



January 2020 Newsletter

Looking into the Future

11/25/19-4/3/20 Farms & Woodlands Course

UMN Extension developed the Farms and Woodlands Course especially for landowners who want to get the most out of every acre of their land. The course consists of 12 self-paced modules offered online. Interested landowners can learn more and register on the class webpage at z.umn.edu/mwofarms.

Registration/discount code questions: Emily Dombeck, edombeck@umn.edu, 612-624-6709

Course content questions: Matt Russell, russellm@umn.edu, 612-626-4280

1/16-1/18 Reclaiming Resilience PFI Annual Conference

As we embark on 2020, Reclaiming Resilience will examine the current state of our farms and our food systems. This endeavor is not about going backwards in time or unraveling progress. It's about reclaiming resilience to help family farms survive into the future. Practical Farmers of Iowa's 2020 conference will explore what's working well and why, as well as what needs to change. <http://bit.ly/2NP26Tu> 1805 Center Dr, Ames, IA

1/22-1/23 2020 AgExpo

The Trade Show, Networking Opportunities, and the Educational Sessions on hot button issues affecting your farm operation are abundant this year. From understanding your insurance needs to mental health and rural America, we have it all covered at this year's MN AG EXPO. 1 Civic Center Plz, Mankato, MN <https://mnagexpo.com/>

1/23-1/26 Food & Farming Conference

Northern Plains Sustainable Ag Society's annual conference with a variety of pertinent topics and a children's program! 3803 13th Ave S, Fargo, ND <https://foodfarmingwinter2020.sched.com>

1/23-1/25 2020 GrassWorks Grazing Conference

2020 Grazing Conference will bring together experts in the field to share all there is to know about Grass. Our theme this year is Regenerating Our Grass-roots. Chula Vista Resort Wisconsin Dells <https://grassworks.org/events/grazing-conference/>

1/24-1/25 2020 Ograin Conference

The fifth annual conference for those interested in organic grain production in the Upper Midwest will feature 25+ expert farmers, researchers and industry representatives sharing their knowledge, along with ample opportunity for networking and discussion. Madison, WI <https://ograin.cals.wisc.edu/events/ograin-winter-conference/>

1/24/20-1/24/20 2020 Ograin Conference

The fifth annual conference for those interested in organic grain production in the Upper Midwest will feature 25+ expert farmers, researchers and industry representatives sharing their knowledge, along with ample opportunity for networking and discussion. Workshops and discussion will highlight issues important to organic grain farmers.

https://ograin.cals.wisc.edu/events/ograin-winter-conference/?fbclid=IwAR1EEiuZMdxJUY7iia6u69dhy_hlvuUf_RXkVXnYBFowUjepcT5GVFvvVvc

1630 Linden Dr., Madison, Wisconsin 53706

1/25 9-1:30 Mitigating Damage to Water & Soil

Farmers, landowners, and anglers can learn how to buck the damage caused by extreme weather to soil and water. Please RSVP for lunch to Gary Schwartz, presike1@live.com. A \$5 donation will help offset the cost of the meal.

1/28 1-4pm Winter Forage Tour

The Winter Forage Tour is here! At these meetings we will go in depth into many different forages and their use, planting date, and more. This will include mainly pasture grasses and blends, but also alfalfa, summer annuals, and cover crops as forage. 75 Rice St, Lewiston, MN 55952

1/29 10-3 Cover Crops, No-Till & Grazing: Evaluating the Economics & 1st Steps to Improving Soil

A Land Stewardship Project workshop will be held at the Peace United Methodist Church 52497 275th Ave., Elgin, MN 55932. Featuring presentations by southwestern Minnesota farmers Grant and Dawn Breitreutz, along with southeastern Minnesota farmers Tom Cotter and Myron Sylling. \$20 per person, which includes a lunch featuring local foods. Register by Jan. 27, contact LSP's Liana Nichols at 507-523-3366

