

The Oneida Nation Community Composting Project

On 85 acres within the Oneida Reservation in northeastern Wisconsin, close to Green Bay, you'll find fields of Iroquois White Corn, beef cattle on pasture, free-range chickens, and rows of vegetables such as beans and squash. This is Tsyunhehkwa Farm. Tsyunhehkwa (pronounced Joon-hey-qwa), which translates to "life sustenance" or nourishment, provides the Oneida Nation community with traditional food staples like white corn. Beyond that, it actively promotes sustainable growing practices among community members.

Tsyunhehkwa is part of the Oneida Community Integrated Food System (OCIFS) program. In 1994, OCIFS was founded to bring together local food producers, increase the community's food quality, share information on health and nutrition, and create jobs and opportunities. OCIFS does food distribution, farming, horticulture, ranching, nutrition education, and community outreach.

William Ver Voort serves as the coordinator of OCIFS. Ver Voort grew up on a dairy farm on the Oneida Reservation and has been working with the OCIFS since 1999. In his role, he has worked on various activities, from growing projects with 4H to food distribution for elders. One of his passions is composting.

In 2021, OCIFS and Ver Voort received an \$8,718 Farmer Rancher grant from SARE to develop a community composting education project using farm waste from the Oneida Nation's Tsyunhehkwa farm. With this project, the OCIFS wanted to improve the soil health of the Tsyunhehkwa farm's white corn acres, along with some community farms and gardens. They also wanted to reintroduce traditional soil preservation and enhancement activities to the community.

"While the reservation economy relies increasingly less on agriculture as a whole, the demand for local agricultural products that are produced sustainably is again spurring

the Oneida to reinvest in local agricultural systems," said Ver Voort. "Composting has been proven safe when done correctly and supports the protection and even improvement of the surrounding growing environment and freshwater supply."

With the grant support, OCIFS acquired a 2-ton capacity food waste fermenting bin and a 106-gallon compost tumbler. Informational materials and videos were developed, and these resources were shared through workshops with community members and youth organizations. Using the compost tumbler, live demonstrations were conducted to create compost, which participants could then take home for their gardens. The project used local news outlets and social media channels to share information, ensuring more community members received the details about composting opportunities.

OCIFS will apply compost to the white corn fields at Tsyunhehkwa this upcoming growing season and they are looking forward to seeing its benefits.

Ver Voort has noticed more community members being interested in and supportive of composting. He is trying to build community support for an institutional composting project that will gather compostable materials from Oneida schools, organizations, and businesses.

"Just like people are beginning to understand that what they eat does affect their health, I believe they will start understanding the huge benefits of composting and the amazing soil that comes from it," said Ver Voort. "My biggest hope is to get the Institutional Composting Project off the ground."

Dig Deeper

For more information on this project, visit <https://projects.sare.org/project-reports/fnc21-1313/> or contact the NCR-SARE office.

NCR-SARE's Farmer Rancher program starts accepting proposals in mid-August. Learn more here: <https://northcentral.sare.org/grants>.

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The Oneida Nation's community composting education project has been reintroducing composting at the Oneida Nation Tsyunhehkwa farm and throughout the community. Photos courtesy of William Ver Voort.

Farming with Soil Life

A HANDBOOK FOR SUPPORTING SOIL INVERTEBRATES
AND SOIL HEALTH ON FARMS

Jennifer Hopwood, Stephanie Frischie,
Emily May, and Eric Lee-Mader



New Book: Farming With Soil Life

This is a new handbook for supporting soil invertebrates and soil health on farms from the Xerces Society and SARE.

Dig Deeper

Farming with Soil Life: A Handbook for Supporting Soil Invertebrates and Soil Health on Farms was written by Jennifer Hopwood, Stephanie Frischie, Emily May and Eric Lee-Mader. Download for free or order a print copy at <https://www.sare.org/soil-life>. Print copies can be ordered online for \$28 each, plus shipping and handling. Call (301) 779-1007 for telephone, tax-free, rush, or purchase orders. Discounts apply for orders of 10 or more copies.

To learn more about this SARE Professional Development grant project, visit https://projects.sare.org/sare_project/ene19-158/ or contact the NCR-SARE office.

