

Cover Crops and Green Manures

Welcome to another post where you can learn how to alleviate one sided soil conditions.

So far we saw that we can inhibit certain weed growth through ashing seeds or making even more potent homeopathic remedies for the soil and our environment to curtail weed infestations.

Today we want to tackle the question of other ways to alleviate these one-sided soil conditions:

- Soils that lack nutrients and fertility
- Soils that are too light, sandy and too well drained
- Compaction of the heavy soils types (clay and silty soils) on the surface or the different layers below the surface which has caused water logging, lack of drainage or aeration, putrefaction, or anaerobic processes
- Soils that have lost their structure through over cultivation and hoeing too much: either they get too powdery and therefore too dry and or when it rains they get puddled on the surface.
- Soils that have lost their structure through converting to organic or biodynamic methods:

Just to mention the most predominant factors of one-sided soil conditions.

What methods can we employ to heal these soils?

The most effective way is by having the soil always covered in living plants, which protect the soil from the impact of rain and the drying effect of wind, sun and cosmic radiation, and whose root systems penetrate the soil deeply creating openings for drainage and also knit the soil together when it is too light, as in the case of sandy soils.

The best substance to co-create for the regeneration and healing of the soils is humus. Specifically, it is humus which is saturated in alkaline elements like calcium, magnesium, sodium and potassium and which help the soil flocculates and particle structure and makes a beautiful, living crumb structure.

To improve fertility we sow nitrogen fixing legumes. This can be achieved by sowing cover and green manure crops: whenever a bed is free we sow a green manure. These improve the structure and fertility of the soil for the crops that are sown afterwards.

In Springtime we sow Mustard, Phacelia, Buckwheat, which enhance structure, raise minerals that were washed out back into the topsoil. And also vetch, peas, fenugreek, Persian clover and field beans which all fix nitrogen.

You can also broadcast mustard or spinach and eat what you can and dig in the rest.

In late summer we sow Winter Vetch with Oats, Rye or Hungarian Rye, which is dug under in Spring before planting heavy feeder vegetables.

These green manures were discovered in the Middle Ages, when farmers needed to feed their animals and started realising that these plants were nutritious for the animal as cover crops for cutting or time restricted grazing for extra fast growth and milk production. Then they noticed that their subsequent crops grew faster after these crops.

Try it out for yourself and let us know how you are doing and send in photos of your beautiful cover crops.

With blessings and good wishes

Hans-Günther

Crimson Clover



Phacelia with bee



Fenugreek – three stages of growth



Winter Peas green manure



Vetch

