

Ashley Loehr ([00:00:09](#)):

I'm Ashley Loehr. We're at Hurricane Flats in South Royalton, where we grow popcorn and produce on the banks of the White River with an awesome small crew.

Andy Chamberlin ([00:00:20](#)):

I'm your host, Andy Chamberlin, and I take you behind the scenes to learn how farmers are building their business in sustainable agriculture. These farmer-to-farmer interviews cover a wide range of topics from cropping systems, marketing channels, lifestyle decisions, and lessons learned along the way.

([00:00:37](#)):

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([00:01:08](#)):

Today's episode comes to you from South Royalton, Vermont, where we visit with Ashley Loehr of Hurricane Flats Farm. She's got over 25 years farming experience and is getting a good feel for the land now that it's her fourth season since buying this farm. This episode starts off in the field, checking out pretty much all the crops. We talk about field prep, interseeding, cover cropping, and weeds. We talk about vegetables, strawberries, and high tunnels. She shows us around the barn where she stores equipment and processes her own popcorn. Whether you like crops, equipment, or organic agriculture, this episode is a good one.

([00:01:45](#)):

I do want to preface there was some static-sounding noise within the first five minutes or so. Sorry about that. But it does clear up, so hang in there, and enjoy the conversation with Ashley.

Ashley Loehr ([00:02:02](#)):

Well, let's do field first, barn second, maybe?

Andy Chamberlin ([00:02:02](#)):

Sure.

Ashley Loehr ([00:02:06](#)):

Does that sound good? Great. Let's just walk down the farm road. It's been really dry. It's wild.

([00:02:17](#)):

Just eyeballing. I think these wobblers are working all right. We could have looked from the top, but the field is sort of broken up into what we call shorties and longs. We're in the zone of the shorties here. This particular section in front of us has all of what we call the fussies, the things that you plant every week. They're pretty quick. The nice thing about them is you get lots of chances because there's so many successions.

([00:02:56](#)):

And I had never really done anything with paper pot before coming here, but Geo had the setup, so we're doing a fair bit of paper pot now. And here's Little Gem lettuce and salad mix and dill and cilantro. Beets, spinach, and scallions, and it's all five rows per bed. We just really pack it in. The Little Gem lettuce is my favorite thing. If I could sell truckloads of it, I feel like this would be a Little Gem farm. I just think it's the best lettuce. And we plant it now in four-inch paper pots, but we have a seeding plate that plants every other. They're eight inches apart in row but five rows per bed, and they just make these chunky, crunchy, cute little heads, but they're just funny. They're funny to display because it doesn't look like a big head of lettuce. We have some wholesale customers that are devoted to them. And other than that, it's just essentially my pet project that I'll probably have to cut out next year.

Andy Chamberlin ([00:03:54](#)):

No.

Ashley Loehr ([00:03:54](#)):

But they're awesome. And we've been paper potting beets, which I was really skeptical of. But now I'm loving it.

([00:04:05](#)):

And spinach. Right now, I think everything that's out here is orach. I love it. It's that kind of diamond-shaped leaf. It does really great in the tunnels for us in the winter. We really can't grow in the summer because it just goes straight to seed. But we do five rows per bed on the spinach, and in midsummer, there's three or four weeks where we cut the whole plant, but most of the rest of the time, the way we harvest is by pinching out our leaves. And it's kind of crazy how much spinach we can get out of a bed. Doing that, there's just always spinach to be had.

([00:04:45](#)):

We don't do a ton of weeding in these sections. We just try to succeed by getting out of there quick and stale-bed seeding. When beds are open, we'll put these wobblers on and then flush beds before we plant and then just try to move fast. Occasionally, if we pick a spinach bed hard, we'll bring hoes and just hoe it afterwards before it grows back or the dill or cilantro. But this was a new section we opened up last year, so the weed pressure hasn't been too terrible.

Andy Chamberlin ([00:04:45](#)):

This whole area was-

Ashley Loehr ([00:05:18](#)):

This little zone. These right here are 100-foot beds, and then we remeasure this year, and we're like, "We can get another 100 feet." That little oat-and-pea zone is going to extend it to 200 feet, which then makes all our rotation blocks, in the shorties, 200-foot beds which is nice to have a uniform unit for the wobbler setups, for row cover, whatever, so that everything's kind of the same bed-

Andy Chamberlin ([00:05:46](#)):

For stale-seed bedding, are you tarping? Flaming?

Ashley Loehr ([00:05:49](#)):

None of the above. Just sneaking in with a Perfecta or sometimes a wheel hoe if it feels too tight after irrigating for a while.

Andy Chamberlin ([00:06:00](#)):

That's not-

Ashley Loehr ([00:06:01](#)):

Not too bad.

Andy Chamberlin ([00:06:01](#)):

Not very intense.

Ashley Loehr ([00:06:03](#)):

I've never gotten crazy on the tarps. And we do haul if we look out here, and we're like, "Geez." We had definitely a couple weeks where the purslane was getting crazy, and we had an afternoon or two hoeing aisles and hoeing between some chickweed. But so far, so good. These sections have had really bad hairy goosefoot pressure, lambsquarter pressure, purslane pressure. Galinsoga, I should knock on the biggest piece of wood I can find, but so far hasn't gotten out of control. I keep a little plastic baggie in my fanny pack. Anytime I see galinsoga, stick it in there, bring it to the dumpster. Just try to-

Andy Chamberlin ([00:06:03](#)):

Absolutely not. Get that out of here.

Ashley Loehr ([00:06:44](#)):

... never, never, never ... Actually, when I was cleaning the barn, I think I found Geo had some piece of paper tacked up somewhere that said like, "Public enemy number one." And I was like, "What is that? " And then I was like, "I think it's a picture of galinsoga." I guess maybe he was on the same wavelength about that.

Andy Chamberlin ([00:07:02](#)):

I know he was on a zero weed tolerance mindset.

Ashley Loehr ([00:07:06](#)):

Yes. I think that is the legacy we have most benefited from Geo Honigford. I'm grateful every day that he felt that way and acted upon it.

([00:07:17](#)):

This tunnel and that tunnel, Geo had ... This one in the middle we built last year. It's a CT Greenhouse, which I had never built before. I'd always built LedgeWood. And when I say I built, I don't mean we built. I mean Mike and Vine Ripe built. It was an NRCS tunnel, and that was our first time having professionals build a greenhouse, and it was incredible. And it was awesome. The NRCS payment for the tunnel and the raised beds covered the tunnel and his labor, which was just so awesome.

Andy Chamberlin ([00:07:46](#)):

Sweet.

Ashley Loehr ([00:07:46](#)):

And this is the first time I've ever had that has insect netting, and we had cucumbers in there. This year-end was definitely the best crop of cucumbers ever. Our goal is always to have them from as early in June as we can get until September, and this was the first year that we were actually picking cucumbers still on September 1st. I think we tore the plants out September 3rd, but still we made it. Usually just the mildew gets them. I think last year we pulled them out in early August because it was so bad. Definitely insect netting and not having that early pest pressure was awesome. Maybe a little reduced airflow, which was sketchy at times, but we opened it up.

([00:08:23](#)):

I've usually done eight rows per bed in a tunnel, single liter, and this year we switched to tomahooks above instead of just tying off twine and cables. We did double rows on everything going down to one row in the center. There's five rows per bed and then these little rows on the edges because we always want to tuck in basil or some early sweet peppers that don't really need to be trellised, and so it feels like a waste of a bed. Now, we have five big beds and two little beds on the edges.

([00:08:57](#)):

And the tomatoes, we did double liter up to the two overhead wires. The cucumbers we alternated. One plant would go to this wire, and one plant would go to this wire. The tomatoes, I made a mistake that I didn't think about lowering and leaning when we were putting those two liters up, so they weren't going in a uniform direction in a way that we could-

Andy Chamberlin ([00:09:22](#)):

They were taut to begin with.

Ashley Loehr ([00:09:22](#)):

... lean them. I'm not sure what we'll do about that next year. Maybe it doesn't matter. We don't have any heat in our tunnels. Lowering and leaning doesn't maybe usually need to happen anyway. We just cut the tops a couple weeks ago, and we'll just kind of get what we can before it gets cold.

([00:09:40](#)):

One thing that's crazy in the tomato greenhouse, though, is ... We've been buying grafted plants from Jennifer at Half Wild Farm and Lewis, and it's just really wild. We have really bad leaf mold in here but not on the grafted plants at all.

Andy Chamberlin ([00:09:56](#)):

Interesting.

Ashley Loehr ([00:09:57](#)):

It's a pretty cool side by side. We started getting into it because we had really bad sclerotinia in this tunnel a couple years ago. We switched to mostly grafted. But I think the reason, too, I was excited to do double liters because the cost of a grafted plant is so high. It felt more worth it to get two heads out of one base. But those two rows are grafted. And then look. It's crazy.

[NEW\_PARAGRAPH]We had really late ripening this year. This is a tighter spacing than I've ever done before because they're 12-inch in row, and then there's two liters. There was a lot-

Andy Chamberlin ([00:10:43](#)):

That's a lot of plants.

Ashley Loehr ([00:10:44](#)):

A lot of plant. A lot of leaf. There was just incredible fruits at ... Every truss was full, and they were just green. And I would just look at them every day like, "Come on, guys."

([00:10:56](#)):

Becky Maden was here a couple of weeks ago, and we were just talking. Maybe I put down a little too much nitrogen. Also, I think with this amount of density, just needed to prune a lot harder than I did. We've struggled with green shoulder before, so I'm always hesitant to prune a lot of bottom leaves, but I think that would have been a helpful steering tool because it was just a lush jungle, not getting enough sun in.

([00:11:23](#)):

We do direct marketing. We go to the Norwich Farmers' Market. Not picking tomatoes until July 10th was a drag. It's not what we want at all.

([00:11:33](#)):

And these are all Rebelski, and these are all marigold, and then everything else is paste and sauce. And for the first time this year, all our tomatoes are in this tunnel. There's no field tomatoes.

([00:11:46](#)):

You can probably see it's a teeny tiny valley where, basically starting the third week of August, there's just this thick, thick morning dew that settles in which is just murder on a tomato leaf. Every disease possible thrives in those type of moist mornings. Having the tunnel really helps with that. And it's been fine. We've had more than we can sell out of this to our distributors' wholesale market and the farm stand, so I think we'll stick with that quantity of tomatoes.

Andy Chamberlin ([00:12:17](#)):

What size is this tunnel?

Ashley Loehr ([00:12:19](#)):

It's a 30 by 96. That's a 30 by 96, too, but it looks so much bigger because we'll pull the pad up a bit. It just looks so tall. The only thing I really don't like about this tunnel is the door is so low. I guess that's what they said they needed to do to make space for that big of a vent. That vent is on those wax cylinders that are automatic opening because we have no electricity or even frost-free water down here.

Andy Chamberlin ([00:12:45](#)):

Wow.

Ashley Loehr ([00:12:47](#)):

But those are really cool. When it gets hot, they open themselves up. And when it cools down, they close them.

Andy Chamberlin ([00:12:52](#)):

Nifty.

Ashley Loehr ([00:12:53](#)):

The sides are not automatic, but just having that vent means that, if I'm making a delivery, and the sun comes out, I'm not like, "Everything's going to die." I know something's going to happen which is awesome.

([00:13:04](#)):

We just pull the cucs out, and then we actually stale bedded in here for two weeks. Just ran the sprinklers. Hopefully flush out some chickweed. And then Lily and I just planted it up yesterday.

([00:13:15](#)):

We have like the successions of the fussies. September 15th is kind of my mental, don't plant anything else outside. This is the final planting of those things. And then we'll try to freeze it out over the winter and then do the earliest, earliest planting instead of try to keep stuff alive all winter.

([00:13:43](#)):

Hopefully after the tomatoes, we'll just fill it with spinach. But it's all paper-potted stuff.

Andy Chamberlin ([00:13:49](#)):

What was in here before this?

Ashley Loehr ([00:13:51](#)):

Cucumbers. It was all cucumbers. And this whole tunnel we have cleared out for curing. We were planning to bring squash into it, but we've been making use of the bone-dry weather to just fuel to cure. We'll see how long that lasts. It's easier to not move things twice if we don't have to.

Andy Chamberlin ([00:14:11](#)):

What are you doing for ground prep in there? Are you using a BCS or-

Ashley Loehr ([00:14:17](#)):

No, the tunnels we've been doing all by hand, just broad forking and raking.

([00:14:23](#)):

My friend, Lily, who works here one or two days a week, and she does a little bit more in the shoulder seasons, she worked with Geo before. She's been working here longer than me.

Andy Chamberlin ([00:14:31](#)):

Nice.

Ashley Loehr ([00:14:32](#)):

And I think she and I probably flipped every single tunnel every time. And she's a speed demon, so we just bust it out. Tear stuff out. Flip it.

Andy Chamberlin ([00:14:43](#)):

Is your whole little plateau here this beach sand?

Ashley Loehr ([00:14:46](#)):

Yes. It's extreme. No rocks, but extreme beach sand.

[\(00:14:54\)](#):

We flooded. Year before last, the flood year, that wasn't Irene. And what I thought was a pancake turns out to have some topography because none of this where we're standing flooded. None of these little shorties flooded. But that corn was underwater, which I honestly would not have known that this was a higher elevation. Also, the weak spot in the river is back there. That's where the water came in first.

[\(00:15:26\)](#):

And that year, we had really gone big in terms of planting our high-intensity vegetable crops on a large scale for wholesale. We had acres of carrots and head lettuce and beets, all the summer things out in the long sections, that were destroyed. I think one of the many take-homes from the flood was to kind of bring it in to an area that's less flood prone, slightly easier to keep eyes on, easier to have controls on. Out there now is just popcorn, rye straw, winter squash, potatoes, dry beans.

Andy Chamberlin [\(00:16:10\)](#):

Long-season stuff.

Ashley Loehr [\(00:16:11\)](#):

Long-season stuff that doesn't require as much irrigation. And if you lose it, the financial impact is less significant. Also, the popcorn survived the flood. Beans survived the flood. Those are also things that made it through. We invested a little bit more in irrigation this year, but other than these wobblers and some drip, we just have these two miniature irrigation reels, neither of which actually cover a full section. You have to pull it out halfway and then move it around to the other side. We don't really have the capacity with our small crew to properly put water on that amount of acreage. But it was awesome. For most of the year, we had these short sections set up where we could just open valves to get water on stuff and not be constantly moving stuff-

Andy Chamberlin [\(00:17:03\)](#):

That's not a chore.

Ashley Loehr [\(00:17:05\)](#):

And that made it that we actually were able to keep enough water on stuff in a really dry year. But not out there. Our whole last planting of sweet corn we basically mowed because we were not able to keep up with the water, and the ears were just half the size they should be, and nobody wants that. It's humiliating. It's terrible. That was, I think, our drought-year crop failure. I'm really curious what's going to happen with the popcorn though.

