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March - April 2026

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- ▶ **Safety Feature: Be Aware of Toxic Gas Exposure** *(page 26)*

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The ILICA News



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PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE



Many of you know that a few years ago we struck an Ameren 6” high pressure gas line with our BRON tile plow at the University of Illinois’ south farm. Fortunately, we were running parallel to the gas line in freshly tilled ground, which caused the plow’s tracks to slip when engaging the pipe. Our plow shank got under the gas line and

lifted it two feet, mere inches shy of potentially rupturing it.

Within minutes of the near catastrophe, dozens of Ameren and USIC personnel converged on the location, including Ameren’s head of Damage Prevention, Vice President David Smith. The USIC employee, who mismarked the gas line by 13 feet and assumed that there was going to be a “Watch and Protect” person there when we dug, was terminated on the spot. David Smith and I became quite close in the weeks and months following the incident, mostly from him calling me with questions on how to improve the rural utility locating process.

A year later, another Illinois LICA drainage contractor, Mark Shortz, had a similar experience when USIC failed to mark an Ameren 8” high pressure gas line in a field east of Peoria. While pre-ripping the ground with their Inter-Drain plow, they struck the gas line; however, the plow tip was below the line and did not puncture it. If they had not discovered the gas line while pre-ripping, they certainly would have severed the line with their trencher. This would have resulted in a loss of life similar to the pipeline strike near Dixon, Illinois.

Mark contacted our Executive Director Ryan, who in turn contacted me, prompting me to resume the dialogue with David Smith. The imminent need to bring together those with the ability to bring about the much-needed change in rural utility locates was evident. Illinois LICA has had a decades-long relationship with J.U.L.I.E., and their Executive Director, Mark Frost. Later that year at our annual convention, we facilitated that meeting, and it began with Mark Shortz giving a

heart-felt presentation of how that nearly fatal mistake impacted him and the lives of his crew.

That meeting two years ago initiated the change that has now come to fruition. The much-needed improvements to rural utility locates were launched this year by J.U.L.I.E., and Ameren has eliminated USIC as their contract locator. Individually, none of this would have been possible, but, collectively, we as the Illinois Land Improvement Contactors Association were able to make substantial improvements!

Whether it be the American Legion, Rotary, Lions Club, Illinois ILICA, etc., 20% of the members in an association do 80% of the work, and 80% of their members do 20% of the work. If you’re part of Illinois LICA’s 80%, I encourage you to become more involved this year. Contact me at 217-433-1302 or Ryan and Michelle at the office to see where you can contribute, you’ll never know where it might take you.

“To improve is to change; to be perfect is to change often.” - Winston Churchill

Jon Seevers

BOARD & MEMBERS’ MEETING SCHEDULE

Unless changed by the Board during the year, the ILICA business meetings are scheduled as follows:

March 14, 2026 - Regular Meeting of the Board:
Virtual & IP - ILICA Office, Galva

May 2, 2026 - Regular Meeting of the Board:
Virtual & IP - ILICA Office, Galva

Exact location, meeting times & other details will be published in the ILICA News and sent to members via mail and/or email.

2026 BOARD / MEMBERS’ MTG. ATTENDANCE						
	A = absent	P = present			C = cancelled meeting	
Area / Director	Jan	March	May	July	Sep	Nov
Pres: Jon Seevers	P					
VP: Tyler Seals	P					
1st VP: LaVerne Weber	P					
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Area 1 - LaVerne Weber	P					
Area 2 - Steve Anderson	P					
Area 2 - Stuart Anderson	P					
Area 3 - Grant Curtis	A					
Area 3 - Joe Streitmatter	P					
Area 4 - David Kennedy	P					
Area 4 - Lee Bunting	P					
Area 5 - Rick Maguire	P					
Area 6 - Scott Day	P					
Area 6 - Bill Dean	P					
Area 8 - Tom Beyers	A					
Area 8 - Tyler Seals	P					
Associate Director: Amber Bosma	P					

NEW MEMBERS

Contractors

Nathan Mast**Okaw Valley Excavating**

412 E CR 370 N

Arthur, IL 61911

Ph: 217-246-5728

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7225 Twp Rd 625E

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Website: nrelandsolutions.com

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9034 E 1600 North Rd

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Email: amjake8@gmail.com

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45W826 Rohrsen Rd

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Email: info@dietzdrainage.com

Website: dietzdrainage.com

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Ph: 309-397-2037

Email: dbrooks.jr@yahoo.com

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Greg Greco

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Ph: 319-234-5723

Email: greg@grecofinancial.com

Website: grecofinancial.com

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EPA GUIDANCE EASES RIGHT TO REPAIR PROHIBITION

The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) issued guidance this week allowing farmers and repair shops to temporarily override emission control systems for repair purposes. The guidance says procedures and tools to temporarily take products "out of certified configuration as necessary to perform maintenance and repair" are not prohibited under the Clean Air Act. While the guidance follows existing language under Clean Air Act regulations, it represents the Trump administration's foray into a debate over "right to repair" concerns of the farm community.

EPA issued a press release that asserts "for years, prominent equipment manufacturers have interpreted the CAA's emission control anti-tampering provisions as preventing them from making essential repair tools available to all Americans." This, in turn, has "forced farmers to take their equipment exclusively to manufacturer-authorized dealers to be fixed, even though the repair could have been made in the field or at a nearby independent repair shop."



"Not only has this made repairs more costly, but it has also caused many farmers to opt for older agricultural equipment that lack modern emission controls simply because they can fix that equipment themselves," the release says.

Agripulse reports that the new guidance was issued in response to a letter sent by farm equipment manufacturer John Deere to EPA last June, seeking approval "to allow customers and independent repair technicians access to the previously-restricted capability of inducement override" as the company develops future service solutions. Deere has rolled out for-purchase tools intended to help accommodate some third-party access to equipment.

