

VEGETABLE CROPS HOTLINE

A newsletter for commercial vegetable growers prepared by the Purdue University Cooperative Extension Service.

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From the Editor's Desk

(Petrus Langenhoven, plangenh@purdue.edu, (765) 496-7955)

Dear Valued VCH Readers,

Welcome to This Week's Vegetable Crops Hotline – Our Final Issue for 2025

As we close out the 2025 growing season, this marks our final newsletter issue of the year. We'll return with our next regular issue on **February 20, 2026**. Should any urgent matters arise during our winter break, we'll publish them as hot topics to keep you informed, so stay tuned.

The end of the growing season is an ideal time to reflect on what worked, what didn't, and how to improve for next year. If you've found yourself wishing you had better records of plantings, treatments, harvest dates, and yields, now is the perfect moment to set up a system for 2026. We're excited to share information about free digital database templates that have been vetted by Purdue faculty and are actually used on Purdue farms—customizable tools that can streamline your record-keeping and planning for the seasons ahead.

This final issue also celebrates the vibrant educational infrastructure supporting Indiana's vegetable growers. We'll take you inside the Purdue Student Farm, which has grown from a modest student project in 2010 into one of the country's most dynamic educational farms, integrating teaching, research, and Extension on 3.5 acres. For those considering a transition to organic production, we'll highlight an upcoming Organic University event in November that brings together expert knowledge and practical guidance specifically tailored for Midwest growers.

As we bid farewell to the 2025 growing season, we encourage you to take advantage of these late-season learning opportunities and use the quieter winter months to plan, organize, and prepare for

an even more successful 2026 growing season. Thank you for being part of our community this year—we look forward to reconnecting in February!

Who Plants Broccoli During the Third week of September in Indiana?

Well, I did. It was a last-minute decision, the ground was ready and the beds were already made. Ideally, broccoli should be planted during the last week of August or the beginning of September in West-central Indiana. It will be interesting to see how the varieties will perform with all the heat they received during the last two weeks of September and early October. It has also been super dry.



Figure 1. Broccoli variety trial established at the Meigs Horticulture Facility, Lafayette IN (Photo by Petrus Langenhoven).

The broccoli varieties planted include Sibsey (33 days), Eastern Crown (58 days), Emerald Crown (60 days), Eastern Magic (62 days), Asteroid (67 days), Imperial (71 days), Millennium (74 days), and Castle Dome (75 days). Seeds were sown in 128-count trays on August 28, 2025, and transplanted on September 16. That puts the harvest date for varieties with the longest days to maturity at November 30. We will certainly experience a hard freeze by then. To learn more about the variety trial results, download the published results from the [Midwest Vegetable Trial Report](#) in January 2026.

Indiana Horticulture and Small Farm Conference, March 3-5, 2026

Save this date! In 2026, for the very first time, the [Indiana Horticulture Conference & Expo](#) and the [Indiana Small Farm Conference](#) are joining forces to present a joint meeting at the Hendricks County Fairgrounds from March 3 to 5. Join us as we merge two popular Purdue Extension events into one dynamic conference. Designed for specialty crop growers and small farmers region-wide, featuring premier educational sessions.



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Event Location: Hendricks County Fairgrounds
1900 E Main St. Danville, IN 46122



Growers and Purdue Extension Educators

Your input and expertise make this newsletter a truly useful resource. If you have hot topics you'd like us to cover, success stories to share, or questions for our Extension specialists, please get in touch with us at plangenh@purdue.edu or contact the specialist directly. We also welcome high-quality photos of pest issues, unusual symptoms, or innovative production practices you've implemented on your farm.

Website Links in Newsletter Articles

We frequently include links to websites or online publications. If you are unable to access these resources, please don't hesitate to contact your local Purdue Extension office or us to request a hard copy of the information.

