

NRCS **NEWS RELEASE**

United States Department of Agriculture • Natural Resources Conservation Service
607 9TH ST NE Long Prairie MN 56347 • (320) 732-6618 ext. 3
Web: <http://www.mn.nrcs.usda.gov> & http://www.co.todd.mn.us/departments/soil_water/nrcs

Contact:

[Russell Kleinschmidt](#), District Conservationist, (320) 732-6618 ext. 3

Soil Health: Organic Matter... Matters

If you are a farmer or gardener planning for the 2013 crop year, it is important to keep in mind that there is one component of your growing system that matters more than anything else: **soil organic matter** (which is the fraction of the soil composed of anything that once lived).

Although soil organic matter usually composes only 2-5% of the soil by volume and much less by weight, it controls 90% of a soil's function. Increased organic matter means soil surface structure becomes more stable and less prone to crusting and erosion. Water infiltration increases and runoff decreases. Crop health and yields improve, long-term productivity and resiliency increase, and weed, disease, and insect pressure is relieved. It also makes soil more friable or easier to work.

At one time soil scientists felt that no significant changes to organic matter could be made through management. Now we know this to be untrue. There are farmers who are doubling their soil organic matter in less than a decade. Even sandy soils, such as those found in a majority of Todd County, can be managed effectively to increase organic matter from less than 2% to 4-5%. Just a 1 percent increase in soil organic matter correlates to a 0.5" increase of available soil water capacity or 13,577 gallons/acre.

Contact the Long Prairie NRCS field office at 732-6618 ext. 3 if you'd like to learn more about soil health and the technical and financial assistance available to you.

#

USDA is an Equal Opportunity Provider and Employer

Helping People Help the Land

An Equal Opportunity Provider and Employer