

Soil And Land Use

Organics: NESFP organic farms produce crops by following the organic standards set by the National Organic Program (NOP). If your farm is managed organically, please read the **Organic Guidelines Section**. Contact a staff member if you have questions about what materials you can use under organic standards. Note: all seeds¹, transplants, fertilizers, pesticides, cleaning products, and other supplies must have an “approved for organic” or OMRI-approved label.

Soil Testing. Farmers must do a Standard Soil Test with Organic Matter which costs \$13. We will give you a brochure for UMass Amherst Soil Testing Lab and we will teach you how to test the soil. You should test your soil at least once per year.

Fertilizers and Compost: Your soil tests will determine which fertilizers and compost you should use. Record all fertilizer and compost use in the farm record book. Using too much can harm the soil and water quality.

Cover Crops: Plant cover crops (green manures: grains and legumes such as rye, oats, clover, vetch or peas) on all bare ground to stop erosion and weeds. After you finish harvesting a crop, plant a green manure or cover crop to improve the soil. If you don't plant a cover, then you need to remove or till in all crop leftovers, and put mulch over the soil.

Crop Rotation: Keep a map of where you planted crops each year on a field map. Each year, you should grow crops in a new place. Wait three years to grow the same crop in the same area where the crop grew before.

Weeds: Control weeds by mulching, mowing, cultivating, or flame weeding. Keep weeds from entering other farmer's fields. Mow edges of your fields and trim brush and/or weeds. You are not allowed to use weed killers (chemicals). Farmers should not grow any plants that are listed on the Federal Noxious Weed list. Check with NESFP staff before planting uncommon crops.

Rocks and Stones: Place rocks and stones from fields on existing rock walls or in marked places. Please do not start new rock walls or piles.

Pest Management: Too much pesticide can poison the soil and water. Follow all rules in the **Pest Management and Pesticide Safety Guidelines**. Record all pesticides you use in the farm record book. Follow pesticide labels and state and federal laws. Alternate pesticides so pests do not get used to them. Always spray safely. Put up signs in the field on crops that you sprayed.

¹ Non-organic seeds may be used if you have proof (3 sources) that the organic variety is unavailable. Always use untreated seed.