soil and Plant Analysis Laboratory (2014, July) for instructions on how to take and send in soil samples. The sample should take around seven to fourteen days to complete.

Another thing that needs to be researched is the previous state of this plot. There used to be a building on this land. When the building was destroyed, was any of it buried? Is there any remnants in the ground? The city should have records of this.

Next, till the land. It is suggested that the whole prospective area should be tilled. Inquire at Parks and Recreation to see if this is something they can do.

Compost could help maximize the growing potential in this area. Search around town to see if there is anyone who may have free compost. It is suggested that the whole area be covered with 1 ft in depth of compost. Explore signage options as incentive to donate compost.

Insurance

Liability Insurance may be required. Contact businesses or nonprofits neighboring the gardens can be contacted for a rider on their insurance. If not, obtain liability insurance.

Garden Planning

Create plans for the garden. It is smart to get community members involved to create interest in the project. This can be done by having 2-3 meetings with involved parties to share opinions. This can create a personal stake from community members, creating initiative to stay involved. This may not have to be included in the first steps of the process, but bringing in members at some point early can be helpful.

From first look, 10x15 ft plots appear to be feasible. Use the diagram as reference. Due to shading caused by trees, having two plots, than increasing to three after one or two rows seems to be the best way to layout. The land between the plots will be determined by the size of the deck on a potential lawn mower used for upkeep. Contact Parks and Recreation for this step. It seems possible, since they do the mowing on the cemetery grounds near by. If this is not possible, and no one else shows interest in maintaining the grounds, use wood chips as landscaping instead. To follow Mason City’s plan, put stakes to block out each plot. Give Gardeners instructions on expectations for planting within these stakes.

Build a shed for the grounds. Use this to hold supplies from the gardeners. An avenue that can be explored is the building trades program at the high school. Mr. Brent Jennings can be contacted to explore interest on this. The shed will go under the southern trees, in the area that receives shade. Give a key to the shed upon sign up. The shed may also contain a scale for gardeners to weigh produce and record measurements. Having a record of how much product is made may come in handy for future grants.

Something else to consider is a bulletin board. Having a board near the shed that has laminated information on sign up and volunteering opportunities is an asset to people walking by.
Using the previous step as a guide, determine a budget. Call around and see how much items will cost. Getting items donated will help lower the cost. According to the City of Des Moines Parks and Recreation (2012 December) an average garden costs around $2,500 to $5,000. If the price exceeds what you are willing to spend, save some items for future purchase.

There a couple of ways to help finance your project. Asking community businesses for donations is one way. Send a letter around explaining the project and the specific needs. Personalize letters and hand deliver. Fundraisers are another way to get the community involved. Events can also be thrown, from bake sales to crafts.

Another way to obtain the money needed is through grants. Identify a fiscal sponsor or a group involved that has a tax-exempt 501(c)3 status. Some grants that are possible options are the Ag Ventures Alliance grant and the Shop on State grant.

The AgVa Grant program supports projects that meet educational and nutritional needs of youth, promote local foods, and mentor young and beginning farmers. The grant form can be found online (AgVentures Alliance, 2014).

The Shop on State grant focuses on projects that build community strength and address community issues. Grant applications must be mailed or dropped off between February 1st-21st, and September 1st-21st. The application form can be found online (SOS Osage, 2017).
Get Organized

Contact city hall to see if they will be the financial agent in charge of taking in dues. This project may be something Parks and Recreation takes over. Set up a bank account. Also, decide the amount charged for dues. The Garden Rules and Garden Application have been drafted using Mason City’s. These documents are attached. You may also want to come up with a list of volunteer job opportunities for the future.

With your committee, determine how often, when, and where you will need to meet as a group. Plan at least one meeting at the beginning of every growing season. It is also helpful to meet more than that to brainstorm solutions to any problems that may arise.

Start Planting

Before digging up anything, call Iowa one call (811) to get underground infrastructure information. This is important because there is an underground phone line box located at the north side of the land. After doing so, you can start the work phase. Schedule work days for cleaning up the site and laying all the compost. Inquire at the school for volunteer help from local teenagers. This could help gain interest. Get water flowing through out the garden in whatever way was previously decided.

Once all this is done, you can begin planting. Stake out areas for 10x15 ft plots, following the plan previously made. Leave the stakes in so that community members know where their area is. If the gardens are going to have wood chips instead of mowing grass, lay these down now. Start a “test” plot to begin growing. An opening event can be held to celebrate the opening of the gardens. During this event, a demonstration on how to plant can be done in the test plot.
The Worth County area is tricky to identify resources that would be helpful for producers. This is due to the fact that many producers in the area farm on a commercial level. One of the only other known producers who doesn’t was interviewed. As far as resources, he is pretty self sufficient and doesn’t need much else in the form of help. Keeping that in mind, the Worth County plan is a little unconventional.

The goal is to get new producers in the area, stepping outside the idea of just farmers. Local foods is more than just produce. This plan focuses on the often forgotten component of local foods, such as beekeepers and chicken raisers. Both of these are things everyday people can start in their backyard. Especially with Worth’s previous efforts with pollinators, an increase in bees can be a benefit to the environment.

One way to help in a small way is to add a water resource in your backyard. According to Bees On The Net (2017), one of the most effective ways to help pollinators is to provide water. Ponds and such are excellent places for butterflies and bees to stop and hydrate. The key is to provide a spot for them to stand so they don’t drown while drinking. Stones and water plants are ways to do so.

Another way to attract these pollinators and continue local foods is by encouraging beekeepers in your community. Getting a large amount of new farmers in the area may not be feasible, but creating more involvement in local foods impacts the community positively.

Reach out to community members. Does anyone have an interest in the types of producing talked about in the plan? Are there members who are looking for new hobbies? Start talking about these potential activities to members of the county to gauge interest. If there is interest, share one of the information sheets provided to educate this member. The Beekeeping sheet is two pages which should be printed front to back. Maybe there are people who perceive these tasks as super labor intensive. These sheets can help them understand the steps involved, which may convince them it is in the scope of what they are willing to try.
Are you thinking of starting a beehive? Are you interested in learning more about the steps it takes to become a beekeeper? Check out this information sheet based on the article DIY Backyard Beekeeping: A Guide For Beginners (Flottum, 29 January, 2015) to find out more!