The new guidance, according to the release, states that "temporary overrides of emission control systems are allowed when it is for the 'purpose of repair' to that equipment to obtain proper functionality." It applies to all nonroad diesel engines equipped with advanced emission control technologies.

2026 ILLINOIS LICA HONOR ROLL

Thank You for Your Continued Dedication to Illinois LICA & the Conservation Legacy We Build Together!

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Marvin Baer - Baer Tiling Services

Bryan Johnston - Johnston Land Improvement, Inc.

30 YEARS

Gary Elliott - Elliott Subsurface Drainage

25 YEARS

R. Henry Habbe III - R. Henry Habbe Excavating

Joe Krupps

20 YEARS

Chad & Myra Hare - Hare Excavating

15 YEARS

John Andermann - Antrex, Inc.

Dave Ballegeer - Ballegeer Excavating

Dan Beyers

Jason Beyers

Darrin Fogle - Blue Springs, Inc.

Carl Kaufman - Tazewell County Asphalt Co.

Howard Ludwig, Jr. - Country Landscape & Supply

Mark McCoy - L.R.M. Land Improvement

Jarrold Miller - Miller Trucking & Excavating

Mike Wagner - M & M Ag, Inc.

Hobart Wielgus - Wielgus Drainage & Construction

Dan Wilkinson - Precision Farm Drainage

10 YEARS

Scott Bragg - Scott Bragg Bulldozing & Excavating

Michael & Jason Gill - Gill Excavating, LLC

Joshua Glendenning - Soil Werx, LLC

William King - KB & E II, Inc.

Daniel Kuberski - B & H Trenching & Tiling

Greg Munie - Munie Trenching & Excavating, Inc.

Joel Ritchie - Ritchie, Inc.

Alan Steidinger - Double S Tiling



5 YEARS

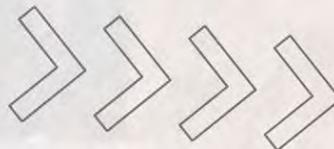
Matthew Decap - Phoenix Corporation of the Quad Cities

Michael Ellis - Ellis Excavating, Inc.

Ben Hayen - Hayen Land Improvement

Harold Pognant - MK Farm Drainage Specialists, LLC

Kevin Windish - AKW Excavating, Inc.



To Promote, Perpetuate, and Improve the Proper Use of Our Renewable Natural Resources for the Benefit of All



ILICA Ladies' Page

4 Cut Flower Garden Designs

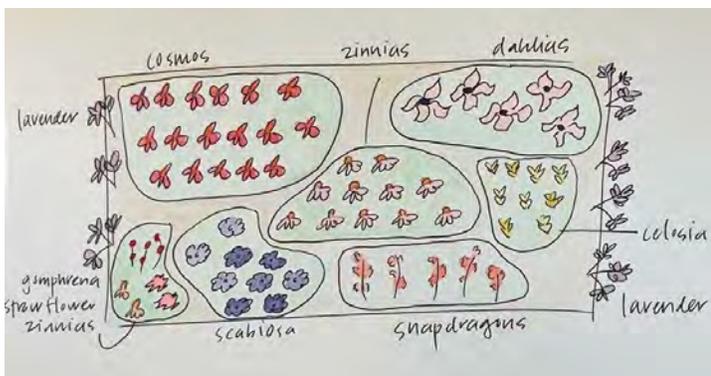
Garden #1: Cut Flower Garden with Annuals

I've always grown flowers for the value they add to our green landscape. I love the way a group of hostas can accentuate a curved raised garden bed or the way Irish moss softens the corners of a limestone path through the yard. I never considered growing flowers for harvesting until three years ago, when I grew interested in designing my own flower bouquets.

It took a lot of practice to get comfortable with cutting flowers instead of leaving them on the stem for visual interest in the gardens. But designing my own bouquets brought me so much joy that I now have a dedicated cut flower garden nestled between two larger growing areas in my backyard.

We designed the cut flower garden (a rectangle raised bed measuring 12 feet by 4 feet) for functional purposes and placed it in the sunniest part of the yard. Electing to go with a straightforward rectangular shape meant I could access flowers, even in the middle of the bed, with ease.

In my first year of the cut flower garden, I arranged indoor-sown flower starts in rows running the width of the bed; each row was arranged by flower variety. When accounting for spacing, this allowed me to plant many flower varieties. I placed cosmos on the edge of the raised bed, but they grew so tall they shaded snapdragons growing beneath them. Now I grow tall flowers, including dahlias, along the back of the bed and I grow smaller varieties, such as snapdragons, near the front of the garden.



I try to plant flowers in orderly rows, but as time passes and flowers grow, the rows transform into organized clumps. I save a small corner of the garden for leftover flowers that won't fit in any other area of my yard. In this watercolor sketch, you'll notice one corner holds space for overflow zinnias, strawflowers, and gromphrena. Lavender grows as a border on two sides of the garden and is the only perennial plant growing in the garden bed.