NCR-SARE's starts accepting Professional Development Grant program proposals in February and they're due in April. Learn more: <https://northcentral.sare.org/grants>.

Innovative farmers know that healthy soil hosts a flourishing and diverse ecosystem of bacteria, fungi, and invertebrates. However, the complex relationships between soil life, productivity, and resilience must be better understood. Now available from the Xerces Society and SARE, *Farming with Soil Life: A Handbook for Supporting Soil Invertebrates and Soil Health on Farms* is a user-friendly, 132-page guide to identifying, understanding, and better managing soil life to improve the sustainability of your farming system.

Written by the Xerces Society and published by SARE Outreach, *Farming with Soil Life* features photograph-filled profiles that outline how to observe and identify 73 soil organisms. Each profile includes the identification, description, ecological role, habitat, diet, and life cycle of the highlighted species.

Farming with Soil Life also examines how producers can boost life in the soil using buffers, no-till cropping, cover cropping, crop rotations, and other practices that encourage soil flora and fauna communities to thrive. Minimizing tillage, synthetic fertilizer use, pesticides, and insecticides may also benefit soil biology.

Understanding the relationships between soil, soil life, and crop production is key to defining and achieving goals within a sustainable production system. Soil is a living, dynamic habitat for many animals and plants. It supports the global carbon and nitrogen cycles. Healthy soils sequester carbon, helping to mitigate climate change. The more we learn, the more we understand that soil is an irreplaceable part of life.

Apply for a Grant

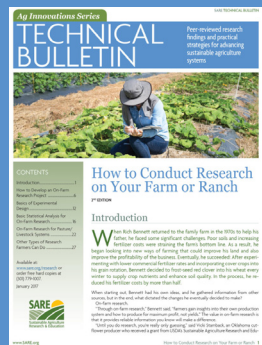
If you are interested in writing a proposal for an NCR-SARE grant, we are here to help. We can provide grant reports from other projects, lists of funded projects, or other sustainable agriculture information. Visit <https://northcentral.sare.org/grants/apply-for-a-grant/> for more details, or contact the NCR-SARE office.

Grant-Writing Assistance

SARE has a network of state coordinators working in each state and island protectorate. While State Coordinators cannot write letters of support or be involved in grants directly, your SARE state coordinator can provide advice and feedback as you work on your grant proposal. Find your SARE State Coordinator and view documents about funded grants in your state by visiting NCR-SARE online at <https://northcentral.sare.org/state-programs/state-coordinators/>.

Michael Fields Agricultural Institute (MFAI) offers free, one-on-one consulting services to help Midwest farmers, agricultural entrepreneurs, and institutions navigate USDA-SARE and other grant programs. Please contact 719-318-7936 or grants@michaelfields.org.

Test Your Ideas



“How to Conduct Research on Your Farm or Ranch” will introduce you to the purpose and goals of on-farm research. If you are exploring on-

farm research for the first time and just want to get an idea of what is involved, this publication will introduce you to the basic steps. If you are ready to plan and implement your project, this publication provides more specific information on experimental design, and how to lay out your field plots and analyze your data using basic statistical techniques. Read it or order a copy for free online at <https://www.sare.org/resources/how-to-conduct-research-on-your-farm-or-ranch/>.

Cover Cropping for Pollinators

SARE's “Cover Cropping for Pollinators and Beneficial Insects” bulletin will

help you use cover crops to encourage pollinators and beneficial insects on your farm while you address your other resource concerns. It describes cover crop selection and management, how to make cover crops work on your farm, and helpful and proven crop rotations. It also touches on the limitations of cover crops and pesticide harm reduction, among other topics. Read the free 16-page guide or order a copy for free online at <https://www.sare.org/resources/cover-cropping-for-pollinators-and-beneficial-insects/>.





New Podcast Series Explores “The Art of Climate Dialogue”

The cover art for the “Art of Climate Dialogue” podcast was created by podcast interviewee Moselle Nita Singh.



Vivian M. Cook

A new podcast series out of Iowa features conversations with farmers, artists, researchers, and activists who are using arts and storytelling to talk about climate and agriculture in Iowa.