1 Preparation

Ask yourself some questions first. Where are you planning on setting up? If the backyard is your answer, make sure you have the proper amount of land. According to Flottum (29 January, 2015), you will need around a tenth of an acre. Make sure no one in your family is allergic to bees. It is also a good idea to check with your neighbors. Are they allergic? Are they against bees?

Keep your hive somewhat hidden to prevent children messing with it. This can be done by painting it an Earth tone, adding hedge plants around it, or placing it behind a shed like building. By placing it here, the bees are somewhat hidden, but also encouraged to fly upward when leaving the hive, rather than at human height.

Another part of preparation is checking zoning rules and ordinances in your area.

2 Acquire Protective Gear

When doing some quick work, a light jacket, hat and attached veil will work. For heavy duty work or working when the bees are temperamental, a full suit is required. If you are uncomfortable with bees touching your hands, glove are also recommended. Beginners should start with a full suit until they are comfortable.

Another purchase to make is a smoker. This small tool will come in handy for any work in the beehive, as it distracts the bees. It causes bees to think there is a fire, which makes them scatter. It also keeps them from communicating. This helps you work in the hive undisturbed.

3 Build the Hive

Build a stand to place the hives on. Doing so helps prevent back pain from bending over and also helps protect it from predators. Another component to think about is the mud underneath. Flottum, (29 January, 2015) suggests using bark mulch, old carpeting, or gravel.

It may be helpful to do some research on naturally formed beehives. Understanding how this happens in nature will give you a better understanding of the structure to expect. Ranging from around 2 to 3 cubic feet, hives are formed in layers. Honey is stored on the top layer and wraps around the hive as a barrier. Below that, pollen is stored, which is the main food source. At the very bottom, the queen resides. This is where she lays her eggs. It is also the most protected area. When building your hive, keep this format in mind.

There are a couple options for this step. The 10 frame Langstroth beehive is a the most common hive set up (Deeley, 2014). There are plenty of resource on how to set up the actual hive. Instructions should come with the specific hive you order.

4 Choose Your Bees

There are different types of Honey Bees to choose from. Online websites list different varieties and characteristics to choose from.
5 Buy Your Bees

Contacting your local BeeKeepers club is a great start. There is one located in Hanlontown called North Iowa Beekeepers Club (Iowa Department of Agriculture and Land Stewardship, 2017). The contact listed for the club is Tim Walrod, who can be reached at twalrod@wctatel.net. These clubs are a great resource, especially for finding local suppliers. If you end up ordering supplies, shipping it to yourself may be one of the biggest costs.

6 Routine Upkeep

For extensive information on the process and what comes after, do some reading. The Complete Idiot’s Guide to Beekeeping, by Dean Stiglitz and Laurie Herboldsheimer is a great resource. As for daily work, there is not much to do. Make sure the queen is safe and producing her eggs. Make sure as the bees produce honey, they have ample room to do so. There is some prep that needs to be done before winter, but otherwise you are set!
RAISING CHICKENS
Getting Started

Are you thinking of expanding your involvement in local foods? Are you interested in raising chickens in your backyard? Check out this information sheet based on the Wholefully (2016) article *How to Start Raising Backyard Chickens in 7 Simple Steps* to find out the basics!

1 Preparation
As always, check the laws and ordinances in your area before starting any work. Sometimes chickens are allowed, but must be limited to a certain amount. According to Zerbe (6 November 2015), you should expect to use a “minimum of 1.5 to 2 square feet per chicken inside the henhouse, and 8 to 10 feet of yard outside”. Use this measurement to help determine if you can sustain the chickens.

2 Set Up the Chick Environment
The environment chicks are first raised in is called a brooder. You will need five things: warmth, food, water, security, and cleanliness.

There are a couple ways to set up the brooder. Use either a cardboard or plywood box, fill it with pine shavings or corn cob bedding, and place a feeder, waterer, and source of heat. You can use either a heat lamp of a electric radiant heat brooder.

3 Choose Your Chicks
You can get your chicks from one of three places: a farm/hardware store, an online hatchery, or a local hatchery. The optimal place to shop from is a local hatchery because there is no shipping and you can usually pick the sexes you want. As far as breeds go, if you’re looking for a good-laying, friendly, non-anxious breed, some suggestions include the Speckled Sussex, the Light Brahmans, or the Cuckoo Marans. A good number of chicks to start with is two or three.

4 Take Care of the Chicks
Chicks are pretty low maintenance. Keep their water clean and make sure they have enough chick starter food. You may also interact with them, which will help them be friendly later in life.

5 Set Up Your Coop
You can choose to build your own coop or buy a premade one. You will have three different main areas, which are the resting box, the hen house, and the run. Each of these requires a bedding. You can use straw, cob, and sand for each respective area.

6 Decision Time
Free Range or Penned Range? Free range is great for the chicken’s health and eggs, but has increased risk, due to predators. Penned range is where the chickens roam during the day but are kept inside at night, which helps protect them. Either way is a good option, just with different variables.

7 Get Started
Start introducing your chicks to the outdoors around five to six weeks in. If you’re going to free range them, put them in the coop for a week to establish their sense of “home”.

Continue to care for them by feeding, watering, and cleaning. At around 6 month, they should start laying eggs. This timeline can vary with breed.
REFERENCES


OSAGE COMMUNITY GARDENS AGREEMENT & WAIVER

Name ________________________________________________________________
Address ______________________________________________________________

Street or PO Box                      City                      State                       Zip

Home Phone ___________________________  Work Phone _________________________

Email____________________________________  Cell _____________________________

Garden location on ____________________________

Plot fees are required before the plot can be assigned. Make checks payable to

______________________________________________________________________

The fee will cover water and plot costs.
Plot size/Cost 10’ x 15’ $___

Plots may not be expanded beyond staked measurement or into paths. The plot assignment does not convey
any estate in the plot, freehold or otherwise.

Plots will be available as soon as the weather permits. Each plot will be flagged with a name or number. The
Community Garden committee or designee will assign plots and notify participants of their assignment. Please
list any special needs or considerations for plot locations (i.e. – proximity to another family, etc.), and every
effort will be made to accommodate those needs but cannot be guaranteed.

________________________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________

Each gardener is responsible for all supplies including seeds/plants, fertilizer and equipment. Fencing is
allowed at the gardener’s expense and must remain inside staked area. Perennials may be allowed at some
sites in designated areas.