Most of the cut flowers that I grow in this garden bed are ones you'd expect to find in a bouquet, such as zinnias, scabiosa, strawflower, snapdragons, cosmos, dahlias and gomphrena. But

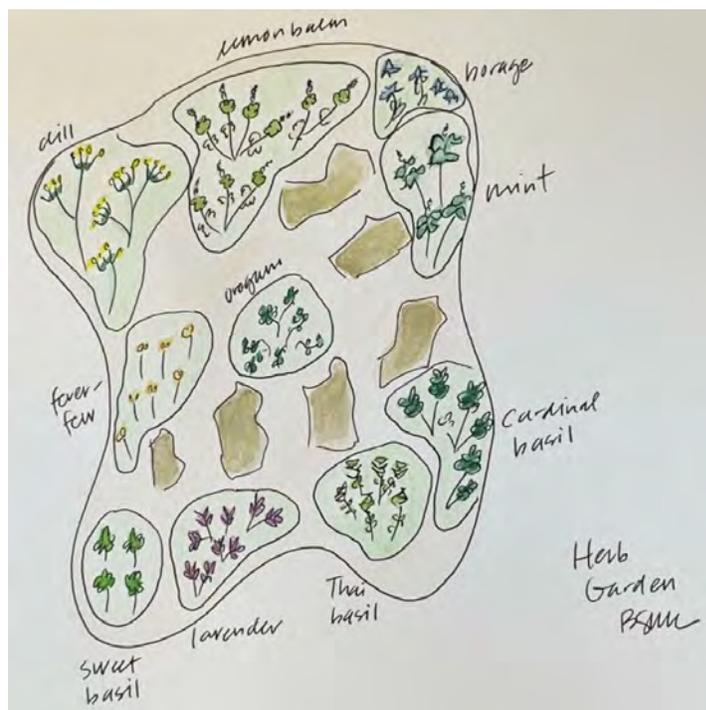
I love exploring the design potential of herbs, native plants and vines when building bouquets, too. The next three cut flower garden designs take an expanded look at how to create cut flower gardens using less traditional plants.

Garden #2: Herb Cut Flower Garden

If you've seen any flower bouquets I've made in the last two years, you'll know that I find great joy in designing arrangements using herbs as a filler. Not only do herbs provide significant coverage in arrangements, but they also add complex scents that can amplify both the color and fragrance of other flowers in the design.

One of my favorite herbs to harvest for design projects is oregano. It's hardy, fragrant and easily pairs with annuals like zinnias and cosmos. Herb flowers also make a stunning bouquet all on their own. My go-to herb to arrange as a single bouquet is dill because its flowers, yellow and delicate, pop when placed in rustic containers with gray tones or in an all white bud vase. Those blossoms smell like quintessential summer to me.

Currently, I grow herbs across several raised garden beds, but if I were to design a standalone herb cut flower garden, it might look like this:



Again, organizing an herb cut flower garden with intentional paths cut through the space provides access to flowers while also creating an aesthetically robust layout for maintaining plants. A mixture of both perennial and annual herbs ensures a constant stream of flowers (and scents!) from May to October. Annual herbs included in this design: lemon Thai basil, Thai basil, cardinal basil and sweet basil.

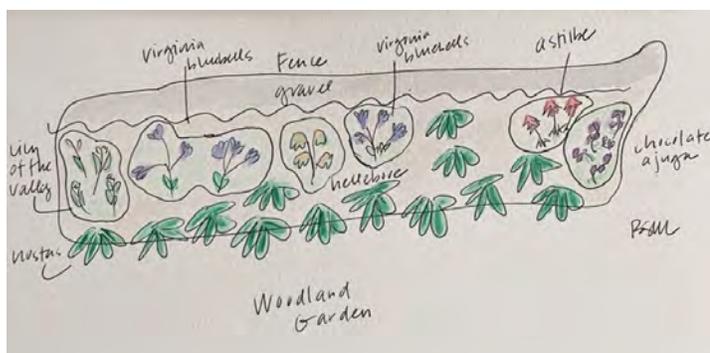
Perennial herbs included in this design: borage, feverfew,

oregano, lemon balm, dill, lavender and mint. Many perennial herbs spread vigorously over time, but both mint and borage grow especially forcefully if not tended properly. I don't mind cutting back or removing rogue borage and mint plants, but some gardeners may find this a tedious garden chore.

Garden #3: Woodland Cut Flower Garden

Once the traditional cut flower bed was established and I gained confidence arranging flowers instead of keeping them permanently in the landscape, I turned my attention to a low strip of the backyard that sits adjacent to a cedar fence beneath two shady trees. This area remained untouched over the years and often acted as a catch-all for yard-related equipment, like firewood or the wheelbarrow.

Around the time I decided to add a cut flower garden raised bed, I also opted to transform this unused area into a woodland garden as a way to extend the patch of nearby hostas and to create a focal point that draws the eye across our yard. The area does not have great soil and gets over six hours of shade, so selecting plants to grow in the woodland garden needed to be intentional. Fortunately, we added gray landscape rock years ago from a different project and it now functions as a slim walking path along the fence, giving us access to the furthest portion of our yard.



The garden is only two years old, but I have already harvested flowers from this area that add depth and value to bouquets. When I am looking for delicate or airy blossoms I turn to the woodland garden because these plants create small blooms that pair well with showy flowers. This past spring I arranged a colorful triptych of three white bud vases filled with bright purple ajuga blossoms. What a treat it was to display these flowers indoors when the yard still held muted brown and gray tones.

Unlike cut-and-come annuals, such as zinnias, perennials growing in the woodland garden do not regenerate throughout the summer. When I harvest blossoms, I have a clear design purpose in mind. To offset the lack of blossoms in late summer, I elevate indoor houseplants, such as pothos, on thick wooden discs throughout the area, where they receive dappled light throughout the day. Incorporating houseplants and vining flowers adds an unexpected visual complexity to flower arrangements. I also love giving houseplants a good trim and then putting cuttings to good use in a bouquet!

