

2026 WPVGA & UW Division of Extension, Grower Education Conference

Tuesday, February 3, 2026

Holiday Inn Hotel & Convention Center, Stevens Point WI

Time	General Session - Expo 1 and 2		
7:30 - 8:20 am	Registration & Visit Associate Division Industry Show (Show open 8:00am)		
8:20 - 8:30 am	Welcome and Opening Remarks - Mr. Tamas Houlihan, Executive Director, Wisconsin Potato and Vegetable Growers Association, Antigo, WI		
8:30 - 9:00 am	Breeding for Disease Resistance, Shape, Flavor and Nitrate Dynamics in Beet, Carrot and Onion - Dr. Irwin Goldman, Professor and KWS Chair, Department of Plant and Agroecosystem Sciences, Madison, WI		
9:00 - 9:30 am	U.S. Agricultural Policy Updates: Implications for Farm Economics and Conservation - Dr. Jeff Hadachek, Assistant Professor, Department of Agricultural and Applied Economics, University of WI, Madison, WI		
9:30 - 10:30 am	Morning Break - Visit Exhibit Hall/Poster Session		
10:30 - 11:00 am	Partnership in Practice: McCain's Regenerative Agriculture Journey in Wisconsin - Ms. Kelly Verhaalen, Agronomist & Ms. Chelsea Zegler, North American Agronomy and Sustainability Manager, McCain Foods, Plover, WI		
11:00 - 11:30 am	The Conservation of Endangered Species and Agricultural Working Lands: What does success look like? - Ms. Sarah Warner, Pesticides and Species Conservation Biologist, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Madison, WI		
11:30am - 12:00pm	The Evolving Role of Extension in a Changing Agricultural Environment - Dr. Karl Martin, Dean of the Division of Extension, University of WI, Madison, WI		
12:00 - 1:15 pm	Lunch Break: WPVGA Awards		
Breakout Sessions	Expo 1 - Agricultural Fundamentals (101)	Expo 2 - Disease and Pest Management	Woodland/Trillium - Rural Partnerships Symposia
1:30 - 1:50 pm	Yi Wang - Potato Irrigation Management	Richard Lankau - Can We Use the Soil Microbiome to Predict Fumigation Efficacy?	Aseem Singh - Driving Efficiency and Sustainability: Results from Multi-Year Nitrogen Trials in Central Wisconsin
1:50 - 2:10 pm	Paul Mitchell - Partial Budget Analysis	Emma Terris - Investigating how Landscape and Gene Expression Shape Colorado potato beetle Cross-Resistance	Guolong Liang - Quantifying Nitrate Leaching: Baby Step to Ninja Level
2:10 - 2:30 pm	Amanda Gevens - Potato Disease Basics: From Seed to Storage	Maria Caraza-Harter - Breeding for Resistance to the Colorado Potato Beetle	Clare Doss & Matt Ruark - Nitrogen Mineralization Patterns and Crop Rotations
2:30 - 3:30 pm	Afternoon Break - Visit Exhibit Hall/Poster Session		
Breakout Sessions	Expo I - Agricultural Fundamentals (101)	Expo 2 - Bringing Value to Ag	Woodland/Trillium - Nutrient Management
3:30 - 3:50 pm	Russ Groves - Scouting and Thresholds for CPB, Aphids and Leafhoppers	3:30 Christopher Hasse, Excel Engineering - Benefits of Soil Moisture Sensors for Irrigation Management	Paul Mitchell - Economics of Nutrient Management and Nutrient Loss
3:50 - 4:10 pm	Matt Ruark - Fertility Fundamentals	3:45 Aida Bise & Sarah Agena, Noble Community Clinics - Healthy Communities, Healthy Workforce: Bringing Value to Agriculture through Accessible Rural Health Care	Francisco Arriaga and Evan Freed - Patterns of Nitrate and Contaminant Leachate
4:10 - 4:30 pm	Jeff Endelman - Potato Breeding and Genetics	4:00 Tony Solis, Thunderstruck Farms - Practical Fabrication Solutions for Farm Efficiency 4:15 Liga Astra Kalnina, VM Agritech - New Product: Curezin® A New Broad-Spectrum Fungicide	Steven Hall - Testing Unconventional Practices to Decrease Nitrate Leaching from Potato
4:30 - 8:00 pm	Wisconsin Seed Potato Improvement Association and WPVGA Associate Division Reception		

