



Acreage Answers

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Organic Industry in Iowa Continues to Grow

by Michael L. White, ISU Extension Crops Field Specialist

Have you noticed the increased presence of organic products popping up on the shelves of your local supermarket lately? Some larger stores even have entire sections in their meat, produce, and milk departments devoted to organic products.

The United States organic industry has grown at a rate of more than 20 percent per year during the last 10 years. Iowa, too, has been very involved with this organic industry growth. Iowa is a national leader in organic soybean production. Iowa also has seen an increase in organic grain, livestock, fruit, and vegetable production.

Producers of organic products operate under strict organic standards. These standards include prohibitions against synthetic pesticides and fertilizers. The emphasis is on soil improvement through the use of manures and crop rotations. Fields must be free of synthetic pesticides and fertilizers for at least three years prior to harvest. Organic livestock cannot be given hormones or prohibited drugs and must be fed 100 percent organic feed. Manufacturers of organic food products also follow strict processing and handling standards.

Organic certification is necessary prior to selling "Certified Organic" products. Applicants for organic certification must keep detailed records and have annual on-site farm inspections to maintain organic certification. Individuals may apply for organic certification through the Iowa Department of Agriculture and Land Stewardship (IDALS) or through private certifying organizations in Iowa. More information on organic rules and certification can be obtained by calling the Organic Agriculture Bureau at IDALS at (515-281-5783). This organic information and a 39-page Iowa "Directory of Organic Producers, Buyers and Processors" can also be obtained at this IDALS Internet site:
www2.state.ia.us/agriculture/index.html

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Please share *Acreage Answers* with your acreage neighbors. Call your local ISU Extension office to be placed on the mailing list for *Acreage Answers* and to give us suggestions for future articles.

Acreage Answers can be found on the Internet at this URL

www.extension.iastate.edu/polk/ag

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Cooperative Extension Service, Iowa State University of Science and Technology, and the United States Department of Agriculture cooperating.

Cost of Owning a Horse

By Carl Neifert, ISU Extension Livestock Specialist and Dale Miller, Madison County Extension Education Director

What do I need and what will it cost? There are certain **minimum** investment and operating costs involved in owning a horse.

A. **Initial investment** is the horse. Costs will vary depending on the age, breed, training, size, etc. As a basic model-figure \$1500 for a registered saddle-trained quarter horse.



B. **Tack.** The necessary basic, functional unadorned accessories include: saddle, bridle, pad, blanket, halter, curry comb, brush, hoof pick, lead rope, and buckets. Figure \$800 – \$900.

C. **Facilities.** For one horse, you need a minimum of 25,000 square feet of pen space. More is better. Additionally, you need shelter, stalls, and a tack room. Figure on a corral of 50 x 50 foot, a 10 x 12 foot shed, plus an 8 x 10 foot tack room. Estimated costs of \$2,500 (materials only). Labor cost would be extra, plus costs to get water and electricity to site.

D. **Horse care.**

- 1) Hay @ 20 lb. /head per day @ \$.05 /lb. (\$3.50 for a 70 lb. square bale) times 7 months is \$210.
- 2) Grains and supplements @ 4 lb./head per day @ \$.15/lb. times 5 months is \$100. Pasture for 5 months @ \$25/head per month is \$125.

- 3) Foot care including trimming and shoeing- \$100/year.
- 4) Veterinary services \$125- \$175 per year.
- 5) Depreciation, interest, repairs, insurance \$375 - \$500 per year.

Total minimum initial investment - \$5000. Total minimum yearly operational costs \$1000 - approx. \$2.75 per day

Protect Crops Against Losses

by Beth Grabau, Dallas County Farm Service Agency

Do you raise hay, Christmas trees, vegetables, or other nontraditional crops? Do you wish that you could insure these crops against a loss? Well, the Farm Service Agency (FSA) has a new program that provides assistance for crop losses due to eligible natural disasters when crop insurance is not available in the county. The Noninsured Crop Assistance Program or NAP covers crops that are grown for food or fiber. This program covers many crops that are not traditional in Iowa such as aquaculture, floriculture, honey, and more. A \$100 service fee per crop is required, but the fees cannot exceed \$300 per county or \$900 per producer. Information about crop yields, making application and other information can be obtained at your local FSA office.