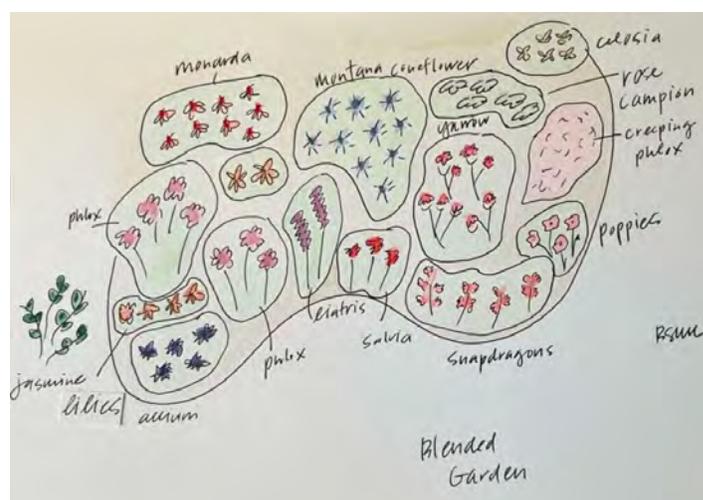
Flowers in the woodland garden currently include spring blossoms such as lily of the valley, Virginia bluebells, hellebore and forget-me-nots, as well as flowers that bloom midsummer,

like astilbe and a variety of hostas. I planted chocolate ajuga as a groundcover in select locations throughout the shady area.

Garden #4: Blended (Native & Non-Native) Cut Flower Garden

Recently, I transformed an existing garden bed full of perennial cultivars into a blended mix of flowers for both cutting and for landscape design. I've accumulated several perennial plants that anchor the growing area by adding distinct height or deep color to the space, such as assorted Asian lilies, monarda, columbine, Montana coneflower and yarrow.

For years, I kept the flowers in the garden, choosing to enjoy their beauty while sitting on the patio. But one day I decided to add a pale peach cluster of lilies to a bouquet that needed more pizzazz, and suddenly I looked at the garden bed in a whole new way. What once was a landscape-only flower bed became an opportunity for cut flower cultivation too.



Another distinguishing feature of this garden bed includes two large potted containers, which both include flowers I use in bouquets. On one end of the garden, I placed a vibrant star jasmine plant; the plant stays indoors during the winter but thrives outdoors in summer months. The curly tendrils are fun (and fragrant) to design with, especially if I'm trying to create a sense of width in an arrangement.

On the other side of the garden sits a twenty-inch oversized terracotta pot filled with assorted annuals, such as canna lilies, sweet potato vine and petunias. I added indoor-sown celosia starts to the container, too, because I ran out of room to plant them in any of the other garden beds. In order to keep the celosia from visually overpowering the canna lilies, I routinely harvest blossoms and add them to bud vases or layer them into larger flower arrangements.

I grow assorted allium (including globe allium), liatris, monarda and creeping phlox in this garden, but they function as pollinator magnets and garden filler throughout the summer—I usually do not harvest these blossoms.

Virtual **SEPTIC TRAINING**



ILLICA.NET/EVENTS

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NRCS / ILICA

TECHNICAL MEETING

April 2, 2026 | 9:30 AM



Share your questions, concerns, or ideas on conservation practices, cost-share, staffing, etc.

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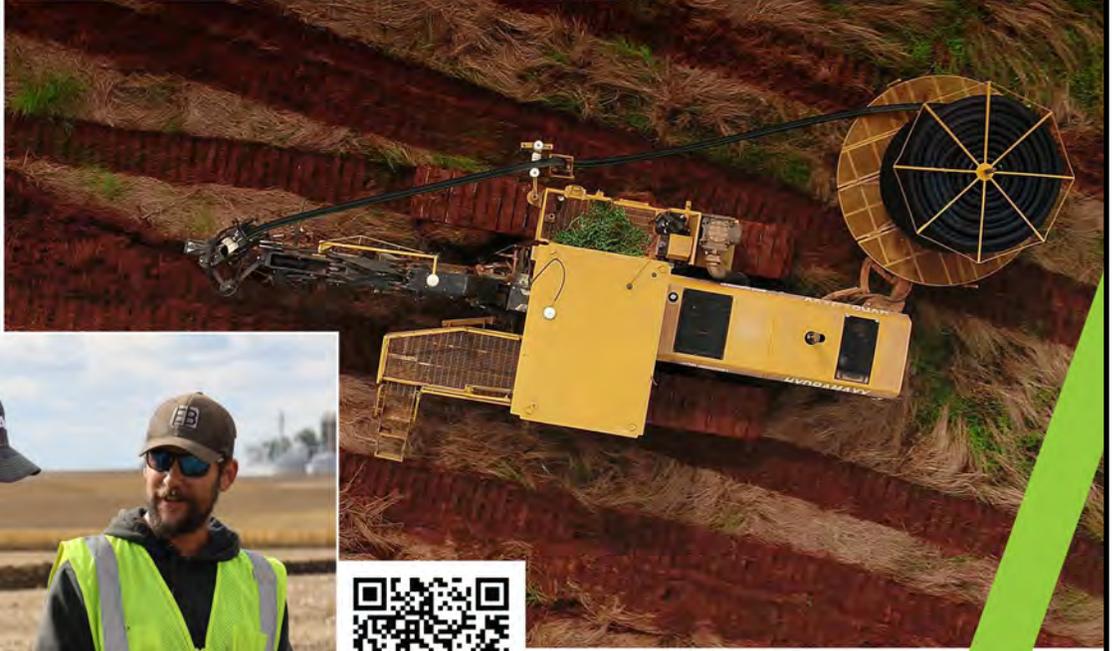
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ILICA ANNUAL CONVENTION ALL GOOD VIBES

Maybe it was the location; maybe it was the venue; maybe it was the food; maybe it was the trade show floor with adequate space for vendors; maybe it was the sub-zero temperatures driving folks indoors; maybe it was the new faces; maybe it was the old faces; maybe it was the dueling pianos; maybe it was the new convention app.; maybe it was a magical combination thereof. Whatever IT was, the 2026 ILICA Annual Convention held in Bloomington, IL on Jan. 21-23 was one of the most well-received conferences in recent memory. Feedback from members was overwhelmingly positive and complimentary with many comments shared about a noticeable air in the room of acceptance, camaraderie, and optimism. A convention resulting in only good vibes from members is both favorable and commendable for the Convention Committee! It also serves as a challenge...they need to make sure they bring IT back for next year, to guarantee similar results.

