



Inter-seeding cover crops at Fall Creek Gardens

“We are growing soil”
Levert Sharpe III, Gardener
Fall Creek Gardens, Indianapolis

Soil Health Hero

Levert Sharpe III believes that mimicking nature’s cycle for rejuvenating the soil creates the most productive and efficient growing medium. He is working with MCSWCD to incorporate several practices to improve soil health, including growing cover crops to keep a live root in the soil, and mulching to retain moisture. Levert is a big advocate of composting organic scraps, like garden trimmings and leaves, to cycle the nutrients back into the soil.



Fall Creek Gardens

Size: Nearly 1 acre total (7 city lots),
4’ x 8’ garden plots

Type: Urban, wooden, raised bed,
organic community garden

Nutrient Cycling: Composting organics
and manure is creating a nutrient-rich
soil that Fall Creek Gardens incorporates
into garden beds to replenish soil
nutrients and levels.



In spring, cover crops are “chopped and dropped” to cover the soil. This mulch is gently pulled away where a small hole is then dug for the transplants. Levert already had a great foundation for soil health, and adding these practices further increases garden success.

Levert has used compost and manure to enhance soil for many years. Now, through experimentation with various MCSWCD-suggested practices, he has been able to identify the best combination to maximum soil health in his beds. Trying out different cover crops, placing cover crop trimmings as mulch and feeding cover crop cuttings into his compile pile -- have all added up to a nutrient-rich soil ready for spring planting.

When Hairy Vetch (a legume) is used as a cover crop, Levert adds the flowers and trimming to the compost pile to increase the nitrogen content. The compost is later added to the beds.



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