Hardin County Extension News Release
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Small Farm Tour

*Hardin County* – Six small farms were visited as part of the Auglaize and Hardin County New and Small Farm College this past Saturday, April 8. The New and Small Farm College was an eight-week short course held at the Ohio State University Lima campus in February and March. The purpose of the small farm tour was for class participants, either current owners or soon to be owners of small farm enterprises to see and ask questions of current small farm owners. Each stop offered a time for the small farm owners to tell their story of their farm goals, issues, and successes. The tour participants were able to see a variety of diverse production agriculture enterprises with different marketing plans throughout the day-long tour.

The small farm tour started out at Probst Family Farm near Bluffton. This is a Certified Naturally Grown Farm with pastured-based meats including beef, pork, turkey, chicken, and eggs with farmer’s market experience. Greg Probst is also the manager of the Bluffton Farmer’s Market. The next stop on the tour was Pure Country Greenhouses near Rawson. Monica and Dennis von Stein are the owners of this family owned and operated greenhouse business that has a variety of flowers, vegetables, hanging baskets, and arranged pots. The von Steins were self-taught and operate their business on a seasonal basis, marketing their plants both on the farm and at the farmer’s market in addition to work on the family’s grain operation. The final stop before lunch was Frisky Friends Farms outside of Ada where Chad and Jamie Hazelton raise hay, corn, dairy goats (of all breeds), Ayrshire dairy cattle, Dexter cattle, Pygmy goats, chickens, laying hens, hogs, rabbits, and horses. Like many other small farms, the Hazelton family children are involved with the many daily chores to take care of the animals.

Peck-n-Coop Family Farm east of Kenton was the first afternoon stop on the tour. Raising dairy, poultry, sheep, and chickens are a part of John and Kriss Brien’s daily family routine to help teach responsibility to their children. This farm has experience with Community Supported Agriculture (CSA), which customers pay a yearly fee to have access to farm products. The next stop on the tour was the Brammell Family Sugar Shack, also located east of Kenton. Maple sugar tapping and processing and tree planting plans for future growth was a topic of discussion at this alternative agriculture farm owned by Shelby and Kyle Brammell. The operation recently purchased a maple syrup evaporator for use in their
sugar shack that was built from timbers taken from a family barn. A commercial fruit and vegetable farm was the final stop on the Small Farm Tour. Levi Yoder Greenhouse & Produce, located east of Kenton produces flowers, mums, strawberries, pumpkins, melons, and many other fruits and vegetables marketed through the Scioto Valley Produce Auction as well as from the farm. Yoder is the manager of this local produce auction that serves as a market for several local produce growers. Each stop on the tour provided an opportunity for the participants to see examples of local agricultural enterprises and find out how each contributed to the entrepreneur’s success. Pictures of the Auglaize and Hardin County Small Farm Tour can be viewed on the Hardin County OSU Extension Facebook page.

Photo caption: Monica and Dennis von Stein share their experiences starting up Pure Country Greenhouses as part of the Small Farm Tour held April 8.