Ease of accessibility and a full exhibit hall capable of accommodating over 40 vendor booths and seating for up to 180 were just a couple of changes to this year's event that were immediately noticeable and in stark contrast to last year's event. Paired with an evening of dueling pianos and a new

convention app, designed to keep members updated about the event in digital form with push notifications and options to share their photos, this year's Annual Convention offered members a new level of event engagement never before offered in the past.

Extreme cold during the week helped drive walk-in attendance pushing numbers around the 140 mark. The tours, education sessions, awards banquet, hospitality rooms, and dueling pianos all proved to be a hit with members. And though the current economy did seem to impact sponsorship levels to a certain degree this year, it was still generally strong thanks to our regular and supportive Associates. Speaking of regulars, auctioneer Dean Hild from Morton, IL took the stage after the banquet once again for Illinois LICA and, with the help of numerous and generous donors and bidders, raised over \$10,700 at the live auction for the Illinois LICA scholarship! (See application on page 21.)

Thank you to our Convention Committee, event sponsors, exhibitors, speakers, and everyone that showed up to support the 2026 Illinois LICA Annual Convention!



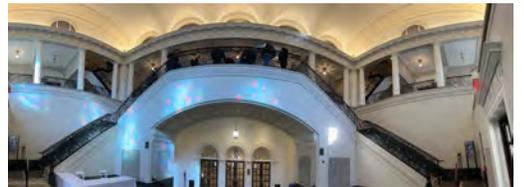
See more photos @

<https://www.ilica.net/state-conventions/2026-convention>



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2025 ILICA AWARD RECIPIENTS

Each year during the Annual Convention, Illinois LICA proudly recognizes the members and partners whose dedication, leadership, and service strengthen our Association and advance the land improvement industry. These awards honor individuals who embody the values that have defined Illinois LICA for nearly 70 years with commitment to conservation, support for fellow contractors, and a willingness to give their time, expertise, and energy for the good of the Association. Their contributions not only elevate our organization but also reinforce the strong sense of community and shared purpose that makes Illinois LICA exceptional. Based on membership nominations, we honor the following outstanding award recipients.

Merit Awards

Illinois LICA is proud to recognize Roger Watwood of JULIE with a 2025 Merit Award for his outstanding partnership and commitment to safe excavation practices across Illinois. Roger has long been a reliable and engaged supporter of our association, contributing through trainings, safety days, conferences, field demonstrations, and ongoing advocacy.



Merit Award:

Lori & David Kennedy being recognized by Veronica Seevers (left) during the awards banquet

Illinois LICA is pleased to honor David and Lori Kennedy with a 2025 Merit Award for their steady involvement, hospitality, and long-standing support of the association. Known for their willingness to step up whenever needed, the Kennedys contribute through leadership roles, committee work, and hands-on assistance at events.

Most recently, they opened their shop to host a membership drive in Area 4, welcoming members and guests while promoting shop safety and the value of ILICA membership. Their generosity, reliability, and commitment to strengthening our community have made them invaluable to the association. Illinois LICA proudly recognizes David and Lori Kennedy for their ongoing dedication and service.

Innovator Award

Illinois LICA is proud to honor Charlie Schafer as the 2025 Innovator Award Recipient.

Starting in 1976 with a small trenching business in Iowa, Charlie helped transform the industry, first by manufacturing the products contractors needed, then by building one of the most influential drainage product companies in North America, Agri Drain Corporation.

His patented systems for managing water, reducing nutrient loss, and improving water quality are now used across the U.S. and internationally. Beyond his inventions, Charlie has been a driving force in scaling up conservation practices through his leadership in LICA, ADMC, NACD, and partnerships with federal and state agencies.

In 2010, he expanded his impact again by founding Ecosystem



Merit Award:

Roger Watwood (second from left) receives congratulations from JULIE colleagues Kevin & Amy Chmura and Brian MacKenzie

His practical expertise, approachable leadership, and dedication to educating contractors have strengthened the relationship between JULIE and Illinois LICA and ensured our members stay informed on best practices and regulatory updates. Roger's consistent involvement reflects both his professional excellence and his personal commitment to our mission, and we are honored to recognize him for his meaningful contributions and continued support.

2025 ILICA AWARD RECIPIENTS (CONT.)



Innovator Award:
Charlie Schafer

Services Exchange, a company dedicated to technical assistance and conservation system design, bringing his vision for healthier water and more profitable farms full circle.

A member, leader, and nationally recognized conservation champion, Charlie has earned numerous honors, including the NACD Friend of Conservation Award, Ducks Unlimited's Conservation Excellence Award, the NASDA Public-Private Partnership

Award, and induction into the International Drainage Hall of Fame. Illinois LICA is honored to recognize Charlie's lifelong commitment to the stewardship and future of conservation drainage.

Mr. Contractor Award

Illinois LICA is proud to recognize Tyler Seals with Kieffer Bros. Construction Co. as our 2025 Mr. Contractor. Tyler continues to strengthen his company's long-standing reputation through hands-on leadership, deep industry involvement, and exceptional community service.

Since taking over operations in 2021, Tyler has led the farm drainage division of his family's company which was founded in 1947 and is now a full-scale construction firm employing more than 50 people. He manages and maintains an extensive fleet of drainage and construction equipment while overseeing projects that span farm drainage, earthwork, concrete construction, municipal infrastructure, water systems, and more.

