



Extension

- Elysia Rodgers*- eberry@purdue.edu
 - Cora Hill*- hill272@purdue.edu
 - Kathryn Jennings*- jennin30@purdue.edu
 - Ann Kline*- kline60@purdue.edu
 - Rebecca Koetz*- busser@purdue.edu
 - Geoff Schortgen*- gschortg@purdue.edu
 - Abigail Creigh+- creigh@purdue.edu
 - Molly Hoag+- mhoag@purdue.edu
 - Robby Kelly~- kelly115@purdue.edu
 - Amy Rumschlag~- amyjohnson@purdue.edu
- *Purdue Extension Ag & Natural Resources
+ Purdue Extension Health and Human Sciences
~Purdue Extension 4-H Youth Development

Rooted & Resilient: Cultivating Confidence and Capacity in Modern Homesteaders

Interest in homesteading and small-scale food production continues to grow as individuals and families seek greater food security, land stewardship skills, and self-sufficiency. However, many beginning and transitioning homesteaders lack access to comprehensive, research-based education that integrates gardening, livestock management, soil health, food preservation, and business skills into one cohesive learning experience. The Rooted and Resilient Homesteading Conference was developed in 2024 to address this educational gap by providing practical, regionally relevant training from experts alongside meaningful networking opportunities.



Knowledge Gain & Skill Development

2024 Outcomes

- 85% learned new information in gardening/produce/permaculture
- 45% gained knowledge in animal husbandry
- 35% increased knowledge in food preservation
- Participants reported hands-on skill gains in poultry processing, soil health, beekeeping, chainsaw safety, maple syrup production, and seed saving

2025 Outcomes

- 92% learned something new about gardening/produce/permaculture
- 50% increased knowledge in food preservation
- 38% learned new animal husbandry practices
- Skill development included cover crops, composting, produce safety, grazing management, herb preservation, freeze drying, and small engine repair

Consistently high knowledge gain in core homesteading competencies, particularly gardening, soil health, and livestock production.



Program Reach & Engagement

- 126 participants over two years
 - 68 individuals in 2024
 - 58 individuals in 2025
- Traveled from 25 different Indiana counties and 2 Wisconsin counties
- Utilized expertise from 34 Purdue and Michigan State Extension Educators and Specialists and 35 community partners
- Served new and returning homesteaders, small-acreage producers, and local food system participants
- Maintained strong repeat attendance, indicating sustained program value



Behavior Change & Networking Development

- 95% (2024) and 92% (2025) agreed or strongly agreed they intend to apply ideas learned within the year
- 100% of prior attendees in 2025 reported adopting at least one recommended practice
- Documented practice changes include:
 - Cover crop implementation
 - Improved composting systems
 - Poultry processing and livestock management
 - Soil testing and soil health improvements
 - Invasive species management
 - Small engine repair and equipment troubleshooting
- 93% (2024) and 76% (2025) agreed or strongly agreed the conference provided valuable networking opportunities
- Participants cited peer encouragement, inspiration, and relationship-building as key benefits
- Strengthened local food system connections among growers, producers, and community members

The conference continues to serve as a regional hub for collaboration, mentorship, and shared learning.

Strong movement from knowledge acquisition to implementation, demonstrating measurable on-farm and homestead impact.



Overall Two-Year Impact & Future Needs

Over two years, the Rooted and Resilient: Homesteading Conference has demonstrated:

- High participant satisfaction and retention
- Strong knowledge gain in essential homesteading competencies
- Measurable adoption of recommended practices
- Strengthened local networks and community resilience
- Continued demand for practical, research-based homesteading education

Across both years, participants expressed continued interest in:

- | | |
|--|--|
| Gardening and season extension | Equipment maintenance |
| Fruit production | Foraging, rabbits, maple syrup, seed swaps, and food preservation techniques |
| Livestock husbandry | |
| Soil health and regenerative practices | |