

ALLEY CROPPING

PRACTICE INTRODUCTION

USDA, Natural Resources Conservation Service—Practice Code 311



ALLEY CROPPING

Alley cropping is growing field crops, horticulture crops, or forage crops between rows of trees or shrubs. Annual or periodic crops are harvested from both the rows of woody plants and the crops in the alternating alley areas.

Alley Cropping is a multipurpose practice that provides one or more of the following benefits: reduced erosion, enhanced economics, enhanced microclimate for crop production, improved utilization of plant nutrients, improved wildlife habitat, and improved landscape visual quality.

PRACTICE INFORMATION

Trees are planted in single or multiple rows. Row spacing between the “sets” of trees varies according to the objective and the crops grown between the rows of trees. The tree species are typically selected for their potential value, including the benefits they can provide to the crops grown in the alley areas of the field. Common tree species are black walnut, pecan, green ash, and northern red oak.

All traditional crops can be grown with alley cropping as long as they are compatible with the growth stages of the tree species. Shade is the primary consideration, and crops grown in the alleys must be planned accordingly.

COMMON ASSOCIATED PRACTICES

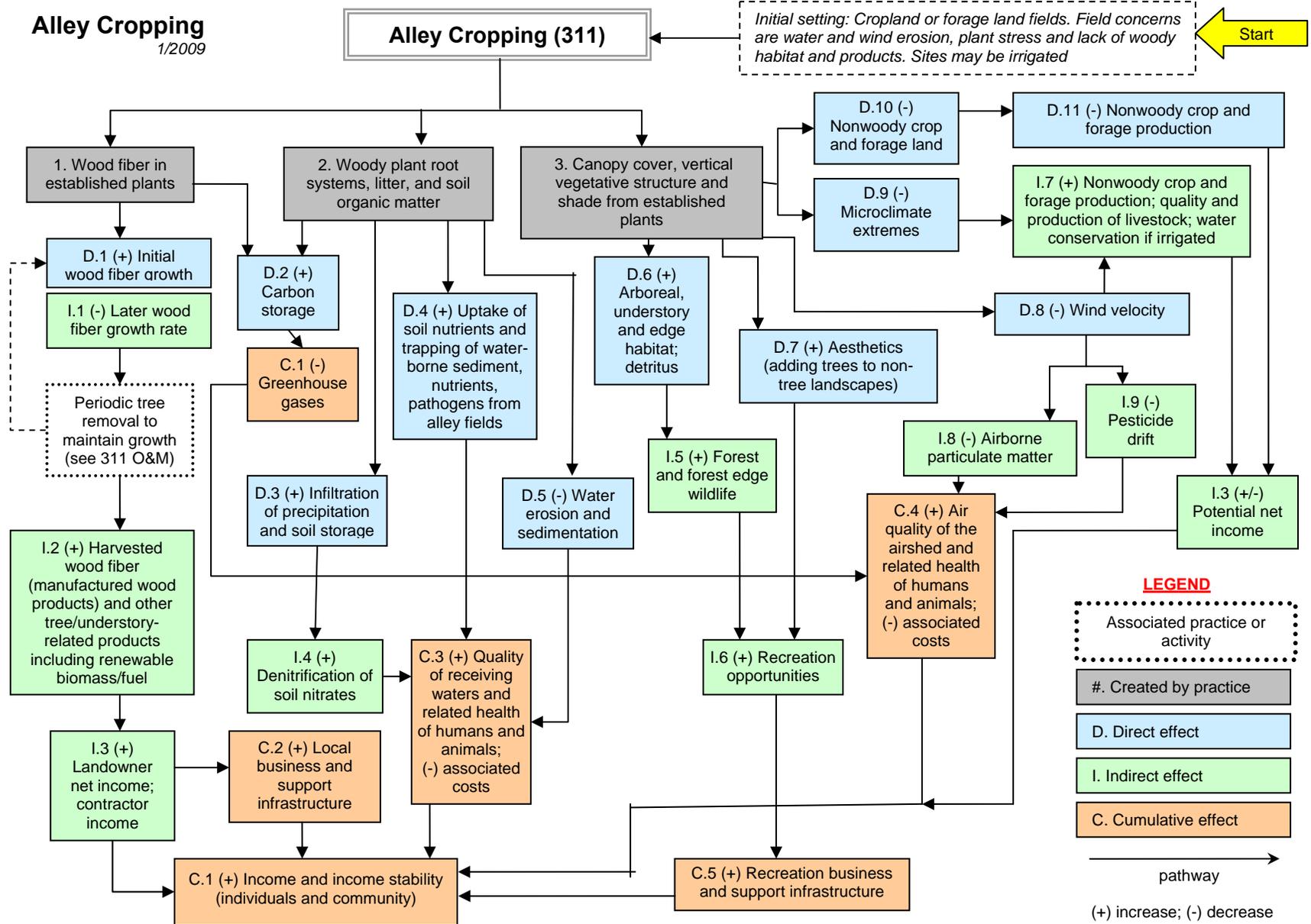
Alley Cropping is commonly planned as part of a Conservation Management System with Conservation Crop Rotation (328), Pest Management (595), Nutrient Management (590), and other conservation practices.

For further information, refer to the practice standard in the local Field Office Technical Guide and associated practice specifications and job sheets.

The following page identifies the effects expected to occur when this practice is applied. These effects are subjective and somewhat dependent on variables such as climate, terrain, soil, etc. All appropriate local, State, Tribal, and Federal permits and approvals are the responsibility of the landowner and are presumed to have been obtained. Users are cautioned that these effects are estimates that may or may not apply to a specific site.

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Note: Effects are qualified with a plus (+) or minus (-). These symbols indicate only an increase (+) or a decrease (-) in the effect upon the resource, not whether the effect is beneficial or adverse.

The diagram above identifies the effects expected to occur when this practice is applied according to NRCS practice standards and specifications. These effects are subjective and somewhat dependent on variables such as climate, terrain, soil, etc. All appropriate local, State, Tribal, and Federal permits and approvals are the responsibility of the landowners and are presumed to have been obtained. All income changes are partially dependent upon market fluctuations which are independent of the conservation practices. Users are cautioned that these effects are estimates that may or may not apply to a specific site.