Each gardener is responsible for the maintenance and upkeep of their assigned garden plot. Tilling, watering,
weeding, harvesting and any other garden related maintenance are all the responsibility of the gardener.
Herbicides and pesticides must follow and are limited to the approved list (see community garden rules). Please
adhere to label recommendations when applying.

The City provides water at no charge. This service is contingent upon tracking your garden harvest.
Failure to track may result in assessing a water-usage fee which will be passed on to all gardeners. A
scale and tracking document are located in the garden shed. Keys to the water source and shed will
be issued each spring by _________________office and must be turned in at the end of the growing
season. Please call ahead to schedule a time to pick up your key.

Please work to keep the garden a happy, secure and enjoyable place where all participants can garden and
socialize peacefully in a neighborly manner.

At the end of the growing season, gardeners are responsible for clearing their plot of all plant material and
leaving the plot as it was found in the spring. Failure to do so could result in termination of your plot (see rules).
Plots must be cleaned by October 15 unless otherwise noted.

Waiver and Hold Harmless Agreement
I hereby knowingly and voluntarily waive any claim(s) I may have against the landowner, their employees or
agents, for any injury, damage, loss or claim arising from acts pursuant to this agreement sustained by
me, my guests, family members or produce recipients. I agree to hold the landowner free from loss, cost and
expense, including attorney fees and litigation, expenses as to any claim arising from my activities pursuant to
this agreement. I understand and agree that the land owner makes no warranty or guarantee of the fitness of
the plot for garden purposes.

Print Name ________________________________________________________________
Signature_________________________________________________          Date_____________________

Return application and payment to ____________________________
GARDEN RULES

1. In order to reserve a plot each year and begin working in a garden, annually each gardener must fill out, sign and return the annual application and waiver agreement form along with payment (checks payable to ____________________) to _______________________________________________________________.

2. Assignment of new garden plots will be awarded on a first come - first serve basis. The Community Garden committee or designee will assign plots and notify participants of their assigned location.

3. The fee is per plot, due in full before the garden season begins. Make checks payable to ____________________. If unable to pay, please inquire about scholarships. ($_____ for 10’ x 15’ plot)

4. Gardeners may only harvest vegetables and flowers from their garden. Perennial and unlawful plants are not allowed in garden plots. Designated perennial areas may be established at some locations and information will be shared with gardeners regarding these areas and guidelines surrounding usage.

5. Each person is responsible for the maintenance and upkeep of assigned garden plot. Watering, weeding, harvesting and any other garden related maintenance are all the responsibility of the gardener. If neglected, plots will be subject to reassignment or removal of plantings with no refund of payment. **All stakes must remain where placed and all fencing must remain within the staked garden plot area.**

6. Raised beds are allowed within garden plot.

7. Fencing is allowed but must remain within staked plot. NO EXCEPTIONS. Netting material is not allowed for fencing. Fencing may remain year to year IF MAINTAINED and garden plot is kept clean.

8. The City has agreed to provide water at no charge. This service is contingent upon tracking your garden harvest. Failure to track may result in assessing a water-usage fee which will be passed on to all gardeners. A scale and tracking document are located in the garden shed. Keys to the water source and shed will be issued each spring by ___________ office and must be turned in at the end of the growing season.

9. Herbicides and pesticides may be applied in powder or granular form and are limited to the approved list found on the back side of this page. Please adhere to label recommendations when applying.

10. Gardeners are responsible for clearing their plot of all plant material, and other plot materials, leaving the plot as it was found in the spring. Plots need to be cleaned and all debris removed by October 15 unless otherwise notified. **Stakes are to be left in the ground.**

11. Herbicide/pesticide community garden policy and additional information is found on back.

Forward any questions or concerns to:

_________________________________
_________________________________
Gardeners that choose to use pesticides need to apply as per the instructions on the containers and with clean water. Be careful not to over apply pesticides, herbicides, or fertilizers as any deviation from the labels could lead to environmental and safety impacts and is a violation of the law.

**Herbicide Chemical use policy for community gardens**

Round-up (non-selective use) herbicide can be used only prior to initial planting or until May 15. Only selective-use herbicides can be used after this date.

- All chemical usage is the responsibility and liability of the gardener.
- All chemicals must be applied by the purchaser.
- Chemicals must be poured from the original container with the label/MSDS information available.
- Gardener applies to his/her own garden only.
- Do not apply any chemicals to common areas.
- Do not store chemicals in the shed.
- Do not dump excess chemical at the community garden site.
- Do not tread through other gardens after application.

Always read and follow label directions. Do not spray chemicals when wind speeds exceed 7 mph and/or temperatures exceed 85 degrees. Avoid applying chemicals when adjacent gardeners are in their plots.

**Pesticide Chemical use policy for community gardens**

Use of any pesticide should be selective in that pesticide selection is dependent upon the identified pest. The same basic rules apply to pesticide application as for herbicide application: (see above)

Avoid using these chemicals in community gardens:

**Sevin (is not allowed)**

Sevin is the trade name for a widely used synthetic insecticide containing the active ingredient carbaryl. Carbaryl belongs to the chemical class called carbamates. Although Sevin is only moderately toxic to mammals and is still widely used in gardens and landscapes, it is highly toxic to honey bees and many other beneficial insects and mites. Sevin is particularly hazardous to honey bees because the particles of insecticide resemble pollen and can be carried back to the hive.

**Permethrin**

Because it is a neurotoxin, Permethrin is NOT recommended for use in a community garden environment. Avoid applying any chemicals for two weeks prior to the anticipated harvest dates. Contact your local extension office for specific information regarding herbicide and pesticide use and application.

All fertilizers and natural/organic pesticides must be applied in a manner that the other garden plots will not be affected.

**Fertilizers:** Gardeners may use compost, composted manure, and natural/organic fertilizers. Chemical fertilizers may not be used.

**Weeds:** Gardeners may apply decomposable mulches such as wood chips, clean straw, and lawn clippings; but they need to be removed at the end of the season. Hand pulling, hoeing, tilling, and natural/organic herbicides are permitted. Synthetic herbicides may not be used.