1/29 Cover Crops: Matching Your Management Strategies & Goals How can you match cover crops to meet your cropping system goals? Have you wondered if cover crops can support your nutrient needs? Learn about U of MN cover crop research addressing these questions and more. Recorded webinar to be able to view later, register z.umn.edu/strategic-farming

1/30 12-2 What Makes MN Ag Water Quality Certification Program Different? Join the Rice SWCD for a discussion about the Minnesota Agricultural Water Quality Certification Program (MAWQCP). A pizza lunch will be provided following the presentation. Please RSVP to travis.hirman@riceswcd.org or call 507-332-5408. 320 3rd St NW Ste 9, Faribault, MN 55021

Still Looking Into the Future

2/4 8:30-3:30 Nutrient Management Conference

12th annual Nutrient Management Conference, hosted by University of Minnesota Extension, the Minnesota Agricultural Water Resource Center, and the Minnesota Department of Agriculture. Researchers will present findings on nitrogen, phosphorus and potassium management. A farmer panel will discuss on-farm conservation practices. \$20 Contact Fabián Fernández fabiangf@umn.edu, 612-625-7460 or Warren Formo MAWRC warren@mawrc.org, (952) 237-9822
1 Civic Center Plz, Mankato, MN 56001

2/6 6:30pm-8:30 Cover Crops 101

Want to try cover crops? Attend this beginning class about how to plant cover crops on your farm. Southeast Minnesota farmer Tom Cotter and TJ Kartes, of Saddle Butte seed company will talk about cover crop seed origination, species and establishment before giving a "Year One" cover crop plan. Alan Krause from the Cannon River Watershed Partnership will share results of a nitrate-sampling project in Rice County. 3625 Millersburg Blvd W, Faribault, MN 55021

2/8/20 SFA Annual Conference

Capturing Carbon for Soil Health, Bumblebees in High Tunnels: An Underutilized Strategy for Improving Production, Untapped Potential: A Landscape View of the Minnesota Halal and Kosher Meat Market, What's the Next Brussels Sprouts: How to be on Top of Local Food Trends, and more! Gorecki Center at the College of Saint Benedict in St. Joseph
REGISTER HERE <https://sfamn.z2systems.com/np/clients/sfamn/eventRegistration.jsp?event=983&>

2/18 8:30-3:30 Nitrogen: MN's Grand Challenge & Compelling Opportunity Conference Current topics in crop production and environmental stewardship will be relevant and informative for today's agricultural producers and professionals and anyone else who appreciates high-quality, research-based information. Register now for the 6th annual Nitrogen Conference, which will be held on February 18th, 2020, at the Arrowwood Conference Center in Alexandria, MN. Certified Crop Adviser credits <https://extension.umn.edu/courses-and-events/nitrogen-conference>

2/24 8:30-12:30 Farm Economics & Soil Health Winter Workshop

Join us for the Farm Economics and Soil Health Winter workshop where you'll hear from area farmers Rick Clark and Matt Alford as well as lunch and raffle prizes! RSVP by registering at eventbrite or calling Jackson SWCD at 507-662-6682 ext 3 <https://www.eventbrite.com/e/winter-workshop-tickets-86522550277?aff=ebdssbdestsearch>

2/27 11:30-2:30 Lunch & Learn-Irrigation Water Management

Don't miss out on this excellent opportunity to learn more about how to make high level irrigation water management work for your farm. Vasudha Sharma, Ph.D. will be joining the Sherburne SWCD this year to speak about her work at the Sand Plain Research Farm. Valley and Reinke Irrigation will also be present on advanced irrigation technology. A free hot dinner will be provided for all attendees. Register by 2/21 to Miranda Wagner 763-220-3434 x 105 or mwagner@sherburneswcd.org 10775 27th Ave SE Becker, MN 55308