“The Art of Climate Dialogue”

podcast series is hosted by community-engaged artist, Vivian M. Cook.

Originally from Prescott, Arizona, Cook traded the arid cacti-filled landscapes of Arizona for the cornfields and humid summers of Iowa to pursue a bachelor’s degree in Performing Arts and French from Iowa State University. She then immersed herself in the interdisciplinary Community Development and Sustainable Agriculture graduate programs at Iowa State University. She began working with The EcoTheatre Lab, a collective that transforms environmental and social justice issues into captivating performances and arts events. Cook was particularly interested in addressing challenging climate conditions through artistic means.

“Research shows that a critical and often overlooked step in addressing climate change is climate dialogue,” said Cook. “And research has also shown that effective facilitation of climate dialogue in agricultural communities should highlight values, diverse perspectives, and personal experiences. Artistic engagement methods are especially apt at incorporating these elements into public dialogue.”

With support from an NCR-SARE Graduate Student Grant, Cook launched her podcast series to explore the intersection of arts and climate communication. Between October 2022, and February 2023, Cook conducted 13 interviews with 15 guests. She hopes the podcast series will increase awareness about the Iowa farmers and artists who are doing creative work to address the changes in weather patterns that have made it harder to produce crops and raise livestock.

Featured guests have included:

- Shelley Buffalo
- Angie Carter
- Omar de Kok-Mercado
- Jean Eells
- Stephanie Enloe
- Linda Shenk
- Lance Foster
- DK (DeAn) Kelly
- Tamara Marcus
- Alice McGary
- Cornelia F. Mutel
- Sikowis Nobiss
- Ruth Rabinowitz
- Moselle Nita Singh
- Mary Swander

“The work that the 15 podcast interviewees are doing is already contributing to more effective, inclusive dialogue around climate change in agricultural communities...dialogue that, in many of their cases, has already contributed to concrete climate action, whether that be through education, coalition-building, research, community development, advocacy initiatives, or changes in agricultural practices,” said Cook.

Cook graduated in May 2023 and works as a Regenerative Agriculture Specialist with Iowa State University’s Bioeconomy Institute and as Community Engagement Director with The EcoTheatre Lab. She is pleased that the number of podcast listens continues to grow, and hopes to keep that momentum going. Throughout the next few months, The EcoTheatre Lab will continue to share the podcast, amplifying the strategies and recommendations of the podcast interviewees.

Dig Deeper

Listen to the podcast here: <https://northcentral.sare.org/resources/the-art-of-climate-dialogue-stories-from-iowa/>.

For more information on this project, visit <https://projects.sare.org/project-reports/GNC22-345> or contact NCR-SARE.

Apply for a Graduate Student Grant

NCR-SARE will start accepting proposals for new Graduate Student grants in February. Learn more about applying here: <https://northcentral.sare.org/grants>.



SARE’s “Cultivating Climate Resilience on Farms and Ranches” bulletin outlines the new challenges that changing weather patterns pose in agriculture and what you can do to make your farm more resilient.

By understanding the climate risks to your production system and practices that can reduce those risks, you can identify some management steps that will improve the resilience of your farm or ranch to changing climate conditions while allowing you to achieve your other sustainability goals.

Read it or order a free copy at <https://www.sare.org/publications/climate-risk-management-and-resilience-on-farms-and-ranches>.

What is SUSTAINABLE agriculture?



At its heart, sustainable agriculture is simple. In practice, it's much more complicated. Farmers and ranchers who value sustainability embrace three common goals for a successful production system:

- Economic viability over the long term
- Stewardship of our nation's land, air, and water
- Quality of life for farmers, ranchers, farm employees, and communities

SARE's newly revised "What is Sustainable Agriculture?" publication provides a primer to practices that can help farmers and ranchers improve the sustainability of any farm or ranch.

Climate Resilience

Conservation tillage systems, perennial cropping systems, manure management, alternative energy, and climate adaptation strategies, such as enterprise diversification

Soil Health

Cover crops, reduced tillage, crop rotation, organic matter additions, and management-intensive grazing

Livestock Health and Husbandry

Preventive health practices, stress reduction, reduced use of antibiotics/hormones, breed selection, and animal welfare

Community Vitality

Social justice and equity, food sovereignty,

What is Sustainable Agriculture?