[\(00:17:35\)](#):

We had really strong bird predation this year, which has never happened to us before. Geo had always said, which is also something I had observed about popcorn, that the kernels are so tiny that by the time the shoot is up, there's not any meat left in the ground for the birds to come after. I talked to a lot of other people that had really a lot of bird predation this year too, and one theory was that the spring was so long and cold, and emergence was so slow, that in fact there was enough meat under there. The birds had time to figure it out. And by birds, I mean crows this year, which we've never had troubles with before.

Andy Chamberlin ([00:18:15](#)):

Eating the seedlings early on rather than the ears this time of year?

Ashley Loehr ([00:18:19](#)):

Exactly. No, the seedlings early on right at emergence, which was pretty annoying because it just made a really weird, bad stand in a not logical pattern. We were stood out there being like, "Should we disc this in and replant it? Should we disc in half of it? Should we just seed right over it?" And it's tricky because it has to all be dry. We can't go out with the corn picker and pick stuff that's not ... We didn't want to seed over rows and have two different maturity times in there because at least we can kind of go row by row. But you can see that's a block we left that was from the early planting, and that's when we replanted. And that's how we want it to be. Normally this time of year, they're bright red. They're drying down. These are green. They haven't even colored up yet.

([00:19:12](#)):

Also, things are so slow because of the dry weather. I'm not really sure what's going to happen. And then there's definitely some. This was also a really interesting year because, in that flood, there was a significant amount of silt deposits that happened. And the deposits that happened are ... There's nothing in them. It's just nutrient list material, and you can really see where they were. You see the corn where it dips and it's yellow? That was a spot where we spread out one of the deposits. In these oats and peas, this right corner, that was the spot where there was a deposit. We have all these places on the farm that are just nothing doing, no organic matter. The first year, we took a fair bit of time setting up the fields in uniform blocks. And our neighbor, Walter, who's a surveyor, came out, and we marked corners and got everything squared up and made all these sections that they're perfect half-acre blocks, which is just so awesome for calculating seed and rotations. But it's funny because you're working in these blocks that are totally non-uniform.

Andy Chamberlin ([00:20:30](#)):

Not anymore?

Ashley Loehr ([00:20:31](#)):

Well, they are still half-acre blocks, but the soil is not because of the silt deposits. They have their own logic that doesn't have to do with my quadrangles.

([00:20:44](#)):

And actually, it's basically strip cropped this field in these half-acre blocks along the long stuff. But one thing over the last two years that we've really noticed is the edge spaces where the half-acre blocks touch each other is the weed trouble. I think we're going to switch it so that we're working in acre blocks now just to diminish the edge spaces. But the way Geo had it set up, because he was making a lot of hay, he had these big blocks and then these super-wide drive rows between each block so that he could make hay there, which was brilliant. And then he had drivers that he didn't have to brush hog.

([00:21:22](#)):

We just have been focusing more on vegetables than hay. We wanted more land and rotation, so we just kind of folded those hay strips in and made everything square.

Andy Chamberlin ([00:21:33](#)):

Are you still haying at all or give up on that?

Ashley Loehr ([00:21:35](#)):

We had been last winter. We made a decision to not hay at all this year and just mow everything. The year before was that terrible hay year where got rained on every single time. The quality was really low. We made no money on hay. And we have a really small crew. And for us to drop everything to get the hay window was just really not economical.

([00:22:04](#)):

Also, Geo had been putting soybean meal down on hayfield, so he was getting a higher yield. We haven't been able to make financial sense of that, so we haven't been contributing anything to the hay fields. The yield has just been diminishing. In the winter, we were like, "Let's just mow everything this year, not bale it, and see how that is." That's been really awesome. It just means that we can focus on the things we make money on instead of chasing our tails, trying to make the window. We also have Saturday markets that requires all of us. If you need to be raking and baling that day, it's a real tussle.

([00:22:43](#)):

I'm not exactly sure what we're going to do next year. We might see if a neighbor wants to make hay. We've also strongly diminished the hay land because we keep opening up more sections, but we've also been making a lot of straw. As far as our needs for mulch, that's been working really great. It's so much more forgiving because we can cut the rye with our sickle-bar mower. It can get rained on three times before we bail it, and it's totally fine-

Andy Chamberlin ([00:22:43](#)):

Right. It doesn't matter at that point.

Ashley Loehr ([00:23:10](#)):

It just fits much better with the other things that we're doing. And we don't have animals, so we were just bailing hay to sell.

([00:23:19](#)):

We'll see. I don't know. It's this hillside, the back of the sections over there, and it's two or three acres back there, so it's not a ton. We were talking to our neighbors down there because they have a two-acre field they hay, but they are awesome, and they run it all with ancient equipment on the nights and weekends, and they're kind of like, "We don't need to add anything else to our scheme."

([00:23:48](#)):

These are our strawberries. We went all plugs this year. We had done some plugs and some bare root the last two years. The plugs just definitely had less disease pressure. And then there was a twilight meeting at Crossroad Farm. I had talked to Phil at Crossroad Farm about his system. And then there was a twilight meeting, and I was able to go and look at his fields when it was fully fruited, and he was just about to start picking. I was with my five-year-old, so I didn't stay for the whole thing. She kind of lost steam. But just to lay eyes on the system and how awesome it looked gave me the confidence to go all in.

([00:24:34](#)):

We just clipped runners last week. We'll definitely need to clip again. I'm worried about how small the plants are right now. I've been considering putting row cover on to just push them along a bit.

Andy Chamberlin ([00:24:44](#)):

When did you plant these?

Ashley Loehr ([00:24:46](#)):

We planted them August 19th. The shipment was a week later than Phil had wanted, which, since Phil's the expert, that's also what I had wanted.

Andy Chamberlin ([00:24:55](#)):

Did you get them from Phil?

Ashley Loehr ([00:24:58](#)):

We got them from Kube-Pak, but it was a group order. They deliver it up here. They delivered to Crossroads, and then we picked them up there.

Andy Chamberlin ([00:25:04](#)):

Nice.

Ashley Loehr ([00:25:06](#)):

And it's also expensive. They're 50 cents a plug. This is 8,000 plugs. This is \$4,000. It's not a lot of space, and we're hoping it's a lot of berries, but it definitely feels like I'm looking at the crowns, looking at the calendar, and I'm like, "Guys, we got some distance to go here still."

Andy Chamberlin ([00:25:27](#)):

Is this a half-acre block?

Ashley Loehr ([00:25:30](#)):

It's a little bit less. It's a third. These are 200-foot beds, and there's 10 of them in the double row. But-

Andy Chamberlin ([00:25:37](#)):

Double row 12-inch?

Ashley Loehr ([00:25:40](#)):

Exactly, 12-inch.

Andy Chamberlin ([00:25:41](#)):

All in landscape fabric.

Ashley Loehr ([00:25:42](#)):

All in landscape fabric.

([00:25:47](#)):

This will be our big ...

Andy Chamberlin ([00:25:50](#)):

You hand planted those through burned holes?

Ashley Loehr ([00:25:52](#)):

We burned the holes and then hand planted them, which actually went way faster than I expected. We kind of flew through it. I was like, "Oh, boy, here we go." But it was fine.

([00:26:04](#)):

But this time of year, normally our bare-root stuff is already getting leaf spot, and it's really hard to keep up with that. Not to mention-

Andy Chamberlin ([00:26:04](#)):

It looks really good right now.

Ashley Loehr ([00:26:14](#)):

... just rotation wise, being able to plant something in August versus May or June is ... Having all that space all summer is pretty awesome and the ability to do weed control ahead of the plants. We're hoping this works because this would be a much more ideal system to stick with going forward.

Andy Chamberlin ([00:26:31](#)):

Have you been doing berries before, or is this new?

Ashley Loehr ([00:26:34](#)):

I had worked at Thompson-Finch Farm in Ancram for them a little bit. That was my only experience with berries. They were all bare root. They were doing five acres, all you pick. It was a totally different system. They were amazing. Don MacLean would farm five acres of berries on a grade, all terracing his beds on contour and planting into them. And they had their whole own beautiful idiosyncratic system. But then lately I've been calling Ray a lot with my berry panic at Edgewater. That's my other touch point.

([00:27:14](#)):

But I think the other funny thing that happened in the flood was we lost so much stuff and only had a few things left and then just had that stark realization that when you focus on something, you get a lot more out of it. Our tomato tunnel didn't flood that year. And I called Becky, and we submitted a tissue analysis. And we dialed in the nutrients, and we were feeding them every week, and we got at least twice the yields we normally get out of a tomato tunnel that year. And I think that has pushed us in the direction of trying to narrow the number of things we do and try to do them a little bit better.

Andy Chamberlin ([00:27:56](#)):

I feel like those are always stepping stones too. Before, we had front loaded the greenhouse and, same thing, hadn't touched it all summer long. Well, this season, I wanted to fertigate weekly. It turned into once, twice a month, but still-

Ashley Loehr ([00:28:14](#)):

Still so much better.

Andy Chamberlin ([00:28:14](#)):

... they went kaboom. I was like, whoa. And now I know what to do. I know what to add. I know how to do it. And also-

Ashley Loehr ([00:28:19](#)):

You're set up [inaudible 00:28:20]-

Andy Chamberlin ([00:28:20](#)):

... next year, that'll be way easier.

Ashley Loehr ([00:28:21](#)):

Totally.

Andy Chamberlin ([00:28:22](#)):

That's kind of a nice-

Ashley Loehr ([00:28:24](#)):

That's tomatoes you're talking about?

Andy Chamberlin ([00:28:25](#)):

Yeah.

Ashley Loehr ([00:28:25](#)):

Totally. That's awesome.

Andy Chamberlin ([00:28:26](#)):

Thanks, Becky.

Ashley Loehr ([00:28:26](#)):

I know. I know.

Andy Chamberlin ([00:28:26](#)):

A little goes a long way there.

Ashley Loehr ([00:28:31](#)):

Becky and Verne, national treasures. Totally.

([00:28:38](#)):

We had sections that we were wanting to seed oats and peas in for a long time, but I just was dragging my feet because it was so dry. But finally, 10 days ago, we seeded, and this is awesome. This is the one wet part of the fields. The oats and peas came up. Everywhere else, not so much. This is one squash planting. This was nine beds wide. Now, it's only three beds wide. We had done a trial. Last year, we did a trial. No-till planting into Dutch white clover and into roller-crimped rye.

([00:29:17](#)):

The Dutch white clover didn't work out just with our systems, so we just did rye this year. And then we did two blocks, one that was roller-crimped rye and one that was roller-crimped rye that, at the time of crimping, we overseeded Dutch white clover to see if ... Because one thing that happens is, as the roller-

crimped rye breaks down and light starts to get in there, there tends to be weeds that come up. We thought maybe the Dutch white clover would fill in. But that was there.

[\(00:29:51\)](#):

I disced it in. It was the weed pressure was just really bad. It was maybe 70% survival on the plants, maybe 60%, and they were very, very far behind these ones. The planting date was already late to a degree that made me nervous because it has to be timed with the crimping of the rye. You can't plant until after anthesis. I like to get squash in the ground by the end of May at the latest. We couldn't get it in until June because of needing to crimp the rye. The plants were late, and then they were slow because the soil was cold, and the competition from the root structure of the rye.

[\(00:30:36\)](#):

I think also our planting tools are not perfect. We got a CEAP grant a couple years ago, and I designed a no-till toolbar with JM Shirk Manufacturing out of PA that has this epic shank and a fertilizer hopper on top and just a coulter that goes in front of the shank. It's pretty awesome, but it definitely makes a furrow that's very, very deep. And there's no zone tillage going on. It just slices a deep furrow.

Andy Chamberlin [\(00:31:12\)](#):

Rips.

Ashley Loehr [\(00:31:13\)](#):

Exactly. Just rips very deeply and puts fertilizer in there. And then we follow behind with the water wheel, but there's no anything to tuck around. You're kind of just smooshing the crimped rye sod against the plants as you're sitting on the water wheel. I just feel-

Andy Chamberlin [\(00:31:35\)](#):

Not great contact there.

Ashley Loehr [\(00:31:37\)](#):

Not great contact, which in both cases, both years of the trial, it was followed by a really hot, dry period where I think there was some exposed roots, maybe some air pockets below, and so not all the plants made it despite putting on a lot of water and planting with water.

[\(00:31:57\)](#):

We were part of a Dutch White Clover trial with Momentum AG. And I was taking pictures.

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Ashley Loehr [\(00:32:00\)](#):

... Momentum AG, and yeah, I was taking pictures. And then at a point I was like, "Do you think we can destroy it?" Because a big-

Andy Chamberlin [\(00:32:07\)](#):

"Can I back out yet?"

Ashley Loehr [\(00:32:08\)](#):

Yeah. The economic impact of the weed seed bank is going to be far worse than what we might make on the squash that might grow here. Yeah.

Andy Chamberlin ([00:32:09](#)):

So-

Ashley Loehr ([00:32:18](#)):

So I think we've learned some things.

Andy Chamberlin ([00:32:20](#)):

Yeah. It sounds like overall it didn't work. You had to disc it in.

Ashley Loehr ([00:32:20](#)):

Yeah.

Andy Chamberlin ([00:32:23](#)):

But are there things that you did learn or that you want to try again? Or was it like, "Nope, doesn't work for us"?

Ashley Loehr ([00:32:32](#)):

I think I want to wait till my kids get a little older to keep experimenting like this. I just feel like the number of things on the management plate are already pretty high, and adding complexity at the moment feels like... Just considering we know how to grow squash and generally do it pretty well, I don't really want to put that at risk.

Andy Chamberlin ([00:32:55](#)):

Don't try to fix what isn't broken in this case?

Ashley Loehr ([00:32:58](#)):

Exactly. And I'm loving growing clover and rye, not with vegetables at the same time-

Andy Chamberlin ([00:32:58](#)):

Fair enough. Yeah.

Ashley Loehr ([00:33:04](#)):

... but in their own right at their own time. And we undersow our popcorn with clover.

Andy Chamberlin ([00:33:11](#)):

Yeah.

Ashley Loehr ([00:33:12](#)):

This year it took so badly, because we usually toss it on at last cultivation, which is like early July, which was precisely the point it stopped raining this summer. So there's not a very good stand. Two years ago

we did a more specific experiment with seeding rates and clover varieties, checking out yellow blossom, Dutch white crimson and medium red under popcorn. And basically, I think what I've come to is just that different clovers thrive in different years. So what we're moving into next year is a trifecta clover blend to undersow under the popcorn of medium red crimson and Dutch white. So that hopefully-

Andy Chamberlin ([00:33:12](#)):

Hopefully something will catch.

Ashley Loehr ([00:34:00](#)):

Hopefully something. And it always catches. It's just like what actually makes a canopy? What looks good the next year? What can handle too much water? What can handle a drought? And they each have their own strengths. So hoping that by combining all three of them...

([00:34:19](#)):

So right here is a spot we were able to leave the medium red clover a second year. That was popcorn last year that we undersowed. So this has just been full year of clover. This is an awesome example of how tricky the edges are of these sections, because the clover's awesome in the middle, but then on the edges, nothing's happening.