Tyler's impact extends far beyond the jobsite. He works closely with his local SWCD and NRCS offices on drainage programs and water management system design, helping landowners access the most beneficial conservation resources. His community involvement is equally impressive supporting the Chamber of

Commerce, local festivals, fundraisers, youth outdoor education, FFA, 4-H, and multiple Farm Bureau programs. His service has earned him repeated recognition in local and statewide publications.

Since becoming an official Illinois LICA member in 2022, Tyler has been one of the association's most active leaders. He attends nearly every meeting, workshop, and event; volunteers at the Farm Progress Show; and serves on multiple committees, including Convention, Executive, Legislative, and Nomination. He also chairs both the Budget and Safety Committees and currently serves as Illinois LICA's Vice President, demonstrating a level of commitment and leadership that continues to elevate our association.

Leadership Award

Illinois LICA is proud to present the 2025 Leadership Award to LaVerne Weber with Grade Solutions LLC, a member whose dedication, professionalism, and commitment to advancing the industry exemplify the very definition of leadership.

Nominees for this award are evaluated on their loyalty to the Association, their willingness to share knowledge, and their representation of the construction industry with integrity. LaVerne embodies each of these qualities and has demonstrated exceptional leadership throughout his three years of membership.

He has served Illinois LICA through key roles including the Budget and Executive Committees, the Board of Directors, and as First Vice President, while contributing meaningfully to numerous other committee efforts. His leadership has already been recognized with the 2023 Innovator Award and the 2024

(Cont. page 16)



Mr. Contractor Award:
Tyler Seals (right) receives congratulations from Awards Committee member, Bill Dean



Leadership Award:
LaVerne & Susan Weber

2025 ILICA AWARD RECIPIENTS (CONT.)

Shiny Shovel Award.

Beyond Illinois LICA, LaVerne is a respected leader in the drainage industry. He actively participates in local, national, and international outreach focused on conservation drainage and subsurface irrigation. His expertise is shared widely through field days, panels, presentations, podcasts, webinars, and published articles, helping connect contractors, landowners, and conservation partners across the industry by leaving a lasting impact on how conservation drainage is understood and practiced.

Shiny Shovel Award

Illinois LICA is proud to recognize Joe Streitmatter, Streitmatter Land Improvement, with the 2025 Shiny Shovel Award. This award honors members and partners who consistently support the Association throughout the year financially, physically, and through ongoing promotion of ILICA's mission. These are the individuals whose "shovels never have time to rust," because they are always engaged, always contributing, and always showing up.

In 2025, Illinois LICA hosted an exceptionally active slate of events, including business meetings, golf outings, trap shoots, workshops, webinars, field demonstrations, partner meetings, and our annual meeting. Providing support across so many activities is a remarkable commitment for any volunteer, and Joe has done exactly that.

Joe has devoted his time, resources, and hands-on help to numerous ILICA events and initiatives this year, demonstrating unwavering dedication to the Association and its members. His steady presence and willingness to contribute wherever needed make him an invaluable part of our organization and the ideal embodiment of what the Shiny Shovel Award represents.



Shiny Shovel Award:
Joe & Jackie Streitmatter

Associate of the Year

Illinois LICA has long been strengthened by members whose dedication, loyalty, and generosity extend far beyond their professional lives. This spirit of service and fellowship, more like a family than an association, continues to define who we are today and is reflected in the Associate of the Year Award, which honors those who support ILICA's mission, participate actively in chapter and area events, and contribute meaningfully to membership development.

This year's recipient has been a steadfast supporter of Illinois LICA for more than two decades. Their relationship with the Association began during a challenging chapter in our history when they immediately stepped forward, working with the Springfield police department and state's attorney, to advocate for ILICA when it mattered most. From that moment on, Courson & Associates have stood firmly beside us.

Their team continues to guide and educate our members with unmatched industry expertise, helping keep contractors compliant, informed, and profitable. Beyond their professional support, they consistently sponsor, participate in, and uplift ILICA events and activities year after year.

Always ready to answer the call and share their knowledge and representing the commitment and partnership that make our Association strong, Illinois LICA is proud to recognize Courson & Associates as the 2025 Associate of the Year.



Associate of the Year Award:
Courson & Associates: Zoey Yang, Maddison Lynn, Kaylee Collinson, Dustin Courson, Kelly Hix, Ziyang Li

Most Active New Member

The Most Active New Member Award recognizes new Illinois LICA members who immediately immerse themselves in the life of the Association contributing their time, energy, and expertise during their very first year of membership. Recipients must demonstrate consistent engagement and meaningful

2025 ILICA AWARD RECIPIENTS (CONT.)

support for ILICA events, initiatives, and activities throughout the award year.

This year’s honoree did exactly that. Jody Kabat with Burnin’ Daylight Outdoors embraced Illinois LICA from the moment he joined in 2025, attending convention, participating in both in-person and virtual workshops, and volunteering at the ILICA booth during the Farm Progress Show, all within his first 12 months. He also jumped in quickly with the Show Committee, offering insight and assistance on our Rend Lake RCPP projects in his area.

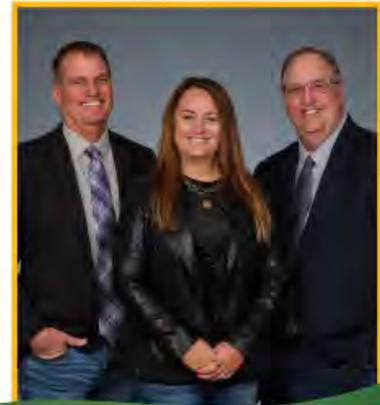
With a strong background in agriculture, engineering, conservation, and land improvement contracting, Jody has already shown that he fits seamlessly into the ILICA

community. His enthusiasm, professionalism, and willingness to contribute make him an exciting new member of the Association, and we look forward to watching his involvement grow alongside the expansion of his company.

