

2018 Nebraska Grower and Brewer Conference and Trade Show

The two-day conference will be held Thursday and Friday, Jan. 18-19, 2018, at Embassy Suites Omaha – Downtown/Old Market, 555 S. 10th St., Omaha.

For more information and to register, visit <http://www.growbrewnebbraska.com/>.

Follow along on Facebook at <https://www.facebook.com/negrowerbrewerconference/>.

Growing Hops in Nebraska

If you've driven north of Plattsmouth on Highway 75 recently you've probably wondered about the 18-foot trellises off on the east side of the road. Those are hop trellises. The hop plant (*Humulus lupulus*) is an herbaceous perennial, usually grown for its strobiles or cones. Hop cones contain different oils, such as lupulin, a yellowish, waxy substance, that provides flavor and aroma to food products like beer.



During the growing season, an individual hop plant can weigh 30 to 40 pounds. So at one thousand plants per acre that trellis has to be strong enough to support 30 to 40 thousand pounds of vines, leaves, and cones. In 2016 Nebraska had around 24 acres of hops harvested. There were additional acres not yet in production and there are plans for more acres to be planted in 2017 and 2018.

So why hops in Nebraska and why now? That has a lot to do with changing purchase habits of Americans – interest is shifting to craft beers over mass-produced beers and more and more folks are making an effort to

buy local. Nebraska has the appropriate climate and day length to produce quality hops and our growing conditions give the product a certain terroir (yes, just like with wine, the soils that produce hops have a huge impact on their character) that intrigues and excites brewers.



So there is demand for Nebraska-grown hops, especially from Nebraska craft breweries. This was evident at the inaugural Nebraska Grower and Brewer Conference held January 5-6, 2017, on the Nebraska Innovation Campus in Lincoln. More than 180 attendees came to hear from university specialists and experienced growers and brewers from Nebraska and other states in the Midwest. There is already buzz about next year's conference – stay tuned for details.

Are hops for you? Maybe you own or manage property and are thinking about growing hops. The first thing to consider is distance from a processor. Most hops are sold to brewers after they've been dried and pelletized, so you need to do your homework in that regard BEFORE you invest. If you work with a company like [Midwest Hop Producers](#) out of Plattsmouth they can share what they know about hop production and pest management, the varieties local brewers prefer, and quality parameters.

Not ready to plant, but you'd like to support the cause? The University of Nebraska-Lincoln has a hop breeding program. [Dr. Keenan Amundsen](#) is eager to produce a Nebraska hop and he needs our help. If you have wild hops growing on your property, please let him know so he can come out and collect plant material to potentially use in breeding projects. During the summer, when you can easily see the cones, is a great time to mark the locations of female hop plants.