Three Steps to a Successful Event

Promote “Soil Health” instead of cover crops because cover crops are only one tool in improving soil health.

1. Make sure that participants understand how soil functions.

Start each session with a demonstration (slake test and infiltration demo, or slake test and rainfall simulator). Demonstrations may differ between indoor and outdoor events.

INSIDE: Slake and infiltration demonstrations work best, although rainfall simulators can be used inside if the room has ample space and an available water source.

Additional demo options:
- Large soil cores
- Single clod aggregate demo
- Light and dark-colored clods to demonstrate organic matter
- Tub with no-till and tilled soil to compare biological life
- “Qualitative” bulk density test

OUTSIDE: Use slake and rainfall simulator or slake and infiltration.

Additional demo options:
- Soil pit
- Compaction layer with penetrometer
- Respiration demo
- Root variation (vertically and horizontally).

2. Give a basic soil health talk covering the four principals of soil health.

- Do not disturb the soil (no-till)
- Keep a living root in the soil at all times
- Use a diverse mixture of plants
- Keep the soil covered

3. Have a presenter talk about cover crops.

- Point out resource concerns that cover crops can help address:
  - Ground cover and more plant diversity reduces weeds
  - More roots and different root structure reduces compaction
  - Improved drainage in wet areas
  - Maximize fertilizer inputs by preventing nutrient loss over winter and fixing more nitrogen
  - Preventing soil erosion
  - Providing livestock feed

- Discuss other details of establishing cover crops
  - proper planting (drilling, broadcast or aerial)
  - proper timing for planting and terminating
  - types of forages
  - soil types on fields
  - cropping history

Participants should come away with a better understanding of soil health and how cover crops are one practice to improve it.