Science Societies

Meet Matt Montgomery, this year's CCA of the Year

By Denice Rackley

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Matt Mongomery (center) is this year's Certified Crop Adviser of the Year. He is shown here with Brenton (left) and Christian Dean, who farm in Pike County, IL.

A deep commitment to making the world a better place and a love of agriculture and knowledge define this year's International Certified Crop Adviser of the Year winner, Matt Montgomery.

Hailing from Chatham, IL, this self-proclaimed “science nerd” developed his enjoyment of learning and agriculture during childhood. From his father, a math and physics teacher, and mother, a grade-school teacher, Montgomery learned that knowledge unlocks hidden worlds. And while gathering wonderful memories on his uncle's and grandparents' farms, he began wondering about the world beneath his feet and how plants grow.

While Montgomery considers his interest in agriculture as a career to be ‘late-blooming,’ an on-farm lecture while at Western Illinois University sealed his fate. Sitting on a hay rack at the edge of a cornfield, he watched as Dr. Gordon Roskamp pointed out a purple-colored stalk, saying it harbored a corn borer. “As the leaves were pealed back revealing the corn borer, I thought how cool it would be if I could simply look at a plant and know what was wrong like that.”

Entering the ag industry

Working for Illinois Extension after graduation, Montgomery had his first opportunity to combine his passions for science, agriculture, learning, and sharing knowledge. He knew that becoming a CCA would add creditability to what he learned in college.

“Although the CCA program was rather new then, it was apparent that if I wanted to show what I knew, the CCA certification was the way to do just that.

“Being a CCA signals to growers that the information we give them is accurate and practical.”

After serving as a Crops Educator for nearly 20 years, Montgomery worked for Burrus Seed as a Sales Agronomist for four years before assisting producers as a Field Agronomist with Pioneer. Currently working as the Agronomy Education Lead for Beck’s, Montgomery is thrilled to be a resource for the company, his colleagues, and producers and continue to do what he loves.

With 30 years of experience as a certified crop adviser, serving agriculture producers is where Montgomery’s heart is.

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Serving producers

Montgomery sees himself as a conduit for the latest information, a bridge between academic research and the farm field. “Good information for growers is more

important than ever," Montgomery remarks. "The CCA program requires continual learning and abiding by a code of ethics that promises we promote practices and products that serve our customers."



Matt Montgomery discussing red crown rot management with farmer Brenton Dean.

While Montgomery doesn't consider himself a researcher, he has spearheaded field trials that offer growers options to overcome and avoid issues. For example, he explored red crown rot in soybeans, which rallied company resources and led to seed treatment evaluations and varietal screenings. He investigated the relationships among red crown rot, soybean cyst nematode pressure, and soil fertility. He and his colleagues also researched two-pass drone applications in corn (at tassel and 21 days after tassel) to see if the system would help growers manage late-season foliar diseases like tar spot.

Through his work, Montgomery has developed numerous educational programs that help growers better understand disease and pest life cycles, treatment options, and modes of action that assist growers in making management decisions for challenges such as foliar disease and insect and nematode pressure.

Lecturing in college classrooms, presenting at conferences, or creating open access resource videos on Facebook, "the short, bald agronomist," as he is known on social media, actively seeks opportunities to share knowledge and mentor others.

Promoting the CCA program

Montgomery has been active in the Illinois CCA program throughout his career. He served as treasurer for seven years and is currently mentoring those who want to take the CCA test and designing and reviewing continuing educational programs.

He supports the program at every opportunity and quickly points out that companies profit from employing CCAs. “Being a trusted resource, being a CCA, benefits the company's bottom line because growers seek to do business with those who provide the best crop production counsel.”

Montgomery sees vast opportunities within the rich and diverse agriculture industry where any and all individuals can use their passion to make a difference.

He credits his success to his family, his faith, mentors, and the CCA program.



Matt Montgomery is active on social media where he is known as “the short, bald agronomist."

Living up to award

“In awe” and “incredibly thankful” are the words Montgomery used to describe how he feels about being named this year’s recipient of the International CCA Award. “I am humbled by being in the company of incredible winners from Illinois—Mike Wilson, Howard Brown, and Todd Steinacher—and will do my best to live up to the accolades accompanying this prestigious award.” He feels this higher-profile platform gives him more opportunities to share his personal motto and guiding principles learned while working alongside his dad and father-in-law.

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He believes living by these two principles encourages a more long-term view of choices. This, in turn, will help CCAs serve their growers, assist the entire agriculture industry, and improve the world beyond agriculture.

“We (CCA’s) are truth-tellers in a world where the truth is sometimes hard to recognize,” Montgomery notes. He hopes his guiding principles will resonate with others and help them along their journey.

For Montgomery, it all boils down to this: “CCAs need to be good stewards of an ever-narrowing toolbox of options and resources that help growers achieve their goals with an eye toward future generations and handing off our world better than we found it."

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