Creeping red fescue, perennial ryegrass and other grasses are often planted between rows of perennial crops, like berries or grapes. These cover crops help reduce soil erosion, catch nutrients and excess irrigation, and improve soil quality.

Good cover crops have the following characteristics: fast germination and emergence, good seedling vigor, competitiveness with other plants, tolerance to adverse conditions, ease of suppression, inexpensive establishment and they require minimal management. Cover crops perform best when seeded early in the fall, to allow for adequate rainfall, good soil conditions, and some warmer weather for early establishment. Irrigation, if available, may be utilized after planting to encourage germination and early growth.

One challenge with winter cover crops is killing the crop and preparing a seedbed for the spring cash crop to follow. Some cover crops like wheat are fairly easy to kill mechanically. Conventional herbicide application in the early spring is an effective method to initiate killing the cover crop, but not in certified organic.
Fall Update from the Small Farms Program

It has been quiet in the Small Farms Program since the last newsletter as I went on maternity leave in May after the birth of my son. Thank you to Maud Powell for covering the program while I was gone.

Since I’ve been back, we have made a few changes. I have reduced my hours, so that I can spend more time with my new boy. Maud Powell has increased her time in the program, so she will be available to meet your small farm needs as well as coordinate classes and assist with phone calls and field visits.

In other news, we’ve got a great line-up of classes for the fall and winter. Topics include soil fertility, beekeeping, organic vegetable production, horses and mud, home processing of animals, sustainable IPM and small farm planning. There should be something for everyone. Check out page seven for all the details. If there is a class that you would like us to plan, please do not hesitate to contact us and let us know. We want to make sure we are meeting your educational needs.

In early August, we held an introductory class on pasture management in which 37 small farm owners attended to learn how to renovate or establish pastures on their small acreage. If you would like information from this class, please give a call and we can help you design a pasture management plan.

On September 22nd, we held an irrigation workshop for small acreage landowners in which we covered various irrigation strategies, water rights as well as irrigation scheduling. We went out to Martin Family Ranch and Fry Family Farm in the afternoon and saw K-Line irrigation in action as well as an innovative drip irrigation system in place.

In October, we are holding the first meeting of the Women in Sustainable Agriculture group. This group is for women who are currently selling agricultural products from the farm. This type of farmer-to-farmer group offers support, educational and networking opportunities. If you are interested in attending, please give us a call or drop an email.

Besides classes and other projects, we continue to do farm and field visits, so let us know if you need me or Maud to come out to your farm for any of your small farm needs including pasture management plans, weed identification or soil fertility information.

-M

Function & Selection of Cover Crops continued from page 1

systems. Other cover crops such as spring oats and sudan grass are susceptible to winter kill, which begins to degrade the biomass, creating better conditions for incorporation into the soil. Most cover crops should be allowed to decompose in the soil for at least a couple weeks before planting a cash crop.

Selecting a cover crop to match the specific needs of the cropping system is accomplished by looking at all options and keeping the end result in mind. Consider equipment needs, timing of planting and harvesting and the benefits of a specific cover crop.

For more information about cover crops and incorporating them into your farming practices, check out the Oregon Small Farms website, where there are links to Oregon State University’s cover crop publications and other resources.

Melissa Fery is the Small Farms Extension Agent for Lane, Linn & Benton Counties.

Cover Crop Information
Oregon Small Farms
http://oregonstate.smallfarms.edu

UC SAREP Cover Crop Database
http://www.sarep.ucdavis.edu/ccrop/

Managing Cover Crops Profitably
http://www.sare.org/publications/handbooks.htm

Rye/vetch stand at Whistling Duck Farm. Photo provided by Melissa Mathewson.
Farm Profile: Willow-Witt Ranch

Suzanne Willow and Lanita Witt live on a 442-acre ranch east of Ashland. A mix of wetland, woodland and meadow, Willow-Witt Ranch is a stunning mix of wilderness and farm. On this ranch, Lanita and Suzanne along with two employees, Tim and Erin, raise pigs, goats, chickens and compost for sale on the local market.