Andy Chamberlin ([00:34:41](#)):

So-

Ashley Loehr ([00:34:41](#)):

Just because like we hit it. We hit it with the disc when we're flipping the next section.

Andy Chamberlin ([00:34:45](#)):

Oh, yeah.

Ashley Loehr ([00:34:45](#)):

And it's just it always gets a little tussled up.

Andy Chamberlin ([00:34:48](#)):

So this middle section here, popcorn last year, undersowed with clover.

Ashley Loehr ([00:34:53](#)):

Yes.

Andy Chamberlin ([00:34:54](#)):

Harvested off the popcorn. And this season you did nothing?

Ashley Loehr ([00:34:58](#)):

We frost seeded rye, thinking that we could make straw off of it. And this is my second time trying and failing with frost-seeded rye and clover. We have crazy Canada goose pressure on frost-seeded rye in

the spring. So they ate tons of the seed. And then what came up is still here. You can see it. It was just really sparse and never did much. So we just clipped it a couple times.

[\(00:35:27\)](#):

We just walked through where our melons were. One trick we've been using in drive lanes is seeding winter rye in the early summer before solstice because then it doesn't go through anthesis. So it doesn't even till. It just bushes out, stays low, and then eventually just kind of falls over. So it's this really awesome kind of weed control living mat that's great for drive lanes.

[\(00:35:54\)](#):

And this kind of acted like that. It almost didn't vernalize or something. Maybe the frost seeding was a little bit late. It just never acted like rye. So no mulch was gotten here. We felt good enough about the weed pressure that we left the clover. If there had been a lot of stuff coming up... Although, now I say that, look at that lambsquarter. Go into seed right there.

Andy Chamberlin [\(00:36:15\)](#):

So did you mow this this summer?

Ashley Loehr [\(00:36:17\)](#):

We mowed it, and then our friend's band played a show a few weeks ago, so we mowed it before that. That's the stage the kids made.

Andy Chamberlin [\(00:36:26\)](#):

Nice.

Ashley Loehr [\(00:36:26\)](#):

That was good. It motivated a second clipping. It's pretty awesome.

Andy Chamberlin [\(00:36:31\)](#):

I think it looks pretty good.

Ashley Loehr [\(00:36:33\)](#):

Yeah. Yeah. No, I'm super happy about this going into the winter. So we have a new idea, 323 corn picker. That's a single row, and it has an aftermarket flail chopper, which shreds-

Andy Chamberlin [\(00:36:33\)](#):

Oh, yeah.

Ashley Loehr [\(00:36:47\)](#):

... the row you just picked. So this is ideal scenario is there's clover that's growing under the popcorn when you're picking it, which, at that time, you can't even barely see. It doesn't look like much. And then that flail chopper shreds the residue and leaves just this nice chunked up popcorn stock kind of spread on the clover, which is great.

[\(00:37:14\)](#):

It doesn't always hit perfectly if our rows aren't perfectly lined up because we have a two-row planter. So it's not doing four or six or eight, even, rows. So sometimes our spacing isn't perfect and we'll touch it up with the flail mower after harvest, unless we were harvesting in the snow, which sometimes happens, and then you're really not going back in there.

(00:37:37):

This is medium red that I sewed this year. And look, this is terrible. Normally, this time of year, it's a carpet that you can see, but this is like... Almost didn't take at all. I mean, there's been some years. So we will spin it on before last cultivation and just scratch it in with the cultivators. So it tends to get incorporated. I feel like I've heard some people struggling with clover, like just washing away in a heavy rain. I think the scratching in pretty much solves that, at least for us. But it just had no moisture, so nothing happened. But yeah, let's look at these. These, I think, are-

Andy Chamberlin (00:38:22):

Is this dust, or is this powdery mildew?

Ashley Loehr (00:38:24):

It's powdery mildew. It's crazy.

Andy Chamberlin (00:38:27):

Jeez.

Ashley Loehr (00:38:27):

Yeah. I feel like I see that a lot on the clover. Yeah. So this, at least it's red.

Andy Chamberlin (00:38:34):

Oh, that's coming along good. Yeah.

Ashley Loehr (00:38:34):

At least it's red.

Andy Chamberlin (00:38:35):

Look at that.

Ashley Loehr (00:38:36):

Our general rule of thumb for going out with the picker is that when you put your fingernail into it, it doesn't make a dent. So I mean, obviously, we're very far away, as we should be. We won't even think about it till November, but yeah. Yeah, these are fine. I mean, they're small for this variety. They're normally a lot bigger than this, but could be worse. Could be worse. Yeah. But I mean, this to that is pretty wild.

Andy Chamberlin (00:39:01):

Yeah.

Ashley Loehr (00:39:02):

I bet if we look at these, we'll see that they're not even red.

Andy Chamberlin ([00:39:07](#)):

And that was planting timing? I forget what you said.

Ashley Loehr ([00:39:13](#)):

Yeah. So we were definitely a touch late already.

Andy Chamberlin ([00:39:16](#)):

Oh, you replanted this.

Ashley Loehr ([00:39:16](#)):

I think two years ago. Or no, last year, which was probably our best popcorn crop ever, we got in on May 10th. This year, I think our first planting was May 18th. We were kind of delayed from just cold, wet weather, but also just getting the fields fit. We were just short-staffed and behind. So we were already late, and then we had the bird predation. Yeah. So these went in like May 26th, which is just dicey. And then they were just slow from being dry. But yeah, that's not what we want to see at all.

Andy Chamberlin ([00:39:58](#)):

So no color yet?

Ashley Loehr ([00:39:59](#)):

No. I mean, some, but it should be ready to dry at this point, not still maturing.

Andy Chamberlin ([00:40:06](#)):

Right. But-

Ashley Loehr ([00:40:07](#)):

I don't know.

Andy Chamberlin ([00:40:07](#)):

... our growing degree days are-

Ashley Loehr ([00:40:10](#)):

Deeply dropping.

Andy Chamberlin ([00:40:11](#)):

... now few.

Ashley Loehr ([00:40:12](#)):

Yeah. Yeah. Yeah. So I don't know. This is really going to be... Because we hemmed and hawed a lot about whether to accept a poor stand or replant, also because... So I guess Gio always grew a blue variety that we were calling Big Blue and the Ruby Red.

Andy Chamberlin ([00:40:30](#)):

Yeah.

Ashley Loehr ([00:40:31](#)):

We did the blue for two years, and then we dropped it because we just had so much lodging trouble with it, as well as we struggled to get it to really dry down to a point that we were happy with. Just like the big kernel, it's a little bit longer days to maturity. We just didn't like it as much as the red. And it's so much easier to have one thing in the bin and the wagons and the bagger.

Andy Chamberlin ([00:40:56](#)):

So is all your corn red now?

Ashley Loehr ([00:40:58](#)):

Everything's ruby red now.

Andy Chamberlin ([00:40:59](#)):

Oh, okay.

Ashley Loehr ([00:41:00](#)):

We've been wanting for a few years to switch to an open pollinated variety, just because, I mean, I think we spent \$3,800 on the seed this year. That was partly because of replanting, but it's expensive. And we also just feel like the way the weather is going and how responsive corn is to selection feels like we could really make headway and progress with having a resilient variety.

([00:41:32](#)):

We grew white, it was called Japanese Hulless White, a few years ago that yielded comparably to the Ruby Red, but I just don't think it would have the customer appeal that the Ruby Red does. The kernels are even a little bit smaller than the red. And it's white, which maybe just isn't that exciting. It crossed a little bit with the red, and so there was some pink ones in there.

Andy Chamberlin ([00:41:32](#)):

Oh, that's interesting.

Ashley Loehr ([00:41:55](#)):

It was beautiful, but it was just a whole different thing. So that's an idea, but one that we haven't been ready to jump into yet. We grew a few rows up here of this variety called South American Yellow. That's an open pollinated that some growers in Ohio have been having a lot of luck with. Some people have been, but it's a few days longer to maturity than the Ruby Red, and it seems like it won't make it. I mean, it's just such a tight window to get in.

Andy Chamberlin ([00:42:29](#)):

Most popular varieties are long-

Ashley Loehr ([00:42:29](#)):

Yes.

Andy Chamberlin ([00:42:29](#)):

... isn't it?

Ashley Loehr ([00:42:31](#)):

Yes, totally. Yeah. And I think we're lucky. Last year we harvested at... It was reading at 18% moisture, which is awesome. For us, that's amazing. Then we only have three and a half percent to go to be where we want to be, which is not that bad.

([00:42:48](#)):

Yeah. And last year it really benefited from the whole way the season went. The ears were huge. The kernels were big. Just, it was a really nice year. So luckily, we still have a lot in the bin because who knows what we're going to bring in this year.

Andy Chamberlin ([00:43:04](#)):

Yeah, that is a good thing.

Ashley Loehr ([00:43:06](#)):

We'll see.

Andy Chamberlin ([00:43:08](#)):

It's shelf stable.

Ashley Loehr ([00:43:09](#)):

Yep, exactly.

Andy Chamberlin ([00:43:11](#)):

So do you plant this with a corn planter?

Ashley Loehr ([00:43:12](#)):

Yes.

Andy Chamberlin ([00:43:13](#)):

Yeah.

Ashley Loehr ([00:43:14](#)):

Yep. We have a two-row JD planter, and we had been planting sweetcorn with the same planter, but we've moved to transplanting all our sweetcorn just to... Yeah, we don't really make that much money on sweetcorn, and anytime there's gaps in the stand, it just drops to really not a good use of the field. So we've been transplanting, which we've been pretty happy with, just to make sure we get the full stand. There's the train.

Andy Chamberlin ([00:43:45](#)):

Yeah. How many times does that go by? Is that a twice-a-day train?

Ashley Loehr ([00:43:51](#)):

Yeah. We call it the lunchtime train and the bedtime train. It's every day, clockwork. I'm like, "I'm hungry," and then I hear the train. It knows. 11:30. Hungry for lunch at 11:30. Is that what time it is? That's early today, isn't it?

Andy Chamberlin ([00:43:52](#)):

It does feel really early. No, 11:23.

Ashley Loehr ([00:44:07](#)):

Oh my goodness. So this is, yep, squash, just waiting for us.

Andy Chamberlin ([00:44:20](#)):

Come and get me.

Ashley Loehr ([00:44:21](#)):

Pumpkins. Yeah. Yeah. So what we've been able to do with the rye straw is get it baled and off the field, and then sneak in with a late potato crop or dry beans. So when we came and visited Gio in his last growing season, he was at peak Colorado potato beetle pressure. My son, they would just be walking down the farm road, my son picked them up and filled all the pockets of his pants with it. It was Apocalypse Now type of Colorado potato beetle pressure.

([00:45:03](#)):

And we had experimented with some late planting techniques in the past. And so the first two years we were here, we didn't plant potatoes at all, nor eggplant, nor field tomatoes, and just tried to make sure to get them gone. And then, last year, we got back into July planted potatoes after the CPV flights have hopefully ended. And knock on wood, we've had zero pressure.

Andy Chamberlin ([00:45:32](#)):

Whoa.

Ashley Loehr ([00:45:32](#)):

But there's only a few varieties that you can get away with that. So we've got Envol. This year we planted a bunch of Fenway red, which is looking really awesome. It seems like it's had enough time. And then Peter Wilcox. Everything else we tried kind of just doesn't... It needs more time than that short window.

Andy Chamberlin ([00:45:55](#)):

Right, right.

Ashley Loehr ([00:45:57](#)):

But yeah. But so that's been awesome. I mean, it means we don't have potatoes for summer markets, but we get a nice fall crop. And we don't spray, which is really nice, or deal with defoliation.

Andy Chamberlin ([00:46:10](#)):

Yeah, yeah.

Ashley Loehr ([00:46:12](#)):

Yeah. This is the other potato block, which has a beautiful understory of bindweed and double crop. Yeah. But so next year, this block and that block will be one management unit instead of these narrower strips. The thing that we loved about the narrow strips in the flood year was that, so the corn stayed up and was fine, and it slowed the water down.

Andy Chamberlin ([00:46:41](#)):

Oh.

Ashley Loehr ([00:46:42](#)):

So having these strips of corn kind of protecting the other crops seemed useful. I think it will be equally useful in acre blocks though, hopefully, if we were to get water in the field again.

Andy Chamberlin ([00:46:56](#)):

And the popcorn ears are so tall it stayed above the water.

Ashley Loehr ([00:46:59](#)):

And most of them hadn't formed yet because it was July. So they were just plants. They hadn't tasseled. We had sweetcorn that had ears, but none of the popcorn did. So thusly, it was food safe.

Andy Chamberlin ([00:47:00](#)):

Yeah.

Ashley Loehr ([00:47:15](#)):

Yeah. I don't know. It was weird because watching the water come in, it looked clean to us.

Andy Chamberlin ([00:47:23](#)):

Right.

Ashley Loehr ([00:47:24](#)):

And it went out, and it looked clean. It didn't intuitively feel like something gross had happened in terms of what touched the crops. I mean, there was... The wastewater treatment plant in Chelsea breached. That happened. That's upriver. But it's like that diluted over that volume of water.

([00:47:44](#)):

And then we did end up being one of the farms that UVM did the extensive sampling on, and it came back zero. Nothing. No E. coli, no coliform. I don't know what we would do with that information again next time, because you can't know, and you can't bring things to market that were just under floodwater.

Andy Chamberlin ([00:48:04](#)):

Right.

Ashley Loehr ([00:48:05](#)):

But it was weird, because a lot of things were totally fine, and we just disced them in anyway, because-

Andy Chamberlin ([00:48:11](#)):

Right. You didn't know.

Ashley Loehr ([00:48:12](#)):

... that seemed like best practices. Yeah. But that was slightly heartbreaking. I mean, things that were actually fell over, destroyed, you understand what's happening, but things where you're looking-

Andy Chamberlin ([00:48:21](#)):

Look fine.

Ashley Loehr ([00:48:21](#)):

... at totally harvestable food that's ready and saleable, that was tough. But yeah, maybe we'll wander back. Oh yeah, this is the dry bean plot. Yeah. So we got a crop of [inaudible 00:48:37] draw off of here and then planted dry beans. This is a pinto bean we're trying this year. I think this is going to be the winner. The other ones are also suffering from the drought and exhibiting major lateness. Oh, yeah. But look at those.

Andy Chamberlin ([00:48:54](#)):

Oh, look at that.

Ashley Loehr ([00:48:55](#)):

These are ready. They're drying down. Awesome. Yeah. We grew a pinto last year called Flor De Mayo, but it's a very indeterminate plant habit. So it was super rangy and viny. And to thresh, we borrowed... Joe Bosson at Bean Crafters has this mobile thresher.

Andy Chamberlin ([00:49:16](#)):

Nice.

Ashley Loehr ([00:49:18](#)):

And Antoine was just over it, like wrestling these six-foot long bean plants into the thresher. So we axed that variety and we're trying some more determinant ones. This one seems like it's going to be great. But these other ones, it's kind of similar to the popcorn. You're like, "Okay, buddies, it's time to be heading towards completion."

Andy Chamberlin ([00:49:38](#)):

Yeah. "Let's go."

