

# Transitioning to No -Till can be challenging...



...but rewarding...

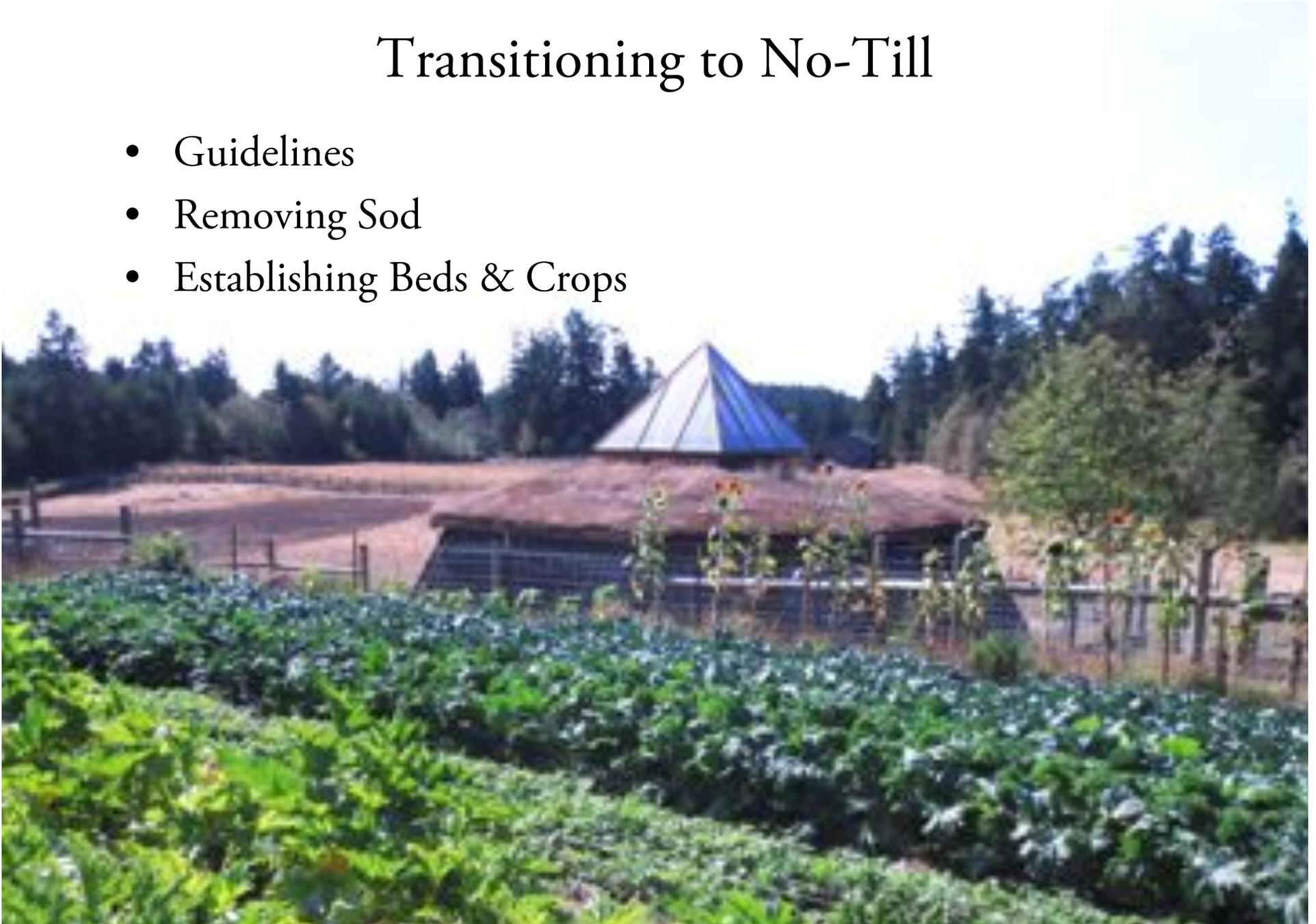


...and, eventually, less work.



# Transitioning to No-Till

- Guidelines
- Removing Sod
- Establishing Beds & Crops



# Guidelines

- A) Start slowly & small
- B) Have a short term & long term plan
- C) Choose something that you can succeed at
- D) Be patient & have realistic expectations
- E) Incorporate no/reduced-till into existing practices
- F) Prioritize minimizing soil disturbance & long term health of soil
- G) In a new site or poorly performing one focus on building fertility & weed management prior to planting a cash crop

H) Establish beds after the site has been well prepared (removing rocks and sod)



I) Base bed widths on your long term plans and use of equipment

J) Once established avoid all compaction of beds with foot / equipment

# Removing Sod

1. Biological approach (for pasture)
2. Mechanical approach (hand or tractor)
3. Using commercial or organic mulching



# 1. Biological Approach

- Broadcast seeds for plants that will out-compete the sod or will establish themselves within the sod



- More appropriate for pasture or areas in the garden that are not being used for cash crops

- Consider using pigs to root out sod in small fenced areas, one section at a time



- The advantage of pigs over mechanical methods: they eat the roots and add manure!

## 2. Mechanical Approach

- Undercut sod to a maximum of two inches deep.

By hand using a hoe or a broad pick.



By tractor using a spread cultivator with a broad knife, or a sod cutter



- Remove sod and rake out surface roots
- Plant aggressive cover crop that will suppress grass
- Don't plant cash crop until sod is under control
- Repeat method if necessary



### 3. Mulching

- Place cardboard, plastic or biodegradable mulch on top of sod



- OR on top of man-made mulch apply thick layer (min 6") of organic mulch (straw, woodchips etc) & punch holes through organic and man-made mulch for transplants
- After 2 years remove all mulch, rake out sod roots & plant cover crop before continuing with cash crops

# Establishing Beds



- Bed width determined by operation and use of equipment



- Strip planting is an alternative to narrow beds and pathways

- Start with easy crops: transplants such as squash, tomatoes, cabbage, broccoli, cauliflower



- Avoid direct seeding crops that are slow germinating until you have gained experience and reduced weed pressure

- Establish a ground-cover in paths (permanent or annual)



- Choose a cover-crop that can out-compete weeds but not your crop