



Midwest Organic & Sustainable Education Service

NEWS RELEASE

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Owners of Four Elements Organic Herbals named Organic Farmers of Year

BARABOO, WI – Jane Hawley Stevens and her husband, David Stevens, have a mission: to connect people with herbal remedies so they come to appreciate—and help preserve—the healing power of nature. They have been growing organic herbs and selling wellness products from their certified organic farm near Baraboo for over 30 years. In recognition of their commitment to good land stewardship, quality of life for their employees and customers, and educating others about the benefits of organic products, they have been named the Organic Farmers of the Year.

This prestigious award recognizes one Midwest farmer/farm family each year for outstanding land management, innovative farming practices, and the outreach they do to teach others how organic farming works. The Stevenses will receive the award Feb. 27 in La Crosse, Wisconsin, at the MOSES Organic Farming Conference, which is organized by the Midwest Organic & Sustainable Education Service (MOSES). It's the country's largest educational event focused on organic and sustainable farming.

The Stevenses own Four Elements Organic Herbals, a 130-acre farm in North Freedom, Wisconsin, about an hour northwest of Madison. They grow over 200 varieties of herbs to make wellness products, such as teas, creams, tinctures, lip balms, and sprays. They also harvest wild plants, including dandelion, chickweed, white pine, and burdock, which have medicinal qualities. Their products are in hundreds of stores across the country and sold online through the farm's website, www.fourelementsherbals.com.

Both Jane and David have degrees in horticulture. They understand how plants grow. David works full-time at the University of Wisconsin Arboretum. During the summer, he also puts in full-time hours at the farm, using organic methods to manage weeds and build soil health. Jane has worked full-time on the farm building the business since the early 1980s.

Jane credits finding an herbal remedy for her son's recurring ear infections when he was a baby as the launch of her life's work. At that time, she was growing and selling potted herbs. She tried a tincture of

mullein flowers and olive oil as an alternative to the drugs he was prescribed and found it quickly alleviated the infection without side effects.

“I was so impressed that it’s become my passion and my path to learn more and more about plants and healing,” she explained. Although her horticulture studies taught her to use chemical fertilizers and pesticides, she saw a connection between the health of her soil and the efficacy of her remedies. After about a year of contemplation, she decided to apply for organic certification in 1989 and has been certified organic since then.

Over the years, they’ve added local employees as the business has grown. Now they have six employees—all women—who work flexible schedules that allow time for family life. Jane, who started the company and farm when she had young children, values putting family first. With more help in the fields and in preparing the wellness products, Jane has had time in recent years to hold classes and share her experience with herbal remedies.

“Using herbs causes you to engage with your own health, to pay attention to your body and how you are feeling and realize you are part of the healing process,” she explained.

Jane also teaches other farmers how to grow herbs and flowers organically through workshops at conferences and field days on the farm; she is a frequent presenter at the annual MOSES Organic Farming Conference in La Crosse. She will host a MOSES Organic Field Day at her farm Aug. 1, 2020.

The Organic Farmer of the Year award is a project of MOSES, which is a nonprofit organization that encourages organic and sustainable agriculture by providing farmers with education, resources, and practical advice. For more information, see mosesorganic.org.

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