

OHIO SOIL HEALTH WEEK

Celebrating
Ohio's Soil!

OHIO'S SOILS DESERVE A CELEBRATION

Soil is Ohio's most valuable natural resource and is every farmer, rancher, and land steward's greatest legacy. Although soil is essential to our communities, economy, climate, nutrition, and farm production, there's little awareness of the importance of soil health. Agriculture is central to Ohio's economy and our soils are at the base of it all. In face of Ohio's unique challenges, good soil health practices can improve water quality while also helping farmers and ranchers with long-term profitability and resilience. Farmers are already having to adapt to more frequent extreme weather events and are interested in improving soil health to help hold more water during droughts and improve infiltration during heavy rain events. Additionally, the cost and availability of fertilizers and pesticides are becoming an increasing problem for the bottom line of farms across the country. Building healthy soils takes time and making those investments will reduce the need for outside fertility and water quality mitigation in the future. Celebrating soil means we're supporting Ohio's farmers, our water, and our future.

HEALTHY SOILS

- Result in better, healthier crops
- Result in nutrient dense foods with more minerals and vitamins
- Increase water infiltration and retention, mitigating floods and droughts
- Sequester carbon and reduce greenhouse gases (GHGs)
- Improved water and air quality
- Protect our waterways and ground water by reducing erosion, runoff, and leaching of nutrients
- Improve profitability by reducing input costs
- Decrease reliance on fertilizers, herbicides, insecticides, and fungicides.
- Provide positive return on investment
- Improve biological diversity and wildlife habitat

PRINCIPLES OF HEALTHY SOIL

The USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) has identified five principles for improving soil health and sustainability:

- Use plant diversity to increase diversity in the soil.
- Manage soils more by disturbing them less.
- Keep plants growing throughout the year to feed the soil.
- Keep the soil covered as much as possible.
- Integrate livestock to recycle nutrients and increase plant diversity.

THE OHIO SOIL HEALTH INITIATIVE

The Ohio Soil Health Initiative (OSHI) supports Ohio farmers, ranchers, and landowners who want to increase farm productivity, profitability, resiliency, and positive impact on their community by increasing the health of their soil. OSHI is organized by the Ohio Ecological Food and Farm Association (OEFFA) in collaboration with our partners across Ohio. Founded in 1979, OEFFA cultivates a future in which sustainable and organic farmers thrive, local food nourishes our communities, and agricultural practices protect and enhance our environment.

OHIO SOIL HEALTH WEEK

An initiative of OSHI, Ohio Soil Health Week would provide a time and space to celebrate, honor, and protect Ohio's soils. Our request is to create a **Soil Health Week Act** that would designate a weeklong celebration of soil health with outreach and education to reach both within and beyond the agriculture community and raise awareness around Ohio's most valuable natural resource. Throughout the Soil Health Week celebration, OSHI and partners will bring together farmers, community members, organizations, state leaders, and legislators to celebrate with a variety of events, opportunities, and resources. Each day of the week will feature different voices in the local food and farm system presenting on a range of topics that focus on how powerful and important Ohio's soils are. We have decided to set the second full week in November as "Ohio Soil Health Week" and the Wednesday of that week as "Ohio Soil Health Day"; honoring the late David Brandt, an Ohio Soil Health pioneer and advocate, the "godfather of Soil Health", and active OSHI member, whose birthday falls that week.



Beyond celebrating Ohio's soils and expanding awareness about the importance of healthy soil, Ohio Soil Health Week would honor the late David Brandt, an Ohio Soil Health pioneer and advocate, the "godfather of Soil Health", and active OSHI member. Dave was a life-long farmer with his family in Carroll, Ohio.