SARE's new resource shares the basic concepts of sustainability in agriculture.

urban agriculture, peer networks, and local and regional food systems

Health and Wellbeing of People

Support for mental and physical health, workplace safety, fair compensation, social networking, and interpersonal skills

Ecological Pest Management

Crop rotation, beneficial organisms, integrated pest management (IPM), pest identification and scouting, and soil health practices

Biological Diversity

Wildlife and pollinator habitat, agroforestry, riparian buffers, crop/livestock integration, mixed species grazing, heirlooms, and heritage breeds

Innovative Technologies and Enterprises

Precision agriculture, alternative energy systems, interseeders, new marketing channels, niche products, and value-added processing

Order a Copy

Available for free in print and online, "What is Sustainable Agriculture?" highlights SARE-funded projects that use innovative technologies and enterprises to explore sustainable strategies that address some of agriculture's most pressing modern-day challenges. Download or order your free print copy of "What is Sustainable Agriculture?" at www.sare.org/what-is-sustainable-agriculture or by calling (301) 779-1007. "What is Sustainable Agriculture?" is available in quantity for free to educators for use in educational workshops, classes, or tours.

Videos to Introduce Sustainable Concepts

Designed to accompany the "What is Sustainable Agriculture?" publication, SARE's series of eight short animated videos illustrates how producers can improve the success and health of their farms by implementing sustainable practices. View the videos here: <https://tinyurl.com/SAREWISAVideos>.



Naima Dhore harvests greens on a plot in Minneapolis. Photo by Hannah Ginder.

Minnesota Millet Farmer Featured by United Nations

Minnesota farmer Naima Dhore owns a 20-acre farm just outside of Minneapolis, Minnesota, where she's surrounded by a large East African community. One of her crops is millet—a resilient cereal grain grown widely in semi-arid regions of the world. Dhore has an eager market within the sizable East African communities of Minneapolis, where an estimated 50,000 to 100,000 Somalis, along with other East African diasporas, reside.

Earlier in 2023, Dhore was awarded a North Central SARE Farmer Rancher Grant to evaluate best practices in the commercial-scale production and marketing of foxtail and proso millets. She has been collaborating with the University of Minnesota Extension on this project.

For her efforts, Dhore's story has recently been featured by the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) of the United Nations as part of the International Year of Millets 2023. This FAO initiative is meant to raise awareness worldwide about the societal benefits of nutritious millets, which can thrive in challenging and changing climate conditions.

"It's just amazing I can grow millets, something I had as a child in Somalia, here in a place like Minnesota," said Dhore.

Dig Deeper

Read Dhore's full story on the FAO website, at <https://www.fao.org/millets-2023/my-story/detail/naima-dhore/en>.

Learn more about her SARE project at https://projects.sare.org/sare_project/fnc23-1369/.



A New Outreach Toolkit for Conservation

A new toolkit is available for conservation professionals to use in planning and executing conservation outreach. Developed by the National Wildlife Federation (NWF) in consultation with an advisory council of conservation professionals and farmers, this new outreach toolkit will help support on-the-ground efforts to expand the use of crucial soil health practices, to reach new audiences of farmers, ranchers, and landowners, and build communication skills of conservation professionals.

“Many staff at conservation agencies and organizations have extensive training in natural and agricultural sciences, but less in communications or social sciences,” said Adam Reimer, an outreach conservation specialist with NWF. “In my career as first a social science researcher and now with NWF, I have seen the importance of local relationships and connections between conservation agencies, producers, and landowners. We have seen a lot of value in providing these skills to outreach professionals and are working to build more resources and support to allow them to be more effective in their jobs.”

Developed with support from a \$86,391 SARE Professional Development grant, the online toolkit includes multimedia tutorials of social science and behavior change concepts, video testimonials of successful outreach, planning tools that guide incorporating behavior change strategies into strategic outreach planning, communication design, event development and implementation, and ongoing program evaluation.

