

MOSES 2004 Organic Farmer of the Year!

Congratulations to Martin and Atina Diffley, Gardens of Eagan, MOSES 2004 Farmer of the Year

Many of us have known Martin and Atina Diffley for several decades. Back then, they stood out as exemplary organic vegetable growers with their innovative marketing ideas, use and adaptation of mechanical equipment, experimentation with cover cropping, green manure crops, and compost, and just through the sheer size of their operation. They are one of the longest certified organic operations in the United States, having been first certified in 1975.

Over the years, Martin and Atina have experimented with diverse cover crops such as Andean lupin beans, African cowpeas, triticale, sorghum sudan grass, and varieties of rye and vetch. Erosion is minimized by maintaining cover on almost all fields throughout the winter months. One of Martin's inventions is a unique side-delivery manure spreader to sidedress compost and other nutrients in a 2' wide swath.

Martin and Atina have had first hand experience of urban sprawl when the 5th generation Eagan farm Martin was renting from his family was sold to make lots for suburban houses. For several years, they had to farm on rented land located in 10-12 different locations within a 30-mile radius, while their newly purchased farm completed the transition process to qualify for certification. They currently farm 140 acres near Farmington, certified by International Certification Services.

The Diffleys worked with the Land Stewardship Project to promote awareness of the importance of land preservation in urban areas with regular appearances in the news and creating a documentary film, "Turn Here – Sweet Corn". They have also published articles in trade publications, such as *Growing for Market*. They have been very active in the cooperative store movement in the Twin Cities, with many years of in-store consumer education and marketing local, organic food.

Martin was instrumental in establishing organic standards in Minnesota. He volunteered many hours, working with the Organic Growers and Buyers Association (MN's first certifying agent) in a variety of roles and was even an organic inspector for 4 years.

They are regular speakers at organic farming and vegetable production conferences. Many of you have heard Martin speak on farming equipment. They have hosted numerous field days, sharing their wealth of knowledge with many others. They have helped Hmong and other immigrants by providing jobs, helping connect them to equipment to start their own farms, and even selling land to help new farmers begin their own farms. They have inspired and educated many young people on organic vegetable farming through their on-farm intern program which was the first in the Midwest.

As you can see, Martin and Atina embody the sentiments of the MOSES Organic Farmer of the Year. We thank Martin and Atina for their years of stewardship, dedication, hard work, creativity, positive thinking, sharing, and most of all, providing people with healthy, nutritious food.

Take some time during the conference to congratulate Martin and Atina, and educate yourself on their innovative operation and fascinating lives!

SECOND ARTICLE:

Presentation of the MOSES Organic Farmer of the Year award is Friday morning, February 27, 8:00 a.m. before the morning keynote address. This year includes a 6 minute slide show of the winner's operation. It is inspiring, poignant and educational! You won't want to miss it!

MOSES is very proud to sponsor the 2004 Organic Farmer of the Year award. This award bestows the highest honor on a Midwest organic farmer or farm family practicing outstanding land stewardship of both the land and the agricultural community. This is the 2nd year the award is being given out.

The award is more than just honor. This exceptional farmer receives a \$500 cash award, \$100 gift certificate to the conference books sales booth, and free conference registration, food and lodging. This 2004 award is made possible by Roger Blobaum's generous support. Roger Blobaum is a long time activist and supporter of organic agriculture. Thank you, Roger!

Nominations for this year's award were received in the Fall, 2003 from the organic community. The MOSES Board of Directors voted at their December retreat for the candidate that best met the criteria listed below. The choice was a difficult one, with a number of excellent nominations. Please join us Friday morning, February 27, at 8:00 a.m. to celebrate the presentation of this award.

Nominations for the "MOSES Farmer of the Year" are based on the following criteria:

- Innovations in organic farming/livestock management, including crops and crop rotations, weed, pest and disease management strategies, development of value added products, sustainable or renewable energy, and marketing.
- Excellence in enhancing farm resources: soil, water, wildlife and biodiversity.
- Inspiration and education of organic farmers, consumers and others in the organic community
- Current organic certification.

Start thinking now about whom you wish to nominate for the MOSES 2005 Farmer of the Year. Nomination applications will be available on the MOSES website, www.mosesorganic.org, by September 1, 2005. MOSES is looking for additional sponsors for next year's award. If interested, contact the MOSES office.

Plan to attend the award presentation on Friday morning and help us honor the 2004 Farmer of the Year.