

Trees for Food

Final Report for FNC97-184

Project Type: Farmer/Rancher

Funds awarded in 1997: \$5,000.00

Projected End Date: 12/31/1998

Region: North Central

State: Iowa

Project Coordinator:

[Mary Carter](#)

Project Information

Summary:

PROJECT BACKGROUND

We (husband, wife, 3 children, husband's mother and father) have 90 acres. We've converted about 23 acres of hay ground to a hardwood "tree farm", with a goal of about 50 acres of trees. We've had a field day demonstrating CRP conversion through tree plantings using direct seed and seedlings, and the use of mulch and mowing for weed control. We are planting organic soybeans this year, after a rotation of alfalfa, which will be plowed under as a green manure. We are a certified organic farm.

PROJECT DESCRIPTION AND RESULTS

The objective of this project is to demonstrate and document the feasibility and profitability of growing selected varieties of fruit and nut trees on highly erodible land in SE Iowa.

I researched by reading and talking to experts about nuts and fruit trees for SE Iowa, especially Tom Wahl. Then I purchased the seedlings and planted them as per Tom's instructions. Some trees do better on high ground, some down by the water and some in between; for example. There were many things to consider such as how to plant for ease of harvest down the road. Tom Wahl helped me with many ideas and suggestions. Other people were our local DNR forester, Ray Lehn and Ron Bower, ISU Co. Extension also there to help with advice was Paul Tauke, RC&D forester.

Results:

The only results we have so far are that there are nut and fruit seedlings in the ground. We will not be able to measure results as to feasibility and profitability of growing these specific trees until they begin growing and bearing. Some chestnuts bear in 2 years; hazels in 3; other chestnuts, 3-4 years. Other trees, 4 plus years to begin bearing. Most of the evaluating will occur over several years. In the spring I will measure the survival of the seedlings.

Discussion:

I learned a lot about the use of alternative crops on highly erodible land. I am constantly learning more since the onset of this project. This is just the beginning. I am now thinking about plants that will grow under the shade of the trees. There are medicinal plants that are more and more in demand and therefore will be another

source of income. I feel this is exciting because of its impact on the use of this highly erodible type of land.

OUTREACH

When I was ready to have a field day I used the media in every way I could think of. I was interviewed by our local newspaper, another local weekly paper, and a newsletter that is produced by a local health food store. The town chamber of commerce's organic representative spread the news by sending copies of our field day write up to other counties across the state. I sent a copy to our local forester. We had about 45 people attend our field day. After the field day I was then interviewed by the local health food store newsletter for a front page article. When the fruit and nut trees begin to bear I will have more field days to demonstrate and share knowledge and experience. In addition, reports on viability and overall profitability will be made available to others through the District Forester and the ISU Jefferson County Extension Agency.

Research

Participation Summary

Any opinions, findings, conclusions, or recommendations expressed in this publication are those of the author(s) and do not necessarily reflect the view of the U.S. Department of Agriculture or SARE.



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