

NEWS RELEASE

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Cover Crops Workshop

The use of a cover crop can improve soil fertility, add organic matter, and reduce soil erosion. Cover crops can also have additional benefits as a forage crop. While cover crops have been incorporated into row crop systems for several years, many vegetable producers and even gardeners are also using cover crops in their production systems.

In September Maurice Ogutu, Extension Educator in Local Food Systems and Small Farms wrote, "Every year, home vegetable producers add compost, manures or other organic materials to their gardens as a source of organic matter", "The organic matter is utilized by earthworms, bacteria, fungi, and other forms of life in the soil to make healthy fertile soil." He also pointed out that, "Some cover crops can be used to attract beneficial insects that control insect pests and these are referred to as trap crops."

The benefits of using cover crops, their establishment and management will be addressed at an upcoming workshop in Decatur on December 7th and 8th. The workshop entitled, "Effective Cover Cropping in the Midwest", is being presented by the Soil and Water Conservation Society. The two day conference features presentations and roundtable discussions by university researchers, farmers and crop consultants, and is targeted to farmers and cover crop service providers.

The workshop agenda includes specific tracks for no-till, tillage, and organic applications. There will also be case study presentations that will identify and discuss strengths and pitfalls of various cover crop applications. More information about the workshop can be found at <http://www.swcs.org/>.

If you are interested in incorporating cover crops into your production system in the future, select seed carefully. There are many seed sources available; however, local seed companies and dealers can provide you with varieties that have been developed for your local growing area. If you have questions or need additional information, contact Dave Shiley, Extension Educator, University of Illinois Extension at 217/543-3755.