As we celebrate this year’s award recipients, we extend our sincere gratitude to all members, partners, and supporters who continue to invest in Illinois LICA’s mission. Your leadership, involvement, and passion ensure that our Association remains strong, forward-thinking, and deeply connected to the contractors and communities we serve. Together, we honor the legacy of those who built Illinois LICA and look ahead with confidence to the continued growth and success of our industry.

Insurance Program Update

We’re continuing to make progress on the State LICA Insurance Program as we plan for 2026 and beyond. While UFG has discontinued its State LICA Program, efforts are underway to ensure members continue to have strong insurance options. Prins Insurance has been actively working with new carriers, and we’re pleased to share that Grinnell Mutual is now writing coverage for dirt movers in several of our states. Although this is not yet a formal program, policies are already being placed and have proven competitive. Grinnell Mutual offers comprehensive coverage, including additional protections such as pollution liability and contractors’ errors and omissions. Work is ongoing to expand availability into more states, with the goal of developing a more complete program by mid-year.



Grinnell Mutual is proud to support the State LICA Associations. We are actively collaborating with Prins Insurance to develop a program tailored to LICA members’ insurance needs, with a target launch in mid-year 2026. Grinnell Mutual is an industry leader. Founded in 1909, Grinnell Mutual is the 114th-largest property-casualty insurer in the U.S. and the largest

primary reinsurer of farm mutual companies in North America.



For more than 30 years, Prins Insurance Inc. has proudly partnered with State LICA Chapters. Founded in 1936, we specialize in protecting businesses in the Construction, Transportation, and Agricultural industries—delivering stability you can count on and we are excited to continue that relationship.



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Call the ILICA office for details: 309-932-1230

NATIONAL LICA SCHOLARSHIP APPLICATION

Every year, National LICA awards scholarships to support students in their pursuit of higher education. LICA encourages students to fulfill their dreams of entering into the career of their choice.

To be eligible, applicants must be related to an active LICA Contractor member. This includes members themselves, spouses, children or grandchildren. To apply, complete the

application **no later than March 15, 2026** and return to:

National LICA, 3080 Ogden Ave., Ste 107, Lisle, IL 60532

Applications can also be downloaded online at: <https://www.licanational.com/wp-content/uploads/pdf-uploads/2026/02/ScholarshipApplication.pdf>

Land Improvement Contractors of America Scholarship Application

3080 Ogden Ave., Suite 107, Lisle, IL 60532
630-548-1984 | Ckrug@licanational.org



Name: _____ Age: _____

Address: _____

City/State/Zip: _____

Phone: _____ Email: _____

Educational institution currently attending: _____

Present year in school: _____ Major course of study: _____

List courses you are taking or planning to take: _____

Parent or Guardian: _____

Address: _____

City/State/Zip: _____

Occupation(s) of parent(s) or guardian(s): _____

Name of current, active LICA contractor member: _____

Relationship to active LICA contractor member: _____

Instructions:

- 1) Write an essay (300 words or less) describing your academic, vocational and personal goals and objectives and why you should receive this scholarship.
- 2) List your major course of study and include high school and/or college grade transcripts.
- 3) Include three letters of recommendation from your community, school or other adult non-relative.
- 4) Include a wallet size picture (2"x3" or equivalent), with the understanding that award recipients will be featured on LICANational.org
- 5) Application must be completed and mailed to the National LICA office with a **postmark date no later than March 15**. Incomplete applications and ineligible students are automatically disregarded.

Applicant's signature: _____ Date: _____



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	East Peoria 309-694-3764



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ILLINOIS LICA SCHOLARSHIP APPLICATION

Established in 2025, the Illinois LICA scholarship is designed to support students in their pursuit of any post-high school education to fulfill their dreams of entering into the career of their choice.

To be eligible to apply, applicants must be related to an active Illinois LICA contractor member. This includes the member themselves, their spouse, children or grandchildren. The scholarship is open to high school seniors and upperclassmen students pursuing ANY post-high school education (e.g. trade school, 2 year or 4 year degree) and ANY course of study.

The \$1,500 scholarship is awarded directly to the recipient’s college, university, or educational institution. Scholarship judging and selection are conducted by the Illinois LICA Ladies Committee (committee members related to applicants recused from selection process).

Interested applicants should mail the following materials below to the ILICA office (112 Exchange St., Ste. 2, Galva, IL 61434), **postmarked no later than March 15**. Incomplete applications and ineligible applications are automatically disregarded. Winners will be notified by May 15.

1. Complete the scholarship application.
2. Submit recent high school and/or college grade transcripts.

3. Provide an essay (300 words or less) addressing your education, career, and employment goals. Include motivating factors or important experiences that have helped to shape these goals. Describe your involvement within the community (e.g. church, non-profits, etc.) and your involvement in extracurricular school activities. Give examples of how furthering your education will help you grow your leadership in these areas. How will this scholarship and your future education help you achieve your goals?
4. Provide three (3) letters of recommendation from non-relative individuals within your community or school. Letters should reference and provide examples of applicant’s leadership, character, and other noteworthy qualities. Letters should also include information about the individual providing the letter, their relationship to the applicant, and their contact information including name, company, title, and phone number. Recommendation letters should be sealed and delivered directly to Illinois LICA, 112 Exchange St., Ste. 2, Galva, IL 61434.
5. Submit a wallet size photo (2”x3” or equivalent) with the understanding that award recipient(s) will be featured in ILICA publications and online media.

Applications can also be completed online at: <https://form.jotform.com/241353639433053>

Illinois LICA Scholarship

Scholarship Application



Name: _____ Age: _____

Address: _____

Phone: _____ Email: _____

Current educational institute: _____

Present year in school: _____ Major course of study: _____

List courses you are taking or planning to take: _____

Parents or Guardian: _____

Address (if different than above): _____

Occupation(s) of Parent(s) or Guardian(s): _____

Name of current, active IL LICA contractor member: _____

Relationship to active IL LICA contractor member: _____

Applicants signature: _____ Date: _____

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One lucky winner will receive a prize!