Water Gardens

by Jamie Beyer, Story County Master Gardener

One of the most memorable fantasies as a teenager growing up was having a place of my own, in the country, complete with a farm pond in the front, and a Weeping Willow overhanging the water. Of course, this pond would be teeming with big fish and have water lilies blooming at one end. The water would be crystal clear, and a guy could go swimming in it on a hot day in July.

Well, like I said, it was a fantasy, but we can come close these days no matter where we live and how much space we have. In the last 15 years, developments in the technology of water gardening have allowed anyone that can dig a hole, put in a pond, and have crystal clear water. There are great liners that seal the hole with relatively little effort. Then there are energy efficient water pumps that run 24 hours a day, 365 days a year, and last for many years.

So, just where do you start? First, do your homework. There are a lot of good references and libraries have many of them available for checkout so you can teach yourself the hobby. Look at how other people have put in their water garden and ask their opinion. Attend water garden tours to see different types of gardens. You can learn from their experiences.

Carefully choose the location of your pond. Sounds easy but it

can be deceiving. Try not to place it in a low spot unless it is an unlined farm pond dependent on the runoff from a watershed to keep it filled. Runoff water can carry fertilizers, manure, pesticides, and a lot of organic matter that can pollute the pond and potentially kill everything overnight. Most lined water gardens today benefit from having very little runoff water flowing into the pond.

Water from a well or rural water supply is much better and contains very little organic matter. Well water in Iowa normally has a high level of iron, but this will not harm the water garden. Chlorinated rural water is also good to use - the chlorine dissipates very quickly. Be patient and add the fish and plants a week or two after filling.

There are a couple of items that rural water gardeners will find different than urban gardeners. One item that comes to mind right away is the amount of wind that occurs in the country. Wind can carry corn shucks, leaves and other types of organic matter. An overload of organic matter in the pond can create the right conditions for algae and a toxic situation for the fish. So, place the pond in a protected location from the wind.

Another very important aspect is that there are fewer kids roaming the countryside. Safety to

children is extremely important. Being more rural reduces the chances of having children unexpectedly visit your pond. In town, ponders have to seriously consider fencing the yard to keep the young neighborhood kids from coming over and falling in.

Once these decisions are made, the task of actually building the water garden can be done in a weekend or two. Remember to do your homework so you avoid mistakes that can lead to problems later.

A resource on the Internet is the Central Iowa Water Garden Association's website at www.geocities.com/ciwga



2002 ISU Extension Garden Calendar

The 2002 issue of the
Garden Calendar is now
available.

The calendars are \$6.00 each
and can be ordered at your
county Extension office.

Shop Tool Selection, Care, Maintenance, and Safety

by Mark Hanna, ISU Extension Ag Engineer

Repair and maintenance jobs often require a wider selection of tools for the acreage-owner than the average homeowner. When selecting tools, recognize that there is often a strong correlation between quality and price.

Evaluate usage and safety before purchase to get the best long-term value. Some things to remember are:

- Hand- and power-tools are categorized as light-duty (hobby), standard-duty (intermittent use), and heavy-duty (industrial).
- Before purchasing from a general-merchandise discounter consider the desirability of after-sale service and expertise for

tools requiring specific skills (e.g. a welder).

- Ease-of-adjustment and, for electrical tools, grounding or double-insulation is important.
- Features should be evaluated on their usefulness and potential to improve the quality of work.

Care and maintenance of tools is specific to each tool. For many, cleaning and perhaps minor lubrication after use is sufficient. Keep directions and operator's manuals in a central location and refer to them periodically for maintenance and safety issues.

Safety and productivity will be improved if the work area is kept uncluttered, has adequate lighting and electrical service, and a hard-surfaced floor. Safety glasses should be easily accessible and used.

