



Small-Scale & Urban Agricultural Farming in Wisconsin



Conservation Available Through the Environmental Quality Incentives Program

The Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) is the principal U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) program for delivering conservation technical and financial assistance to private landowners. EQIP supports the needs of agricultural operations by offering ideas, solutions and guidance for a successful and sustainable conservation operation. Conservation practices described below (and others) can be selected and implemented after developing a conservation plan designed to address your specific resource concerns. Several conservation practices have payment scenarios developed with small-scale costs considered. Beginning, veteran, limited resource and socially disadvantaged producers will receive a higher payment rate and can receive 50% advanced payment.

Whether you measure your farm in terms of square feet or acres, your local NRCS office has experienced conservationists that can help you develop a conservation plan using practices that conserve, maintain, and restore the natural resources on your land and improve the long-term health of your operation.

To find your local NRCS office, go to www.nrcs.usda.gov/contact/find-a-service-center



High Tunnel System

A high tunnel system is an enclosed polyethylene, polycarbonate, plastic, or fabric-covered structure used to protect crops from sun, wind, excessive rainfall or cold to extend the growing season in an environmentally safe manner. The high tunnel structure must be planned, designed and constructed from a manufactured kit in accordance with manufacturer's recommendations. These can be scaled for smaller structures less than 600 square feet. Crops must be grown in the original soil profile.



Cover Crops

The practice of cover crops involves growing grass, small grain, or legumes primarily for seasonal protection and soil improvement. They are commonly used to suppress weeds, manage soil erosion, help build and improve soil fertility and quality, control diseases and pests, and promote biodiversity. Cover crops may consist of a single species or a mix depending upon their intended purpose. Commonly planted on small scale or urban sites in Wisconsin are a single species of fall rye, cereal grain or clover.



Wildlife Habitat Planting

Wildlife habitat planting establishes herbaceous or shrubby wildlife habitat by planting seeds or plants that can provide essential wildlife food and cover. Selecting native species, diverse mixes and beneficial species for pollinators and Monarch butterflies are important considerations.



Tree & Shrub Establishment

Tree/shrub establishment involves planting seedlings, cuttings, or seeding. Trees and shrubs can be established for a variety of purposes. Conservation benefits may include, but are not limited to: enhancing wildlife habitat, establishing forest cover, controlling erosion, improving water quality, capturing and storing carbon and conserving energy.



Composting Facility

A composting facility can either be a structure or a device that facilitates aerobic decomposition of manure or other organic material into a product that is stable for on-farm use, thereby reducing the potential for water pollution. It transforms organic waste into a soil amendment, improving soil health and providing plant-available nutrients. Additionally, it conserves energy by reducing mass and improving waste handling characteristics.



Irrigation System, Microirrigation

Microirrigation provides frequent, small quantities of water to a crop by using drip or spray applicators. This practice can be utilized in a seasonal high tunnel or on small acreage cropland to apply irrigation water more efficiently and uniformly to crops. A low-cost irrigation system can be as simple as a series of troughs or gutters moving water by gravity, or it can involve a pump and pipelines to move water to sprinklers or a drip system.



Irrigation Pipeline

Irrigation pipeline is used to convey water from a water source or storage to the irrigation water system. This can be a buried or above ground pipe. This practice can improve water quantity by supplying water to an irrigation system at the appropriate times and at the appropriate quantity.



Irrigation Reservoir

An irrigation reservoir (dam, pit, or tank) is used to store rainwater, ground water, or surface water to be used for irrigation. This facility can improve water quantity by storing water to provide a reliable irrigation water supply and to control available irrigation flows when the water source is sporadic or fluctuating.



Roof Runoff Structure

Roof runoff structures collect, control and convey rainwater from a roof. They can provide a method to capture rainwater and safely outlet it for other uses on the farm or divert clean water away from contaminated areas. Runoff structures can reduce soil erosion, improve water quantity and quality, increase water infiltration and capture water for on-farm use.

For more information and resources for small-scale and urban agricultural farming in Wisconsin, go to www.nrcs.usda.gov/wi/urban-ag



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