

Hosted by SDSPA
in Partnership with NRCS

**THE UPPER MIDWEST
URBAN AND RURAL
AGRICULTURE
INNOVATION
CONFERENCE**

2024

UMURAI CONFERENCE

The Upper Midwest Urban and Rural Ag Innovation Conference (UMURAI) is a premier gathering of agricultural professionals, researchers, and enthusiasts from across the region. Bringing together experts and knowledgeable leaders to discuss the latest trends, innovations, and best practices in soil health, specialty crop production, and rural and urban agriculture.

UMURAI is focused on exploring the unique challenges and opportunities facing farmers and producers in both urban and rural settings.

VENDORS



www.conference.sdspecialtyproducers.org

THURSDAY
9:30 AM

SD NRCS ADMINISTRATION

10:45 AM

FIRST TRACK SESSIONS

11:45 AM

- Cut Flowers with Jenny Behlings, J Ellen Design & Market
- Business Planning with Cheri Rath, VAADC
- Biostimulants with Gary Shafer, Integrated Soil & Plant Technologies

12:00 PM
2:00 PM

LUNCH | SDSPA ANNUAL MEETING

SECOND TRACK SESSIONS

2:15 PM

- Raising the Standard: Production Practices for Raised Beds and Containers with Dr. Kristine Lang, SDSU Extension

3:15 PM

- SD Food System Listening Session with Blake Pulse, SDSU Extension
- Soil Health with John Frank, Integrated Soil & Plant Technologies

THIRD TRACK SESSIONS

3:45 PM

- How May Biodynamic Practices Aid Business Development with Beth and Nathan Corymb, Meadowlark Hearth Seeds

4:45 PM

- Grow Your Business with a Registered Apprenticeship Program with Ezra Hunter and Bill Christensen, SD Dept of Labor
- Growing Alliums with Gary Shafer, Integrated Soil & Plant Technologies

**FRIDAY
9:00 AM**

AGENCY UPDATES

with NRCS, F2S, DANR, and VAADC

10:30 AM

FIRST TRACK SESSIONS

11:30 AM

- Overcoming Barriers to Healthy Local Food with Jared Lukens-Black
- Developing Opportunities for Urban Producers with Alina Krone-Hedman, Minnehaha Conservation District
- Reading Your Plants with Gary Shafer, ISP Integrated Technologies

**12:00 PM
1:00 PM**

LUNCH

SECOND TRACK SESSIONS

1:00 PM

1:45 PM

- Innovating Agriculture Through Technical Education with Bryan Mitchell, Western Dakota Technical College
- Using Solar On Your Farm with Molly Brown, GenPro Energy
- Nutrient Dense Production with John Frank, ISP Integrated Technologies

THIRD TRACK SESSIONS

2:15 PM

3:00 PM

- Mushrooms 101 with Jonalyn Burt of Johnny's Seeds
- An Overview of Organic Agriculture Programs, Policies, and Opportunities with Dr. Angela K. Jackson, Owner of PrairieSun Organic Farm
- Soil Health Gardening with Kent Vlieger, NRCS State Soil Health Specialist

3:00 PM

- Crop Insurance for Specialty Producers with Kelsey Willardson, Policy Associate at the Center for Rural Affairs

2024 UMURAI

SPEAKER LIST



SPEAKER

SDSU Extension

Kristine Lang, Assistant Professor and Extension Consumer Horticulture Specialist



SPEAKER

Center For Rural Affairs

Kelsey Willardson, Policy Associate



SPEAKER

Budding Moon Farm

Jared Lukens-Black, Owner



SPEAKER

SDSU Extension

Blake Pulse, Graduate Research Assistant



SPEAKER

Johnny's Seeds

Jonalyn Burt, Product Technician



SPEAKER

PrairieSun Organic Farm

Dr. Angela K. Jackson, Owner / Operator



SPEAKER

Meadowlark Hearth

Beth and Nathan Corymb, Board Members / Co-Owners



SPEAKER

Western Dakota Technical College

Bryan Mitchell, Program Director Electrical Trades program and Co-Program Director Controlled Environment Agriculture