Special purpose tools are best selected by considering the range of tasks to perform. For welders, consider the types of metal and thicknesses to be welded. This will help a salesperson determine the type of welder, amperage, and duty cycle to fit the need. An air compressor may be used for painting or pneumatic tools in addition to tire inflation. Portability is an advantage. For more general use, select a compressor in the range of 1/2 hp with airflow of 2.5 cu ft/min.

Living on Gravel Roads

by Debbie Van Arkel, Poweshiek County Extension Education Director and
Ann Smith, Tama County Extension Education Director

Will we ever get plowed out? What's an embargo? These questions, along with billowing dust, not enough gravel, or too much gravel are some of the realities of living on a gravel road. County roads are not covered by state plans so each county establishes local policies. Call your county engineer with questions about county maintenance policies. County and state budget cuts for equipment and staff time are concerns that may

influence winter road maintenance this year.

Issues vary with Iowa's changing seasons. An example of local policy is one county's goal to have roads open, to at least one-way traffic, three days following a snowstorm. Other common snow handling policies include priority for school bus routes, prohibiting dumping snow on the road or pushing a ridge of snow across the road

into the opposite ditch. Expect a ridge at the end of your driveway when the plow pushes snow to clear the road.

During warm weather months dust is the major concern. There are effective measures that can help control dust, at a cost to the country dweller. Check with the county engineer's office for local guidelines for applying dust control and credible sources for those substances.

Bird Feeding Season

by Steve Lekwa, Story County Conservation Director

Birds add a cheerful presence any time they are around, but that is particularly true in a long Iowa winter. It is time to get bird feeders ready.

Start by making sure feeders are clean. Dirty feeders can hold and spread disease organisms. Soapy water works well on plastic and metal feeders. Wood feeders need a 10 percent bleach treatment to penetrate and disinfect hard-to-clean crevices and corners.

Feeders should be in wind-sheltered locations when possible, and where they can be seen. Perching and escape cover of brush piles or dense shrubbery nearby make feeders more attractive to birds. "Critter guards" discourage squirrels. They can be purchased at many garden stores and placed on feeder posts.

Black oil-seed sunflower is a great basic food for most winter birds, and can be fed from

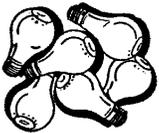
"tube feeders" as well as on platform types. Small birds like Juncos and Tree Sparrows prefer small seed like millet spread on or close to the ground. Pesky English Sparrows are attracted to small seeds, too, but can be offered cheaper cracked corn well away from the "window feeders."

A regularly cleaned, heated water source can round out your offerings and make your yard very popular with winter birds.



Lighting for Security & Comfort

by Gene Mohling, Johnson County Extension Education Director



The quantity and quality of light around us determines how well we see, work, and play. Light affects our health, safety, morale, comfort and security. Lighting also directly affects our pocket book. A typical household spends 10-15 percent of its annual energy budget on lighting, which may vary from \$90 to \$150 per year.

Many homeowners use outdoor lighting for decoration and security. When lighting for security, you should take precautionary steps with the home itself by making it as burglarproof as possible. This

step in security will mean added expense on items such as deadbolts, locks on windows, and interior lights placed on timers.

Exterior lighting may take many forms from low voltage pathway lighting to high-sodium motion-detector floodlights. It is recommended that outdoor lighting operate on a photocell or timer to help you save energy during the day. Driving into a well-lighted yard at night gives you a sense of well-being.

Light output is measured in lumens. For example a 100-watt bulb produces about 1750 lumens. A footcandle of

illumination is a lumen of light distributed over 1 square foot. Most companies will recommend an illumination of 30-50 footcandles for outdoor lighting. While any light source is better than no light at all, high-intensity discharge lamps provide the highest efficiency and longest life. The most common of these are the mercury vapor and high-pressure sodium light. These lights have an energy savings of 75 percent or more over incandescent light. For security, safety, and comfort, lighting your outdoor living space is an inexpensive option.