Experimental Acres

2024 Farm Profiles

Farmers know their land best

The Experimental Acres program supports a farmer-led discovery of new practices to build soil health and enhance carbon recapture.

The program offers funding to enable a de-risked learning season to assist in developing a business case for practices worth repeating. Experimental Acres supports farmer-created projects through 3 funding streams:

Living Roots and Green Cover

Integrating Animals on the Farm

Innovation

The Experimental Acres program was developed as a part of Guelph-Wellington Our Food Future, a project funded by Infrastructure Canada. The County of Wellington facilitated the program in Wellington and Dufferin Counties in 2022, and Grey County joined in 2023. The 2024 program is being administered by Grey Agricultural Services.

Contact 519-986-3756 or info@greyagservices.ca for more details..

Dufferin county

Lennox Farms Ltd.

Interseeding cover crops into sweet corn and rhubarb

Cover crops will be interseeded to suppress weeds, fix nitrogen and build soil health in both sweet corn and rhubarb crops.

Sweet corn: A mixture including rye and legumes will be broadcast into the corn in June, and incorporated with light cultivation. Establishment and productivity of the crops will be monitored as well as soil health indicators and plant nutrient levels.

Rhubarb: An oat and pea mixture will be hand seeded in August, when the rhubarb crop begins to die back for the year. Similar parameters will be monitored to learn about soil health and intercropping rhubarb. Cover crops will be left to winter kill, leaving behind a mat of organic material for the following spring.

Research Questions

- Are cover crops effective at suppressing weeds in the two cropping systems?
- How is the nutrient status of the plant affected when legumes are interseeded?
- Are there differences in soil compaction, infiltration or biology between areas that are or are not interseeded?

Measurements

- Lab analysis of nutrient values
- Visual monitoring of plant growth and performance
- Compaction testing with penetrometer
- Infiltration testing

Project Size

8-9 acres

Dufferin county

Brilliant Meadows Farm

Establishing beneficial insect habitat to suppress pest pressure on a market garden

Brilliant Meadows Farm is located in a big potato growing area. Perennial beneficial insect habitat will be established on marginal land along several market gardens. The farm hopes to build a beetle berm to attract predatory beetles which will help to control Colorado Potato Beetle Larvae.

The addition of native plants, will also aim to attract other beneficial insects, one example being Lacewings attracted using yarrow or similar plants.

Pest pressure and beneficial insects will be monitored through insect counts. material for the following spring.

Research Questions

- What population changes are seen in pest and beneficial insect populations when habitat is established?

Measurements

- Insect counts for beneficial and pest insects will start in 2024 and be carried out going forward

Project Size

100m of garden space

Dufferin county

Nourished Roots Market Garden

Comparing high quality compost with cover crops for building soil health.

Two garden beds will be prepared as comparison plots. One will have well composted cattle manure incorporated. The other will establish cover crops to terminate for 'green manure' before growing a vegetable crop.

Soil health, fertility and crop yield will be compared between the two plots.

Research Questions

- How does crop performance compare between a quality compost and a green manure cover crop?
- What is the economic viability of the two options?
- Can nutrient differences be measured between the two plots?

Measurements

- Soil testing
- Yield monitoring and comparison to records from prior years
- Economic evaluation

Project Size

5200 sq. ft.

Dufferin county