



**SOUTH DAKOTA STATE
UNIVERSITY EXTENSION**

Speaker Bios



Keynote speaker Paul Owen has as diverse a career as one could imagine. He is the owner/operator of Slightly Different Nursery in Shelby, North Carolina. He currently specializes in daylily propagation, but in his past life has had significant experience with propagating perennials. Traveling extensively, he seeks out the unusual and beautiful! He holds multiple patents for unique plant varieties. Owen has presented at the Purdue University Extension Master Gardener State Conference, Royal Horticulture Society in London and numerous regional and local charities. His fun-loving personality lends itself to a light-hearted evening. Owen looks at the plant world as a palette of inspiration just waiting to be explored!

Dr. John Ball supports the citizens of South Dakota in his role as a Professor, SDSU Extension Forestry Specialist and South Dakota Department of Agriculture Forest Health Specialist at the South Dakota State University campus in Brookings. Ball is a Board Certified Master Arborist and serves as a campus arborist. He is also a Treecare Safety Professional, and an Advanced EMT. Ball is an entertaining and informative speaker who will also lead a walking tour highlighting trees and plants of interest on the South Dakota State Fairgrounds.



Dr. Kristine Lang joined the Agronomy, Horticulture, and Plant Science Department and SDSU Extension as an Assistant Professor and SDSU Extension Specialist in in 2021. During her formative years as a horticulturalist, Lang worked for three local garden centers, served as a design intern for two natural playgrounds, and worked briefly as a florist. She graduated with a Bachelor of Science degree in horticulture and communication from the University of Minnesota, Crookston. She spent two years as the Assistant Greenhouse Manager of the Agricultural Experiment Station Research Greenhouse at North Dakota State University. Lang went on to pursue a Ph.D. in horticulture and sustainable agriculture at Iowa State University working in the

Sustainable Vegetable Production Lab. Her research focused on high tunnel vegetable crop production through grafting, cultivar selection and microclimate modification, with an emphasis on tomato and pepper cropping systems. Most recently, she served as an Extension Scientist for the Rodale Institute Midwest Organic Center based in Iowa. South Dakota is the fourth Midwest state she is proud to call "home." Lang works with the citizens of South Dakota to empower Master Gardeners, celebrate public gardens, champion local foods, garden centers and cut flower production, and address herbaceous plant questions from asparagus to zinnia!

Carrie Werkmeister is an Assistant State Soil Scientist for the South Dakota U.S. Department of Agriculture-Natural Resource Conservation Service (USDA-NRCS) and grew up on a grain and livestock farm in southeastern South Dakota. Werkmeister holds Bachelor of Science and Master of Science degrees from SDSU in agronomy with a soils emphasis. She is a PhD candidate at NDSU in the soil science program and has worked in the soils area since 2005. She has managed soils and plant research labs at SDSU and NDSU. Werkmeister is excited to be working at NRCS and addressing landowners soil resource concerns.





Christina Lind is a long-time plant enthusiast with degrees in horticulture, landscape architecture and Spanish, working as a Gardener and Education Coordinator for McCrory Gardens for over 12 years. Currently you can find Lind as an independent Horticultural Outreach Consultant for McCrory Gardens as well as Farmer, Horticulturist and Communications Specialist at Blue Dasher Farm and Ecdysis Foundation, where she also calls home.

Kristianna Gehant Siddens owns Prairie Coteau Farm near Astoria, South Dakota where she has been growing and marketing vegetables and herbs since 2004. She is a founding member of Dakota Fresh, a producer-owned food hub serving Sioux Falls and Brookings, where she served on the board and recently completed two years as manager. Before returning to her ancestral roots in South Dakota, her adventures in gardening took her from perennial plant and produce farms in Illinois to community garden development as a Peace Corps Volunteer in West Africa. Along with her husband and two daughters, she currently raises certified organic garlic and grass-finished lamb which she sells via Dakota Fresh and on her website.



Jessie Ruml is the owner and founder of Pixie Acres Flower Farm and Design. She's a farm girl from Elk Point, South Dakota who grew up walking beans and corn. She graduated from SDSU in 2006 with a liberal arts degree and then graduated from the University of South Dakota with a bachelor's degree in dental hygiene. She worked as a dental hygienist for a decade before realizing she wanted a different path in her life, which led her back to her farm girl roots. Ruml just finished her third season as a flower farmer. Her flower farm has about a half acre in production, with 65 different varieties of flowers, including old-fashioned favorites like zinnias, dahlias, snapdragons, foxglove, sweet peas and more. Ruml is passionate about spreading joy through South Dakota flowers,

supporting the Buy Local movement, cooking and spending time with her family. Pixie Acres is located on her family's farm west of Castlewood, South Dakota. She is married to Philip and they have four daughters, three Springer Spaniels, 16 chickens, 2 ducks, a pet cow and random 4-H sheep.

Rodney and Becky Freeman have been making apple cider in their barn for 15 years. When Rodney turned 60, Becky wanted to give him something special for a new hobby. There were so many different varieties of apple trees on their farm, so it seemed like a wonderful idea to have a beautiful wooden press ordered from Happy Valley Farm. Rodney was thrilled, and that fall, they assembled the press and picked bushels of organic apples. The Freemans made gallons of cider that year and have been ever since. About 13 years ago they started inviting the 4-year-old children from Kindernook Preschool to come for an Apple Day field trip. It has been happening every September since then, honoring Johnny Appleseed, and learning about apple cider. The Freemans are sometimes known as the Apple Man and the Apple Lady. The children seem to love it, and Rodney and Becky, of course, love it when a child comes up and asks them if they remember when they came to Apple Day.

