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OATS | the Organic Agronomy Training Service

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OATS to Host the Organic Weed Control in Vegetables Workshop in Athens, WI

Athens, WI: Controlling weeds is the biggest challenge on many vegetable farms, especially for organic farms and those transitioning to organic. Labor time used in killing weeds can be so hard for farmers' wallets and their backs. There are a wide variety of weeding tools available for all scales that can save farmers time and money - but it can be hard to choose the right weeding implement and to know how to adjust them in the field to be effective. This workshop will show you the best tools available, as well as a great chance to network and discuss with other organic farmers to discover what tools and strategies work best for whatever problems you're facing and for what scale of or land you're tackling.

This event will help ag advisors better understand and assist their farmers with weed management. Farmers and ag advisors will also learn about new tools and get a chance to be hands on with these implements. By bringing together an experienced farmer and an organic weed control expert, you'll become familiar with many kinds of weeding tools and how to use them. You'll take a farm tour to see how weed management is planned into every part of Cattail Organics farm, and then spend time in the vegetable field learning about weed ecology, seeing many weeding tools, learning how to adjust them to match field conditions, and trying them yourself in a demo plot.

Why should I attend?

"This event will allow ag advisors and farmers to see the successful machinery systems used for weed management on an established organic vegetable farm. Participants learn hands-on directly from an experienced farmer and weeding tool expert," said Sam Oswald Tilton, event organizer.

- **When:** September 19th, 1:45 PM - 6:00 PM CT
- **Where:** Cattail Organics, 247011 Baldwin Creek Road. Athens, WI 54411
- **Who:** CCAs, Extension, NRCS, and vegetable farmers
- **How Much:** \$15.00
- **Local Host Organizations:** Marbleseed, Cattail Organics

AGENDA

- 1:45-2:00: Arrival, registration, coffee
- 2:00-2:30: Introductions
- 2:30-3:15: Farm tour
- 3:15-3:45: How weeds work, weed ecology
- 3:45-4:15: Introduction to tools and machinery types
- 4:15-4:45: How to adjust tools
- 4:45-5:30: Hands-on time to try tools
- 5:30-6:00: Snack, evaluations, closing

Speakers:

Kat Becker, Cattail Organics

Kat Becker of Cattail Organics in Athens, WI, is in her 20th season as an organic vegetable farmer. Kat brings a particular perspective to weed control after transitioning from Stoney Acres (2006-2017) to Cattail Organics (2017-Present). In the transition, she downsized from 14 acres in vegetables to 5, increased total gross sales and profitability, and used the lessons and limitations from her first farm business to develop new integrated systems. At Cattail, Kat farms with her husband and 2-4 employees. Her approach is based on a lean labor model dependent on lower weed pressure. Cattail has built a highly profitable system using a mixture of tillage (and reduced tillage) regimes, raised beds, extensive covered production, consistent rotations, synthetic mulches, and cover crops to limit weeding labor, address disease concerns, and reduce weed seed banks. Weed control systems are planned independently according to crop profitability, length of cropping season, and specific weed pressures in a given field.

Sam Oswald Tilton

Sam Oswald Tilton is an agriculture consultant at Glacial Drift LLC, and the Training Developer for OATS. He has a background in vegetable farming and a master's degree from Michigan State University with a focus on precision weeding tools. Sam has developed and sold weeding machines for the KULT-Kress company, visited farms throughout Europe and the U.S., and worked on and managed vegetable farms in WI. For the past 6 years, he has organized the Midwest Mechanical Weed Control Field Day. Previously, Sam taught horticulture at Lakeshore Technical College and served as the Fresh Market Vegetable Specialist for UW-Madison Extension. Sam teaches about weed management around the country.

This workshop was made possible by generous support from North Central Region SARE (award number ENC22-215). This event is supported through the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) Transition to Organic Partnership Program (TOPP). TOPP is a program of the USDA Organic Transition Initiative and is administered by the USDA Agricultural Marketing Service (AMS) National Organic Program (NOP).

For more information and to register, please visit <https://marbleseed.salsalabs.org/weedingtoolfieldday/index.html>. Questions? Contact Sam Oswald Tilton at sam@organicagronomy.org.

OATS, the Organic Agronomy Training Service, is a collaboratively-managed training program for agricultural professionals working with organic or transitioning farmers in the United States. We seek to grow domestic organic production by strengthening the educational support network of agronomists, certified crop advisors, extension agents, and technical service providers. Our aim is for every transitional and certified organic farmer to have robust access to technical service expertise to provide unbiased, science-based agronomic support for their farming operation.