Issue 3

Sustain US

October 2016

Working Together For a Better Future

The Sustainable Agriculture & Forestry Scholarship Fund Newsletter

Soil is just dirt! Right?

Wrong! Healthy soil* represent the lifeline for humans and all critters on earth. Here is what we know now...

Healthy soil...

- greatly reduces flooding
- lessens rainwater runoffs
- lessens soil losses
- reduces chemical runoffs
- generates higher yield with less effort.
- promotes rainfall infiltration
- cycles nutrients

"Farmers today can grow two to three times as much grain, fruit, and vegetables on a plot of land as they could 50 years ago, but the nutritional quality of many crops has declined."[2]

"Without fertile soil, what is life?"
—Vandana Shiva, 2008

"Soils around the world have become worn out"[1]

"Soil organic matter is the very foundation for healthy and productive soils."[1]

"The key to healthier produce is healthier soil."[3]

"Historically, soil degradation caused significant harm to many early civilizations. This led to decline of cultures"[1]

The issue is soil organic matter

"Dead soil" has 0% organic content and will not support human life. Healthy soil has up to 15% or more organic content. Less than 1% organic matter, often found in modern farmland, represents soil close to extinction. Organically farmed land with a continuous cover (aka pasture) has 3% to maybe a high of 6% organic matter. Prairie land that has been undisturbed for eons may have 15% or more organic content. Some consider organic soil a threatened species—taking 1000s of years to be restored. Stopping the use of agrochemicals combined with using multi species cover crops and rotational grazing has proven to re-establish the organic content of soils on a shorter time scale (note 4). The issues of organic matter applies also to lawns—the largest mono-culture 'crop' in USA (note 5). More information on our website.

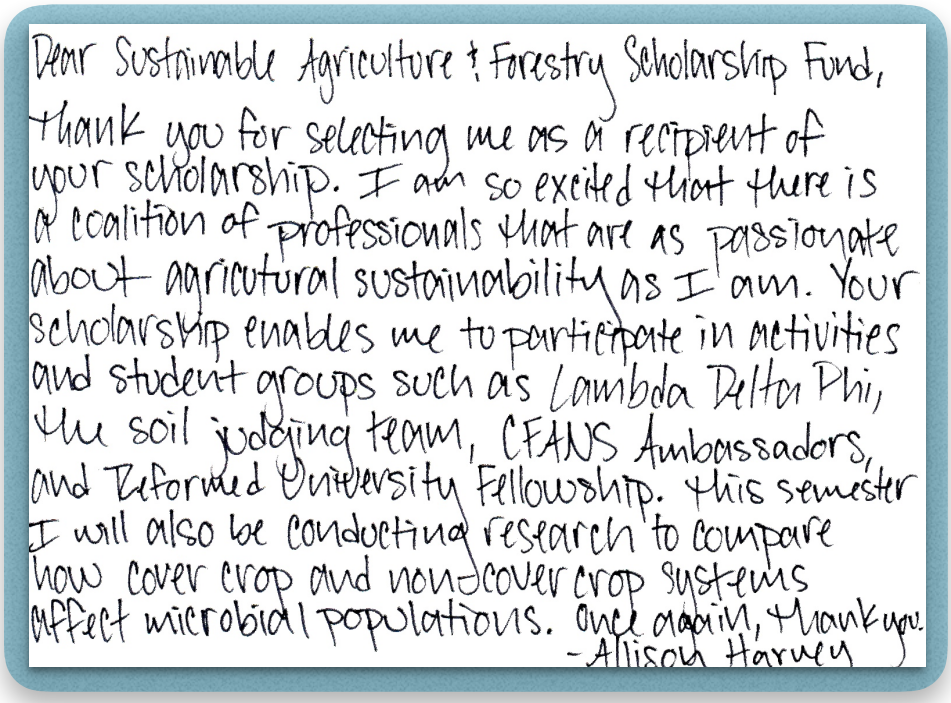
"Soil health, also referred to as soil quality, is defined as the continued capacity of soil to function as a vital living ecosystem that sustains plants, animals, and humans."
(Soil Health USDA/NRCS)

"Enhancing soil health—in all its aspects, not just nutritional levels—is probably one of the most essential strategies for providing nutritious food to all the people in the world and ending the scourge of hunger and malnutrition"[1]

*** and native pollinators and clean water**

1) Building Soils for Better Crops—Sustainable Soil Management by Fred Magdoff and Harold van Es, 3rd ed.
2) worldwatch.org "Crop Yields Expand but Nutrition is Left Behind"
3) scientificamerican.com/article/soil-depletion-and-nutrition-loss/
4) Regenerating Landscapes for a Sustainable Future/OnEarthMagazin.pdf by Gabe Brown
5) NASA research abstract available at http://www.huffingtonpost.com/entry/lawn-largest-crop-america_us_

This thank you note from our primary scholarship recipient for 2016 shows emphasis on sustainability and soil restoration—exactly the kind of learning the Scholarship is meant to fund.



Dear Sustainable Agriculture & Forestry Scholarship Fund,
Thank you for selecting me as a recipient of your scholarship. I am so excited that there is a coalition of professionals that are as passionate about agricultural sustainability as I am. Your scholarship enables me to participate in activities and student groups such as Lambda Delta Phi, the soil judging team, CFANS Ambassadors, and Reformed University Fellowship. This semester I will also be conducting research to compare how cover crop and non-cover crop systems affect microbial populations. Once again, thank you.
-Allison Harvey

We see huge problems that prevent sustainability

Current common practices endanger

- our water quality and quantity
- our soil and forests
- our food quality and the health of our people, and kill our vitally important pollinators

Sustainable agriculture and forestry is the efficient production of safe, high quality agricultural and forestry products, in a way that…

> *protects and improves the natural environment, the social and economic conditions of farmers and related operations, their employees and local communities, and safeguards the health and welfare of all farmed and natural species.*

Three ways to donate:

If you use the GiveMN system, then go to our website, click on their logo on the Donor page. This will bring you directly to the Scholarship's donation page. Remember the November 17, 2016 Give-to-the-Max Day.
A 100% matching offer is in effect until December 31, 2016.

You can also go directly to the Rochester Area Foundation and donate. Again, go to our website, click on the Donate button. This will bring you directly to the Scholarship's donation page on their website.

You can also clip off the form below and mail a check directly to the Rochester Area Foundation.

In all cases, make sure you specify that your donation shall go to the Sustainable Agriculture & Forestry Scholarship Fund.

Thank you for your willingness to help with the goal of achieving sustainability for our children, grandchildren and their futures.

Announcing the 2017 scholarships.

Practitioners are invited to submit applications by December 15, 2016 for scholarships to be announced on January 17, 2017. Up to $1,500 will be awarded to one or more practitioners. Individuals working in organic farming or wanting to learn more about it by attending seminars or short courses are eligible for Practitioner Scholarships.

College students at junior or higher level studying sustainable agriculture and/or forestry—in accordance with the scholarship's definitions— are invited to submit applications for the school year starting in the fall of 2017. Application are due by April 15, 2017. The invitation will be available on December 15, 2016.

For details and application information, visit the Scholarship website:

http://protectourresources.org

Our website contains more information about healthy soils with links to great information sources and references to the quotes used herein.