SPEAKER

Minnehaha Conservation District

Alina Krone-Hedman, Urban Conservation Education Coordinator

125 Seats
UMURAI 2024

Watch 2023 Sessions and more:

www.conference.sdspecialtyproducers.org



SPEAKER

Value Added Ag Development Center (VAADC)

Cheri Rath Executive Director of Value Added Ag Development Center



SPEAKER

SDSU Extension

Anna Tvedt an SDSU Extension Nutrition Field Specialist



SPEAKER

Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS)

Rachel Lawton Urban Conservationist



SPEAKER

J Ellen Design & Market

Jenny Behlings, Cut Flower Production



SPEAKER

ISP Integrated Technologies

John Frank of Integrated Soil & Plant Technologies



SPEAKER

GenPro Energy

Molly Brown, EVP of Corporate Strategy



SPEAKER

South Dakota Department of Agriculture & Natural Resources

Timothy Schoonhoven Policy Advisor



SPEAKER

Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS)

Kent Vlieger; NRCS State Soil Health Specialist



SPEAKER

StartTodaySD Program

Ezra Hunter, Apprenticeship Coordinator



SPEAKER


StartTodaySD Program

Bill Christensen, Apprenticeship Coordinator

125 Seats
UMURAI 2024

Watch 2023 Sessions and more:

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UMURAI CONFERENCE

Speaker Highlight:

Jenny Behlings of J Ellen Design & Market

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Thursday, February 8th - 10:45 am to 11:45 am

Cut Flowers – SD Grown

Can you grow Cut Flowers in SD? Sure, and there are plenty of folks doing it already. Find out the Who, What, Where, How and Why of Cut Flower Production and if it might be right for you to add to your operation.

Jenny Behlings, AAF AIFD CFD PFCI SDCF, has been in love with flowers from the very beginning! She studied Floral Design and Greenhouse Management at the University of Minnesota – Waseca, followed by the founding of Jenny's Floral – Custer SD in 1987.

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SOUTH DAKOTA
VALUE-ADDED
AGRICULTURE
DEVELOPMENT CENTER

Speaker Highlight:

Cheri Rath of Value Added Ag Development Center

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Thursday, February 8th - 10:45 am to 11:45 am

Business Planning

Join Cheri Rath as she provides valuable guidance and strategies for developing effective business plans tailored to the unique needs and goals of agricultural enterprises.

Whether you're a seasoned entrepreneur or just starting out, this session will equip you with the tools and knowledge to drive success in your agribusiness ventures.

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ISP INTEGRATED
SOIL + PLANT
TECHNOLOGIES

Speaker Highlight:

Gary Shafer of ISP Technologies


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Thursday, February 8th - 10:45 am to 11:45 am

Biostimulants

Gary Shafer, from ISP, the potential of Biostimulants in growing produce - How they can help improve soil productive potential and reduce yield robbing plant stress.

Explore the potential of biostimulants, Gary will discuss the latest advancements in biostimulant technology and how they can be leveraged to achieve sustainable and resilient agricultural systems.



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Speaker Highlight:

John Frank of ISP Technologies

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Thursday, February 8th - 2:15 pm - 3:15 pm

Soil Health

Join us as John Frank delves into the critical role of soil health in producing crops that are not only abundant but also brimming with flavor and nutrition. John will explore how a healthy soil ecosystem is optimized to support roots, microbes, and produce, creating the ideal environment for plant growth and development.

In this engaging session, attendees will learn about the intricate interactions between soil microbes, root systems, and plant nutrition, and how they contribute to the overall quality and taste of crops.



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UMURAI CONFERENCE

Speaker Highlight:


Kristine Lang, Assistant Professor and Extension
Consumer Horticulture Specialist SDSU

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Thursday, February 8th - 2:15 pm to 3:15 pm **Raising the Standard: Production Practices for** **Raised Beds and Containers**

Kristine Lang, Assistant Professor and Extension Consumer Horticulture Specialist at SDSU, will enlighten us on production practices for raised beds and containers.