2/27-2/29 2020 MOSES Organic Farming Conference

60 Workshops | 6 Sessions Crops, Livestock, Market Farming, Soils, Business, & More. Learn from experienced organic farmers, researchers, and ag professionals. 10 Organic University™ Courses. Dig deeply into a farming topic with a full-day class before the conference. Two-Floor Trade Show Find buyers, suppliers, ag agencies, seeds, tools & more. 300 Harborview Plz, La Crosse, WI 54601

3/5/20 Midwest Soil Health Summit

The 2020 event will feature two educational tracks: Silvopasture featuring Diomy Zamora and Gary Wyatt from University of Minnesota Extension and Keefe Keeling from the Savanna Institute and Agriculture featuring farmers who have established soil health practices as well as educators and researchers. More speaker and session information will be updated as it is finalized. Oliver Kelley Farm is at 15788 Kelly Farm Rd NW, Elk River. Questions? Call Jerry Ford 763-244-6659
<https://www.sfa-mn.org/midwest-soil-health-summit/>

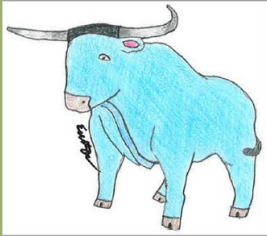
Keep your eyes peeled for upcoming winter meetings with the Coalition around the state!

Find these events on our website

<https://mnsoilhealth.org/>

And Facebook

<https://www.facebook.com/mnsoilhealth/>



Babe's Country

Breaking Wind - While Improving Air Quality, Soils, and Diversifying

Breaking wind isn't always a bad thing, it can actually bring a smile to your face! If you look around and notice snirt (dirty snow), you are seeing one reason to break wind. During the snowy months we are able to see some of the soil erosion from wind, much of the material is in suspension up in the air and travels thousands of miles. Remember the yellow/brown snow last winter? That was soil from Texas blowing our way. Minnesota soils have been found in New York, I believe those are some pretty good reasons to start breaking wind.

Wind erosion in Minnesota on average actually contributes to more soil loss than water erosion but we aren't able to see the whole picture with the sediment blowing in wind and depositing when there isn't snow, Wind erosion causes high losses of organic matter because of particle sizes and how light in weight it is so we're losing the best of what we have. We also have issues with wind cutting young crop plants by sheer force and/or combined with the soil particles in the air damaging the crops.

What can we do about it? Well, there are many courses of action we can take including keeping the soil covered, keep a living root, reduce disturbances, but also providing barriers to slow the wind down can greatly reduce our wind erosion. The other positive of using windbreaks - plant species that you can get an economic gain from, diversify. There are a variety of shrub and tree species that grow in Minnesota and finding well suited and beneficial species is possible.

Windbreaks can increase humidity and air temperature which "on average, associated with a 6 to 44 percent increase in crop yield," University of Minnesota Extension.

Which species to choose? There are considerations to keep in mind when planning windbreaks:

Your location, what species will thrive in your region, soils, and wetness/dryness of your soil

What are your objectives besides breaking wind?

Timber

Biomass

Fruits

Nuts

Floral/decorative

You'll also want to consider how long the species take to grow, are they fast or slow growing?

How many resources are you willing to provide for management (bud capping, pruning, etc)

Some species don't like to be planted by other species - think high school cliques

When do you want to be able to harvest from your windbreak?

A great comprehensive guide called the Minnesota SWCD Tree Handbook is available online at https://www.anokaswcd.org/images/AnokaSWCD/Products/Tree_Shrubs/tree_handbook.pdf

Or stop in to your local conservation office to get more information on species and planning windbreaks-many SWCD's are currently accepting tree orders so it's a great time to inquire!

What To Do During the Cold Winter Months

So it's the time of year to spend more time inside, review how 2019 went, go over financials, and plan for 2020. What are you looking at for the coming year? This is the perfect time to plan, take the time to evaluate what your ground needs - do you need to increase infiltration, increase organic matter, improve tilth, improve the cycling of nutrients, control herbicide resistant weeds, add more carbon to have lasting residue, fix nitrogen? Really pin point the needs of your ground and then starting working at a plan to meet those objectives. There are countless sources of information available, finding the right recommendations for your land, management, climate, and objectives can seem daunting and frustrating.

