

• ETZEL •  
**SUGAR GROVE FARM**



INDIAN CREEK NATURE CENTER

**Let's Grow. Together.**





# Etzel Sugar

Let's Grow. Together.

There are moments when a generous and well-timed gift, coupled with a strategically executed vision, can positively alter the environmental landscape and impact the economics of a community for decades to come.

The 190-acre Etzel Sugar Grove Farm represents such a moment, ushering in a new era of ecological sustainability in Iowa.

We hope you will partner with Indian Creek Nature Center to make Etzel Sugar Grove Farm a cornerstone of the environmental agriculture movement. As a permaculture operation, Etzel Sugar Grove Farm will offer widespread ecological benefits for our community and provide a unique opportunity for people to learn, teach, or experience agriculture practices that integrate the ecology of the land. Join us in leading the essential resurgence of restorative agriculture in our community.





# Grove Farm



## The Etzel Sugar Grove Farm Story

George Etzel and his four siblings came of age during the Great Depression. Theirs was not a life of material wealth; rather, it was one of inherited connection to the land that provided for their family.

The Etzel family purchased the Sugar Grove farmstead in the 1880s, where three generations would make ends meet through the sowing of seeds, raising of chickens and harvesting of ice. Starting with George's grandfather, Henry, and followed by his parents, Ernest and Ina, the Etzels would live, work, love, play and survive difficult times together at Sugar Grove Farm.

Today, the 190-acre Etzel Sugar Grove Farm consists of 80 acres of agricultural land, 80 acres of timber, 20 acres of pasture, and 10 acres of farmstead. A creek flows through the bucolic property.

George served in the Korean War and attended college on the GI Bill, and he gravitated to sustainable practices on the family farm he inherited. His love of the land and respect for the environment made a partnership with Indian Creek Nature Center a natural fit. The gift of Etzel Sugar Grove Farm to the Nature Center is one that ensures that the heart and soul of the farmstead will live on. As part of the gift, one of the largest in the history of Indian Creek Nature Center, the organization has pledged to protect Etzel Sugar Grove Farm from commercial or residential development in perpetuity.

The strategic vision of transitioning Etzel Sugar Grove Farm into a permaculture farm builds on the Etzel family's legacy of cherishing the land on which one lives and works, ensuring that it remains fruitful and whole for future generations.



*Etzel family heirlooms*



Indian Creek Nature Center is a place where people connect with the wonders of the natural world. It is a space for learning, inspiration, solitude, and relaxation amid the beauty of Iowa's natural landscapes. In 2016, ICNC opened Amazing Space, one of the only net-zero energy buildings in Iowa and the first project in Iowa on track to achieve Living Building Challenge certification. ICNC welcomes more than 80,000 visitors each year.



# Indian Creek Nature Center

## Vision

At Indian Creek Nature Center, we create champions of nature. What does this mean? We connect people to nature as early and as frequently as possible to encourage understanding and passion for the natural world. Connecting children to nature is important because people who are passionate about nature as children will grow into adults who work to protect it. They will become the next generation of environmental stewards.

## Mission

Indian Creek Nature Center, Iowa's only nonprofit nature center, serves children and adults alike. The Nature Center's purpose is to promote a sustainable future by nurturing individuals through environmental education, providing leadership in land protection and restoration, and encouraging responsible interaction with nature.

The Nature Center fulfills its mission by:

- ▶ sharing the land's historic and cultural resources
- ▶ demonstrating land preservation and ecological restoration
- ▶ promoting a sustainable future with sound management practices
- ▶ promoting environmental awareness and respect through education





# Leveraging Proven Agricultural Practices to Save our Wetlands and Woodlands

Restorative agriculture and permaculture systems are the answer to reversing practices that led to the catastrophic loss of critical resources that threaten our wetlands, woodlands, and communities. The solution to this problem is complex, but it starts with people and organizations working together to restore the health and integrity of our farms, watersheds, and environment.

Agriculture draws resources from the earth. Nutrients and water are absorbed by plants in one location and transported hundreds of miles before being used as food for people, as food for livestock, and increasingly as non-food products such as ethanol. The original location is depleted of its nutrients. Aquifers run dry. Our populations degrade the environment. Restorative agriculture attempts to solve this challenge by shifting to an agriculture system that restores the environment while maintaining productive and profitable yields.

Permaculture is an agriculture system that merges human activity with the natural surroundings to create efficient, self-sustaining ecosystems. This integration is the core of restorative agriculture. Permaculture designs focus on effectively reusing energy and resources as much as possible before they leave the system. Rather than solely pulling resources from the earth, as current agricultural does, the flow system of a permaculture farm transfers energy from one element to another, and ultimately back into the ground.



## Loss of Critical Resources, Increasing Demand

- ▶ Iowa has lost 99.9% of its original virgin prairie with less than 3,000 acres of protected virgin prairie remaining.
- ▶ In the past 100 years half of Iowa's topsoil has eroded away, leaving only six feet on average.
- ▶ Our environment is adversely impacted by a growing number of invasive species, which create unhealthy ecosystems. Declining populations of a number of species, including the monarch butterfly and the grass pickerel fish, are a result.
- ▶ The world's population is expected to reach 9.7 billion people by 2050. This represents an increase of over 7.2 billion people in just 100 years.



