United States Department of Agriculture

INDIANA CONSERVATION CHOICES

Urban/Small Farm Practices

Conservation practices help improve soil health, reduce soil erosion, improve water quality and provide other natural resource benefits.

USDA's NATURAL RESOURCES CONSERVATION SERVICE - INDIANA

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No matter the size of your farm, having the knowledge you need to conserve, maintain and restore the natural resources on your farm is a powerful tool. The Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) can help urban and small farmers create a conservation plan that can serve as a road map towards improving the health and resiliency of your operation.

A conservation plan can enable you to make educated decisions for your farm, keep you from making costly management mistakes, and possibly help qualify you for financial programs.

The way we manage our soil resource has a greater impact on its ability to function than any other factor. Productive and resilient land can be obtained by using a soil health management system that incorporates these four simple principles:

- Minimizing disturbance from tillage and over-grazing
- Maximizing soil cover with residues and living plants
- Maximizing diversity with crop rotations and cover crops
- Maximizing living roots year-round with crops, forages and cover crops

Benefits can include increased soil organic matter, improved resilience to drought and floods, improved nutrient cycling, and overall increased profits.

This fact sheet lists common conservation practices that will help address natural resource concerns on your urban/small farm. To learn more about the assistance available for you farm and how to get started, visit your local USDA NRCS office. We can help you make the right choices to protect and improve your land and other natural resources.

Practice		Description	Benefits
High Tunnel		A covered structure used to protect crops from sun, wind, excessive rainfall, or cold	» Improves plant growing conditions » Extends the growing season » Improve plant quality
Low Tunnel		A low-profile temporary covered structure that protects plants	» Protects plants from cold, sun and wind » Extends the growing season » Excludes pests from crops
Cover Crops		Grasses, legumes, and/ or broadleaves planted for seasonal cover	» Reduces erosion » Maintains or increases soil organic matter » Traps and cycles nutrients » Improves water infiltration and water-holding capacity » Reduces compaction
Mulching		Applying plant residues or other suitable materials to the land surface.	» Improves soil moisture management » Reduces weed pressure and erosion » Builds or maintains soil organic matter
Pollinator & Beneficial Insect Habitat		Planting wildlife friendly grasses and wildflowers to support pollinators and beneficial insects	» Increases pollination of crops » Increases predation and parasitism of pests » Reduces soil erosion, runoff and improves water quality
Crop Rotation		Growing a diverse number of crops in a planned sequence	» Reduces crop pests (insects, disease, weeds) » Adds soil biological diversity » Can reduce erosion
Microirrigation		Managing the volume, frequency, and rate of irrigation water	» Improves irrigation water use efficiency » Minimize irrigation-induced soil erosion » Improves plant growing conditions » Reduces energy use

For more information visit: www.nrcs.usda.gov/Indiana