Midwest Vegetable Production Guide

The 2025 Midwest Vegetable Production guide is now available for growers to visit online at mwveguide.org, or you can download and print a guide from your computer at mwveguide.org/guide. The guide can also be purchased for \$15 per copy. Contact your Extension Office or Stephen Meyers (slmeyeres@purdue.edu) directly to buy a copy.

Midwest Vegetable Trial Reports

Are you still considering purchasing vegetable seeds? The [Midwest Vegetable Trial Reports](#) feature many articles to help you make an informed decision. The resource also hosts research results related to production.

Best regards,

Petrus Langenhoven

Clinical Assistant Professor and Vegetable Extension Specialist
Department of Horticulture and Landscape Architecture

Purdue University

Marbleseed and Indiana Organic Network to host Organic University in November

(Ashley Adair, holmes9@purdue.edu)



INDIANA ORGANIC NETWORK

If you're considering transitioning your farm to organic production, we have an event coming up in November that's perfect for you! The Indiana Organic Network and Marbleseed are teaming up to host an Organic University event in Indiana at the Hendricks County Fairgrounds on November 6, 2025, from 10:00 a.m. to 5:30 p.m. This event is designed to give farmers the tools, connections, and knowledge needed to jump into organic transition. The day is structured to benefit both specialty crop growers and grain growers. The morning begins with talks on soil health and organic regulations applicable to all types of crops. Concurrent breakout sessions will follow in the afternoon to cater to the specific needs of specialty crops and grain crops. We are grateful to have folks like Dan Perkins of Perkins Good Earth Farm in De Motte, IN; Sam Oschwald-Tilton, Organic Agriculture Professional with Glacial Drift Enterprises; Jenn Whaley, General Manager with OnMark Certification Services; and Tay Fatke, Farmer Education Manager with Marbleseed, on our schedule for the morning. These folks will bring a wealth of knowledge and experience related to organic production in the Midwest to this event.

Speakers featured on the specialty crops track include Chris Adair, manager of the Purdue Student Farm in West Lafayette, IN; Dan Perkins, and Laura Ingwell, Fruit and Vegetable Pest Management researcher and extension specialist with Purdue Entomology. Attendees will learn about weed management, integrated pest management, and post-harvest handling strategies for organic vegetable crops.

Speakers featured on the grain crops track include Leon Atwell, Kansas farmer and part of Organic Farmers' Agency for Relationship Marketing (OFARM), and a panel of Indiana grain producers that will discuss organic weed management and marketing.

This event is **free to attend**, thanks to support from the Transition to Organic Partnership Program (TOPP) and the Indiana Organic Network. Registration can be completed at https://marbleseed.salsalabs.org/ou_indiana/index.html

We hope to see you there!



Purdue Student Farm: Growing Leaders, Knowledge, and Community

(Petrus Langenhoven, plangenh@purdue.edu, (765) 496-7955)

What began in 2010 as a modest student initiative in a field of honeysuckle has blossomed into one of the country's most dynamic educational farms. Today, the Purdue Student Farm operates on 3.5 acres on the northern edge of campus, serving as a living example of how a land-grant institution can integrate teaching, research, and Extension to serve students and community alike.

A Simple Yet Powerful Philosophy

The [Purdue Student Farm's](#) approach is elegantly straightforward: we operate as a viable, diverse Indiana vegetable farm, and in doing so, we naturally create opportunities for education, outreach, and research. Growing nutrient-dense vegetables and herbs using principles that govern balanced ecosystems, we

emphasize sustainable farming methods while addressing the three pillars of sustainability—economy, community, and environment.



Figure 1. The Purdue Student Farm summer internship program offers students the opportunity to learn about the operation of a small farm, participating in all activities from seed to market (Photo by Chris Adair).

The farm truly integrates all three pillars of the College of Agriculture's mission. We focus first on students, developing their skills in small farm management, vegetable production, and marketing. Second, we serve farm operators and consumers through Extension activities that support citizens across Indiana, the Midwest, and beyond. Third, we serve as a vital hub for on-farm research.