Ashley Loehr ([00:49:38](#)):

Yeah. And they're definitely not quite there. So we'll see what happens. But it's funny. There's still a lot left of warm days, certainly with dry days.

Andy Chamberlin ([00:49:49](#)):

Right. Yeah, yeah.

Ashley Loehr ([00:49:52](#)):

And they do have beans in there. They're just not mature. So we'll see.

Andy Chamberlin ([00:49:56](#)):

Right. We're mid-September now, and then-

Ashley Loehr ([00:49:59](#)):

Exactly.

Andy Chamberlin ([00:49:59](#)):

... there's still potentially a lot of fall left.

Ashley Loehr ([00:50:01](#)):

Yeah. No, it's true. It's true. Yeah. Yeah. So we'll see what happens.

Andy Chamberlin ([00:50:06](#)):

Getting some color to it.

Ashley Loehr ([00:50:07](#)):

Yeah. But yeah, the drought has been a little bit disorienting in terms of my sense of how things grow, like just different indicators than I'm used to.

Andy Chamberlin ([00:50:18](#)):

Yeah.

Ashley Loehr ([00:50:19](#)):

But it's definitely better than the flood year. That's definitive.

Andy Chamberlin ([00:50:25](#)):

You have a river you can suck from.

Ashley Loehr ([00:50:26](#)):

Exactly. Yeah. Do you feel like the leaves are turning so early too?

Andy Chamberlin ([00:50:32](#)):

Yeah, they're definitely a little more color down here than-

Ashley Loehr ([00:50:35](#)):

Than where you are.

Andy Chamberlin ([00:50:36](#)):

... up there. Yeah.

Ashley Loehr ([00:50:38](#)):

Yeah. But definitely, the pest and disease pressure has also been less this year, for us anyway.

Andy Chamberlin ([00:50:44](#)):

Right.

Ashley Loehr ([00:50:44](#)):

I feel like I was also dragging my feet to clip winter squash because the plants were just so alive, whereas normally the double attack of mildews hit, and then everything drops, and then you're like-

Andy Chamberlin ([00:50:57](#)):

"Oh, time to pull it." Yeah.

Ashley Loehr ([00:50:58](#)):

... "There's a squash. Let's go in there." Yeah. But we were climbing through things and tripping on vines that are still green, which is just not usual for us, but pretty nice. Yeah. We just have bindweed that just is persistent. We had quite a lot of bindweed in here, and we've basically just bare fallowed it all summer. I'm curious. I'm curious if that means something will change or if we'll just get in here next year and it will thrive again. But I don't know, though. I have mixed feelings about bindweed because it's so horrible, but it also is like... It kind of is what it is. I guess that's because we're always growing popcorn in it and the popcorn's fine.

Andy Chamberlin ([00:51:42](#)):

Yeah. Yeah.

Ashley Loehr ([00:51:43](#)):

I mean, I don't like it. It makes me feel sort of like things aren't under control, but it also stays in its zones as long as we clean off equipment and don't move it around the farm too much. It's like it's been in this little zone forever. If we can just keep it there, maybe it's going to be okay. I don't know.

([00:52:05](#)):

Gio used to get... There's always an ice rink in town on the green, and they put this liner in it, and every year after they were done, he would take the liner and just put it somewhere on the field to try to smother bindweed. But then in the fall when we came here, I was picking popcorn with the picker next to one of those pieces of ice skate rink classic, and the picker just grabbed the corner, pulled up in the gathering chain. No fun at all. Got to steer clear.

([00:52:39](#)):

Yeah. So that was where you can still see the rye that we seeded as a harvest lane in the melons. And it's just a grassy mat. And then here in the pickling cucumber block, we just seeded oats and medium red clover at planting time. I'm not sure. The year before we had planted all the cukes just like bed next to bed next to bed. And there was just a lot of tripping and stumbling and us not having a good spot to put our basket. So we opened up full beds for harvest lands this year.

(00:53:15):

We're still on the fence. Like, do we really need it? Also, we just pulled insect netting off two days ago, but this is Excelsior, which is like a parthenocarpic variety that stays covered its whole life under hoops. So the plants, they don't branch out that much. They kind of stay on the bed. So we might go back to the tight spacing, and wear your sneakers when you go to pick cucumbers. Take your big boots off. We'll see.

(00:53:45):

This is like a Hail Mary brassica planting. I don't know. It felt a little late, but maybe we'll still get something out of it. They're coming along. Some sweet potatoes. Oh, man. So leaks this year, we kept under insect netting their whole lives, which I've never done before. And it's awesome. The year before, just we got really bad leak moth, and they were basically unsaleable. And this year they're beautiful. We also dibbled them, so we planted them into super deep holes. So they finally have blanched shank, which is awesome. Some sweet potatoes.

Andy Chamberlin (00:54:20):

They look good too.

Ashley Loehr (00:54:21):

Yeah. I love growing sweet potatoes, but we have a really hard time selling them.

Andy Chamberlin (00:54:21):

Really?

Ashley Loehr (00:54:24):

So every other year I consider axing them. Yeah. I think it's because our market goes until the end of October, so that direct market outlet kind of disappears. And I think Laughing Child's is just so awesome and grows so many sweet potatoes and services all the co-ops that we do that they have an easy thing. Also, we don't have heated wash and pack, so to muscle through a stack of sweet potatoes in January is very troublesome for us. So-

Andy Chamberlin (00:54:56):

Not fun.

Ashley Loehr (00:54:57):

Yeah, so this is like a very... This is about a quarter of what we have planted the past few years, just for our basic stuff. We'll see. Man, we also have a very beautiful green bean crop this year, but we're not selling them all. Planted a few too many. But they've been really nice. It's this variety from High Mowing that's called Red Tail, and I love them so much. They're not that matte. I don't know. The other green bean varieties I've grown have. So they hold up better. You can set them out in a court and they don't

get that green bean flop by the end of the day, and they kind of keep their color really nicely. Flavor's good too. But we have 800 pounds to sell. If you know anyone.

Andy Chamberlin ([00:55:49](#)):

Ready. Right now.

Ashley Loehr ([00:55:51](#)):

Ready, yeah. We've only been growing a little broccoli, but a ton of this broccolini. This is B6... No, BC1611 is the variety. Obsessed with it. It's awesome. We were picking it into bulk bins and spending a lot of time in the washroom bunching. Now we've been bunching as we pick into... We have those harvest baskets that we wear, and it's a lot faster. It's pretty great. Classic cauliflower that will be ready... I'll give up on it, and then like November 10th, it'll be like, here's 600 pounds.

Andy Chamberlin ([00:56:34](#)):

Shoot.

Ashley Loehr ([00:56:34](#)):

I don't know why this always happens to me, but I always have the latest cauliflower. So late. Yeah, this is the field.

Andy Chamberlin ([00:56:34](#)):

It's awesome.

Ashley Loehr ([00:56:45](#)):

It's all-

Andy Chamberlin ([00:56:46](#)):

Just running the tiller around the outside edges to keep your box clean.

Ashley Loehr ([00:56:49](#)):

That's right. That's our weed moat. Yeah. So we tried. Because with the Farmall, this band tends to be like... You pick stuff up and drag it into the sections. So just having this open bare zone to get your cultivator set before you head in has made a really big difference on the-

Andy Chamberlin ([00:57:07](#)):

It makes sense.

Ashley Loehr ([00:57:08](#)):

... first 20 feet of the bed and the weed pressure there.

Andy Chamberlin ([00:57:08](#)):

Yeah.

Ashley Loehr ([00:57:11](#)):

Yeah. So after Irene, that's the part of the bank where basically the river changed course and just blasted through-

Andy Chamberlin ([00:57:12](#)):

Lost them.

Ashley Loehr ([00:57:19](#)):

... and came into the field. So Gio did a huge project reinforcing and planting up that bank. So those maple trees that you see are Irene age, actually, which is kind of crazy. They've gone pretty fast. And then, so that was like a 35-foot buffer, and then our second year here, we flooded again. And then we actually decided to increase it to a 50-foot-wide buffer because we kind of felt like that riparian buffer, it had been completely open with no plants at all in Irene, and we kind of felt like that saved us because nothing came into the field. There was no stuff. We were watching the river, and there was all kinds of things floating down the river. Trees. I don't even know.

Andy Chamberlin ([00:58:06](#)):

Yeah, all kinds of-

Ashley Loehr ([00:58:08](#)):

Yes. And they stayed in the river because this whole zone just screened it. So it was just water that came in. I mean, the force of the water is what's scary, but to not have the water go out and then have a bunch of trash in the field felt like it made it manageable.

Andy Chamberlin ([00:58:24](#)):

Yeah. I mean, you saw it. It slowed it down. It kept fairly clean.

Ashley Loehr ([00:58:30](#)):

Yep, totally. Totally.

Andy Chamberlin ([00:58:33](#)):

Kept the crops standing.

Ashley Loehr ([00:58:34](#)):

Yep. Yep. Yeah. So now that kind of brushy zone has a bunch more trees and shrubs that the White River Partnership planted.

Andy Chamberlin ([00:58:42](#)):

Nice.

Ashley Loehr ([00:58:43](#)):

Which also is partly what's decreased our hay land. I think that's why Gio wanted to keep it at 30 feet because he wanted to get those bales.

Andy Chamberlin ([00:58:50](#)):

Right, right.

Ashley Loehr ([00:58:50](#)):

But I guess we felt like if we can mitigate our flood risk, which is our primary risk here in any way, it's really worth it.

Andy Chamberlin ([00:58:59](#)):

Long-term benefit there. Yeah.

Ashley Loehr ([00:59:01](#)):

Yeah. Yeah. But so what's funny here, you can see from right here, this is the floodplain, and that, everything, all the structures, are in this tiny pocket that's out of the floodplain. So I've been surprised how much that has pretty much affected every decision we make. Like that seedling greenhouse there right next to the barn, we are so busting at the seams. Every week is this insane shuffle-

Andy Chamberlin ([00:59:28](#)):

Oh, it's cool.

Ashley Loehr ([00:59:29](#)):

... to figure out how to fit all the trays we need. It's just way too tiny for us, but I really don't want to put propane tanks and climate control and stuff down here. So it's all about figuring out: how can we make the best use of our little tiny building envelope that's high for this acreage? Which I do have some schemes now. I think we can extend that little pad just enough to get 10 more feet worth of a seedling greenhouse, which would make a huge difference for us. But it's interesting because we're never going to invest a lot down here. This is always just going to be crop production area. Even thinking about putting more bells and whistles in the hoop houses, I feel pretty resistant to it, because the time we had, from realizing that the water was going to come into the field to when it did, I felt like there was already plenty to do in that time. I don't want to be moving greenhouse heaters and taking electronics apart.

Andy Chamberlin ([01:00:30](#)):

" Pull the motors!"

Ashley Loehr ([01:00:30](#)):

Exactly.

Andy Chamberlin ([01:00:30](#)):

Yeah. It's like, "Argh!"

Ashley Loehr ([01:00:30](#)):

Yeah, I would rather just have a different frame of mind for those structures. Yeah, yeah. It will be just interesting how it goes, thinking through those things, and how other people are approaching it, because I know there is a way to sort of like have your checklist. And when the warning comes out, you just start going through the steps.

Andy Chamberlin ([01:00:50](#)):

Yeah. But you never know.

Ashley Loehr ([01:00:50](#)):

That's right.

Andy Chamberlin ([01:00:50](#)):

And you don't want to execute on that list unless you absolutely have to.

Ashley Loehr ([01:00:51](#)):

That's right.

Andy Chamberlin ([01:00:55](#)):

Because it's a huge to-do list and then-

Ashley Loehr ([01:00:56](#)):

Totally.

Andy Chamberlin ([01:00:57](#)):

... half the time it's overpredicted-

Ashley Loehr ([01:00:58](#)):

Exactly.

Andy Chamberlin ([01:00:59](#)):

... and you don't know when it really is going to be the deluge.

Ashley Loehr ([01:01:02](#)):

Exactly. And that was very much my sentiment about that flood. I saw the rain in the forecast, and I was like, "Rain. It's been raining all year. What's the big deal?" But Antoine's on the fire department and they called the emergency meeting, and they were like, "Have you gotten all your equipment out of the field?" And he was like, "No." And they were like-

Andy Chamberlin ([01:01:03](#)):

"Do you know something I should know?"

Ashley Loehr ([01:01:21](#)):

... "Well, you better." Actually, a bunch of firefighters came over and helped us just move-

Andy Chamberlin ([01:01:25](#)):

Nice.

Ashley Loehr ([01:01:26](#)):

... everything up top. And thank goodness because then the next day, it would have been underwater.

Andy Chamberlin ([01:01:31](#)):

Hitching and unhitching. Hitching and unhitching. Go, go, go.

Ashley Loehr ([01:01:34](#)):

Exactly. That's when the forks come in handy. Pick it up.

Andy Chamberlin ([01:01:34](#)):

Just grab it.

Ashley Loehr ([01:01:37](#)):

Yeah. I think, actually, there's a dent on the bed, definitely from that day. It was definitely getting dark. Yeah. This is the chickory zone. Radicchios. There was one golden period at our previous farm. There was this large CSA in the capital region that we contracted with and we did all their herbs, radicchios, and winter squash. They had like 2,200 members.

Andy Chamberlin ([01:02:09](#)):

Whoa.

Ashley Loehr ([01:02:09](#)):

We would sit down with them in the winter and be like, "Here's the things we're growing." And then as stuff reached maturity, we'd be like, "Okay, which date? Which box do you want this from?" And then it was like, we would just get to go out and pack up 2,400 red radicchio or 1,850 Greek basil, and they would just pick it up the next day. They're not in business anymore, but I could have lived in that zone forever. That was awesome. That was the best wholesale situation I've ever experienced. We named the price. I mean, it was clearly too good to be true. But now this is the extent of our radicchio patch, but used to be acres.

Andy Chamberlin ([01:02:56](#)):

What's your total growing acreage here now?

Ashley Loehr ([01:02:59](#)):

So we're at 15 and a half.

Andy Chamberlin ([01:03:00](#)):

Wow.

Ashley Loehr ([01:03:03](#)):

But these kind of high-management zones are about four and a half, almost five, and then the rest is in the popcorn straw, squash, potato. So it's not that crazy. It's not really that much of the little stuff. Man, we've been growing carrots five rows per bed, which I never thought I would do, but it's been awesome. We've been doing a lot of early carrots, probably 10 beds. I'll prep them in the fall, and then as soon as I can get out in April, I'll seed five rows per bed.

[\(01:03:37\)](#):

And it means we have carrots in June, which is so awesome. But it's kind of a drag. I mean, we can only do it in places where we have low weed pressure, and they never get very big. It's not good for storage carrots. But it's really cool. One of the early beds of carrots this year, we got, I think, 460 bunches off of it, off of the one bed, which for us, that's like a lot on the three-row system that never happened.

PART 2 OF 4 ENDS [01:04:04]

Ashley Loehr [\(01:04:00\)](#):

... a lot on the three row system. That never happened, so. Yeah, this is the first real look at implements, is kind of fun.