“We have seen a lot of interest in our toolkit among outreach professionals, including local conservation district staff, university extension educators, and local conservation organizations,” said Reimer. “We’ve seen interest, especially in examples of innovative and successful outreach

approaches; while there are ideas like this out there that people can find through the internet or their professional networks, having a ‘one-stop shop’ for these types of examples and resources could be very valuable for conservation professionals. In addition, we have had a lot of interest in templates or examples of event and outreach evaluation strategies, something organizations do not always have a lot of support in conducting.”

In evaluations from workshops, Reimer received many positive comments about the toolkit’s training and behavior change outreach approach.

“Building the capacity of individuals and organizations is a key part of thinking broadly about sustainability, especially the social and human capital aspects,” said Reimer. “This toolkit project was a valuable step in moving toward a set of resources and professional network building that we hope to continue in the coming years.”

Dig Deeper

Access the online toolkit at <https://growingoutreach.nwf.org/outreach-toolkit/>.

Learn more about this SARE grant project at <https://projects.sare.org/project-reports/enc20-194/>.

Apply for a Professional Development Grant

NCR-SARE will start accepting proposals for new Professional Development grants in February. Learn more about applying here: <https://northcentral.sare.org/Grants>.



Weston Lombard added mulberries to his agroforestry farm. Photo by Weston Lombard.

Exploring the Commercial Potential of Mulberries

Ohio farmer Weston Lombard has successfully incorporated mulberries into the agroforestry system on his farm, where harvested leaves and dropped fruit provide excellent forage for chickens and hogs. With support from a SARE grant in 2016, he dialed in his main income streams, which are u-pick events and propagating and selling nursery stock.

If you’re curious about new opportunities in tree fruit production for your farm, listen in on a new episode of ATTRA’s “Voices from the Field” podcast, where Lombard talks about his experience with mulberries. In it, Lombard and NCAT Sustainable Horticulture Specialist Guy Ames discuss the commercial possibilities and challenges mulberries present, along with different cultivars and growing strategies.

This episode of “Voices from the Field” is one in a series co-produced by ATTRA and SARE that explores how farmers are working to create new local markets for specialty and niche crops. Each partner episode addresses a different production system or crop—from endives to small-grain value chains—and will feature farmers sharing their production and marketing strategies, challenges, and successes.

Dig Deeper

Listen to the podcast episode here: <https://attra.ncat.org/episode-327-attra-and-sare-the-commercial-potential-of-mulberries-in-the-midwest-2>.

Learn more about Lombard’s SARE project at https://projects.sare.org/sare_project/fnc16-1044/.



Sherman Reed is a Michigan farmer and a member of NCR-SARE's Administrative Council.

Review Grants with NCR-SARE

If you live and work in the North Central region and are interested in sustainable agriculture, you could help review NCR-SARE grant proposals. Self-nominations to serve on NCR-SARE grant program review committees are welcome anytime throughout the year.

Serving on a Grant Review Committee

Sherman Reed (above) is a farmer and a District Conservationist for the National Resources Conservation Service (NRCS). He runs an organic farm in Michigan, is a member of NCR-SARE's Administrative Council, and is the chairperson of NCR-SARE's Farmer Rancher Grant Review Committee.

"I get to communicate and learn from a diversity of individuals (multicultural scientists/professionals and farmers) from the Midwest," said Reed. "It's exciting to read, learn, and critique the ongoing and latest agricultural trends, environmental resource concerns, and urban/rural farmers' struggles. I just love the challenges of the agricultural industry and revolution!"

Serving on an NCR-SARE grant review committee can be a rewarding and educational experience. Each review committee has varying requirements, but generally, members review proposals, discuss the proposals, and make recommendations to the Administrative Council. To apply, visit <https://tinyurl.com/NCRSAREreview>.

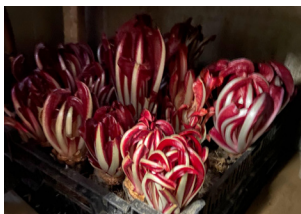
Video Series Showcases Grantees

NCR-SARE's storytelling video series, "Farming Matters," features SARE grantees sharing their stories. Join NCR-SARE staff members Erin Schneider and Marie Flanagan as they learn more about what inspires and motivates farmers, researchers, and educators. You'll leave each video with a better understanding of the innovative ways SARE grantees approach challenges.