Figure 2. Purdue Student Farm Organization (PSFO) students were helping Miranda Purcell to harvest grapes at The Meigs Horticulture Facility (Photo by PSFO member).

Impact by the Numbers

The farm's 2024 achievements tell a compelling story of productivity and educational reach:

Production and Community Impact:

- 27,295 pounds of high-quality food produced
- 25,595 pounds sold through various channels

- 19,104 pounds from the Purdue Student Farm
- 6,491 from Meigs/Throckmorton Purdue Ag Center
- 1,700 pounds donated to support local food security initiatives

Educational Outreach:

- 6,400 hours dedicated to education
- 627 students, farm operators, and visitors engaged
- 131 students and 54 farm operators trained in sustainable farming practices

Research Excellence:

- 12 investigators from multiple colleges conducted 17 on-farm projects
- 7 graduate students supported (2 PhD, 5 MS)
- 47 publications and presentations disseminated



Figure 3. Student interns are learning how to transplant beets (Photo by Chris Adair).



Figure 4. A student prunes and trellises tomatoes in a high tunnel at the Purdue Student Farm (Photo by Chris Adair).

Innovation in Research and Technology

Research conducted at the farm spans diverse agricultural challenges. Faculty and students have developed video analytics systems for assessing hand-hygiene practices in wash-pack environments and created HortCalculator, an online financial planning tool that has reached 7,000 stakeholders with a remarkable 95% adoption rate. Mobile device LiDAR technology for non-destructive plant assessment has also been tested on-site.

One standout achievement is our pioneering integrated weed management program, which achieved a 60% reduction in hand-weeding labor costs while simultaneously improving yield. Our research on leaf mold compost earned an Outstanding Paper Award in Urban Agriculture and Regional Food Systems, and our pepper variety trials have reached growers in 108 countries.



Figure 5. Students in a Small Farms Experience course (SFS 21000) help with harvesting Swiss chard at the Purdue Student Farm (Photo by Joshua Clark).



Figure 6. The HORT 318 (Field Production of Horticulture Crops) class is listening to Chris Adair (Purdue Student Farm manager) describing how to cultivate sweet peppers in a high tunnel (Photo by Petrus Langenhoven).

The Overbeck Controlled Environment Agriculture Facility

A major advancement was made with the addition of the

[Overbeck Controlled Environment Agriculture Facility](#)—two state-of-the-art container farms bringing vertical farming technology to campus. In just its first year of operation, the facility has produced impressive results:

- Over 2,100 pounds of head lettuce (approximately 10,000 heads)
- Substantial quantities of mixed greens and herbs
- Year-round production regardless of Indiana’s seasonal limitations

Six student interns rotate through the facility weekly, gaining hands-on experience with advanced agricultural technology. As one student noted, “This opportunity is allowing me to see similar technologies to the ones used in the production of plants in space right here on Purdue’s campus, all while producing fresh produce for the local West Lafayette community.”

The facility has enabled the launch of a new [Spring Salad Kit CSA program](#) and supplies campus culinary programs with fresh greens throughout the year.



Figure 7. Students helping with the harvesting of a high tunnel sweet pepper variety trial at the Purdue Student Farm (Photo by Petrus Langenhoven).

Community Supported Agriculture: From Challenge to Success

When COVID-19 closed campus dining courts in 2020, the Purdue Student Farm faced a critical moment. Rather than shutting down, the team pivoted and launched the [Boilermaker Vegetable](#)

[Season Pass CSA program](#). What started with 50 members has grown to 153 today.

Members consistently rate the program as “world-class” and strongly support its local, student-led, and educational mission. The feedback speaks for itself. One member shared, “I so look forward to the vegetable bag each Friday as I start my meal prep for the weekend, making great food from fresh ingredients.” A graduate student noted that the program “removed all of the decision fatigue around shopping for veggies and ensured she was eating healthy.”

By purchasing a CSA share, community members directly support [student education](#) while receiving fresh, locally grown vegetables—they’re investing in the next generation of agricultural leaders.