Andy Chamberlin [\(01:04:10\)](#):

Yeah, I love equipment.

Ashley Loehr [\(01:04:13\)](#):

Tiny tedder.

Andy Chamberlin [\(01:04:14\)](#):

Yeah.

Ashley Loehr [\(01:04:17\)](#):

Yeah, this is our water wheel transplanter, the Rain-Flo 1600. I have been chit-chatting with people and dreaming of an ARGUS Kult Kress for a bunch of years on a two row so that we could... 'Cause we kind of just have a really hard time with inrow we control in the popcorn. So we're just using beat knives. We just can only get in row weed control by throwing dirt. We can't actually get in there. So if we miss a window or stuff gets away, there's not really a way. So, that would be fine in the popcorn, the Kult Cress, because it's direct seeded. But pretty much every rep I've talked to is like, "What are you using to transplant?"

Andy Chamberlin [\(01:05:01\)](#):

Oh, interesting.

Ashley Loehr [\(01:05:02\)](#):

A water wheel? Forget about it. Because here's the spike. Are you planting over here? Or in this bottom corner? You're never centered. And so the finger weeders are going to take stuff out. If you're going to the Kult Cress, you really need to go to the Checchi & Magli. Some type of carousel planter where the machine sets the location and puts it in. I don't know how true that is, but it definitely does feel like... The Kult Cress, we probably want higher clearance than our Kubota 7060 has. We probably want a different transplanter. It's like a whole road to go down.

Andy Chamberlin [\(01:05:39\)](#):

Yeah.

Ashley Loehr ([01:05:39](#)):

But for now, we're pretty happy with this guy. I've had it for like 15 years, and lose spikes, buy new spikes. Last year, I was offering my kids a quarter every time they found a spike on the farm road and it was awesome. They were just like-

Andy Chamberlin ([01:05:52](#)):

I'm surprised they pop off that regularly on your sand.

Ashley Loehr ([01:05:56](#)):

It's just like if we're flying down and it's full of water, and it's popping around on your way to a section. It's not like-

Andy Chamberlin ([01:06:04](#)):

Bounces?

Ashley Loehr ([01:06:05](#)):

It's not hitting around. Yeah, it's just bouncing.

Andy Chamberlin ([01:06:06](#)):

Gotcha.

Ashley Loehr ([01:06:06](#)):

Though we have the hydraulic top link on the Kubota now. So that's nice, 'cause you can shrink it all the way up and get it really nice and high 'cause we forget, then we'll lose one. This disc we bought this year and it has been so awesome. We all previously just had like a three point hitch disc with no weight that you felt like you were just driving to drive. It just didn't dig in.

Andy Chamberlin ([01:06:32](#)):

"This is the path I should be making, but."

Ashley Loehr ([01:06:34](#)):

Exactly. "Here's the disc pass. Guess I'll do it again." And this just really actually cuts, which is awesome. Yeah. I just really don't worry about compaction in the soil at all. So, it's changed my sense of implements, for sure.

Andy Chamberlin ([01:06:53](#)):

Yep.

Ashley Loehr ([01:06:55](#)):

Perfect too is awesome. We've been talking about getting a second one.

Andy Chamberlin ([01:06:59](#)):

Really?

Ashley Loehr ([01:06:59](#)):

Because it's a little wider than our beds.

Andy Chamberlin ([01:06:59](#)):

Oh.

Ashley Loehr ([01:07:02](#)):

So it's awesome in the big sections, but it happens in these little succession guys that we want to just fly through a bed. And you kind of can 'cause it's like perfectly to the next crop row. But if we have any inconsistencies in our paper potting or seeding, it'll-

Andy Chamberlin ([01:07:19](#)):

Yeah, you move the tines around a little bit, but that wheel on the back's pretty limiting.

Ashley Loehr ([01:07:22](#)):

Exactly. Yeah. The basket sets the whip. And this Chili I bought a long time ago from a farm in Maine and we've replaced everything on it. It's just so many moving parts. It just goes through bearings like crazy. And it's funny because-

Andy Chamberlin ([01:07:40](#)):

Is that a spader?

Ashley Loehr ([01:07:41](#)):

Yes, it's a speeder. We don't need it in terms of soil structure or in terms of... I think a lot of people get into this with heavier soils to avoid compaction.

Andy Chamberlin ([01:07:52](#)):

Right.

Ashley Loehr ([01:07:54](#)):

But what's awesome is that I feel like it really incorporates cover crop. So, if we have something that's in rye or heavy oats and peas, at times we've tried to just go straight in. Now, we definitely flail mow and then go in. But it just really does a beautiful job. I recently heard someone talking about being concerned about over aeration with a spader.

Andy Chamberlin ([01:08:18](#)):

Oh, interesting.

Ashley Loehr ([01:08:18](#)):

Which honestly, had not crossed my mind. So, maybe I'll just not even worry about it, but I was like, "Huh, a new thing to worry about. Cool." Yeah, but it's pretty awesome. We try to use it in all these little short sections, especially in the spring getting going. I think it helps heat stuff up a little bit to just get the shovels kicking stuff out.

[\(01:08:41\)](#):

This is the no-till toolbar that we got through the CEAP grant. That's pretty cool. So, it's set up for squash right now, but we have another set of knives and another coulter so it can be this or it can be on our 24-inch spacing for two row. And we had got baskets with it. So last year in our no-till trial, we didn't use these baskets. This year we did, and it was definitely much better, because yeah, when the coulter slices the residue and then the ripper rips, and then the hydraulic top link is key on this because we can adjust the angle so that it doesn't rip and pull up. But if there are moments where it does rip and pull up, the basket mellows it down.

[\(01:09:33\)](#):

So, this year definitely felt better in terms of soil prep and it did crumble up the edges a little bit. So you had a little more to work with in transplanting, but it was still pretty stiff. The roots of the rye are solid. They're not just going to turn into friable soil. It's a channel. It's not like a growing bed that we're used to. So yeah, then this is the fert hopper that just runs in the hydraulics, which is great.

Andy Chamberlin [\(01:10:01\)](#):

Nice.

Ashley Loehr [\(01:10:01\)](#):

But yeah, definitely still a work in progress. And it's just crazy how much changes. You put the guide wheels up another notch and the whole character of the bed changes or drop the coulter a little bit and then the ripper acts totally different. There's just so many minute adjustments.

Andy Chamberlin [\(01:10:19\)](#):

It's fairly simple, but a lot of nuance to it.

Ashley Loehr [\(01:10:23\)](#):

I think especially when you're working in rye or clover, something that's basically established and full. It's not loose soil. And then I think that's where we've noticed the nuances in the field the most, because you get into one of those salt pockets that the flood left behind and suddenly-

Andy Chamberlin [\(01:10:43\)](#):

"Ooh."

Ashley Loehr [\(01:10:43\)](#):

Yeah, exactly. Exactly. Yeah. With this sickle bar mower that we've been using for hay and straw, which is awesome. GEO had a disc mower, which was like the tiniest disc mower I've ever seen. It was awesome. But the guard head didn't exist on the front. And I think we like priced out replacing it at one point. It was like \$860 to like replace that flap on the front. One of the discs didn't actually spin, so eventually we upgraded and this thing has been really awesome.

[\(01:11:16\)](#):

Originally, got it because I was... Or like one of the reasons we were motivated to go sickle bar was the ability to also clip garlic before harvest because we've been growing quite a lot of garlic. And we did that one year and it was pretty awesome 'cause then we clipped maybe eight inches and then undercut, and then it was just so much less material to deal with in the curing process.

[\(01:11:40\)](#):

This year, our garlic was really weedy, so I did not... I thought we would just lose it if we sickle bar mowed the tops, so we did not do it, but maybe next year we'll do it again. It was good. What's on this side? Ah, the best. Steady Freddie, the moldboard plow. That guy's so awesome. It's like every six years replace the tips and it's a champ. It just works so well. Such good old technology.

[\(01:12:09\)](#):

We don't use it that much. I think this year, we've only used it for new areas that we're opening. The first couple years, we used it for corn stubble because our disc was so crappy that that wasn't doing anything for us. But now that we have this, it's much faster and better to just roll through with the disc. Oh yeah, there's the old disc. I thought I had sold it, but no, got to do that still. Nobody wants it.

Andy Chamberlin [\(01:12:31\)](#):

Tires and stumps and-

Ashley Loehr [\(01:12:35\)](#):

Yeah.

Andy Chamberlin [\(01:12:35\)](#):

Worn out discs don't cut very good.

Ashley Loehr [\(01:12:36\)](#):

Yep. Winter projects. Ah, this is the Lesche bed former. Love this guy. Let's see if we can find the dent from the pre-flood move. Something bonked on it. Can't find it now.

Andy Chamberlin [\(01:12:50\)](#):

It looks easy to pick up with force.

Ashley Loehr [\(01:12:51\)](#):

Oh, here we go, this. Although, you know what? Actually, this has been awesome because it marks the center of the bed. So it's like a little flopped, but whenever we form a bed, then when we're paper potting or seeding, you're like, "Great, there's my center line."

Andy Chamberlin [\(01:13:04\)](#):

The wobbly row there.

Ashley Loehr [\(01:13:05\)](#):

Yeah, it's perfect. But it's awesome. It's pretty adjustable. The thing that I'm bummed about it, that we're always trying to figure out if we can add, is it does not flush weeds. It makes a bed, but that's really its only function, but it would be so awesome if this could be our last pass before planting and it also took out some weeds.

[\(01:13:25\)](#):

We were trying to figure out if we could fabricate just a little bar, like a tiny undercutter, almost scuffle how to go on the front before the shaping pan. Additionally, it brings soil up from the edges onto the

top. So really, what we've been trying to do is make beds and then stale bed seed so that what's on top stays on top.

[\(01:13:51\)](#):

And actually, this year we got a big landscape rake and we've been using that to stale bed seed sometimes. Just one pass down and one pass back, and in six minutes your bed's weed free and ready to go. That's been actually like our favorite tool.

Andy Chamberlin [\(01:14:05\)](#):

Just a quick little scratch.

Ashley Loehr [\(01:14:06\)](#):

Just a scratch, yeah. And then maybe like if there's anything big, just grab it with your hand. Ancient. Hay rate goes real slow, real slow. The PTO-driven versus the ground rake is just not my preference, but it's what we have. That's a snowblower.

Andy Chamberlin [\(01:14:27\)](#):

Yeah.

Ashley Loehr [\(01:14:28\)](#):

That's a brush auger that's still barely hanging on. This, we pretty much only used to do those weed modes. This is the old rototiller.

Andy Chamberlin [\(01:14:35\)](#):

Okay.

Ashley Loehr [\(01:14:36\)](#):

I really don't like what it does in the beds. It's like so superficial. It's a king cutter. It's not like a high quality rototiller. It has teeny tiny tines. It's not very adjustable. Yeah, but it's great for the weed mounts 'cause it's fast. The problem with the spaders, it's really slow. For many years, I ran as it's recommended, like three quarters of a mile per hour. Now, we're bold enough we'll go 1.2, but it still really takes time.

[\(01:15:08\)](#):

This is a JM Shark undercutter. It's the best. I feel like I've used undercutters at various farms, some where we've had to like all the whole crew get on the back to get it to settle, or we've had to dig a ditch with the shovel to get the bar to go in. This, with the hydraulic top link, I feel like we can almost always nail it. It's really-

Andy Chamberlin [\(01:15:30\)](#):

That really helps shrink down in there?

Ashley Loehr [\(01:15:32\)](#):

Yeah. I think the double frame is awesome. It's not just the bar. The qualters really help because they help the bar set, and then we just keep the five eighths wrench in the toolbox with some marks on it for each crop, and then you can pretty much always get the gauge wheels where you want.

[\(01:15:52\)](#):

There's also, with the hydraulic top link, there's some little magic, where if you get the bar at the right angle, especially with garlic, you can not only undercut, but pop just a little bit so that the angle of the bar lifts, because ideally, this is like a bed lifter, not just an undercutter. So it reduces the amount of effort it takes to get the garlic out of the ground.

Andy Chamberlin [\(01:16:18\)](#):

Yeah, move it up while you're here.

Ashley Loehr [\(01:16:20\)](#):

Yeah, exactly. But yeah, it's like a little fussing. And then of course, the third bed in, I'm like, "It's fine." And I just drive and stop looking back over my shoulder, but.

Andy Chamberlin [\(01:16:28\)](#):

Just got to get it up, yep.

Ashley Loehr [\(01:16:29\)](#):

Yeah. Ah, so old pallet scale I've never used, but moved three times, so if you want one.

Andy Chamberlin [\(01:16:37\)](#):

Kind of. It's something that like the dork in me loves the data, but at the same time I don't really need it.

Ashley Loehr [\(01:16:45\)](#):

Totally. This was a roller crimper we also got with the CAP grant.

Andy Chamberlin [\(01:16:50\)](#):

Okay.

Ashley Loehr [\(01:16:50\)](#):

Look what Antoine wrote on there, genius, "Empty before freezer."

Andy Chamberlin [\(01:16:53\)](#):

Oh yeah, that's probably important.

Ashley Loehr [\(01:16:55\)](#):

Yeah, because it's full of water.

Andy Chamberlin [\(01:16:57\)](#):

Yeah, I don't want to ruffle that.

Ashley Loehr [\(01:17:00\)](#):

This is what creates it, but it's pretty awesome. We like this thing. We were debating, when we were looking at them, whether to get the drag type, 'cause sometimes it feels like because we don't really

have down pressure on our hydraulics, like a three point hitch implement never really sinks as much as you want.

[\(01:17:17\)](#):

And I don't know, we talked to a couple of people. We talked to our friend Stuart Farr, who's a grain farmer in Ancram, and he like grew up in England grain farming where all the fields are so tight and have hedgerows, and so he's just three point hitch everything guy 'cause he's always trying to scoot in and scoot around him.

[\(01:17:33\)](#):

I don't know, he kind of convinced us on the three point hitch, and it's been really awesome because it's true. The drag types are a little less maneuverable and we've been able to like lend this to people or move it around.

Andy Chamberlin [\(01:17:43\)](#):

Right. Yeah. It's not huge.

Ashley Loehr [\(01:17:45\)](#):

Yeah. This is a rotary hole, which clearly we didn't use this year. We used it the year before. It's like a blind cultivation tool. I think, basically, to be effective, we would need to replace all these spoons because it should disturb the whole area, but it really just poked holes on top of the corn.

[\(01:18:11\)](#):

And we have a tine weeder, which is kind of our preference. It feels like as soon as the popcorn gets the root down, you can tine weed over top of it without ripping it up. And for us, the tine weeder has just felt like it does more even disturbance across the whole field. This is a chisel plow we don't use that I've also been trying to sell. Yeah, we have five shanks for it, but this is the three. I think we used this for planting sweet potatoes a few years ago, but other than that, it's time.

Andy Chamberlin [\(01:18:47\)](#):

You just don't have the compaction that you need to rip it?

