



Fond du Lac County Success from the Field

Small Farm Produces Big Conservation Results

Background

Tracy and Richard Vinz, of Olden Produce LLC, have been working hard to produce heart healthy fruits and vegetables locally in their community of Ripon, Wisconsin. They have done this with a mindset of growing their produce in a way that is both healthy to eat, as well as grown to not harm the environment.

Highlights

Tracy and Richard are the fourth generation of farmers to operate this 100-acre farm. Tracy can attest that the farm has had its share of challenges, especially since they made the decision to transition from conventional to certified organic. She believes the work that she and her husband have devoted to the farm over the last 10 years has paid off. "We made a decision to become certified organic and have never looked back," explained Tracy. "Our land can be extremely wet. There used to be a gully that would show up year after year. We are located amongst conventional farms that use pesticides and chemicals. These were just some of the issues we've encountered. The NRCS has been more than willing to provide us with technical assistance to address resource concerns on our farm." Tracy and Richard worked with Cory Drummond, NRCS District Conservationist, and other NRCS staff to implement various practices on their land. "The Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) has been our program of choice. That gully? We were able to eliminate it by installing a grassed 230 ft waterway. We restored a .8 acre wetland, that is now used by ducks and inhabited by huge doles of turtles and armies of frogs, which we absolutely love!" added Tracy. The Vinzs also installed over 4,000 feet of windbreak to serve as a buffer against pesticide drift. "Being certified organic, we are always fighting weeds. We planted 27 acres of cover crops this year to help in that endeavor. We also utilize seasonal high tunnels that help our business extend the growing season. It's amazing how our farm has transformed over the last 10 years," explained Tracy.

"Tracy and Richard have been amazing landowners to work with," added Cory. "They are always seeking out ways to improve their land and their resources. They have been steadfastly committed to conservation, while meeting the demands of being certified organic producers."



Tracy and Richard Vinz in front of the installed high tunnel.



Richard Vinz in the wetland scrape.

Future Plans

Olden Produce LLC, officially reached certified organic status May 2016. Tracy is on the board of directors of the Oshkosh Farmers Market and has been an advocate for organic farming for years. Olden Produce LLC, now has a processing facility and can process spiralized vegetables grown on the farm. Tracy says she would love to plant a cover of pollinator habitat because she also has honeybees on the farm. She says she intends to continue to work with the NRCS, as Olden Produce LLC, continues to grow.

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