Earthworms cycling the nutrients of a decaying radish

Tree Handplant List:


Submit orders by April 1st

NEW YEAR’S RESOLUTION: IMPROVE SOIL HEALTH

It is essential for every farming operation to invest in Soil Health. The soil is much more than a medium for growing crops, it is a biological ecosystem. We rely on millions of tiny microorganisms to do their jobs and create a conducive environment for plants to grow. You will reap the benefits by allowing these microorganisms to work for you. A poorly functioning soil may produce a crop, even a good crop, for many years. However, over time the soil becomes less resilient. Symptoms of poor soil health become more prevalent: poor germination, decreased yield, less porosity, salinity issues, increased erosion etc. On the other hand, a healthy soil is resilient. A healthy soil can build organic matter, maintain proper balance and improve plant productivity. A healthy soil is key to handling weather extremes, pest pressures, and just flat out reducing headaches.

Here are the four basic principles to the health of your soil:

1. Increase Diversity – The plant community directly impacts the soil biological community. The plant community is a food source for the soil biology. Different crops offer a change of food source and type. Crop diversity and cover crops will offer a biological buffet.

2. Lengthen Growing Season – The sun is the ultimate source of energy. Capture more sun and put that energy into your soil. One way to do this is to plant a cover crop to continue capturing sunlight well after your production crop has shut down.

3. Decrease Disturbance – Extensive tillage is detrimental to soil health. When soil is tilled the biological community is flipped upside down causing breakdown of pore channels and loss of organic matter. Conservation tillage and no-till operations will tremendously improve soil health.

4. Maintain Soil Cover – Keep soil cover on the surface. The purpose for soil cover is not just erosion. Residue maintains conditions for the microorganisms. Soil microbes live in that residue at the soil surface and convert it into organic matter and nutrients.

Contact us to start your 2015 resolution to improve soil health. Give us the opportunity to help you implement these principles in your operation.
Richard Faught, SCD Supervisor, Retiring

Richard Faught, long time supervisor for the Cass County Soil Conservation District, will be retiring from the Board of Supervisors in January. Richard started his tenure in 1991. He followed his father, Roy Faught, who retired after 30 years on the Board. Richard has represented Cass County in various aspects of conservation throughout the state and nation. He has been Chairman of the Cass County Soil Conservation District, Director of the North Dakota Association of Soil Conservation Districts, and represented the state at different levels in the National Association Conservation Districts. He has also been very active with RC & D. He is a very avid conservationist and has many stories he can tell about soil, crops and water. Richard and his wife Karen, reside in the rural Amenia area and as conservationists at heart, will continue to provide conservation information and ideas to all that may be interested.

Enhancing Wildlife Habitat: by Eric Dahl

When thinking about wildlife and their needs, I often like to use the comparison that the animals are no different from humans in terms of survival. All animals require food, water, and some sort of shelter in order to survive. By creating good quality upland habitat, we can provide better living conditions and survival for desired wildlife in our area. Species that will benefit from habitat improvements include upland game birds, big game, furbearers, waterfowl, amphibians, reptiles, and other species of upland wildlife. Habitat value depends on the quality, quantity, and distribution of food, water and cover in the immediate area. If quality food, water and cover are not available, enhancements must be made to ensure wildlife survival. The staff at Cass County Soil Conservation District and NRCS have the knowledge and tools for enhancing wildlife on your farm. Through detailed conservation planning we can determine what enhancements are needed to create optimal wildlife habitat. In many instances there are programs that will provide financial assistance to achieve these goals. Whether it be tree planting, grass seeding, or food plot planting, we have the means to assist you in implementing these practices on your farm.
ANNUAL REPORT: 2014 was a great year for conservation in Cass County.

- The district worked closely with our partners NRCS and FSA in setting up CRP, EQIP, and CSP contracts that involved either tree plantings or grass plantings. We would like to thank all the cooperators in the county for giving the District the opportunity to apply conservation to their land. The District assisted these cooperators in planting 215,000 If of trees and installed 186,000 If of weed barrier. Almost 55,000 trees were planted in Cass County in 2014.

- Our Eco-Ed outdoor educational program was held at Brewer Lake. Samantha Brunner, ND State Bee Inspector, gave an interesting presentation on bees in North Dakota and their beneficial effect in agriculture in the United States. Maple Valley School and Oak Grove Lutheran School enjoyed the beautiful weather while rotating thru the five stations: Water Quality, Woodlands, Prairie, Wetlands, and Soils.

- This fall, the 319 Watershed Program wrapped up two five-year projects for the Maple and Rush River Watersheds. In the final year of the project, the program provided cost-share on 4357 acres of cover crops, 6 septic system renovations, and 20,885 feet of tree planting. For 2015, we are starting a new watershed project for the Buffalo Creek Watershed. The Buffalo Creek Watershed Project is a continuation of the Maple River Watershed Project Phase I. This watershed project will provide cost-share opportunities for residents living in the Buffalo Creek Watershed. New for 2015, we are excited to announce that we will sponsoring a large scale no-till demonstration plot. The plot will be located west of Gardener on County Highway 26 near Northern Cass School.

- The Urban Conservation program held several workshops this past year. Three community education workshops were held including construction of rain barrels, building compost tumblers, and a composting for soil health workshop. The Lending Library was also expanded. The Lending Library is an educational resource lending program for Cass County schools and educational organizations.

- In celebration of Arbor Day and Earth Week, the District with its many community partners including Fargo Forestry, Fargo Park District, River Keepers, hosted two community events. The “Plant it For the Planet” was held at the Red River Zoo. The “Reforest the Red” event allowed community residents to participate in tree planting along the Red River to enhance the riparian forest. Both events were well attended and are planned again for 2015.

- In March, the District held the annual Ladies Ag Night at St. Leo’s Church in Casselton. The event featured speaker Todd Weinmann, NDSU Extension Agent, specializing in horticulture. Ladies Ag Night is a special event to show appreciation for all the ladies in Cass County that are involved with agriculture.

- The District participated in the Ag in the Classroom program which was held at the Red River Valley Fairgrounds. This event educates approximately 2000 Cass County 4th graders on various agriculture and conservation practices.

- We had a booth at the Home and Garden Show at the FargoDome. We get a chance to meet new people and tell them about the many services the District has to offer.

- We had a booth at the Big Iron Farm Show. Big Iron gives us a great opportunity to discuss soil conservation with the producers that stop by the booth. We also displayed our tree planting equipment at our shop which is located on the Red River Valley Fairgrounds.

All in all, it was a very productive and busy year. We look forward to working with producers and organizations to help Cass County continue to make strides in conservation.
**Upcoming Events**

**January 19, 2015** — Martin Luther King Day: Office Closed
**February 16, 2015** — President’s Day: Office Closed
**February 17, 2015** — Board Meeting at 8:00am
**February 27-March 1, 2015** — Booth at Home & Garden Show, FargoDome
**March 12, 2015** — Ladies Ag Night, St Leo’s, Casselton

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**District Staff**
Wayne Stautz — Operations Coordinator
Tony Peterson — District Technician
Eric Dahl — Watershed Coordinator
Amy Cole — District Clerk

**NRCS Staff**
Brent Gustafson — District Conservationist
Derek Schmitt — Soil Conservationist
Val Hartman — Soil Conservationist

**District Supervisors**
Terry Hoffmann — Wheatland
Brad Kellerman — West Fargo
John Grove — West Fargo
Brooks Whitmore — Page

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