Ashley Loehr [\(01:18:47\)](#):

Don't have the need. Yeah, exactly. Yeah. We had some heavier fields we had leased before, which was when we got it, and we would do kind of a tandem with chisel plow with the five row and then use this disc bedder as like a pre- shaping path, which was awesome. It was in heavier fields where we really wanted the beds to be raised up.

[\(01:19:08\)](#):

And so when we had heavy cover crop residue, we could chisel plow through it, and then this heavier disc would kind of throw the clogs of rye up and make these mounds. And it could sit like that for a little bit and break down, and then we could run over it with the bed former and have nice high beds. But it just hasn't been that useful in the lighter soil. Another bent piece of steel, but this is the tine weeder.

Andy Chamberlin [\(01:19:38\)](#):

It's a little one.

Ashley Loehr ([01:19:41](#)):

It's a little guy. Yeah. It's awesome though. I think you have to fly with a tine weeder, but you can really go fast. Those pile of flags. We've been in the habit of flagging all our beds, flagging centers in these short beds, 'cause we just find when we do, then our tillage passes are straight, our planting passes are straight, our cultivation paths are straight, and we don't lose the beds over time.

([01:20:09](#)):

And for planning purposes, it's been really helpful to be like, "We have 33 beds in this section," and that is a constant. We don't sort of just accidentally lose one. Or really what happens, if we don't kind of stay in the wheel tracks, is we end up with these spaces between beds that none of our cultivators hit. And it just becomes the special place where all the weeds go to seed and migrate. So, even though it's kind of a pain, we've been sticking with it.

Andy Chamberlin ([01:20:39](#)):

Yeah.

Ashley Loehr ([01:20:39](#)):

This roller, so we have a grain drill that we use for seed and cover crop, and then we typically roll afterwards with this. Just because the soil's so loose, that feels like the grain drill sets the seed, but it's in no way tamped or making seed contact. But we just, a couple of weeks ago, seeded all these oats and peas and then it was just too dry. Rolling just like moved massive clouds of dirt.

([01:21:07](#)):

So we waited and we got one of those little 10th inchers, but it was just like dew on dust. We rolled, but you can see what happened, is it like pretty much just pushed the seed to the sides, dragged huge piles. So, maybe we should have just grain drilled and left it. I don't know. It's just really dry, really dry. That's the implement row. We did it.

Andy Chamberlin ([01:21:29](#)):

Cool.

Ashley Loehr ([01:21:31](#)):

Yeah, so those three gravity wagons right there are, that's what we pick popcorn into.

Andy Chamberlin ([01:21:36](#)):

Yeah.

Ashley Loehr ([01:21:37](#)):

So, the New Idea corn picker has a conveyor. So it's PTO-driven off the tractor and then it has that aftermarket flail mower on the bottom, and it has a husking bed on top. So, the teeth pull in the whole plants and the gathering chain rolls them up and kind of pops the ears off. Then they roll across the husking bed, up the conveyor and into those wagons.

([01:22:06](#)):

And the husking bed is, I would say, maybe 20% don't get husked, but that ends up being totally fine in our storage and shelling situation. Yeah. And I think every year we do it also because we've had a big

sheller struggle. We're like, "Can we just combine direct? Should we switch gears?" But I think it's really, in our climate, not possible, because the moisture that we're typically harvesting at would just woosh it right up in a combine.

[\(01:22:41\)](#):

It wouldn't pop easily off the kernels, 'cause then after we're harvesting it, we're putting it in the bin, drying it down to the moisture we want, and then putting it through the sheller. And it shells nicely once it's dry, but it's never dry enough in the fields for... And I mean, it's different with grain corn, where if you crack them, it's not a big deal, but for us, the product is the kernel, so we can't have a harvester that's-

Andy Chamberlin [\(01:23:03\)](#):

Cracking the bags. Yeah.

Ashley Loehr [\(01:23:05\)](#):

Cracking the popcorn. Yeah, totally. Yep. Yeah, barn tour, should we do that?

Andy Chamberlin [\(01:23:10\)](#):

Yeah.

Ashley Loehr [\(01:23:10\)](#):

Oh, yeah. You're really catching us at peak, peak chaos here. It's that time of year. Every mess is still a mess. Oh, there's the BB gun shooting range for our son.

Andy Chamberlin [\(01:23:11\)](#):

Peow.

Ashley Loehr [\(01:23:31\)](#):

Yep. Yeah, I feel like the first week of September, there's like this slightly euphoric thing every year where it's like whatever mistakes have been made have been made, you're just harvesting stuff now. You're not thinking that hard yet about next year. And now, it's like past that moment of bliss and I'm like, "Okay."

[\(01:23:53\)](#):

I think yesterday, particularly, I just hit the wall. It's just still irrigating. It's such a drag. It's like things have been breaking, we haven't fixed them because we don't have time, and we're still watering everything. Ready for rain. See what we got up here.

[\(01:24:15\)](#):

This is the grain drill. So this has the grass box and the grain box. So we have put clover in here at times, depending on what time of year we're seeding, mostly with oats. With rye, if we're getting in early with rye... Just checking that it's empty while we're here.

Andy Chamberlin [\(01:24:35\)](#):

Pretty much.

Ashley Loehr ([01:24:36](#)):

Vacuum. We'll vacuum. If it's an early rye, I will throw clover in, even though conventional wisdom says that that's kind of a waste of seed in September, but I found that even in September, clover will germinate. Make it through the winter. So, I often feel like there's no harm. If it's a spot that I'm planning to frost seed with clover anyway, I'm into a split application. Sun and the fall-

Andy Chamberlin ([01:25:03](#)):

For the nitrogen benefits of that?

Ashley Loehr ([01:25:04](#)):

Yeah, exactly. Bike workshop. Yeah. Well, let's look at this stuff. It's the potato planter. Totally awesome. It's a pick type planter. I can't even believe, honestly, what a good job it does.

([01:25:26](#)):

And we ended up this year not cutting any seed. We definitely don't need to sit on it, but we typically do, just to make sure everything's going good and to see if we need to adjust the depths.

Andy Chamberlin ([01:25:35](#)):

Yeah. Keep an eye on all things.

Ashley Loehr ([01:25:36](#)):

Yeah, but these little guys, they pick up one piece so uniformly and drop it in. It's just awesome 'cause it's not like an aperture thing. It doesn't have to be a particular size to make it through a hole. It just needs to be a potato. It's great.

([01:25:55](#)):

Oh, it's the nine-year-old skate ramp. Baler. So this, our neighbors at the Ainsworth farm, they recently sold the farm, and before they did, they cleaned out. And so they had this corn picker out for sale and we got it as a backup. We haven't used it. It needs like a hitch welded onto it. And it's not exactly the same as our 323, so it doesn't have interchangeable parts, but we had... I mean last-

Andy Chamberlin ([01:26:33](#)):

But if something goes down, yeah.

Ashley Loehr ([01:26:35](#)):

Exactly. It's good to have one in the queue.

Andy Chamberlin ([01:26:36](#)):

Yeah.

Ashley Loehr ([01:26:37](#)):

So yeah, because last year I think I harvested the whole four and a half acres of popcorn in six hours, which-

Andy Chamberlin ([01:26:49](#)):

Nice.

Ashley Loehr ([01:26:49](#)):

... I shouldn't even say that out loud. It was too good. It was dry out, everything moved well, the husking was going awesome, but the year before that it took us two and a half weeks to get the whole crop in because multiple things broke, snowed a couple of times.

([01:27:09](#)):

So anyway, it's a very critical moment, the harvesting. So it seems like we figured it'd be good to have a second picker. But yeah, so this is the gathering chain. This was actually my first year picking popcorn. So GEO's been really great. He's like, he does not hover-

Andy Chamberlin ([01:27:27](#)):

Oh, this last year was your first year?

Ashley Loehr ([01:27:27](#)):

No, sorry. I started telling a story and then I got distracted. The first year I was picking popcorn here, the gathering chain just kept falling off, kept falling off and I couldn't figure it out. And I just was like, "I'm calling GEO."

([01:27:41](#)):

And this was like this moment where I was like, "GEO, you're awesome," 'cause he was here in five minutes in the field and we just tightened that sprocket, and then the gathering chain stayed on and I was just like, "Thank you." Not too much, not too little. It's great. That's the gathering chain, and then flies up into the husking bed and then goes up into that conveyor.

Andy Chamberlin ([01:28:00](#)):

So are there any challenges you see using this really old piece of equipment?

Ashley Loehr ([01:28:06](#)):

Yeah, it's terrifying because I feel like we've fixed it enough times now that I am comfortable with it, and my ears can tell me-

Andy Chamberlin ([01:28:19](#)):

If something's not perfect.

Ashley Loehr ([01:28:20](#)):

... where to look first. It's another reason I never listen to music on the tractor though. I feel like my ears are my best tool. But no, it definitely feels like it's a risky situation because we're totally reliant on this. We couldn't hand pick the amount of popcorn that we grow. We don't have another tool besides this one that we've never used. So yeah, this thing really has to work. We have to be able to keep fixing it, which is so far, so good.

([01:28:47](#)):

But the cool thing is a lot of things are replaceable and you can get parts. Like we replaced a bunch of these rubber fingers on the husking bed, the chains are universal, the apron chains and the gathering

chains, had to put some new belts on, but for the most part, it's not super hard to come by. The sheller is more the dilemma. Now we're, I think, in an okay spot, but that's been a saga. There's some of our rye straw that we're saving for strawberries is the last little bit. That's all there is to see up here.

Andy Chamberlin ([01:29:20](#)):

So you're going to put the straw right over the berries in the landscape [inaudible 01:29:25]?

Ashley Loehr ([01:29:24](#)):

That's right. Yep. And then rake it into the pathways in the spring.

Andy Chamberlin ([01:29:28](#)):

So are you going to lift the plastic?

Ashley Loehr ([01:29:28](#)):

After harvest.

Andy Chamberlin ([01:29:33](#)):

After planting it with straw on it and everything?

Ashley Loehr ([01:29:36](#)):

Yeah. Yeah, I don't know. I don't know if this happens to everyone, but by the time we're done picking strawberries, I feel like the mulch is barely exists anymore. It's light. Maybe also because we're using straw. When we were using hay, it was maybe a little bit less, but it's not much of a burden. Oh, can't even look at the shop. Winter. We'll be back.

([01:30:03](#)):

So this is like the old dairy barn and then this was an addition, which we call the popcorn wing. So the popcorn bin is built into this half of the barn. So when we have a full wagon, we pull it up this hill, we get our conveyor, we pop one of those out, and that opens up into the popcorn bin below, and we just load the kernels right into the barn.

([01:30:32](#)):

So this is our storage, but this is also the top of the bin. The bin goes all the way down. I am skeptical of this bin. I don't think it's in the highest, driest place it could be, since it's built into a hill. So I feel like our struggle to dry is partially because-

Andy Chamberlin ([01:30:51](#)):

Ground moisture?

Ashley Loehr ([01:30:52](#)):

Ground moisture. I think we battle it.

Andy Chamberlin ([01:30:55](#)):

Okay.

Ashley Loehr ([01:30:56](#)):

There was a propane dryer that blew into the bin. So now, we just dry with air. So we just use our chart and choose days that are hot and dry, and turn the dryer on and just blow air through to get it down. There used to be propane addition, but this bin is wooden and I was not comfortable. I was not comfortable blasting flames into the wooden barn.

Andy Chamberlin ([01:31:30](#)):

Feel that.

Ashley Loehr ([01:31:33](#)):

Yeah, we disconnected the propane and we don't use the propane aspect anymore. And we've been able to succeed with just the air. So hopefully, that continues to be true.

Andy Chamberlin ([01:31:43](#)):

Yeah.

Ashley Loehr ([01:31:47](#)):

If we get it in early and we have nice, warm, dry days, like in November and December, that's the dream. It's like when we get it in late, it's a little above moisture and then you're looking for those windows throughout the winter. It becomes a real babysitting job in the winter to be checking the weather, turning the dryer on, turning the dryer off, because if you are pushing air that's moist or cold onto the popcorn, you're going backwards in your goals.

([01:32:14](#)):

And then these open. So the bin is split. The reason the bin is split is because to make the opportunity to store two different varieties. We have red in all one. One thing that's really important in the spin is getting the level even because the air will always take the path of least resistance. So if there's only five wagons of this side and we put seven wagon loads in that side, it will blow through here and up. And that won't really get very dry because it has a perforated grain bin floor across the bottom, that's what the air blows through. And then the corn is all above that.

([01:32:52](#)):

So when we fill it up, we also get in there and push it around and try to fill in any spots, and get the whole top as level as we can. Oh, here's the chart. This chart is awesome. So basically, this is like relative humidity. So we have a little reader that will tell us what the current relative humidity is and what the current temperature is, and this is where they meet. So this is like your highest potential.

([01:33:22](#)):

If you are working with 40 degree air, that's 70% moist, 16% is the lowest you'll be able to dry your corn. So if you're at that, you don't turn the dryer on. If we come in at 18, then we'll turn the dryer on in those conditions, but if we're already at 16 and we're trying to get down to our golden 13 range, we need to look for more optimal conditions. What this table doesn't have in it is time, and that's been like a little bit of a figuring as like-

Andy Chamberlin ([01:33:57](#)):

'Cause if it's these conditions, yeah, how long do-

Ashley Loehr ([01:34:01](#)):

How long?

Andy Chamberlin ([01:34:01](#)):

... you want it?

Ashley Loehr ([01:34:01](#)):

And we usually just do it as long as we can and then just keep testing it. And then so this is the conveyor, so that will put outside under a wagon to go up into the top of the bin, or when it's time to shell, it sneaks under one of these door number four and goes into the sheller. I think one not so ideal thing is everything moves around. We're not just set up to shell, which is totally fine, but-

Andy Chamberlin ([01:34:30](#)):

Well, it's something you're not doing that like you're washing greens.

Ashley Loehr ([01:34:34](#)):

That's right. Yeah. We only do it a few times a year, but it's surprising. You're like, "We're going to shell corn." It's the better part of a day to set up. And then do the shelling of the corner and a better part of a day to clean up. And it's not a super smooth flow, but so this is the sheller.

([01:34:50](#)):

So, GEO had been shelling with a John Deere 43 almost exactly like this one, except it was missing the cob conveyor and many, many pieces of steel. So, it was just like a real OSHA concern for me. Frequently pieces would fly off.

Andy Chamberlin ([01:35:13](#)):

Oh, geez.

Ashley Loehr ([01:35:15](#)):

And the clearances were just not tight anymore and could not be tightened anymore, so kernels would fly-

Andy Chamberlin ([01:35:24](#)):

Safety glasses required.

Ashley Loehr ([01:35:25](#)):

... everywhere. Yeah, totally. Safety glass required. It worked when it worked, but also it didn't have a cob conveyor. So the kernels and cobs will get separated, but they would all just pile up together all over the place.

([01:35:39](#)):

So we got rid of that old 43 and then I started barking up an electric sheller tree to seed corn manufacturers for shelling that stuff. And we got one that I was pretty psyched about and it just was not high enough capacity for us. It was just way too slow and didn't even work that...