Suzanne and Lanita bought the land in 1985 and originally, they started with milking goats and cashmere goats until Suzanne read an article about pack goats in Sierra magazine. That’s when they started training their milk goats as pack goats selling them to folks who use them for backpacking. Lanita and Suzanne also use the goats on their own hiking trips, milking them on the trail. Along with their pack goats, they sell milk from the farm under the ODA exemption. They also sell goat meat by the whole animal as well as what they certify with the USDA stamp. They run the goats through the yard in springtime and out to browse three hours a day. They are interested in seeding their pastures with native grasses as a goat forage as well as interested in developing a management intensive grazing system for their goats.

After their daughter got involved in raising a pig for 4-H, Lanita and Suzanne began their own herd and now raise twenty to thirty wieners a year selling them as shares to a list of seventy families. They are the only ranchers raising organic hogs in the Rogue Valley. The Grange Co-op even prepares a special organic feed for them.

Their goal is to develop a variety of USDA certified value added products from their pigs to sell on the local, retail market. They’ve already been experimenting with sausages and salamis for themselves and are working toward organic certification of their entire ranch.

Suzanne and Lanita also raise Cornish Cross broiler chickens on a small patch of pasture in a simple field pen they built themselves. This year, they are growing three rounds of fifty birds. They process the chickens using equipment shared by a local poultry cooperative. They also raise these birds on organic feed, supplementing with kelp meal and oats. The women ranchers would like to sell their poultry locally when the processing equipment can become state inspected and certified.

Besides raising all-organic livestock, Suzanne and Lanita also raise organic compost (as yet to be certified) made from their goat manure, hay and wood chips. They sell about 60 to 80 yards per year to farmers and gardeners around the Rogue Valley.

On top of this, Suzanne and Lanita have successfully enrolled 76 of their 442 acres into the Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program through the USDA-Farm Service Agency. Willow-Witt Ranch had been heavily grazed by cattle in the past and the two were interested in restoring part of the degraded land. They worked with the USDA to fence seventy-two acres of wetland and have agreed not to graze this acreage for fifteen years. This is a cost-share program that requires them to maintain the grazing exclusion and fencing over the life of the agreement. They have also begun a small restoration project by planting 4,500 willows from their own land’s cuttings with plans to plant more.

Lanita and Suzanne are committed to stewarding their ranch with passion and observation by combining ecological land management principles and sustainable farming and ranching management. They are a terrific example of the diversity of small farms and ranches in the Rogue Valley.

—Melissa Matthewson
Impacts of the 2007 Farm Bill on Small Farmers

The 2007 Farm Bill is a complex piece of legislation that addresses many issues related to food and farming. The Bill, which is reauthorized every five to seven years by Congress, was passed by the House of Representatives in late July, and will be voted on by the Senate in the coming weeks. Since it covers such a wide scope of policy issues, including food assistance, conservation, agricultural trade, credit, rural development, research, and other policies, the Farm Bill can be difficult to understand. While some parts of the Bill can be passed as stand-alone laws, Congress has found that a bill broad in scope creates a more diverse coalition, and is thus easier to pass into law.

It is helpful to understand that the Bill is comprised of mandatory and discretionary programs; mandatory programs are guaranteed funding, while the discretionary programs require annual Congressional appropriations. Many discretionary programs are never funded by Congress. The single largest mandatory program in the Farm Bill is food stamps, which receives $30 to $40 billion per year. Some of the smaller mandatory programs include rural development and agricultural research.

Most small farm advocates consider the 2007 House Farm Bill to be a step backward because it increased the subsidy limits on commodity farmers. If passed into law, the limit increase means that more federal money will be spent on larger farms that grow one of a handful of crops. An active coalition is currently lobbying the Senate to curtail the amount of money spent on large, commodity farms.

On a positive note, the House Farm Bill includes many great programs that support small farms. The final House bill reauthorized the Beginning Farmer and Rancher Development Program with $15 million a year in mandatory funding, the Value Added Producer Grant with $30 million a year in mandatory funding, the Farmer’s Market Promotion Program with $35 million over the next five years in mandatory funding, the Senior Farmer’s Market Nutrition Program with $15 million per year in mandatory funding, the National Organic Certification Cost Share Program with $22 million over five years in mandatory funding, the Organic Farming Research and Extension Initiative with $5 million per year in mandatory funding, and a range of other programs that support the efforts of small-scale farmers. Some of these programs, including the Beginning Farmer and Rancher Development Program, were discretionary programs in the past, and never received funding from the Appropriations Committee. State and national USDA offices throughout the country oversee these programs.