This session will explore the "how come" and "how to" of moving away from in-ground growing. Come prepared to share your experiences and ideas while Kristine shares her perspectives from research and growing in Iowa and South Dakota.



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Speaker Highlight:

Blake Pulse of SDSU Extension

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Thursday, February 8th - 2:15 pm to 3:15 pm

Listening Session: Building Resilience in the South Dakota Local Food System

Join the discussion about building resilience in the local food system. Blake Pulse will guide attendees through an interactive listening session to discuss challenges and opportunities to strengthen the local food system within our state.

Your perspective is extremely valuable to this ongoing research conducted by SDSU in partnership with the SD Local Foods Coalition.

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UMURAI CONFERENCE



Speaker Highlight:

Beth and Nathan Corymb of Meadowlark Hearth

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Thursday, February 8th - 3:45 pm - 4:45 pm

How May Biodynamic Practices Aid Business

Development

Meadowlark Hearth is a Farm Ecological Seed Initiative. We are proud of our efforts to offer quality vegetable seed from a midwest whole farm fabric.

Meadowlark Hearth provides open pollinated seed on contract for varied midsize seed companies throughout the US as well as its own online distribution.

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UMURAI CONFERENCE

Speaker Highlight:

Ezra Hunter and Bill Christensen of StartTodaySD
Apprenticeship Program

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Thursday, February 8th - 3:45 pm - 4:45 pm Grow Your Business with a Registered Apprenticeship Program

Apprenticeship Coordinators from the StartTodaySD Apprenticeship Program will explore the U.S. Department of Labor's Registered Apprenticeship Program (RAP) and its role in addressing workforce challenges within the agriculture industry.

This presentation will delve into RAP development, expansion, benefits, and funding opportunities for South Dakotans through the South Dakota Department of Labor and Regulation.

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UMURAI CONFERENCE



ISP INTEGRATED
SOIL + PLANT
TECHNOLOGIES

Speaker Highlight:

Gary Shafer of ISP Technologies

www.conference.sdspecialtyproducers.org

Thursday, February 8th - 3:45 pm - 4:45 pm

Growing Alliums

This session will provide advice on growing, harvesting and curing onions and other alliums for either fresh or storage markets. Gary Shafer has been involved in research projects for ISP and is continually looking for new market opportunities for growers

ISP Technologies is founded on the principles of research and results. If cutting edge technology yields the best results, we recommend it. If it's something more basic, we'll tell you. Our products are designed based on the needs we've encountered, literally "in the field". With ISP you're not buying a "system" that will start working in a few years. Your investing in a proven solution that delivers results.



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UMURAI CONFERENCE

Speaker Highlight:

Rachel Lawton, Urban Conservationist with the
Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS)

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Friday, February 9th - 9:00 am - 10:00 am

Agency Updates with NRCS, F2S, DANR, and VAADC

Rachel has worked for the NRCS for four and a half years, first starting out as a soil conservationist and then District Conservationist in the Chamberlain Field Office in south central South Dakota.

She took on the role of Urban Conservationist for South Dakota in August of 2022. Prior to moving to South Dakota, Rachel graduated with a bachelor's in environmental science from The University of Rhode Island. She later received her master's from Aarhus University in Denmark studying agro-environmental systems, soil physics and soil fertility.



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UMURAI CONFERENCE

Speaker Highlight:

Anna Tvedt SDSU Extension Nutrition Field Specialist


www.conference.sdspecialtyproducers.org

Friday, February 9th - 9:00 am - 10:00 am

**Agency Updates with NRCS, F2S, DANR, and
VAADC**

Anna is a registered dietitian and serves as a Nutrition Field Specialist for SDSU Extension. Her work revolves around healthy food access initiatives, such as farm-to-school, farmers markets, nutrition incentive programs, breastfeeding, and more. As a Nutrition Field Specialist, Anna provides nutrition expertise to South Dakotans statewide.

Part of the shared session for agriculture-related agencies and organizations. She will provide a summary of opportunities and ongoings with the SD Farm to School Network relevant to producers.