PART 3 OF 4 ENDS [01:36:04]

Ashley Loehr ([01:36:02](#)):

... and didn't even work that well. One thing that happens on the popcorn ears is they have what we call red dogs, which is like the pericarp of the kernel. It's all these little dusties. This sheller's awesome because it's aggressive enough that some people call them bees wings. They're those little pieces of this flaky red that hang onto the kernel, and they look terrible in a bag. People don't want them in their popper. We really have to get them off.

Andy Chamberlin ([01:36:31](#)):

Is that separate from a hull?

Ashley Loehr ([01:36:35](#)):

That's a really good question.

Andy Chamberlin ([01:36:36](#)):

Yes.

Ashley Loehr ([01:36:36](#)):

Maybe it's the hull. Maybe it's the hull. It's the last-

Andy Chamberlin ([01:36:40](#)):

Is it part of the cob or part of the kernel?

Ashley Loehr ([01:36:41](#)):

It's part of the kernel. It's the point where the kernel connects to the cob. So it's like-

Andy Chamberlin ([01:36:45](#)):

Okay. I know what you mean now. Yep. Yep.

Ashley Loehr ([01:36:47](#)):

It's the little last two hanger-oners that hang onto the kernel. And so, that electric sheller also did not knock those off.

Andy Chamberlin ([01:36:55](#)):

Okay. So those stuck to the-

Ashley Loehr ([01:36:57](#)):

They stuck to the kernel.

Andy Chamberlin ([01:36:57](#)):

... to the kernels.

Ashley Loehr ([01:36:59](#)):

And then as we would clean and bag, they were still kind of all mixed in.

Andy Chamberlin ([01:37:02](#)):

Leaving a [inaudible 01:37:03] in bags. Yeah.

Ashley Loehr ([01:37:04](#)):

Leaving this little stuff in the top of the bag, which is just not nice. This one is much more aggressive and just moves a lot more air, moves a lot more product, and really knocks a lot of stuff off. Still not as much as we'd like. We borrowed this rotary cleaner for Mike Snow, so we're going to... These two super sacks are filled with last year's crop. Oh, maybe we can see some bees wings on these. We're going to run them through the rotary cleaner to see if we can knock all the bees wings off.

Andy Chamberlin ([01:37:35](#)):

Have you found either of your shellers to be too aggressive and damaged the kernels?

Ashley Loehr ([01:37:41](#)):

If it's at the right moisture, it's not a problem. It's almost like they want to pop off one way at that. Yeah. Perfect. See? See those little guys?

Andy Chamberlin ([01:37:52](#)):

Let me get a good picture of that.

Ashley Loehr ([01:37:55](#)):

Yeah, those are the bees wings, the red dogs. So it's fine. We have this... We can look at our cleaner. The cleaner's also gentle and great, so it also doesn't really knock them off. Anyway, hopefully the rotary cleaner is going to be the step we need.

Andy Chamberlin ([01:38:16](#)):

Yeah, to clean the seed.

Ashley Loehr ([01:38:18](#)):

Yep. Yeah. This is just this awesome old clipper. It's exactly the same as the clippers they make now. It's just like this is wood and... So we've got all these fans piled up on it because every time we run it, we aspirate as much as we can.

Andy Chamberlin ([01:38:32](#)):

Move it, move it.

Ashley Loehr ([01:38:32](#)):

Yeah. But so that doesn't really push those red dogs off either. What else? I mean, this is just our... Yeah, this is the barn. The family roosters. Oh, this is the... We should look at the bagger. Bagger's kind of cool.

Andy Chamberlin ([01:38:45](#)):

Oh, yeah.

Ashley Loehr ([01:38:46](#)):

Yeah, but also when we're bagging, we just run a fan next to it just to push off whatever. This is Logical Machines. It's pretty awesome. We had it programmed for the red and the blue, but now we just use the one programming for the red. It's like ergonomically, we should raise it up because we're going like doo-doo-doo-

Andy Chamberlin ([01:39:06](#)):

You can handle that.

Ashley Loehr ([01:39:09](#)):

... doo-doo-doo. Yeah. Yeah, totally. But we can still fly through. It's pedal activated.

Andy Chamberlin ([01:39:12](#)):

Nice.

Ashley Loehr ([01:39:13](#)):

It's controlled by that little compressor. Yeah, it's great. We can just load it up, and someone will just bag all day.

Andy Chamberlin ([01:39:13](#)):

Is that something Geo found, or you found?

Ashley Loehr ([01:39:18](#)):

Yeah, no Geo had this, which has been really awesome. It's definitely like a cold winter job, but it's a great winter job. Bump tunes, turn the bagger on.

Andy Chamberlin ([01:39:28](#)):

Nice.

Ashley Loehr ([01:39:31](#)):

That's all there is. Cover crop seed, fertilizer. It's our weird seeding dungeon. Keep the trays, keep the soil.

Andy Chamberlin ([01:39:38](#)):

How do you manage mold on the cobs in the field if you're harvesting it in November, December? Not every cob's going to be clean. I know that.

Ashley Loehr ([01:39:50](#)):

Totally. Yeah. That is my concern for this year, is that there will be... I feel like if it's not properly dry, we see that. The couple of times I've seen it in the wagon, it's just disappeared once it's dry, when there's little bits of that white mold on there.

Andy Chamberlin ([01:40:08](#)):

Yeah, so you really aren't concerned about it too bad?

Ashley Loehr ([01:40:09](#)):

I'm not concerned about it. I think the husking bed also helps. I think if we're bringing it in with more husk or wet husk, but also the day we harvest is crucial. It has to be a bone dry day. The picker will tell you that. It won't work. It won't pick. It won't move properly if it's too moist. So definitely, we've had a lot of false starts where I'm like, "Today's the day," and I go out and I start picking and it's just gumming up and not flying off the husking bed. I guess I'm just not that worried about that. I haven't experienced it that much.

Andy Chamberlin ([01:40:42](#)):

Yeah, so you're not... Yeah, you don't have a crew sorting through bad cobs?

Ashley Loehr ([01:40:44](#)):

No. Definitely not.

Andy Chamberlin ([01:40:46](#)):

It's just like, it's popcorn day and off it goes?

Ashley Loehr ([01:40:47](#)):

Yes, definitely. Definitely. No, it hasn't been a concern.

Andy Chamberlin ([01:40:51](#)):

That's good.

Ashley Loehr ([01:40:52](#)):

Yeah. But maybe I should-

Andy Chamberlin ([01:40:53](#)):

I don't know.

Ashley Loehr ([01:40:55](#)):

More things to worry about. Good. I just haven't seen much of it. Yeah, but I think that's also... The Ruby Red's awesome.

Andy Chamberlin ([01:41:03](#)):

But then you can get it in here and you can get it drying immediately-

Ashley Loehr ([01:41:05](#)):

Yes. Yes.

Andy Chamberlin ([01:41:06](#)):

... which is helpful too-

Ashley Loehr ([01:41:07](#)):

Yep, totally.

Andy Chamberlin ([01:41:07](#)):

... when it's growing. How many years have you been farming here?

Ashley Loehr ([01:41:12](#)):

This is our fourth season here. We had a drought year, but not as bad as this one. Then a flood year. Then last year was perfect. Then now it's a drought. Now, it's a drought year. Yeah. It's surprising. I don't know, the soil's really great. I'm surprised that the flood didn't knock me back mentally more than it did.

([01:41:37](#)):

I just feel like... This is definitely I would say the most productive and forgiving soil type I've ever worked in, and it just gives a lot. Most of the time. It's like high risk, high reward, I guess, feels like what this field is. But the reward times are so awesome. It doesn't make me forget about the flood, but it feels like there's a potential for balance there.

Andy Chamberlin ([01:42:05](#)):

Yeah. Did you have other crops that were a real big win on that flood year that like-

Ashley Loehr ([01:42:10](#)):

Yeah, so we... I mean, I think that's also influenced our thinking a lot about what we grow and what the crop mix is because we were really behind on transplanting that year. We had a bunch of stuff up in the greenhouse. We were able, as soon as the water was gone to get in there, flip beds, and tuck that stuff in, and have fall successions of greens. I mean, it was really the moment right after the flood that the cash flow situation was horrible. We had nothing to sell.

([01:42:39](#)):

That was the moment, those two weeks, but we were able to have things to sell a month after that, because we had a bunch of quick succession stuff up top. We had garlic that didn't flood, so we pulled that and we were able to sell it, and then we just poured our energy into the tomato tunnel because I think secretly I would love to grow two or three things. That would be my dream farm, is to not have this highly diverse, multiple markets, a lot of details.

([01:43:08](#)):

Yeah. I feel like I'm kind of in the game for the freedom to live in my mind, and the more details I have it's getting further and further away from that. For example, after the flood, we work with some distributors. Meijer is one of them, and they just swooped in. I mean, we closed the farm stand because we had four things to sell. We still kept eking along, going to market.

([01:43:32](#)):

We couldn't be running our truck around delivering stuff for Swiss chard and tomatoes, but Meijer was able to really promote the few products we have and really push them. And so, we were able to keep selling the few things we had with them and get those distributed and keep cash flow coming out like a really crucial time, as well as multiple other loans that really helped.

[\(01:43:58\)](#):

That is like... You know, anytime I'm like, "I wish we could be just wholesale, or I wish we could just really hone in what we're doing and only move retail, or I wish we could grow less things," just that flood mind kind of keeps us staying a little bit spread out because it's just really helpful to have the different levers to pull when the unforeseen stuff comes along.

[\(01:44:22\)](#):

Yeah, I mean I think that flood year, everything we've replanted did really well. The tomato greenhouse did really well and we had a really beautiful garlic crop that year that we pulled just a few days after the flood because it hadn't been underwater. But it sucked. It was like we had such beautiful onions that year and they were so clean. We had just done such a good job keeping them clean, and they were huge, and they were days away. We had already knocked tops and they were curing.

[\(01:44:51\)](#):

Yeah, I mean everything was just at the moment of being about to harvest and then we just disked it all in, which yeah, it was a drag and it definitely... I think coming here, I've been surprised at how long it's taken to adapt one farmer's farm to us and what we want to do and make sense to us. I do really feel like that flood year was a hiccup because it just kind of made us pause and reassess everything, and the way we do everything, and then everything is kind of seen through that lens of what if that happens.

[\(01:45:29\)](#):

Not what if. It will happen again.

Andy Chamberlin [\(01:45:32\)](#):

It did. So, yes.

Ashley Loehr [\(01:45:32\)](#):

It did, it will. So how do we have the pieces mobile enough, and that we can handle that, I guess.

Andy Chamberlin [\(01:45:41\)](#):

Yeah. Yeah.

Ashley Loehr [\(01:45:44\)](#):

Yeah. Yeah. Yeah. So flood mind, it's a real thing. Yeah, I feel like I'm always so grateful to the elder generation of vegetable growers that have, I just feel like, did so much legwork for people our age that just figured out so many systems, varieties, really opened up markets that weren't there before. I feel like they did that work so that we can deal with climate change basically. Now we have this whole other load of garbage to wade through. Yeah. It's a thing.

Andy Chamberlin [\(01:46:21\)](#):

Yeah. Well, I could chat with you all day, but I know you have other things that you could be doing too.

Ashley Loehr [\(01:46:27\)](#):

Yeah, I don't know what time it is.

Andy Chamberlin [\(01:46:27\)](#):

It's like 12:30.

Ashley Loehr ([01:46:27](#)):

Oh, yeah. Hungry.

Andy Chamberlin ([01:46:31](#)):

The train's long gone.

Ashley Loehr ([01:46:32](#)):

Totally. Awesome.

Andy Chamberlin ([01:46:34](#)):

But a couple of questions. You've got the John Deere 4052 and a Kubota, what, 7060?

Ashley Loehr ([01:46:41](#)):

7060, exactly. Yeah.

Andy Chamberlin ([01:46:42](#)):

They're both almost the same tractor, right? I mean, they're the same ballpark.

Ashley Loehr ([01:46:46](#)):

No, the John Deere is like 55 horse, I think. And this is 72.

Andy Chamberlin ([01:46:50](#)):

Okay.

Ashley Loehr ([01:46:51](#)):

This also has a creeper gear, the Kubota, and narrower tires. Clearly, you can tell which tractor I like better. I'm like, they're not the same.

Andy Chamberlin ([01:47:00](#)):

No, that's why I want-

Ashley Loehr ([01:47:01](#)):

This one is awesome. That one is-

Andy Chamberlin ([01:47:03](#)):

Subcompact tractor. So, I would see-

Ashley Loehr ([01:47:04](#)):

Yeah. See, this to me is an agricultural tractor and whenever I'm driving the John Deere, I feel like a weekend warrior. It just feels like it's not ever having the power, the strength, the versatility that I want it to, but it might also be because it's slightly newer and it has the next level beyond Tier IV emissions,

whatever that is, and more electronic safety sensors. It's basically just always driving me crazy. I've been wanting to trade it out for a long time.

Andy Chamberlin ([01:47:36](#)):

Is that hydrostatic?

Ashley Loehr ([01:47:36](#)):

It's not hydrostatic. Thank God. No, I couldn't live that way, but yeah, it just like... I love basically this. We had old tractors for so many years. My first tractor was a Case 431. It was just so awesome. It was like... Do you know the old Cases? They have like peachy hood and that fire red chassis? But it was just-

Andy Chamberlin ([01:47:59](#)):

It's a sun fade, I think.

Ashley Loehr ([01:48:00](#)):

Yeah. No, no. Yeah. Well, it's an awesome color, but it was a tractor that only I could drive because it was just so finicky. Basically when my son was born, it became very clear that it was not feasible to have a tractor that was only good for one person, and we bought this tractor at that time, and it's been really great. It's just so much more drivable than any of the old tractors we used to own. Manageable, safer.

([01:48:28](#)):

But yes, we have those. And then we have a Farmall 100 that was in the field that we didn't look at, that we got from Pooh many, many years ago. When we got it from him, it was set up with the tobacco cultivator, normal Farmall style. We built a diamond toolbar that kind of slides into those collars that we can put beat knives on and slide them around. It's really great. It just doesn't have much clearance because the Farmalls, they're not that high to begin with, and then with that toolbar, we get boxed out of the corn a little sooner than we would like.

[NEW\_PARAGRAPH]It would be awesome to get one more run through there, but we're always pushing it, flopping the corn down under the tractor to get the less cultivation. Yeah, those are the three machines, and that farm truck. We keep talking about maybe getting a side by side. I've never had one. I can't tell. I feel like they're so tiny though. I'm like, the bed just seems like... What can you even put in there?

Andy Chamberlin ([01:49:30](#)):

I don't know how I'd farm without our Gator.

Ashley Loehr ([01:49:31](#)):

Really?

Andy Chamberlin ([01:49:32](#)):

Yeah.

Ashley Loehr ([01:49:32](#)):

Okay. Yeah. Gosh. I feel like everyone I talk to, that's what they say. Maybe it's time. Yeah. It seems like it would be so nice. Recently, I realized I was like, you can pull a wagon with it. You can hitch it to stuff. I mean, yeah.