**Diseases:** Decomposable mulches and natural/organic fungicides are permitted. Synthetic fungicides may not be used.

**Insects:** Hand picking, row covers, trap crops, and natural/organic insecticides are permitted. Synthetic insecticides may not be used.

Call the Cerro Gordo County Extension office to learn other natural ways to control weeds, diseases, and insects in your garden.

**BENEFITS OF COMMUNITY GARDENS**

- Stimulate social interaction
- Produce nutritious food
- Reduce family food budgets
- Provide a catalyst for neighborhood and community development
- Create opportunities for recreation, exercise, and education
- Provide opportunities for intergenerational and cross-cultural connections
Becky breaks her products down into three groups—berries, orchard, and vegetables. For berries, it’s strawberries, blueberries, raspberries, and aronia berries. As for the orchard, it’s peaches, pears, cherries, apples. When it comes to vegetables, she mentions some Asian vegetables, different greens, tomatoes, green beans, peas, and really anything the farmers market is lacking in. They also have expanded their business into baked goods/jams using their fruits. This has been a large part of their profit at farmer’s markets.

2. **What scale of operation do you have?**

Becky describes the scale as small. She says at most she farms on 3 acres, but split into different sections around 1/4 of an acre.

3. **What are your production methods**

Becky’s farm is chemical free and organic. She does not have the organic certification, but she says she does everything but the paperwork. Everything is by hand and does not use big equipment. They can’t use a tractor because of their deer fencing, which is preventing the 20 something deer that hang out in their backyard from eating their product. The fencing is a necessary evil.

4. **Could you tell me a little bit about the history of your farm?**

Becky’s husband worked for 20 years with Kraft, then go laid off in 2012. The family was desperate to get something going for income, so the Mennonites from the Charles City area came down and helped them get started. Around thirty of them cleared out the west side of their woods so they could use it for farming. They stayed and helped the family learn the ins and outs of farming. Becky and her family, which includes eight kids, applied for a grant that helped them get a 30x72 ft high tunnel. They grow their tomatoes and other greenhouse produce in there. Whatever the greenhouse holds is what they use for profit their first year. They had local teens volunteer to start the berry fields. They started doing farmers markets that year, both in Clear Lake and Mason City. They don’t hire any help, it is all family run. Her husband still needed a full time job though, and works at the public high school.

5. **How long have you been farming?**

While their own operation opened in 2012, Becky is no stranger to gardening. She grew up in the Clear Lake/St. Ansgar area, where her father had a large garden. Her husband is a city boy from the Philippines. He then lived on the west coast as an engineer.

6. **What makes you value producing food for your community?**

To understand Becky’s passion, you have to look into her background. She studied nutrition for years and has knowledge on the subject. Her family has also taken care of foster children in the past. With those experiences and her time at farmers markets, she has a real concern that this generation is not getting enough nutrition or knows enough about cooking. She’s also concerned that the Midwest doesn’t have enough local opportunities for eating healthy. She spoke about her husband’s experience on the west coast and that the population there is seemingly more healthy and aware of what they eat. She also thinks that the harsh chemicals used on some food production can lead to diseases, which puts more burden on low income families who are trying to eat healthy and can’t afford medical care. This reason is what led her to use organic practices on her own operation.

7. **What are the struggles each day on farm?**

One of the biggest struggles Becky expressed is that their organization is not big enough for great equipment. They could not afford large purchases of this type, plus barely have the land for some. The weeds in particular are their biggest opponent. It has gotten so bad that they have decided to switch to the Garden of Eden method, which uses wood chips. They don’t use any sprays on their weeds, because they found that even the organic ones did not do much to help. Currently they do not have many issues with insects, but are apprehensive that this may come in to play later on. Another struggle they have is that there are no berry operations in the area that are organic and similar in size to themselves. This doesn’t give them much to compare to, which makes it hard for them to judge their success. It has also been hard to keep up with their vegetable farming, so they are planning on scaling that back.

8. **How do you market your farm?**

North Iowa Berries and More has their own website and Facebook page, which is what they use primarily for marketing. They did send out some brochures in the past, which were more effective than Becky originally thought they would be. Word of mouth has been huge for them, as well as pushing their brand out at farmer’s markets. Healthy Harvest has also been an aid to them. They have used local advertisement avenues such as KGLO and the Globe Gazette.

9. **What are your goals for your farm?**

The Huang family has set a goal of being completely fruit and berry related in two years. This has to do with the previously mentioned fact that the vegetables are very hard to upkeep while only making 1/4 of the overall profits. They are also considering downsizing the strawberries and focusing on the aronia and blue berries. Becky sees herself doing this for around ten more years, but not too much further after that. This is due to the fact that her husband and herself are aging, and none of her kids seem to have a strong interest in taking over after they’re done.

10. **Where do you get information for:**

a. **Marketing opportunities in your community (i.e. Healthy Harvest, city websites)**

As far as finding marketing opportunities, Becky is not afraid to search online. She finds its best to find the top searched organizations and figure out a way to join them. This is how she became a part of Healthy Harvest and Practical Farmers. As previously mentioned, she also takes any calls from local advertisers interested in meeting with her.
b. Technical assistance and research (i.e. ISU Extension)
A huge help to the farm has been a similar berry farm from another area. She says he’d prefer to stay anonymous, so while she did not mention a name, she said he helps from in field issues to finances. He has been in business for around 40 years and comes up to stay with them twice a year. They also call him whenever they run into problems. Other sources that have been helpful are the Mennonites, Healthy Harvest and Practical Farmers. She also mentioned that she had thoughts about reaching out to ISU Extension and Outreach about some trees she thinks are dead, but wasn’t sure if that was something they could help with. I told her to definitely reach out, because that seemed to fit in the scope of what we can help with.

11. Are there any educational programs you would like to see offered in your region?
Becky stressed that locals need to be more educated in healthy eating. She also mentioned it’d be helpful to have more local help for berry producers, but that she hadn’t explored too many avenues yet. This is where I directed her to ISU. Another thing she is concerned about and thinks needs much focus is the amount of vendors in the farmers markets. She says that many vendors are getting older and that the markets will die out if we don’t get younger people involved and interested.

