




# *Ograin 2018*



James (Sandy) Syburg  
White Oak Farm  
Southeast Wisconsin  
Established 1988  
300 certified organic acres  
100 transitional acres  
Grain-corn, barley, rye, wheat  
Seed-peas, barley, rye, vetch  
Dry Edible Beans, alfalfa  
Sunflowers (oil)



Important in my small operation  
to spread work out over longer  
timeframe

10 year field history

36 individual plantings


25 different varieties




## Why Organic ?



We seem to think that  
working with nature  
is like  
being honest in our lives  
(in that it is a good thing to do).



## This is Why...



In fact nature's need for balance is so powerful  
that once you begin to seriously work  
with true ecological integrity,  
you will be amazed how our efforts will be  
reciprocated and amplified"

*Alick Bartholomew / Author  
Hidden Nature 2003*



# Organic Transition

The necessary changes need to take place in the mind as well as the fields of the farmer.




**BETTER LIVING**  
through **CHEMISTRY**



# CHALLENGES



The image shows a hand holding dark soil on the left and a large field of yellow sunflowers under a blue sky with clouds on the right.



## #1 Fertility

- In transition fields work from a good field history and soil test if possible
- Cannot input your way to success
- Reduced or waived rent in transition years based on soil correctives
- Share in upside with landowner when fertility and yield goal are met



The image shows a hand holding dark soil.



## #2 Weed Management

- Takes priority over everything
- Over time add tools to the toolbox
  - ◆ 2 types of cultivators
  - ◆ Tine Weeder
  - ◆ Rotary Hoe
  - ◆ Optical (camera) cultivator
- Cultural
  - ◆ Interseeding (competitive exclusion)
  - ◆ Rotation
  - ◆ Read,Read,Read...




## Resources I have used

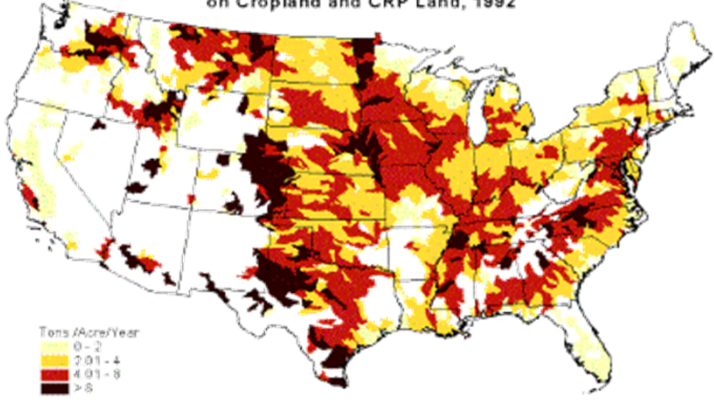
- When Weed Talk  
*Jay McCaman*
- Weed Control Without Poisons  
*Charles Walters*
- Weed Control a textbook and manual  
*Craft & Raynor (1938)*
- Farm Economy  
*twelve courses in agriculture (1915)*

**PURPLE COW ORGANICS**

# SUCESSES



Average Annual Soil Erosion by Wind and Water on Cropland and CRP Land, 1992




Tons /Acre/Year

- 0-2
- 2.01-4
- 4.01-8
- >8

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# “Feed the Soil, Feed the Soil, Feed the Soil”





## So what about yield ?

- Not the only (or best) measurement
- I feel that 10% above county average is a starting point
- \$\$\$ Organic premiums are an attractive reason to transition
- Should be based on a fully functioning plant soil system
- not just different inputs



## In Just 3 Years...









## In 10 Years...



- Increased organic matter 1%
  - ◆ 15-20K gallons of water/acre
  - ◆ \$750 additional nutrients
- Reduced soil compaction
  - ◆ Went from less than 6" penetrometer to unrestricted
- Increased P & K 140% without application  
healthy soil/biological liberation



**"Hope gives rise to that, that is contemplated"** James Godsil



~~If it's not broken,  
don't fix it~~

**If it's fixed,  
don't break it**

 It's not all rainbows and unicorns





 Thank You!





Syburg Family Farm 1904