*Bec Hellouin Permaculture Farm, Normandy, France. This farm uses innovative, productive methods yielding more than 100 baskets of fruits and vegetables a week on only 400 square meters of land.*





“What is needed are ecosystems that are designed to produce our food, fuel, animal feed, medicine, and fibers, and ecosystems that can do so without the use of fossil fuel technology, those that can tolerate extremes of weather and potentially changing climates, and that can thrive without supplemental irrigation from vulnerable and increasingly expensive public utilities.”

Mark Shepard,  
*Restoration  
Agriculture: Real-World  
Permaculture for  
Farmers*

## Permaculture's benefits include:

- ▶ Protecting soil, animals, crops, and homes from extreme weather
- ▶ Improving water quality
- ▶ Producing valuable goods for market
- ▶ Producing products like food, fiber, bioenergy, wood, floral and medicinal/botanical products, and more
- ▶ Improving pollinator habitat
- ▶ Using living snow fences to trap snow and prevent it from blocking roads
- ▶ Providing habitat for wildlife, and creating corridors for their travel
- ▶ Sequestering carbon and other greenhouse gases
- ▶ Creating beautiful places

## Organic Certification

As a first step toward permaculture farming, ICNC will implement organic practices with both livestock and crops. USDA organic certification includes practices that enhance soil fertility, promote ecological balance, and conserve biodiversity. Common organic practices include: crop rotation; selection of hardy, non-GMO stock; and the management of pests, weeds, and diseases in a natural manner.

In 2018, ICNC will begin the organic certification process by planting prairie buffer strips surrounding an eight-acre field on the west side of the farm. This field will be the primary area for crops and must be chemical-free for a minimum of three years before being certified organic. We will plant a variety of species that are synergistic for permaculture, including different types of trees, bushes, perennials, and annual crops. ICNC will partner with grocery stores and restaurants throughout Eastern Iowa to distribute the produce in coming years.



*Aerial shot of Etzel Sugar Grove Farm.*



# The Vision for Etzel Sugar Grove Farm

*The purpose of Etzel Sugar Grove Farm is to establish sustainable, economically viable permaculture farming practices and create champions of nature through education and replication of these practices.*

As champions of nature and a local, state and regional leader in environmental sustainability, ICNC is uniquely suited to this challenge. Most importantly, the organization is compelled to act before it is too late.

Since ICNC's inception in 1973 it has been a leader in sustainability, solar energy, water management, and environmentally responsible operations. The organization's history of innovating new practices, addressing community needs, initiating educational programs and implementing environmentally sustainable actions have established it as a trusted resource in the community. The successful completion of Amazing Space, which has achieved net-zero energy status and is on track to achieve Living Building Challenge certification, has cemented the organization's role as a leader in environmental and operational sustainability.

More recently, ICNC has focused on two areas in Iowa that vastly impact sustainability and environmental responsibility: agriculture and food sourcing. ICNC's strategic plan formalizes the organization's commitment to allocate time, energy and resources to deliver on its stated purpose for Etzel Sugar Grove Farm.

## Let's Grow. Together.

Permaculture techniques are uncommon and often underutilized in conventional farming. In order for them to become widespread practices, we need to demonstrate their economic viability. Transitions to new crops, new methods, and new machines can be economically challenging, and if poorly implemented, financially devastating. Leaning on its history of innovation and commitment to sustainability, ICNC will join the agriculture community as an early adopter. Working with farmers who are the main caretakers of the land, ICNC will lead the conversation about how permaculture can become a mainstay for Iowa's working farms. Our goal is to develop a sustainable, replicable model and share that knowledge with the community. Etzel Sugar Grove Farm will serve as the necessary educational incubator, in order to promote the change we wish to model in our communities.

In the past few decades, farmers are increasingly integrating sustainable techniques, such as low-till cultivation, into existing farm operations. The time is right to collaborate with them to create ways in which restorative agriculture becomes the foundation of the farm itself. As an organization, ICNC will leverage valued partnerships to usher in a new era of ecological sustainability.



Founded in 1976 and based in Norway, Iowa, Frontier Co-op™ offers a full line of products for natural living under its Frontier Co-op, Simply Organic® and Aura Cacia® brands. ICNC is proud to partner with Frontier Co-op, a company operating with a responsibility to people and planet.

Each year, Frontier Co-op gives back 4% of its pre-tax profits to causes and organizations around the world that inspire wellness in communities where its products are produced. The co-op has committed the lead gift of \$150,000 to the seed campaign for Etzel Sugar Grove Farm.

## Tony Bedard, CEO, Frontier Co-op

*"At Frontier Co-op, we've always believed that we have a responsibility to people and planet. We care deeply about our impact on the world and have always tried to operate in a way that reflects this, not only because it's the right thing to do, but because we believe it's just good business."*

*"When Indian Creek Nature Center approached us about a partnership, we were truly honored. It's not often that you're presented with an opportunity to transform the way our community views such important issues as organic agriculture and environmental sustainability. We've chosen to partner with ICNC in their efforts at Etzel Sugar Grove Farm because we know they share our core principals."*

*"We believe in their ability to educate and lead our community forward, and in doing so, we hope to further fulfill our own purpose: to inspire wellness in the communities we serve."*





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