Since the Senate is busy crafting their version of the Farm Bill, people still have time to make their voices heard. The Sustainable Agriculture Coalition has an on-line Farm Bill Action Center with suggestions on how to get involved. Their website is sustainable agriculturecoalition.org. The following websites have great information about the 2007 Farm Bill and how to stay involved.

Organic Farming Research Foundation
www.ofrf.org
Center for Rural Affairs
www.cfra.org
Western Sustainable Agriculture Working Group
www.westernsawg.org

New Small Farms Listserve!

We are trying something new here in the Small Farms program and we want to invite you to participate. We have set-up a listserve for small farmers located in southern Oregon in which members can email the listserve with discussion topics or questions related to their small farms.

For instance, if you are looking for a piece of equipment and need a supplier recommendation, you can email the listserve and ask others for recommendations. Or, if you are having a specific pest problem on your farm and you want to see what others may be doing to control that pest, you can email the listserve. Our intent is to continue developing communication channels between farmers, so that your needs are met by your peers as well as through OSU Extension.

You can request that you receive emails in a digest form, which means that you only receive one email per day with all of the email messages in that single email. Also, you can reply just to the person who asked the question or you can reply to the entire listserve. If you so desire, you may delete emails with threads that are not pertinent to your farm. Please limit your discussion topics and questions to issues relevant to small farms in southern Oregon.

You can subscribe to the listserve in two ways:

—Send a blank email to ‘Southern_oregon_small_farms-join@lists.oregonstate.edu.’ You will receive an email in return asking you to confirm your subscription.

—Or, you can join by going to http://lists.oregonstate.edu/; type in ‘Southern_oregon_small_farms’ and then follow the directions to join the list.
Finding Specialty Equipment for Market Farms

---from ATTRA---

In the 1980s Ferrari tractors became popular with kiwifruit growers in California’s Sacramento Valley. The low-profile machines could pass under the trellises and handle hilly terrain. Eugene Canales, the local Ferrari dealer, saw that these low-impact tractors would also work well for vineyards and small market farms. “I went looking for implements to match the tractors,” he recalls. In Italy he found numerous manufacturers of small-sized specialty farm equipment adapted to regional needs.

Canales started importing implements such as spading machines, which were a big breakthrough because they loosen the soil without inverting or compacting it. At first only a few forward-thinking viticulturists used the spaders, but the machines are finally becoming popular with market farmers all over the country.

Walk-behind tractors are gaining market share, too. These small tractors look like rototillers, but are much more powerful. They can utilize a wide range of implements including spaders, potato diggers, grain drills, transplanters, mowers, hay balers, windrowers, and powered trailers.

Greens harvesters are another new machine for modern market farms. Some are powered and others use battery-run cutter blades and are designed to be pushed along a wide bed of mesclun lettuce or other greens.

According to Canales, the most exciting new development is an implement that buries rocks while preparing a fine seedbed over them. “In Europe, stone buriers are as common as grass,” he said. “But here they are nowhere to be found.”

Several American companies are now importing various small-sized European tractors and implements that are extremely well suited to market farms. Asian tractors are also in wide distribution for both small and large operations. The following dealers specialize in machinery for small and medium-sized market farms:

**Earth Tools:** Walk-behind tractors & compatible implements

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Josh Cohen of Barking Moon Farm drives a walk-behind BCS tractor. Photo provided by Brad Greibenow.
(Ob)Noxious Weeds Bring Us Together

Anyone who grows a garden knows that weeds result in less tomatoes, lettuce or carrots. Most of us only contend with the everyday, shall we say ‘garden variety’ of weeds, but there is another category of weeds called “Noxious” weeds that are more sinister. These are weeds that are moving in from other areas, crowding out our native plants and taking over our landscape.

