

FIELD DAY RESOURCE GUIDE

Tools and Investments to Reduce Labor



OAKLAND AVENUE URBAN FARM

Jerry Ann Hebron started Oakland Avenue Urban Farm in 2009 after leaving a career in real estate with the commitment to bring her community fresh, local, and accessible food. Since then, Oakland Avenue Urban Farm has grown in size and infrastructure, now supporting multiple farm sites in the neighborhood, three high tunnels, two water catchment systems, and operating its own farmers market. In 2020, Oakland Avenue Urban Farm is unveiling their new irrigation system that will continue their efforts to support production in a limited space while also reducing labor time and creating a more efficient farming system.

TIPS FROM THE FARMER

1.

Do your research.

It's important to research as much as possible before starting a new project on the farm. Tools that work for one farm might not work for everyone, so Jerry Ann suggests reaching out to your local extension office, or utilizing student support to help your farm conduct research. As Jerry Ann says, "knowledge is power."

2.

Get the community involved.

Jerry Ann works hard to get to know her customers and understand what their wants, needs, and interests are. Knowing what products your community wants or is interested in is the first step in planning what to produce for the season. Bringing your neighbors, customers, and members of the community together to communicate with each other is a great way to know that you're producing will be what they need and that they'll be back to purchase from you in the future.

3.

Explore alternative means of labor.

Sometimes you have to get creative with your farm labor. Oakland Avenue Urban Farm works with children, students, interns, individuals completing community service hours, and volunteers from the community on their farm. Jerry Ann explores unique labor opportunities to ensure her labor is economically efficient and sustainable. She suggests reaching out to local schools for agriculture students seeking summer work, exploring the department of corrections for individuals completing community service hours, and recruiting volunteers at the farmers market.



RESOURCES

- 1. Selecting an Irrigation System.** Natural Resource Conservation Service, 2009.
This helpful guide from the Natural Resource Conservation Service outlines the different types of irrigations systems, functionality, and cost. It also provides information on how to choose the right system for you, as well as technical assistance resources for irrigation systems.
- 2. Improving Labor Efficiency on Farms.** Phil Durst and Stanley Moore, MSU Extension, 2020.
Establishing an efficient labor force on the farm can be challenging to navigate. MSU Extension has created this helpful list of ways to improve the efficiency of farm labor, including information on expectations, leadership, organization, and more. This article will help you understand how to operate your farm at maximum efficiency.
- 3. Vegetable Growers Reflect on Improving Efficiency on Small Farms.** Penn State Extension, 2017.
In this resource, new and young farmers specializing in vegetable production provide ideas for most effective steps that small-scale farmers can take to improve efficiency. This list of efficiencies can help any small farmer improve production on their farm.



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