Andy Chamberlin ([01:49:45](#)):

It's just zippy and quicky. I feel like there's a lot of times I'm going to the field where I'm not harvesting 30 bins of something. It's just me or just a couple of tools.

Ashley Loehr ([01:49:54](#)):

Totally.

Andy Chamberlin ([01:49:54](#)):

And you can just sit down on there.

Ashley Loehr ([01:49:55](#)):

This year, I'm just like irrigation. I'm always just running to the field with like two fittings, or to check something, or open a valve and either I literally run or I drive the truck, but maybe a Gator would be the perfect middle ground.

Andy Chamberlin ([01:50:06](#)):

We're a Gator family.

Ashley Loehr ([01:50:08](#)):

Nice. Yeah. Yep, that's the equipment.

Andy Chamberlin ([01:50:11](#)):

What does sustainable agriculture mean to you and what are you doing to achieve it? We talked a lot about things, but what stands out for you?

Ashley Loehr ([01:50:19](#)):

Oh, wow. I mean, I guess the word sustainable means keep going, right? And sustain it. That's what sustainable means, so I guess... I mean, that means making money, not losing money, and not beating the field up, being able to keep doing it. And so, I guess that means trying to increase its capacity and diminish its weed seed bank so that it's better and more possible to keep doing what we're doing.

([01:50:53](#)):

I don't know. Maybe I should think more about that question. I don't know. Yeah. I mean, we're certified organic. I do think that it's partly because I just worked on certified organic farms, so that's what I got used to, but it's also definitely something we believe in and think is awesome and are inspired by other organic growers. But I don't think it's the only way. I also take much advice and have deep respect for all the conventional growers that are doing really amazing job.

([01:51:24](#)):

Okay, blah, blah, blah. Next question.

Andy Chamberlin ([01:51:30](#)):

Okay. Next question is two part. What do you wish you knew when you were starting out that you know now? Or what advice would you give your younger self?

Ashley Loehr ([01:51:40](#)):

I don't know. It's weird because I mean, I guess I was like 15 when I got my first farm job. I'm going to be 40 in November, so I just have a different brain now than I did then. I don't even know.

Andy Chamberlin ([01:51:52](#)):

100%.

Ashley Loehr ([01:51:52](#)):

Any advice I would have given myself wouldn't have even permeated probably. I guess I think one thing that I've been happy about as each year passes is I'm less of a perfectionist and I take things less personally, which I just think is really important. It sort of embarrasses me to think about how obsessed with control I have been at various points in this career because it's kind of the whole thing, is there's only so much you can do. So, yeah.

Andy Chamberlin ([01:52:30](#)):

Letting go of that.

Ashley Loehr ([01:52:30](#)):

Letting go a little bit.

Andy Chamberlin ([01:52:31](#)):

A little bit. You still got to care.

Ashley Loehr ([01:52:34](#)):

We have no sweet corn in the farm stand right now, and I think like seven years ago I would have been devastated about that. And now, I can write drought and then I can mow it, and I can put my energy towards something that will actually make money and not feel like I'm a total failure. Just be like, it's freaking farming. It's not perfect.

([01:52:54](#)):

It's hard and you basically work for the weather. So yeah, it's not always going to come out how you expected, so that's nice. I think if I had been able to chill out a little bit more when I was younger, I would have gotten better sleep sometimes. Yeah. Yeah.

Andy Chamberlin ([01:53:12](#)):

Similar, what advice would you give to a beginning farmer, somebody starting out now? Or any lessons learned that-

Ashley Loehr ([01:53:21](#)):

Maybe don't be afraid to talk to people, or call people, or like bother people. I feel like every time I get feeling like I have to figure it all out myself, or something's happening that I don't understand, I forget that I can just call someone. Call someone I know that does the same thing. Call Becky Mountain. Email Vern. Just like reach out, and I feel like you get miles ahead so fast by just comparing experiences with other people instead of trying to figure it out by yourself, or on the Internet, or whatever. Yeah.

Andy Chamberlin ([01:54:00](#)):

I find it helps put you at ease. I'll go to a farm visit and then, "Oh, you're struggling with that too." I at least feel better.

Ashley Loehr ([01:54:07](#)):

Totally.

Andy Chamberlin ([01:54:07](#)):

It's not me that I did something wrong. It's like, oh, it's a drought. That's why things are stressed out.

Ashley Loehr ([01:54:15](#)):

It's a drought. Totally, totally. Yeah. Yeah, it's huge.

Andy Chamberlin ([01:54:17](#)):

Are there any specific mentors or people who have been an influence for you?

Ashley Loehr ([01:54:22](#)):

Oh, my God, so many. Yeah, so many. Yeah. I don't know. I mean, I feel like probably the first person I really asked a lot of questions to about farming was a guy named Alton Earnhardt, who was... He ran Lightning Tree Farm, which is a 1,200 acre grain farm in Dutchess County in New York State. I think a lot of grain farmers and dairy farmers actually. It's inspiring to talk to them because...

([01:54:52](#)):

I do think there's this thing that happens with vegetable farming where it becomes very myopic and detail oriented, and there's so much about scheduling and control. I really enjoy talking to grain farmers, dairy farmers, even fruit farmers where everything is responsive management instead of scheduled control-based management, and just like widening the lens.

([01:55:17](#)):

I think first talking to Alton and Janine, they were thinking in these rotation blocks over 10 year spans, over 20 acre fields, and just to get that kind of input of the bird's eye view. Yeah, like my friend Sarah and her dad Barry that have run a dairy farm for generations, they just have a long view also. They just think more than year to year and have this kind of deep sense of devotion and commitment, and herd health, eyes, and like just a different way of looking at their farm.

([01:55:53](#)):

But also lately, like talking to Pooh, or Anne, or Ray, or Jenny or Sarah at Edgewater, like them having such a bigger scale than us and having been able to incorporate so many family members and operate on such a professional level, and just also have such a good attitude about it and bring a sense of fun to it all the time. I feel like on my darkest days, they're really my go to these days to just remember that it can be lighthearted.

[\(01:56:23\)](#):

I mean, obviously they get stressed out too, but you know, just talking to people on different scale, instead of like, who can I copy or who's doing exactly the same thing as me that I can talk to, I really enjoy talking to people, doing it a little bit different, working on a different scale or in a different crop mix, or whatever. Another weird answer, so here we go.

Andy Chamberlin [\(01:56:42\)](#):

No, it's all good.

Ashley Loehr [\(01:56:44\)](#):

All over the map.

Andy Chamberlin [\(01:56:45\)](#):

Well, that's what makes these farm visits so interesting because everybody's story's different.

Ashley Loehr [\(01:56:49\)](#):

Yeah, totally. Totally.

Andy Chamberlin [\(01:56:52\)](#):

Your crop mix is different, your markets are different, your location is different. I mean-

Ashley Loehr [\(01:56:56\)](#):

Yeah, totally. Yeah. No, it's really true. That's what's amazing about farms is they're all idiosyncratic expressions of their people in their weird specific place. Yeah. So awesome.

Andy Chamberlin [\(01:57:07\)](#):

You may not have gotten into popcorn if that wasn't already an established thing here.

Ashley Loehr [\(01:57:14\)](#):

That's right. Totally. Yeah.

Andy Chamberlin [\(01:57:14\)](#):

Or hay.

Ashley Loehr [\(01:57:14\)](#):

Yeah, totally. Yeah.

Andy Chamberlin [\(01:57:16\)](#):

Having the mindset to be like, "Maybe we don't need to do the hay that Geo enjoyed doing."

Ashley Loehr [\(01:57:20\)](#):

Yes. Yes.

Andy Chamberlin ([01:57:21](#)):

Just maybe not so much.

Ashley Loehr ([01:57:22](#)):

Right.

Andy Chamberlin ([01:57:23](#)):

But having the equipment, all of a sudden you can bale your own rye. Well, that is helpful.

Ashley Loehr ([01:57:26](#)):

Yes. Yeah, it really is. Yeah, weed-free mulch, it's the best.

Andy Chamberlin ([01:57:27](#)):

Yeah.

Ashley Loehr ([01:57:31](#)):

It's amazing.

Andy Chamberlin ([01:57:32](#)):

I'd like to touch upon it. How did you get started farming?

Ashley Loehr ([01:57:38](#)):

I got my first job on a vegetable farm when I was 15, and I guess the simple story is I just never looked back. I just kept working on vegetable farms. I wonder about it sometimes because sometimes I'm like, am I just a myopic personality? Like I'm Scorpio, maybe whatever job I had gotten when I was 15, I would have stuck with it. I'm not sure about that.

Andy Chamberlin ([01:58:05](#)):

I don't know.

Ashley Loehr ([01:58:05](#)):

I don't think so though. I think it really hit me at the right time and the right place, and really suited me. I had a rough early adolescence in terms of just my coming to terms with the world was not pleasant. I was not pleased about the things I saw and learned, and was aware of, and felt, I guess kind of like a simultaneous desire to drop out and dig in, and could not find my place.

([01:58:38](#)):

I think also just like, yeah, as a young... Just I think in farming with a colinear hoe in my hand, I immediately felt like I was using my body and expressing my femininity in a way that totally made sense to me, and it just felt great, felt right, and has continued to, which is pretty amazing. I feel really lucky about that.

Andy Chamberlin ([01:59:04](#)):

Yeah, good.

Ashley Loehr ([01:59:07](#)):

Yeah. I mean, so yeah, effectively it was a job that I liked and I kept doing it.

Andy Chamberlin ([01:59:11](#)):

Felt satisfactory, so hey, that's a good reason to keep going.

Ashley Loehr ([01:59:14](#)):

Yeah, it felt satisfactory and I think it felt not... I was really confused at that time what a person could possibly do that wasn't destructive. I feel like my lens was that every comfort that existed was based on the oppression of other people, and that became my entire lens of the world. Everything I did and everything I saw, all I could think about was the chain of events that had led up into that point and how many people's backs had been stepped on to get to a can of soda, or a mile in the car burning grass.

([01:59:48](#)):

It was a really paralyzing state of mind, and I think having that job on a farm was the first time that I felt like I was doing something that wasn't explicitly damaging. It's not perfect and I've never thought that I'm saving the world, but it also doesn't feel like I'm... Yeah, it helped me escape from that, the confines of that paralyzing lens of looking at the world order basically.

Andy Chamberlin ([02:00:16](#)):

That's interesting.

Ashley Loehr ([02:00:16](#)):

It's really helpful.

Andy Chamberlin ([02:00:18](#)):

Yeah.

Ashley Loehr ([02:00:18](#)):

Yeah.

Andy Chamberlin ([02:00:19](#)):

Farming is therapy, whether you're a teen or an adult.

Ashley Loehr ([02:00:21](#)):

Right. Yeah. Sometimes. Sometimes it's the opposite.

Andy Chamberlin ([02:00:26](#)):

Yeah. Yeah, for sure.

Ashley Loehr ([02:00:29](#)):

Yeah.

Andy Chamberlin ([02:00:30](#)):

What's something you wish the general public or your customers knew about farming?

Ashley Loehr ([02:00:34](#)):

I don't want ever for our marketing to be a sob story, or justify poor quality product with environmental conditions, but I also want people to understand how hard it is right now for farmers. I really feel like talking about the weather is a really common thing that we all do, and I think the next step in understanding how that weather just directly affects the production of crops and the availability of food is what I wish.

([02:01:14](#)):

I think back to the sweet corn failure, which clearly is a hot button for me this year. But you know, someone came to the farm stand looking for it because typically this time of year we would have it in abundance and full supply, and they were disappointed, and they were like, "Oh, how disappointing. We've been waiting for weeks." I feel them and I also feel like, "You think it's disappointing for you? How do you think I feel?"

([02:01:42](#)):

Yeah, I guess just realizing that these weather patterns translate into food, that translates into the availability, and being supportive and adaptable, and being willing to break some habits or expand your thinking a little bit to keep supporting local agriculture, which people really do and I'm so touched by it all the time. Just that people really show up to buy food from farms in this state is huge. It's really awesome. Yeah.

Andy Chamberlin ([02:02:18](#)):

And that was The Farmer's Share. I hope you enjoyed this episode with Ashley of Hurricane Flats Farm. The Farmer's Share is supported by a grant offered by the USDA Specialty Crop Block Program from the Vermont Agency of Agriculture, Food and Markets. This funding helps to cover some of my time and travel in order to produce this podcast until March of 2026.

([02:02:45](#)):

The USDA Agricultural Marketing Service supports projects that address the needs of US specialty crop growers and strengthens local and regional food systems. I have no doubt that this podcast will meet those needs and help educate growers to support the industry. If you enjoyed this show and want to help support its programming, you can make a one-time or reoccurring donation on our website by visiting [thefarmersshare.com/support](http://thefarmersshare.com/support).

([02:03:15](#)):

We also receive funding from the Vermont Vegetable and Berry Growers Association. The VVBGA is a nonprofit organization funded in 1976 to promote the economic, environmental, and social sustainability of vegetable and berry farming in Vermont. Their membership includes over 400 farms across Vermont and beyond, as well as about 50 businesses and organizations that provide products and services of all types to their members.

([02:03:43](#)):

Benefits to members include access to the VVBGA Listserv to buy, sell plants and equipment, share farming information, and tap the vast experience of our growers. Access the Community Accreditation for Produce Safety, also known as CAPS. This program is designed for growers by growers to help you easily meet market and regulatory food safety expectations.

This transcript was exported on Dec 04, 2025 - view latest version [here](#).

[\(02:04:09\)](#):

You can access the VVBGA's Soil Health Platform, where you can organize all the soil tests and create and store your soil amendment plans and records, access to webinars for growers in the VVBGA annual meeting, an email subscription to the Vermont Vegetable and Berry Newsletter, camaraderie, enhanced communication and fellowship among commercial growers.

[\(02:04:32\)](#):

Memberships are on a per farm, per calendar year basis, and annual dues this year are \$80. These funds pay for the organization's operating costs and support educational programs and research projects. These funds also support projects that address grower needs around ag engineering, high tunnel production, pest management, pollinators, produce safety, and soil health.

[\(02:04:57\)](#):

Become a member today to be a part of and further support the veg and berry industry. You can visit [thefarmersshare.com](http://thefarmersshare.com) to listen to previous interviews or see photos, videos, or links discussed from the conversation. If you don't want to miss the next episode, enter your email address on our website and you'll get a note in your inbox when the next one comes out.

[\(02:05:20\)](#):

The Farmers Share has a YouTube channel with videos from several of the farm visits. We're also on Instagram, and that's where you can be reminded about the latest episode or see photos from the visit. Lastly, if you're enjoying the show, I'd love it if you could write a review. In Apple Podcasts, just click on the show, scroll down to the bottom, and there you can leave five stars and a comment to help encourage new listeners to tune in. I'd also encourage you to share this episode with other grower friends or crew who you think would be inspiring for them.

[\(02:05:50\)](#):

Thanks for listening.

PART 4 OF 4 ENDS [02:06:01]