12. Would you be interested in a future event that gave sign up information on Market Maker, a free connection website for producers and buyers?
Becky expressed mixed emotions on Market Maker. She thinks it would be a great source for resources for producers of all types. She also mentioned that while she liked the idea, she’s not sure she’d be interested at the moment. This is due to the fact that all of their production is already accounted for, and that they do not have much excess to sell. Becky says Market Maker is something she’d try out in the future, when they expand their operation. She did show interest in using it to find her own resources.
1. What products are you growing or raising?
75% of the greenhouse’s products are annual flowers. They are sold in 14-inch tubs or small four packs. They also sell zucchini, summer squash, snow peas, green beans, green peppers, tomatoes, kohlrabi, Brussels sprouts, and baby red potatoes. They do not sell fruit.

2. What scale of operation do you have?
Glennis described her operation as a ‘mom and pop’ store size. She owns an acre and a half. She used to own two and a half acres, but sold one because it was too much to tend to. They sell to Charlie Brown Childcare in Mason City, HyVee in Charles City, and Payless Foods in Osage.

3. What are your production methods
Glennis describes their production as old fashion, open garden farming. They start in the greenhouse to get the products growing, than transfer them outside. She said honestly that what they do isn’t too different from backyard gardening.

4. Could you tell me a little bit about the history of your farm?
Glennis worked in the food service industry for around 15 years. She decided she needed a change, and went to work for Krieger’s Greenhouse in Mason City. It was there she found out that she had a passion for gardening. She stayed there for 10 years, until it closed permanently. After that, her husband and herself decided to open their own business.

5. How long have you been farming?
Glennis has had her own business for 9 years. She mentioned that she grew up on a farm and has been around it her whole life.

6. What makes you value producing food for your community?
Glennis heard a commercial for Charlie Brown’s fresh veggie program and approached them, especially because of her close proximity to Mason City. They took her business because of her availability. The reason for getting involved is simple to Glennis-local. Supporting local businesses is so important, even more so after having her own business. She wants to continue to get people involved locally. and its not just about food for Glennis, she thinks just shopping at local retailers helps a bunch.

7. What are the struggles each day on farm?
When describing daily struggles, Glennis equated it to a normal farmers struggles. The growing season and variety of weather that comes with it is the biggest hurdle. The temperature changes week to week and the rain can be a hassle. Another struggle is how expensive advertising can get.

8. How do you market your farm?
Glennis builds relationships as a primary marketing force. They figure out where they want their products to go, approach and build relationships, then improve their product so that it reaches that companies standards. They also use Facebook extensively. They have a TV commercial in the spring and Glennis does Live Spots with KGLO. Glennis would love to expand marketing for the flowers, but just don’t have the funds to do so.

9. What are your goals for your farm?
Glennis and her husband were around 60 years old when they started. They began with the intention to have something to do after retirement. While they will no longer have other jobs after retirement, they have no intent to slow down. As for expanding, Glennis expresses that they are pleased with where they are. They have three daughters in the area, with their own kids, and does not foresee any of them taking over the business, which is fine with Glennis. She is happy and busy the way it is now.

10. Where do you get information for:

a. Marketing opportunities in your community (i.e. Healthy Harvest, city websites)
The primary way Glennis finds out about businesses is through word of mouth. As for the more formal avenues she uses, Glennis had heard other ads on TV and figured that it could pertain to her too.

b. Technical assistance and research (i.e. ISU Extension)
Glennis has her daughters help with a lot of the research she has to do when it comes to researching on the computer. As far as in field help, Glennis uses ISU Extension services to help her.

11. Are there any educational programs you would like to see offered in your region?
Glennis is currently a member of Healthy Harvest. One thing she thinks could be improved on is the business aspect of farming. She states that while there is information on raising vegetables, there isn’t much in the way of the actual greenhouse retail business. She also thinks resources on finding products could be improved. She explained that she struggled with finding plastic containers and certain chemicals. She personally uses Notes (?) Midwest Supply, a Mennonite company. She also struggles with shipping prices.

12. Would you be interested in a future event that gave sign up information on Market Maker, a free connection website for producers and buyers?
Glennis would be interested in learning more about its resources and how it would improve her ability to reach out to others.
1. Could you tell me a little bit about the history of your farm?
The family has been farming since the 30’s and owned two farms. Now around 70, they rent out one. They started their own very small business of a vineyard and winery. They are self taught and started it for fun, less for a living wage. They want to pass it on to their kids and let them decide how to expand it.

2. What makes you value producing food for your community?
They are the only commercial winery in Franklin County, which helps both them and the community. They love community involvement. They’ve hired two senior citizens to help them pay their bills. They also occasionally hire high school kids to get younger people involved. With their community being a large percent Spanish, they also have some diversity in their employees.

3. What are your 5 year and 20 year goals for your farm?
They want to hand off the production to their kids (who are around 50), so a lot of the long term goals will be coming from them. Some may include adding distilling and beer. There has also been talk about acquiring bees. Mostly, their goal is just to stay out of debt so they can continue being self sufficient and be able to pay their employees.

4. How long have you been farming?
They have been farming in general for about 20-25, stopping in the 80’s to rent out the farm. They’ve been doing the wine business for around 10 years. They have a hard time with the definition of farming, because the government has a blurry line for what it considers farming, which plays into tax credits and such. Since at the start, Iowa did not have many opportunities to learn, Vernon trained online with Illinois, field training in Wisconsin, and then finished in Eagle’s Landing, which is in Iowa. He says there is a large difference between learning with pictures vs. going into the field and learning in person.

5. What are your production methods?
While they produce wine, they buy their grapes from other places because it is just not profitable to do so themselves. They prune in March when the weather is colder. They put a stress on cleanliness and accuracy. This is important because it is a living product that people are going to be consuming. The cleanliness plays a role in all aspects, because while you yourself may be clean, you can still have contamination due to the yeast of other factors. Everything has to be monitored. They also use plastic for the storage as opposed to stainless steel. They would prefer to use glass, you cannot use this method in mass production.

6. How do you market your farm?
Marketing is a big expense on their production. They use the local newspaper, which reaches around 7 or 8 other newspapers also. They use the radio station occasionally. They are in the visitors guide to the county, which is one of their favorites. They are in the American Inn Brochure for visitors. They are on Facebook and love anything free. They also help sponsor most anything the Chamber does, as long as their name can be put on it, even if it is an event that does not involve wine. They are involved in the Bridge of Hope. Another big pull is the Franklin County Fair. They run the saloon on the grounds that sells bottles of wine and serves non alcoholic beverages. They also hold events on their property, including a large one around Labor day. Some of these events include weddings, birthday parties, class reunions, and even sometimes have professional photos done on the property. The Labor Day event has bands, vendors (which come for free), bouncy houses, wine, breweries, and other things. Their events are all family friendly.