A new coalition has recently formed in Jackson County to combine forces and work more effectively to control noxious weeds. This group, called the Jackson County Cooperative Weed Management Area (or Jackson County CWMA) is composed of federal, state and local agencies who manage public lands. Other participants include agencies and organizations who work with private lands and private landowners, such as the Jackson Soil and Water Conservation District and The Nature Conservancy.

Coming together as land managers, the Jackson County CWMA recognizes that noxious weeds have a significant economic and ecological impact in our region. The same way that weeds reduce the potential of your veggie garden, weeds are reducing the productivity of farms, ranches and forest property throughout the county. Weeds are also having a negative impact on some forms of recreation and in some cases a bad infestation of weeds can lower property values. Additionally, eradicating weeds can be costly and well established weeds can take years of repeated treatment to remove. Weeds are a substantial part of the flammable vegetation that contributes to wild fires in our area.

Did you know that 50 years ago yellow star thistle was not a big problem in the Rogue Valley? Eradication seems hopeless now as it has spread everywhere, but it might have been possible when start thistle first took root in the valley. With that in mind, the Jackson County CWMA is prioritizing noxious weeds in our area in order to focus efforts on controlling new and emerging weeds before they take over.

The Oregon Department of Agriculture has compiled a statewide list of weeds that are considered noxious weeds. Here in southwestern Oregon, we have a combination of unique climate, soils and conditions that makes our high priority list a bit different from the statewide list. The Jackson County CWMA has developed their own “Most Wanted” list to help focus their attention on those weeds which are the most damaging and/or have the greatest potential to be held in check in Jackson County. The current “Most Wanted” list includes:

Yellow Star Thistle, Japanese Knotweed, Purple Loosestrife, Puncture Vine, Scotch Broom, Spanish Broom, Spotted Knapweed, Diffuse Knapweed, Canada Thistle, Scotch Thistle, Leafy Spurge, Dyer’s weed

In Jackson County these weeds represent both a threat and an opportunity. The threat is that if ignored these weeds have the potential to “move in and take over”. The opportunity is that if we work together there is a strong chance that we can keep these weeds at acceptable population levels that minimize economic and environmental losses. Our goal is to control and contain the populations, even if we can’t completely eradicate them.

The Jackson County CWMA will focus on 1) weed education, 2) coordination and 3) prevention goals to reduce the negative impact of noxious weeds.

The first goal to increase weed education is a high priority because locating and treating weeds throughout the county is a big job and we will need more foot soldiers to get it done. An excellent example of an education project was a recent training offered by The Nature Conservancy for Early Detection Rapid Response. This program teaches volunteers how to recognize new weed invaders. With knowledgeable volunteers on the lookout, we hope to attack these new invaders quickly before they get a chance to get a foothold. Future education activities will focus around weed identification and promoting awareness and better land management to improve our ability to control the spread of weeds.

Weeds could care less whose land they are on! Coordination, the second goal of Jackson County CWMA, creates an opportunity to make weed treatment more efficient by working across land-ownership boundaries and jurisdictions. Efforts to control them must go beyond land ownership if they are to be effective. Meeting monthly gives members of the Jackson County CWMA a chance to keep each other up to date on new weed populations and efforts to treat and control them. The meetings also create a forum to discuss what types of treatment are working and to share ideas for improvement.

Did you know that weeds spread by hitchhiking on hikers, all-terrain tires and livestock? The third aim of the Jackson County CWMA is prevention to increase awareness in hopes of reducing the spread of weeds through human activities. Many people are unaware that they may be spreading weeds through recreation, road building, or any kind of soil disturbance. Future prevention activities will include developing a monitoring program to keep an eye on certain sites or weeds and working to develop weed-free certification programs to help consumers identify which hay, livestock feed or gravel is certified to be free of weed seeds.

The Jackson County CWMA is grateful to the Jackson Soil and Water Conservation District for providing a home base for the group’s activities. If you have an interest in the group or you are interested in lending a hand, or learning more about weeds contact the SWCD at 734-3143.