Annual Small Farm Education Field Day

Since 2018, the Annual Small Farm Education Field Day has become a cornerstone event for Indiana’s growing community of small and medium-sized farmers seeking practical knowledge in sustainable agriculture. The event has attracted over 900 participants throughout its history.

This signature program exemplifies what the Purdue Student Farm does best: bringing together academic expertise and practical farming experience. Fifteen faculty members, specialists, Extension educators, and students coordinate demonstrations throughout the year, offering hands-on guidance in diverse farming practices. The Field Day has become a vital hub for knowledge transfer, helping Indiana’s farmers adopt sustainable practices and enhance their operations.



Figure 8. The Purdue Student Farm hosts the annual Small Farm Education Field Day during the third week of July. Here, Stephen Meyers and graduate students Jeanine Arana and Celia Corado demonstrate different hand-weeding tools to attendees (Photo by Joshua Clark).



Figure 9. Petrus Langenhoven is talking to attendees about pepper cultivation in high tunnels at the Small Farm Education Field Day (Photo by Joshua Clark).

Building Bridges and Growing Community

What makes the Purdue Student Farm special extends beyond production numbers and research output. The farm has created partnerships with Purdue Cultural Centers, hosted international visitors from Peru, Ukraine, Japan, and Hawaii, and welcomed groups from NRCS, USDA, and FFA chapters. The Student Farm co-leads study abroad experiences and maintains a commitment to community service through regular donations to ACE Food Pantry, Food Finders Food Bank, and Purdue Cultural Centers.

From outdoor fields to cutting-edge vertical farms, the Purdue Student Farm has created a comprehensive learning environment that prepares students for every aspect of modern agriculture. It embodies a fundamental aspect of the land-grant mission: a place where teaching, research, and Extension come together in service to students and the community.

The Purdue Student Farm isn't just growing vegetables—it's growing future agricultural leaders, advancing sustainable farming knowledge, and nourishing the community in every sense of the word. Come and visit us anytime!

For more information about the Purdue Student Farm, visit ag.purdue.edu/departments/hla/facilities/student-farm or contact Petrus Langenhoven (Purdue Student Farm director) or Chris Adair (Purdue Student Farm Manager) at the Department of Horticulture and Landscape Architecture, studentfarm@purdue.edu.

Digital Records are Easy and Useful

(Dennis Buckmaster, dbuckmas@purdue.edu)

Here, at the end of the 2025 production season, you may find yourself wishing you had better records of plantings, treatments, harvest dates, yields, etc. That information is valuable to you for both financial records and future planning. This seemed like a good time to remind (if you've seen this before) or inform (if you missed it earlier) you that some private database templates have

been prepared for you to duplicate and customize to your specialty crop operation. These templates have been vetted by Purdue faculty and staff, who are highly knowledgeable about horticultural crop operations and are even used on Purdue farms.