7. What products are you growing or raising?
They produce apples, red currant, gooseberries, rhubarb, pumpkins, hops, both red and black raspberries, and other experimental berries. They’ve produced around 21 wines all together, with about 12 available at a time.

8. What scale of operation do you have?
Very small, and only selling at events, on their own, and in a few small stores.

9. What are the struggles each day on farm?
To begin, there was not enough information and help to start a small business. A lot of information that was brought in was not suited to the environment, like having a large scale producer from California come in and talk about “going big”. They also feel that they have a hard time making their money back on advertisements. When it comes to events and classes, they sometimes struggle with attendance. They taught two classes at NIACC, one there and one on location. For the on location one, only one person showed up. They once had an event with a band large enough to sell out on most shows, but at their event only around 100 people showed up. Another issue is that they feel as though assistance is not personalized enough. When calling someone for help, they care from about 9-5, give advice, then check out for the day. If you call back you get a new person who doesn’t know your story. The assistance is not invested in them personally. Maybe a way to solve this is to create some sort of specific contact for them. They said Myrlie from Iowa State used to be a great help, but he is now retired. The last point to note is that a lot of their customers are not from the county. Mason City is the largest surrounding area, so they get some business from that. Surprisingly, a lot of their customers are from Minnesota, due to the Iowa Wine and Beer Booklet. They are now on an Iowa wine trail, which gets tourists interested.
10. Where do you get information for:

a. Marketing opportunities in your community (i.e. Healthy Harvest, city websites)
   They use the Iowa tourism site for a reference. They have a couple owners from their family who are more computer savvy, so they do more of the research for marketing. This includes their son who other primary job is marketing outside of the winery.

b. Technical assistance and research (i.e. ISU Extension)
   They contact the Wine Growers Association, who always get back to them with answers to help but aren’t the best hands on group. A lot of their information is self found, since they are mostly self taught and there are little to no resources in Iowa for wineries. They also have to be in contact with the TTB, or the Alcohol and Tobacco Tax and Trade Bureau, for licensing and labels. Although they have an overall license, they have to get individual ones for each wine. This is a point of struggle, since recently the TTB has changed their protocol and are more strict on regulations. This is not a negative, except for the fact when a wine is not approved, there is no reason as to why. Once the Harper’s were told that the TTB needed more information, and when they asked of what sort, the TTB responded with “more”.

11. Are there any educational programs you would like to see offered in your region?
   While Vernon is not a fan of the educational programs that exist, or excited about seeing more in the future, he did have some suggestions on what needs to be offered. Those include less tips/talk and more one on one, on location help. He wants more opportunities to talk to a live person who wants to see a project come to completion. From this interview, there also seems to be a strong need for resources pertaining to small businesses.

12. Would you be interested in a future event that gave sign up information on Market Maker, a free connection website for producers and buyers?
   They were very interested in a future with Market Maker. They had not heard of it before, but enjoyed the idea of a more focused informational site. While they themselves may not manage it, they are thinking it would be good to pass on to their kids.
1. What products are you growing or raising?
Jackie produces potatoes, onions, carrots, beets, cucumber, tomatoes, watermelon, cantaloupe, broccoli, cauliflower, eggplant, and cabbage. She also makes different flavors of popcorn. A majority of what she does includes baking desserts to sell.

2. What scale of operation do you have?
Jackie’s operation is very small. It involves just a garden at her house.

3. What are your production methods
Her process involves tilling the soil, planting, weeding, and other typical gardening tasks. She also has plastic mulch under her tomatoes to prevent disease.

4. Could you tell me a little bit about the history of your farm?
Jackie started gardening because her daughter was involved in 4-H and became very interested in doing so herself. Together they started planting, and decided to sell the extra produce at farmers markets. They also made treats together. Jackie has continued it on herself after her daughter graduated.

5. How long have you been farming?
While she can’t remember exactly, she estimates it at 10 years, if not longer.

6. What makes you value producing food for your community?
Jackie loves gardening herself, so it really gives her happiness. She works with 4-H in Hampton, which takes up a lot of nights and weekends. Her favorite way to kill overtime hours is by taking days off to focus on her garden. She also loves providing to community members who maybe wish they could do the same but are restricted in some way, like elderly people or those who do not have enough space to do so.

7. What are the struggles each day on farm?
This year, she has been struggling with critters and other animals getting into her plants. For now she has an electric fence up, but in the future her family is going to put up a large 6 foot fence.

8. How do you market your farm?
While she doesn’t actively market her garden, she does post to the Hampton Farmer’s Market page on Facebook. This helps her get the word out and lets buyer know about what she will be bringing into the market that day.

9. What are your goals for your farm?
While she doesn’t have any plans to make the production bigger herself, she does want to get more people involved. She’d love to get her grandchildren active in the garden. Some of them have their own garden plot, while the others use hers a little. Jackie would just love to see them get involved and continue to use it. She says perhaps they’ll get more into marketing it.

10. Where do you get information for:
   a. Marketing opportunities in your community (i.e. Healthy Harvest, city websites)
      Facebook
   b. Technical assistance and research (i.e. ISU Extension)
      Doesn’t really do too much research, but did complete the Master Gardener program (in Harden County), so she has some knowledge on her own.

11. Are there any educational programs you would like to see offered in your region?
She enjoyed the Master Gardeners class (which are currently in Mason City and Harden County), and while she does not see a strong enough need to have the same program in Hampton, she’d love to see gardening, landscaping, or even tree care classes.

12. Would you be interested in a future event that gave sign up information on Market Maker, a free connection website for producers and buyers?
Jackie likes the idea of Market Maker and thinks it would be a great resource for all the vendors at the Hampton Farmer’s Market.
Leroy Zimmerman Log Cabin Produce

1. What products are you growing or raising?
Leroy produces a large variety of crops on his farm, including strawberries, raspberries, blueberries, sweet corn, watermelons, cantaloupes, pumpkins, zucchini, cucumbers, peppers, green beans, onions, and tomatoes.