Jan/Feb Answer: 30 Acres



CALENDAR OF EVENTS

Illinois

Board of Directors Meeting (hybrid)

March 14, 2026

Committee Meetings: 8 am - 12 pm

Board Meeting: 1 pm

ILICA Office: 112 Exchange St., Ste. 2, Galva, IL 61434

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/9759547353?pwd=c1ZPcjFhSTBTYjhXeERNZnFRTXdOZz09>

Or call: 1-312-626-6799 Meeting ID: 975 954 7353

Passcode: 0000

Contractor Training Store & Illinois LICA

Virtual Septic Training

March 19, 2026

8 - 11:30 am

Register: <https://form.jotform.com/210405973758159>

or via QR code on page 10

NRCS/ILICA Technical Meeting

April 2, 2026

USDA-NRCS Illinois State Office

2118 W. Park Court, Champaign, IL 61821

Meeting: 9:30 am

Register to attend (members only) and/or submit questions and comments for the meeting by March 23

at: <https://form.jotform.com/230454081861150>

or via QR code on page 10

Contractor Training Store & Illinois LICA

Virtual Septic Training

April 30, 2026

8 - 11:30 am

Register: <https://form.jotform.com/210405973758159>

or via QR code on page 10

Area 6 Golf Outing & Trap Shoot

June 5, 2026

McKillip Farm: Lerna, IL

Meadowview Golf Course: Mattoon, IL

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SAFETY FEATURE: BE AWARE OF TOXIC GAS EXPOSURE

The atmospheric conditions on a construction site can change before workers have a chance to detect a change. Protect yourself through proper toxic gas monitoring equipment.

Toxic gas exposure is a real hazard that causes hundreds of occupational injuries each year.

Toxic gases are usually invisible, but they are nonetheless present in all types of workplaces and environments. While short-term effects may not be serious, the symptoms of toxic gas exposure often lead to serious accidents. Be aware of the types of toxic gases you may be exposed to on the job so you can effectively respond in case of an accident or emergency.

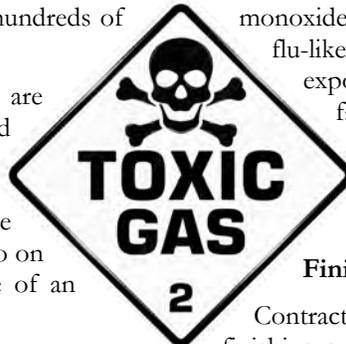
Trenching Gases

Underground digging is one of the most common sources of toxic gas exposure. Excavation work has the potential to expose pockets of natural gas, which can ignite quickly and cause a fire or explosion.

In addition to natural gases, digging may expose poisonous gases like hydrogen sulfide or carbon dioxide. These substances deplete the surrounding environment of oxygen. Working in environments that have low concentrations of oxygen is just as dangerous as working with high quantities of toxic gases and can cause you to lose consciousness quickly.

Gases from Equipment

Another major source of toxic gases on the job site is construction equipment. Equipment powered by propane gas or diesel could pollute the surrounding air with carbon



monoxide fumes. Acute carbon monoxide poisoning causes flu-like symptoms, headaches and vertigo, but long-term exposure can cause depression, memory loss and failures of the central nervous system or heart.

Other equipment on-site, such as compressed gas cylinders used for welding or cutting, may also expose you to toxic gases.

Finishing and Maintenance Work

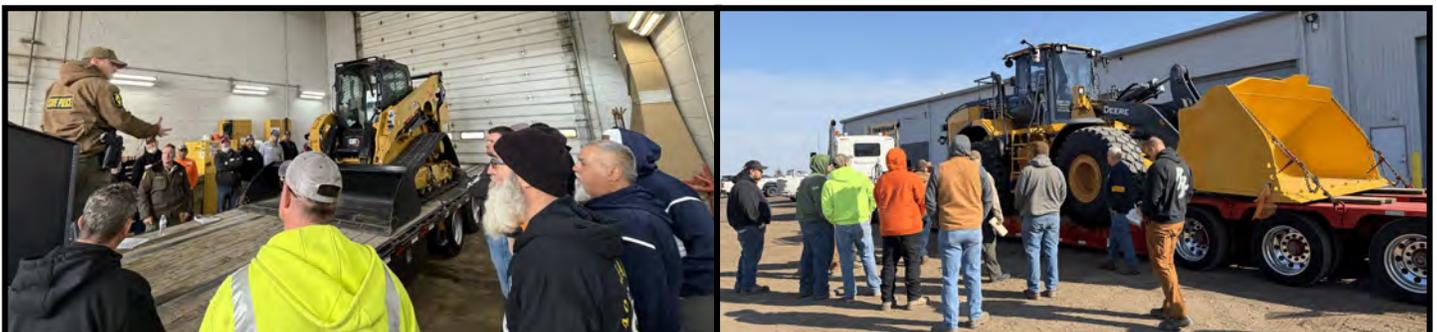
Contractors and construction workers performing finishing operations have unique risks of toxic gas exposure. Poisonous fumes from paint or other finishing products could cause serious long-term harm, especially if you are not wearing the appropriate respirator.

Workers performing maintenance may not be fully aware of the situation they are getting into. Before making routine repairs, identify all possible hazards, including the types of toxic gases that may have been present before you began working.

Prevention

The most important thing you can do to protect yourself from toxic gas hazards is use a personal monitor that detects explosive or poisonous gas buildup as well as lack of oxygen in the environment. Wearing this simple device could save you and your co-workers' lives.

Source: Construction Playing It Safe - LICA Safety Portal



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