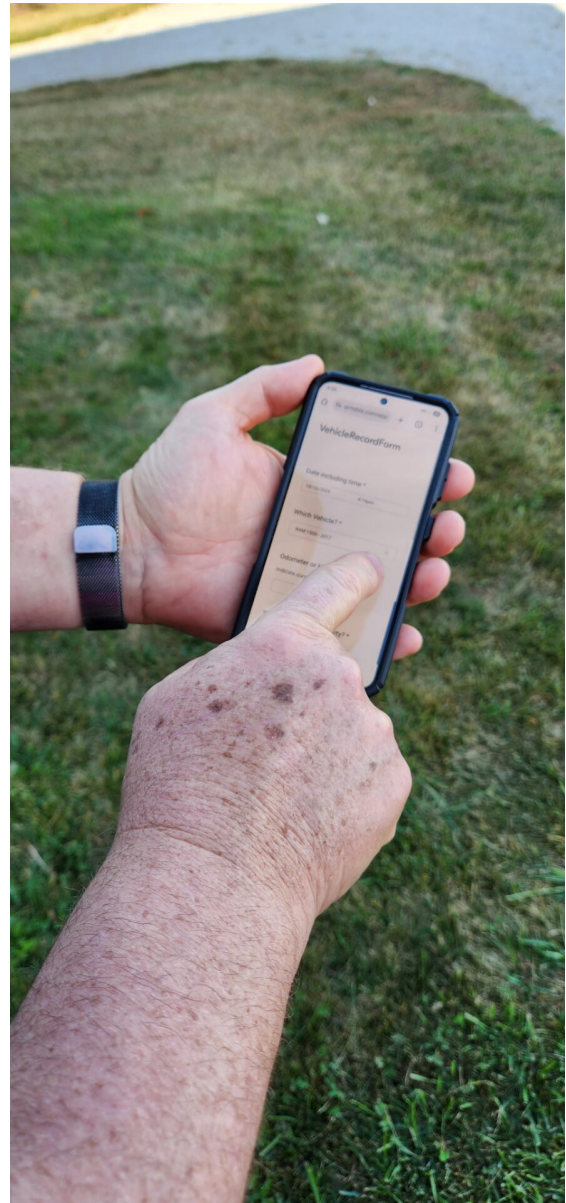


Figure 1. Farm worker making a record of maintenance to a vehicle (Photo by Dennis Buckmaster).

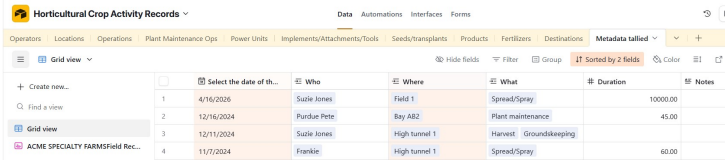
So what is a private database? First, the private ... it is your data stored in a cloud platform in which you control access via ID, password, and sharing privileges. There is a separation of the "access to the data" aspect from the "provide data" aspect. You can have workers provide data via a very mobile-friendly form, while retaining the security of the actual records, accessible only to management. Now the database ... visualize a spreadsheet with columns of different information and rows for each activity or event. You can use this approach as sort of a "quick books lite" that you customize and, in those instances, the rows are income or expense events (buying inputs, selling goods, etc.) and the columns are information about such events (purchaser, supplier, amount, date, item category, etc.). However, private databases are excellent for tracking the activities you perform in production, such as tillage, seeding, weeding, spraying, thinning, harvesting,

storage, and transport. One advantage of this approach is its digital nature. When the records are digital, you can sort, filter, compute – and the records never get lost.

Template 1: The Horticultural Crop Activity database template is ready for you to duplicate and customize to track what happens to every field, row, block, bed, or other management unit. It was built using [Airtable](#), a cloud-based platform with a free tier robust enough for your records; read about it [here](#). While there, you’ll see that there is a recorded workshop covering how to duplicate and use the template.

Template 2: The FSMA (Food Safety Modernization Act) database templates, also built using [Airtable](#), will facilitate your keeping of sufficient records regarding post-harvest water treatment, cleaning and sanitizing, training, water system inspections, and composting. Access the post to learn more and get a copy [here](#).

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	Date	Who	Where	What	Duration	Notes
1	4/16/2026	Sue Jones	Field 1	Spread/Spray	10000.00	
2	12/16/2024	Purdue Pete	Bay A82	Plant maintenance	45.00	
3	12/11/2024	Sue Jones	High tunnel 1	Harvest Groundskeeping		
4	11/7/2024	Frankie	High tunnel 1	Spread/Spray	60.00	

Figure 2. Screen capture of a portion of horticultural crop records in Airtable.

There are a couple of other templates you can duplicate. One is for [vehicle expense records](#), and another is an [income and expense tracker](#). To learn how to build your own private database for other purposes, such as customer contacts, livestock treatments, a UAV flight logbook, or even grade school student reading records, see [this post](#) that includes, yes, another recorded workshop.

These templates are brought to you by [IDAAS, Purdue’s Institute for Digital and Advanced Agricultural Systems](#).