2. What scale of operation do you have?
Leroy describes his farm as a medium sized operation, with about 52 acres. A little bit of this is land he rents down the road from him. He also has two greenhouses, one solely for tomatoes and the other his brother, who has a farm not too far away, rents for flowers.

3. What are your production methods
Leroy had a hard time describing his farm, but settled on mostly conventional farming with some organic practices. He says he tries to me mostly chemical free, but that there are some pests he can’t destroy without chemicals. This includes some weeds and the spotted wing drosophila fruit fly. This particular fruit fly is from around 2008. He has tried to find organic solutions for this particular pest, but can’t seem to find anything other than chemicals to be efficient.

4. Could you tell me a little bit about the history of your farm?
Leroy and his family are originally from Pennsylvania. They moved to Iowa in 2005 to pursue farming. His brother came around 1997 and actually found the farm for Leroy and his family. Now, most of his extended family has relocated to the area. He started off with 10 acres in his first year. He expanded to growing 1 acre of strawberries in 2007, and eventually developed to the 3 acres he has now. Although he came to focus on vegetables, over the thirteen years he’s been here, he has gradually cultivated more variety. One reason he specifically chose this area was due to the Cedar Valley Produce Auction. He has been able to mostly support himself on this, along with selling out of their farm. Leroy also tried attending farmers markets with his brother for around three years, but found out it wasn’t for him. He had to play both marketer and farmer, which forced him to spend less time on the farm and therefore compromising the quality of the produce. He enjoyed both ends of the process but couldn’t afford to give up that amount of time, which is why he went into wholesale.

5. How long have you been farming?
Although Leroy has been farming in Iowa for thirteen years, he has been exposed to farming his whole life. He grew up on a hog farm his father owned in Pennsylvania. There was also vegetable farming in the area, but he was not involved at that age.

6. What makes you value producing food for your community?
When Leroy first began, he admits he was thinking directly about the community. He looked at it solely from a farming prospective, but as time goes on, he starts to focus more on the impact it has on the community. He places emphasis on the quality of his products. His only real direct link to the community is through his food stand on his farm. Here is where he sells all the fruits he grows. He also allows families to come and pick their own strawberries.

7. What are the struggles each day on farm?
A typical complaint from farmers is lack of labor, but Leroy says he is pretty set in that category. He has a large family that helps out, along with hiring a neighbor to regularly help weed. When it comes to harvesting the berries, he hires about 20 younger women from the community to help out. One of the issues he does have is weather. Heat and dryness are not something that bothers him, due to his irrigation system, but hail and too much rain does have a negative impact on his production. As previously mentioned, there are some pests that cause damage on the berries and fruits. Leroy has the normal weed and pest issues, but says these are pretty manageable. To help with this, along with his irrigation system, he places tarps on his some parts of his fields. He then cuts holes in it for the plants to grow up. This helps prevent sunlight to the weeds which in turn helps stunt their growth.

8. How do you market your farm?
Leroy advertises in the paper, postcards, and on the radio before the growing season. Because of the auction, he doesn’t need to market too much, because a lot of his product goes there for wholesale. Leroy says that at the auction, the quality of the produce does all the marketing itself. Each grower is assigned a number, so if a customer specifically enjoys what Leroy brings, he can continually buy from him. He thinks this system is great, because customers can really get to know their farmer and ask them questions.

9. What are your goals for your farm?
Leroy wants to keep the size of the farm mostly the same, with the exception of the blueberries. He’d like to expand this section within the next five years, because he sees the market really responding to them. He says there are a lot of customers who don’t realize blueberries can be grown in Iowa. He says his vegetable section is maxed out. He wants to continue to keep his basic crops, provide work for the family, and keep the community involved.

10. Where do you get information for:
   a. Marketing opportunities in your community (i.e. Healthy Harvest, city websites)
Leroy is involved with the Buy Fresh Buy Local campaign, but other than that, as previously stated, he does not need to many other marketing resources. He does not have his own website, but is on the Healthy Harvest site.
10. Where do you get information for:
b. Technical assistance and research (i.e. ISU Extension)

Iowa State University is Leroy’s number one go to. He really enjoys the seminars they do at the auction. He used to go to the extension office in Ames, but now that he is more established he just calls the offices when he needs support. He thinks over the past years Iowa State has made huge strides in the information and resources they provide for vegetable and fruit farmers. Leroy has been very excited with this growth.

11. Are there any educational programs you would like to see offered in your region?

Leroy believes, with the previous growth, that Iowa State Extension and Outreach provides a sufficient amount of education and resources for the area. He thinks they have a pretty good variety.

12. Would you be interested in a future event that gave sign up information on Market Maker, a free connection website for producers and buyers?

Leroy is interested with the idea of Market Maker. He likes the idea that it is specifically suited for farmers. He also likes that you don’t have to constantly update the information. He is not currently signed up but would be interested.
1. What products are you growing or raising?
For vegetables, Steve grows sweet corn, potatoes and onions. He also grows corn and soybeans.

2. What scale of operation do you have?
Compared to some other producers in the area, Steve has a large operation. He has around 10 acres of corn, 50 acres of potatoes, 30 acres of onions, 800-900 acres of corn and beans. He has these acres in two areas, Osage and Fertile.

3. What are your production methods
Steve fertilizes with commercial fertilizer. He sprays for weeds when needed. For the corn, he has a regular spray program to help prevent the corn earworms. For the potatoes and onions he uses fungicide once a week.

4. Could you tell me a little bit about the history of your farm?
Steve was fifteen years old when he started growing sweet corn as a project for the FFA. He continued on with it and it ended up helping put him through college. When he was in college, Steve rented corn and bean acres. As far as his farms now, they have been in the family for awhile. In the 1930’s, his uncle and dad owned the farms in the Fertile area. Then, in the 1960’s, a family by the name of Kittleson got involved with the Rachuts. A brother of the Kittleson family was diagnosed with cancer and past away, which is when Steve got involved. The current years are a bit of a transition period, as some of the other farmers are getting ready to retire. Steve is thirty five, so he is far away from that.