Amy Wilson is Coordinator of the SW Oregon RC&D Council.
Calendar of Events

- **Monday, October 15th, 8:00 a.m.—5:00 p.m., Good Agricultural Practices for Fruit & Vegetable Production, $95**
  
  *Location: 238 Wiegand Hall, OSU Campus, Corvallis, Oregon State University. For more information, contact Debby Yacas, deborah.yacas@oregonstate.edu, or 800.823.2357.*

  This workshop provides participants better understanding of microbial risk and contamination of fruits and vegetables on the farm. The focus is on how to develop and implement Good Agricultural Practices (GAPs) to enhance food safety, as well as provide information about third-party certification and auditing.

- **Tuesday, October 16th, 4:00—8:00 p.m., Soil Fertility Building Blocks, $10**
  
  *Location: OSU Extension Auditorium, 569 Hanley Road, Central Point. To register, call Sheila at 776-7371.*

  Fall is a great time to build your soil fertility by planting cover crops, starting a compost pile, and planning your crop rotations for next season. Learn the basics of soil composition and how to develop a soil fertility management strategy appropriate for your soil types and farm operation.

- **Saturday, October 27th, 1:00—4:00 p.m., Introduction to Beekeeping, $10**
  
  *Location: 257 Wilson Road, Ashland. To register, call Sheila at 776-7371.*

  Interested in adding honey to your list of farm products? Apiarist Karen Peteros will outline the basic principles and practices of keeping bees. The class will be held at Karen’s farm, Wilson Lane Apiary, where we can visit her hives and take a close look at her beekeeping equipment. A representative from the Southern Oregon Bee Keepers Association will offer local resources for new and experienced beekeepers.

- **Monday, November 5th, 5:30—8:00 p.m., Creating Successful Farm Internships, $5**
  
  *Location: OSU Extension Auditorium, 569 Hanley Road, Central Point. To register, call Sheila at 776-7371.*

  Farm internships offer prospective growers educational and work experiences while providing affordable labor for small farmers. In this class, we will cover the basics of designing an internship that is mutually beneficial for farmer and intern alike. Topics to be covered include intern housing, work schedule, stipend, and recruiting and hiring interns. We will also introduce participants to a curriculum and cooperative internship program developed by local growers used to enhance farm internships. This class is co-sponsored by WEB (Within Earthly Bounds), a local non-profit dedicated to increasing agricultural learning opportunities.

- **Saturday, November 10th, 9:00 a.m.—5:00 p.m., Home Processing of Small Animals, $25**
  
  *Location: OSU Extension Auditorium, 569 Hanley Road, Central Point. To register, call Sheila at 776-7371.*

  In this hands-on class, local ranchers will demonstrate the butchering of sheep, rabbit and chickens for people interested in raising small animals for meat. Speakers will also address food safety issues and state and federal regulations for processing and selling meat and offer information about a local poultry processing cooperative.

- **Saturday, December 1st, 9:00—5:00 p.m., Horses & Mud, $20**
  
  *Location: OSU Extension Auditorium, 569 Hanley Road, Central Point. To register, call Sheila at 776-7371.*

  Co-sponsored by the Jackson County Soil and Water Conservation District, this class is designed to help small acreage horse owners learn how to manage mud and manure and how to implement good pasture management. Topics to be covered include horse health issues, cost-share programs and grazing management. Field visit included in the class.

- **Friday, December 7th & Saturday, December 8th, Organic Vegetable Production Short Course, $50**
  
  *Location: OSU Extension Auditorium, 569 Hanley Road, Central Point. To register, call Sheila at 776-7371.*

  In this short course, we will cover the nuts and bolts of organic vegetable production. Agricultural professionals and experienced, local growers will cover topics including organic production principles, organic certification, soil fertility, irrigation, greenhouse production, succession planting, insect, disease and weed management, season extension, marketing, and business planning basics. Lunch is provided.

- **Thursdays, January 10th, 17th, 24th, & 31st, 6:00—9:00 p.m., Exploring a Small Farm Dream, $100**
  
  *Location: OSU Extension, 215 Ringuette Street, Grants Pass. For an application, call Lyn at 476-6613.*

  In this four-session course you will set personal and farming goals, assess available resources, determine if farming as a business is right for you, and develop an action plan to guide next steps. Along the way you will take a close look at the realities of working for yourself, in particular what it takes to own and manage a successful agricultural venture.
Newsletter of the SW Oregon Small Farms Program.

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