

## TIP OF THE DAY

### Guide-Guard Keeps Sliding Door Free of Ice in Winter

In the winter, the [door guide guard](#) on my machine shed doesn't work very well. Snow covers it up, melts, and then ice forms, which makes... [read more](#)

## CROP TALK

### Precision Agriculture Book

Call for Book Chapters -----  
----- Book Title: "Precision Agriculture Technologies for Food Security and Sustainability" This call for book chapters ...[\[More\]](#)

Author: [bmmasprep](#) Posted: 09-28-2019

### Crops Are Changing

Here is a snapshot of the corn and soybeans in southcentral Iowa, just south of Des Moines. These photos were ...[\[More\]](#)

Author: [marketeye](#) Posted: 09-18-2019

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# 10 TAKEAWAYS FROM SUMMER FIELD DAYS

By [Megan Vollstedt](#)  
10/7/2019

Spring and summer kept throwing curveballs to farmers in the Midwest, forcing many to sit on the bench and await brief opportunities to get in the fields.

No matter the weather, field days are productive ways to spend a few hours learning new strategies and networking with peers.

Below is a roundup of insights from events this year to consider as you do fall field work and prepare for the 2020 growing season.

- 1 Working on saturated soils this spring caused compaction in fields. This fall, tillage and cover crops can help to fracture and shatter the compaction layer.
- 2 Residue management is key. A minimally tilled field would ideally have 6- to 8-inch-long pieces of nutrient residue, which won't float or blow away. Anything bigger, or with fewer entry points will take microbes longer to break down, keeping nutrients away from the crop when it needs them most. Shorter nutrient residue, around 2 to 3 inches long, is easily washed away, along with the nutrients it could have provided.
- 3 Pay attention to the weather, not a date on the calendar, when applying cover crops.
- 4 Know the difference between annual ryegrass and cereal rye. Annual ryegrass is a turf-like cover crop, grows well, and has prolific roots, but is tough to burn down in the spring. Cereal rye (also called winter rye) is fast-growing, has excellent rooting depth and weed suppression, and is easy to burn down in the spring.
- 5 Landowners play a crucial role in caring for the land and supporting practices that promote soil and water health, especially as their numbers increase.
- 6 Fields susceptible to soil erosion (especially in hilly areas) are great candidates for minimal-tillage practices.
- 7 Strips of prairie planted within corn and soybean fields (a new conservation

practice) harness the benefits of prairie plants in the midwest. Native perennials are effective at reducing erosion and nutrient loss because of their abundant roots and the stiff stems that stand up to pounding rains and high winds. They are also suited to various soil types.

- 8 To create an effective nitrogen plan, look inside your field boundaries and identify zones to do further soil, tissue, and nitrogen sampling.
- 9 Implement many practices on your farm to improve soil health and water quality – not just one. Consider prairie strips, cover crops, minimal-tillage, saturated buffers, livestock grazing, etc. to get the ecosystem working together.
- 10 Plant milkweed outside of crop acres to support a pollinator habitat and save time on mowing.

Bonus: Remember sometimes to pause, take a breath, and enjoy the land around you.

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