5. How long have you been farming?
Steve has been farming since he was a young boy with his father.

6. What makes you value producing food for your community?
Steve has a strong pride in what he does. He wants to create a high quality product for his community. The food he grows is directly tied to his name, so its important that he gives both it and himself a good reputation. As far as where his food goes, his sweetcorn is sold roadside and at the Mason City and Clear Lake farmers markets. The potatoes and onions are harvested in the fall and put into storage. They are then marketed to area grocery stores once a week from November to May. This grocery stores typically involve HyVee and Fairway. The onions are sold to a wholesaler in Minneapolis.

7. What are the struggles each day on farm?
With a variety and large quantity of land, the hardest thing for Steve is thinking ahead. He as to always be thinking about the next step in the process. As always, weather is an issue. They had a particularly messy problem last year when everything was overly wet, which made his onions very diseased. He couldn’t even harvest most of them.

8. How do you market your farm?
Steve uses Facebook, occasional newspaper ads, and sign-age around town.

9. What are your goals for your farm?
Steve has three kids, so he wants to sustain the farm and keep it healthy so that if his family wants to take over and keep it going, they can. He would like to expand, but as far as specifics for that, its really up to the economy of the crops and the market.

10. Where do you get information for:
   a. Marketing opportunities in your community (i.e. Healthy Harvest, city websites)
   Steve has not been super interested in looking for marketing resource. He has long standing relationships with the grocery stores, and he has just contracted more in Minnesota. He contacts stores directly and markets himself to them.

   b. Technical assistance and research (i.e. ISU Extension)
   Steve relies on other growers mostly. He also talks to suppliers of the seeds and chemicals he uses. These companies have resources all over the USA, so its nice to hear their take on things and learn more from them.

11. Are there any educational programs you would like to see offered in your region?
This was a difficulty question for Steve. He says nothing specific comes to mind, but just general information when diseases hit, like with the onions last year.

12. Would you be interested in a future event that gave sign up information on Market Maker, a free connection website for producers and buyers?
Steve thinks Market Maker sounds great and he is possibly interested. He thinks the important thing is getting buyers like restaurants and such, so that producers can market themselves to potential buyers.
1. What products are you growing or raising?
Ronald produces onions, cabbages, carrots, a variety of onions, potatoes, green beans, rutabagas, and kohlrabi. The onions are the
his focus for commercial sized growing, while the rest are mostly for Healthy Harvest and local communities. He also grows corn to
revitalize the soil.

2. What scale of operation do you have?
As previously mentioned, Ronald has a mix of local growth and commercial growth. Because of this, he describes his production as a
small farm and a large garden. He owns around one acre of land.

3. What are your production methods
Ronald’s farm is very close to home, as the labor is primarily done by himself and his family. He also brings in part time helpers
occasionally. The soil itself is muck soil, with around 50% organic composition, and a pH value of 6.0 (which is pretty good for his
products). He does not till the soil, but does rotation crops. He also uses cover crops to help prevent blowing soil. He uses a mold board
plow to keep the soil loose under and firm on top. He describes his farm as conventional, with use of prowl and goal weed killers.

4. Could you tell me a little bit about the history of your farm?
Ronald’s father farmed onion, grain, and cattle, so Ronald has been exposed to farming for a long time. He bought his property from
his mom around 1970. His brother and nephew farm next to his land, which they use a lot of for potatoes. Since Ronald is 71, he has
started cutting back and renting more land to his brother and nephew.

5. How long have you been farming?
As mentioned previously, Ronald recalls being around farming since he was 5. He remembers his father teaching him all about onions
and showing him how to properly weed.

6. What makes you value producing food for your community?
Ronald’s first answer to this is that it is the “Christian thing to do”. He goes on to explain that this can be broken down into two
categories- the good and selfish reasons. The good reason is that people need to eat, and there are many who don’t have the money or
resources to do so. By farming and providing food, he can help fix this problem for those in need. He also teaches people how to cook
with the products he provides, as some people have never really handled such vegetables. By doing this, he helps get better nutrient out
to children and adults alike. He expressed concern for the kids who are not getting the proper food. This plays into his ‘selfish’ reason.
If he shows people how to use his products, they will be more likely to buy them after they know how to use them. While this is self
serving on the surface, Ronald’s thought and compassion seem to be the real driving force.

7. What are the struggles each day on farm?
Weather is the number one struggle on the farm. He sometimes gets drowned out, due to being in a valley region. He also mentioned
that markets are a hardship, because he does not really get to pick the prices for his product. This is mostly determined by markets in
Washington and other areas. Finding the sweet spot of getting the price high enough for production costs but low enough for buyers is
tough. Other factors he mentioned were weeds and bugs, specifically yellow nutseed and the root knot nematode.

8. How do you market your farm?
Ronald keeps his marketing small. He sells to Healthy Harvest at a set price, so this does not really require marketing. His grain is on
share, so this is determined by season and market. As far as his commercial market, he calls the same guys every year in Minneapolis
area. He tells them the amount that he has, and they market and sell it up in their area. He also sells to Opportunity Village and Hyvee.

9. What are your goals for your farm?
Ronald has lots of change in his future. He plans to stop the grain and onion production after this year. This is due to the fact the Mayor
is stepping down in two years, so he will be in training to take his place. Because being Mayor also includes being city administrator,
he will not have time to do both. While he plans to scale back on farming, he still plans to keep his one acre and sell to Healthy
Harvest. If his brother wants his land, Ronald will make a deal with him.

10. Where do you get information for:
a. Marketing opportunities in your community (i.e. Healthy Harvest, city websites)
As far as marketing resources, Ronald didn’t have much to share. He is very local and self taught. He sells to Healthy Harvest for his
variety vegetables, but as far as his commercial products, he does not do much marketing.

b. Technical assistance and research (i.e. ISU Extension)
Ronald uses ISU Extension contacts and specialists. He also has some resources in Michigan. He does go to the North Iowa Fruit and
Vegetable Convention.

11. Are there any educational programs you would like to see offered in your region?
This question was tricky for Ronald. He says he is typically willing to drive to get information. Maybe information he seeks out
elsewhere can be brought to Worth and Region 3. With his business, it would probably help to have information for small scale
productions. He also mentioned Bio genetics, maybe there is an avenue to bring more information in about this topic.

12. Would you be interested in a future event that gave sign up information on Market Maker, a free connection
website for producers and buyers?
Ronald would attend an event over Market Maker, and mentioned that he actually signed up for one before. He remembers starting the
account but not really following through on using it. He thinks its has potential to be a great resource for farmers.