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UMURAI CONFERENCE

Speaker Highlight:

Timothy Schoonhoven Policy Advisor

www.conference.sdspecialtyproducers.org

Friday, February 9th - 9:00 am - 10:00 am
Agency Updates with NRCS, F2S, DANR, and
VAADC

Timothy Schoonhoven is a Policy Advisor at South Dakota Department of Agriculture and Natural Resources.

He will give an overview of current opportunities through RFSI, SCBG, LFPA during the Agency Updates session on Friday.

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UMURAI CONFERENCE

Speaker Highlight:

Jared Lukens-Black of Budding Moon Farm


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Friday, February 9th - 10:30 am - 11:30 am

Overcoming Barriers to Healthy, Local Food

Everyone eats, but not everyone eats the high quality, local food being grown in our communities. This session will identify what gets in the way of more eaters participating in our local food system and ways everyone can make local foods more accessible.

Jared will cover what has and hasn't worked on his farm - including a deep dive into his Veggie Rx (prescription produce) program, sliding scale pricing, and the positive impact those have on the sustainability of his operation. You will walk away with concrete ways to support the health of our neighbors, our communities, and our local food producers.



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UMURAI CONFERENCE

Speaker Highlight:

Alina Krone-Hedman, Urban Conservation
Education Coordinator Minnehaha Conservation District

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Friday, February 9th - 10:30 am - 11:30 am

Developing Opportunities for Urban Producers: A Look at Creating Community Programs From Inception to Implementation

Minnehaha Conservation District (MCD) strives to promote the sustainable use of natural resources through responsible stewardship by providing quality services and education to the surrounding community.

This presentation will explore how opportunities like these are created, look at funding sources, and provide a synopsis of what these programs do.

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UMURAI CONFERENCE



ISP INTEGRATED
SOIL + PLANT
TECHNOLOGIES

Speaker Highlight:


Gary Shafer of ISP Technologies

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Friday, February 9th - 10:30 am - 11:30 am Reading your Plants

Learning and understanding the language of plants, and how this can lead to higher yields and improved produce quality. Gary Shafer has been involved in research projects for ISP and is continually looking for new market opportunities for growers

ISP Technologies is founded on the principles of research and results. If cutting edge technology yields the best results, we recommend it. If it's something more basic, we'll tell you. Our products are designed based on the needs we've encountered, literally "in the field". With ISP you're not buying a "system" that will start working in a few years. You're investing in a proven solution that delivers results.



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UMURAI CONFERENCE


Speaker Highlight:

Bryan Mitchell of Western Dakota Technical College

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Friday, February 9th - 1:00 pm - 1:45 pm Innovating Agriculture Through Technical Education

Forget vast landscapes – imagine lush green spaces thriving right in the heart of your city. Western Dakota Technical College (WDTA) is reshaping agriculture from the ground up, bringing fresh, local food production into the urban landscape through controlled environment agriculture. Their award-winning program isn't just about harvest yields – it's about building a future where sustainable food security starts in your backyard. Join WDTA faculty as they unveil their cutting-edge CEA systems, showcase collaborations with local, regional, and even international farms, and explore how they're nurturing not just crops, but a generation of food pioneers. It's time to redefine agriculture – one leafy green, one urban oasis at a time.



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UMURAI CONFERENCE

Speaker Highlight:


Molly Brown of GenPro Energy

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Friday, February 9th - 1:00 pm - 1:45 pm **Solar projects and funding for Ag Producers**

The Inflation Reduction Act earmarked funding specifically for renewable and energy efficiency projects for ag producers. This session will go over project types, typical costs, funding resources, and paybacks.

Molly Brown is the EVP of Corporate Strategy for GenPro Energy Solutions based out of Piedmont, SD where she helps steer the company's overall vision and strategy while overseeing distributed generation project development. Her background in quantitative economics has allowed her to see and create market opportunities in underdeveloped regions.



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UMURAI CONFERENCE

Speaker Highlight:

John Frank of ISP Technologies

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Friday, February 9th - 1:00 pm - 1:45 pm

Nutrient Dense Production

The market for quality produce has never been saturated! This session will be a rapid-fire overview of What, Why, and How, builds on the earlier session of Advanced Soil Health.