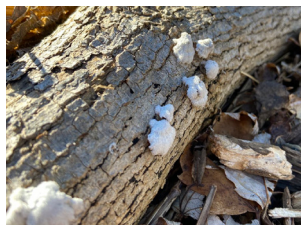
With this project-sharing series, as with all our outreach efforts, NCR-SARE is working to broaden the narrative about farmers and their communities by sharing stories from various perspectives. Watch these videos on YouTube at <https://tinyurl.com/NCRSAREfarmingmatters>.

Featured Episodes

Peter Skold joined us from Waxwing Farm, where he and Anna Racer have been growing and evaluating the feasibility of radicchio and endive as season extension crops in Minnesota with support from SARE. Their colorful radicchio and endive can be found at restaurants and dinner tables in the Twin Cities.



Lauren McCalister received SARE support to work with a network of farmers, brewers, coffee vendors, and consumers near Bloomington, Indiana, who are reducing by-product waste through the production and marketing of mushrooms. Check out the People's Cooperative Market at: <https://www.peoplesmarketbtown.org/>.



FARMING MATTERS WITH NCR-SARE

Gavi Welbel and Marya Matlin-Wainer joined us from Zumwalt Acres in Illinois, where they have been investigating the impact of biochar on their agroforestry plantings with support from SARE.



Sarah Stephens joined us from Wichita, Kansas, to update us on the progress of the Kansas Hemp Consortium. They are working to increase awareness and industry knowledge of industrial hemp.



Watch Every Episode

Episodes of Farming Matters are released on YouTube twice per month, and will be announced on NCR-SARE's Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram accounts. Subscribe today and never miss an episode.

- YouTube: <https://tinyurl.com/NCRSAREfarmingmatters>
- Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/NCRSAREA>
- Twitter: <https://twitter.com/ncrsare>
- Instagram: <https://www.instagram.com/ncrsare>

UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA



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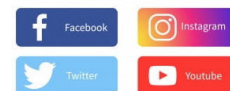
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Did you know NCR-SARE is on Facebook, YouTube, Instagram, and Twitter? Keep track of our grant opportunities, projects, events, and more. Follow, like, or friend us!



ABOUT NCR-SARE

NCR-SARE funds cutting-edge projects every year through competitive grant programs, and has awarded more than \$100 million worth of grants to farmers and ranchers, researchers, students, educators, public and private institutions, nonprofit groups, and others exploring sustainable agriculture in the 12 states of the North Central region.

Are you interested in submitting a proposal for an NCR-SARE grant? Before you write the grant proposal, determine a clear project goal, and look for sustainable agriculture research on your topic. Need help determining which program is best suited for your project? Go to <https://northcentral.sare.org/grants> for more information, or contact the NCR-SARE office at ncrsare@umn.edu.

NCR-SARE GRANT TIMELINES*

Farmer Rancher*

August - Call for Proposals Released
December - Proposals Due
February - Funding Decisions Made
April-May - Funds Available to Recipients

Graduate Student*

February - Call for Proposals Released
April - Proposals Due
July - Funding Decisions Made
September - Funds Available to Recipients

Research and Education*

August - Call for Preproposals Released
October - Preproposals Due
January - Full Proposals Invited
March - Full Proposals Due
July - Funding Decisions Made
November - Funds Available to Recipients

Professional Development Program*

February - Call for Proposals Released
April - Proposals Due
July - Funding Decisions Made
October - Funds Available to Recipients

Youth Educator*

August - Call for Proposals Released
November - Proposals Due
February - Funding Decisions Made
April-May - Funds Available to Recipients

Partnership*

August - Call for Proposals Released
October - Proposals Due
January - Funding Decisions Made
April - Funds Available to Recipients

*Timelines are subject to change.

NORTH CENTRAL REGION SUSTAINABLE AGRICULTURE RESEARCH AND EDUCATION PROGRAM CONTACT INFORMATION

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Email: ncrsare@umn.edu
www.northcentral.sare.org



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Visit <https://northcentral.sare.org/about/join-our-mailing-list/>.