

COVER CROPS



Cover crops are crops grown for protection and enrichment of the soil and to benefit the growth of future crops.

Adding cover crops into the rotation fulfills 3 of the 6 **Principles of Soil Health** (see back). Cover crops act as an **armor** for the soil, keeps a **living root** year-round, and increases **plant diversity**. That's only the beginning! Check out this list of anticipated benefits from growing cover crops.

Benefits of Growing Cover Crops

- Holds soil in place, preventing erosion
- Feeds the biology
- Provides a good source of feed for livestock
- Intercepts raindrop impacts
- Suppresses weeds
- Conserves soil moisture
- Promotes nutrient cycling
- Potentially reduces expenses for synthetic fertilizers
- Positive impacts on carbon-to-nitrogen ratio
- Increased water infiltration
- Helps to maintain viable soil temperatures
- Creates a habitat for the soil food web
- Creates a habitat for wildlife
- Regenerates the soil
- Sequesters carbon
- Builds organic matter
- Improves soil aggregate stability

PRINCIPLES OF SOIL HEALTH



1. CONTEXT

Consider the context of your own farm when applying the soil health principles.



2. MINIMIZE SOIL DISTURBANCE

Tillage breaks down soil aggregates and facilitates the consumption of biologic glues that hold the aggregates together which reduces the capacity to infiltrate, filter and store water.



3. ARMOR YOUR SOIL

Keep the soil covered at all times. This protects it from erosion, moderates soil temperatures, reduces water evaporation, suppresses weed growth and feeds the biology.



4. PLANT DIVERSITY

Expand crop rotations and use diverse cover crop mixes. This will increase plant, insect, wildlife and biological diversity.



5. KEEP A LIVING ROOT

Keeping a living root in the soil as long as possible feeds the soil biology, thus feeding our plants.



6. INTEGRATE LIVESTOCK

Plants and livestock have a synergistic relationship. When livestock graze on plants, photosynthesis increases and releases root exudates that feed the biology and supply nutrients for regrowth.

WANT TO LEARN MORE? REACH OUT TO US!

HERE'S
HOW...

VISIT  www.mnsoilhealth.org/contact-us/

OR

CALL  **505-980-1360**
(Mark Gutierrez, Executive Director)