For the past 2 decades Jon has prescribed fertility recommendations across the United States for thousands of gardens, market gardens, greenhouses, specialty crops, cannabis, and field crops. Jon developed a lab test to measure the nutrient density of produce and documented the cause-and-effect relationship between an optimized soil, the health of plants, and the nutrient density of food.



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UMURAI CONFERENCE

Speaker Highlight:

Jonalyn Burt, Product Technician Johnny's Seeds


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Friday, February 9th - 2:15 pm to 3:15 pm

Mushrooms 101

Learn the basics of mushroom cultivation, beginning with foundational biology then discussing principles of producing mushrooms using indoor fruiting blocks, outdoor logs and beds, or countertop kits.

Johnny's Selected Seeds is a 100% employee owned seed company based in mid-coast Maine. Johnny's is known for superior product quality due to a rigorous in-house trialing program and an amazing breeding team.



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UMURAI CONFERENCE

Speaker Highlight:

Dr. Angela K. Jackson of Prairiesun Organic Farm

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Friday, February 9th - 2:15 pm to 3:15 pm

Organic Farming Programs, Policies, and Opportunities

This session provides an overview of organic agriculture programs, policies, and opportunities designed to connect participants with running a successful organic food production operation.

Dr. Angela K. Jackson is the owner/operator of Prairiesun Organic Farm in Vermillion, SD, since 2006. She is a member of the International Organic Inspectors Association and a lead auditor for organic and regenerative farming systems. She has been active in advocating organic farming rights locally and nationally for the past 10 years and an organic inspector/auditor since 2007.



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UMURAI CONFERENCE

Speaker Highlight:

Kent Vlieger, State Soil Health Specialist with the
Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS)


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Friday, February 9th - 2:15 pm to 3:15 pm

Soil Health Gardening

Kent Vlieger has been the State Soil Health Specialist with the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) in South Dakota since 2018.

He feels fortunate to have worked with and learned from numerous soil health focused producers, conservation district boards and agency personnel. Kent's favorite part of his job is working one on one with producers and being part of the Cain Creek and Dale Demonstration Farms' management team. Kent is a graduate of SDSU with a bachelor of Science in Agriculture.



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UMURAI CONFERENCE

Speaker Highlight:

Kelsey Willardson Policy Associate Center For Rural Affairs

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Friday, February 9th - 3:00 pm to 3:30 pm **Crop Insurance for Specialty Producers**

Learn about crop insurance options and programs to fit your specialty operation. Find out the ways that USDA's Risk Management Agency can help protect your operation in cases of revenue or yield losses and their newest programs. Get your questions answered so you can make crop insurance work for you!

Kelsey Willardson is policy associate at the Center for Rural Affairs. The Center works to create vibrant rural communities through advocacy, education, and outreach. Kelsey has a Master's of Agriculture Law and Policy and loves working with farmers on the issues that impact them. Raised in a rural farming community, she's passionate about making sure farmers have a voice in the decisions that affect them.

SDSPA

The South Dakota Specialty Producers Association



SDSPA is a nonprofit comprised of a diverse, geographically dispersed group of specialty producers in the state. SDSPA's members are growers, processors, chefs, marketers, consumers, resource providers and others interested in producing, marketing and consuming specialty crops and local products.

The organization, founded in 2001, represents non-commodity products that include fruits and vegetables, specialty meats and grains, wine and beer, cut flowers, organic products, honey, agritourism businesses and more.

www.sdspecialtyproducers.org

N R C S

*Natural Resources
Conservation Service*



The Natural Resources Conservation Service is USDA's primary private lands conservation agency through voluntary conservation programs. NRCS helps producers, soil and water conservation districts, and other partners protect and conserve natural resources.

NRCS is focused on the American farmer, especially those underserved by programs and those trying to break into new markets, like organics. NRCS is also placing a new priority in targeting producers in urban and suburban areas as well as small-scale and specialty crop growers across the nation.

www.nrcs.usda.gov

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