



Urban/ Small Farm Practices for Rhode Island



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

No matter what size farm you have, knowing how to conserve, maintain and restore the natural resources on your farm is a powerful tool. The USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) can help urban and small farmers create a conservation plan that serves as a road map to improve the health and resiliency of your operation.

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

The way soils are managed has the greatest impact on your land's productivity. Productive and resilient land can be obtained by following these four simple soil health management principles:

- Minimize disturbance from tillage and over-grazing.
- Maximize soil cover with residues and living plants.
- Maximize diversity with crop rotations, cover crops and inter-cropping.
- Maximize living roots year-round with crops, forages and cover crops.



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

This fact sheet lists common urban/small farm conservation practices to help you address natural resource concerns on your land. To learn more about help available for your farm and how to get started, visit your local USDA NRCS or Conservation District office. We can help you make the right choices to protect and improve your land and 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
- » Improves plant quality

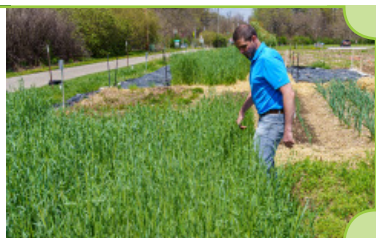
Low Tunnel



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
- » Improves 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 crop pollination
- » 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
- » Minimizes irrigation-induced soil erosion
- » Improves plant growing conditions
- » Reduces energy use

For more information visit: www.RI.nrcs.usda.gov