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Wednesday, February 4, 2026

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Time	General Session - Expo 1 and 2		
7:30 - 8:15 am	Registration & Visit Associate Division Industry Show (Show open 8:00am)		
8:15 - 9:00 am	Potatoes USA - Delivering Flavor: How Potatoes USA is Driving Demand through Culinary Innovation - Chef RJ Harvey, RDN CEC, Culinary Director, Potatoes USA, Denver, CO		
9:00 - 9:30 am	Healthy Grown for Whole Farm Management; Historic Success and Future Trajectory - Mr. Jeb Barzen, Ecologist, Private Lands Conservation, LLC and Mr. Andy Diercks, Vice President, Coloma Farms, Coloma, WI		
9:30 - 10:00 am	Distinguishing and Managing Potato Tuber Blemish Pathogens - Dr. Amanda Gevens, Professor and Associate Department Chair, Department of Plant Pathology, University of WI, Madison, WI		
10:00 - 11:00 am	Morning Break - Visit Exhibit Hall/Poster Session		
11:00 - 11:30 am	Aerial Application Technology; Past, Present and Future - Mr. Damon Reabe, Owner, Reabe Spraying Service, Plover, WI		
11:30am - 12:00pm	WPVGA/State Legislative Issues Update - Ms. Jordan Lamb, Attorney, The Welch Group		
12:00 - 1:15 pm	<p style="text-align: center;">Lunch Break</p> National Potato Council Update - Mike Wenkel, Chief Operating Officer, National Potato Council, Washington, DC		
Breakout Sessions	Expo 1 - Potato Storage and Varieties	Expo 2 - Crop Health	Woodland/Trillium - Wisconsin Muck Meeting
1:30 - 1:50 pm	Todd Forbush - Impact of the AIM Act on Potato Storage Refrigeration	Inna Popova - Development of Plant-Based Pesticides for Crop Protection	Dr. Mike Thornton - Onion Development and Abiotic Factors (Smoke) That Influence Crop Health
1:50 - 2:10 pm	Deana Knuteson - Healthy Grown-Expanding Markets and Increasing Acres	Sean Schoville - Factors Influencing Colorado Potato Beetle Abundance and Insecticide Resistance	
2:10 - 2:30 pm	Amber Walker - Update on Elite Potato Varieties Grown in Central Wisconsin and Associated Storage Success at the UW Storage Research Facility	Wynne Aldrich - Innovation Hub: Building Resilient Potato Fields through Fumigation Alternatives and Soil Health	Dr. Amanda Gevens - Peeling Back the Program: What's Working for Onion Disease Control
2:30 - 3:30 pm	Afternoon Break - Visit Exhibit Hall/Poster Session		
Breakout Sessions	Expo 1 - Disease and Pest Management	Expo 2 - Water Use and Quality	Woodland/Trillium - Wisconsin Muck Meeting
3:30 - 3:50 pm	Peter DiGennaro - Screening Potato Cultivars Against Nematodes and Nitrogen	Mallika Nocco and Logan Ebert - Advancing Evapotranspiration Estimates in Central Wisconsin	Dr. Matt Ruark - Managing Nutrients on Muck Soils
3:50 - 4:10 pm	Dennis Halterman - Breeding for Early Blight Resistance in Potato	Erika Borgardt and Kevin Hedinger - Evaluation of Nitrate Leaching and Groundwater Recharge: Work in Progress	
4:10 - 4:30 pm	Aurelie Rakotondrafara - Plant Viruses: Can they be beneficial to the plants?	Chuck Bolte - When Water Flows on the Antigo Flats - What Happens?	Dr. Jed Colquhoun - Precision Weed Management in Muck Grown Onion

5:15 p.m. Social Hour | 6:00 p.m. WPVGA Associate Division Banquet

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Thursday, February 5, 2026

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Time	General Session - Expo 1 and 2
8:00 - 8:30 am	Potato Breeding and Genetics - Jeff Endelman, Professor, Department of Plant and Agroecosystem Sciences, University of Wisconsin-Madison
8:30 - 9:00 am	Updates on Potato Foliar Disease Management in Wisconsin - Amanda Gevens, Professor and Associate Chairperson, Department of Plant Pathology, University of Wisconsin-Madison
9:00 - 9:30 am	Looking to the Future: Seed Potato Testing Advancements - Brooke Babler, Associate Research Program Director, WSPCP Program, Department of Plant Pathology, University of Wisconsin-Madison
9:30 - 10:00 am	Neonicotinoid Alternatives; Management Programs to Limit CPB and Colonizing Aphids - Russ Groves, Professor and Associate Chairperson, Department of Entomology, University of Wisconsin-Madison
10:00 - 10:15 am	Morning Break
10:15 - 10:45 am	A Look into the Future of Potato Weed Management - Jed Colquhoun, Professor, Department of Plant and Agroecosystem Sciences, University of Wisconsin-Madison
10:45 - 11:15 am	Artificial Intelligence-Driven Technologies for Sustainable Potato Production - Yi Wang, Associate Professor, Department of Plant and Agroecosystem Sciences, University of Wisconsin-Madison
11:15 - 11:45 am	How Late is Too Late for Nitrogen? - Matt Ruark, Professor, BCS Chair and Dairy Innovation HUB Director, Department of Soil Science and Environmental Science, University of Wisconsin-Madison
11:45am - 12:00pm	Thank You and Concluding Remarks - Tamas Houlihan, Executive Director, Wisconsin Potato and Vegetable Growers Association
12:00 pm	Adjourn - Thanks for your Attendance and Participation
12:30 pm	WPVGA Annual Meeting