Talking with others in your area to learn about what has been successful and what hasn't is very useful, there are countless ways to cut a pizza, not one single way is correct, and it all depends on how you want to eat it. Soils that are sandier will have different objectives than heavy clay soils, higher rainfall and colder temperatures dictate different timing, it's an evolving puzzle that isn't set in stone but is possible to put together.

Objectives change over time too, when first starting out, cycling organic matter quickly to reduce nitrogen tie up is essential but as your soils regenerate, it is difficult to keep enough residue in and on the soil to meet the demand. Farmers have so many items to consider and manage, planning and learning are your best management strategies to conquer issues and meet objectives.

How do we determine your plan? First take stock and determine where you are, then determine your objectives.



There are easy ways to get started, planting cereal (winter) rye before soybeans and planting green, upping the game and interseeding a 4 way or more mix in your corn between V4-V6 to feed the biology and increase nutrient cycling, or establishing clovers as a living cover in your corn ground for soil protection and fixing nitrogen.

Check out this easy mix guide that meets NRCS standards and specs and provides mixes based on objectives and includes herbicide interactions

https://mnsoilhealth.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/09/Cover-Crop-Inventory_All.pdf

Talking with our farmer mentors can provide a sounding board and a friendly voice. They are Minnesota farmers that have implemented soil health practices and are willing to discuss their experience and provide you with input and information to help with questions, feedback, trouble-shooting, and more.

Find them at <https://mnsoilhealth.org/mentor/>

This is the perfect time to sign up for EQIP for cover crops, nutrient management, reduced tillage, irrigation water management, pest management, prescribed grazing, and other practices. Stop by your local field office to find out what's available and to submit an application. Filling out an application doesn't lock you in, it puts your foot in

the door, you've got nothing to lose! Find your local NRCS field offices: <https://www.nrcs.usda.gov/wps/portal/nrcs/mn/contact/local/>

You can also do frost seeding of clovers and/or cereal to get a head start for the spring!

Local Soil Health Groups and Their Importance

What is a local soil health group? It's a group of farmers that provide range of support including discussions, sharing experiences, learning with and from each other, bringing in specialist for education, completing testing, doing test plots, working together for obtaining seed and equipment, obtaining funding for projects, and being leaders in their area willing to share their experiences and knowledge. These teams typically partner with their local offices to provide support to the group. Some are a single county, some are multi-county. One thing that is the same with all of the local soil health groups - the increase in implementation of soil health practices and understanding of logistics for application, management, and trouble shooting.

There are local soil health groups across the state doing great things and working together to reduce the learning curve - if we can learn from others we will reduce mistakes/failures and progress more effectively. The Minnesota Soil Health Coalition supports the creation and continuation of these groups because having the local contacts are key to success. Contact your local field office to learn if there is a soil health group near you, there may be one just a county away that can provide tremendous information and support while we navigate through the experiences and decisions of integrating soil health into our management.



Preparing Gardens While the Weather is Frightful

We're in the dead of winter, temperatures are cold, the wind blows, and that lovely white stuff is blanketing our landscape. How is a gardener supposed to get their fix while improving conditions for the coming growing season? Snow seeding! You can snow seed different cover crops this winter so when temperatures start rising, you'll be feeding your soil organisms, warming the soil, providing protection of your soil against the elements, and competing with those pesky weeds. Garden soil can also be healthy by employing the 4 principles of soil health: keep the soil covered, increase diversity, reduce disturbance, and keep a living root. Increasing your soil health in your gardens isn't just benefiting our natural resources, it also benefits your crops as well as providing for pollinators! Some species you can snow seed:

- Red clover
- White clover
- Cereal rye
- Mustards
- Canola

Contact

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Natural Resources Conservation Service



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