

# REGENERATIVE VINEYARDS

Building the Foundation and  
A Successful Transition

**Chuck Schembre**

Regenerative Ag Consultant  
Orchards | Vineyards | Vegetables

*Certified Professional Soil Scientist*





# A BIT ABOUT CHUCK



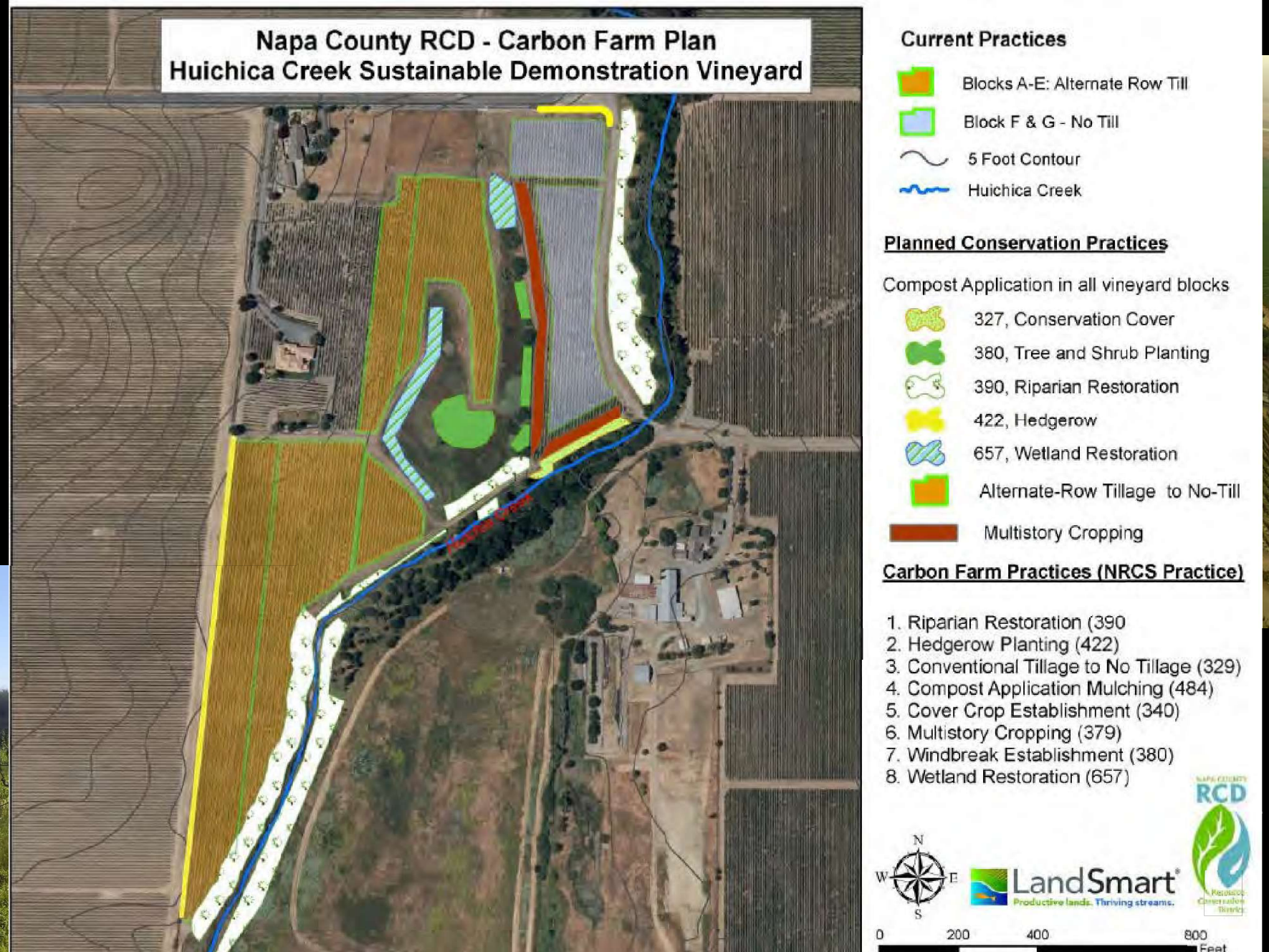


























# The 6-3-4™

## Understanding AG's Regenerative Model

### 6 PRINCIPLES

#### Of Soil Health

1



#### Know your context.

Our soil health practices are a reflection of ourselves and our stewardship of the land.

2



#### Do not disturb.

In nature, there is no mechanical or chemical disturbance.

3



#### Cover and build surface armor to protect the soil's "skin"

4



#### Mix it up

with a diversity of plants, microbes, insects, wildlife, livestock. Mother Nature did not grow monocultures so why should we?

5



#### Keep living roots in the soil as long as possible each year. Roots feed soil microorganisms, which feed our plants.

6



#### Grow healthy animals and soil together.

Grazing has been an essential component of all soils at one time or another.

### THREE RULES OF ADAPTIVE STEWARDSHIP

#### Compounding

Everything we do on the farm or ranch produces compounding and cascading effects. These effects are never neutral in nature but either positive or negative. Create positive impacts with.

#### Diversity

Nature never supports or produces a monoculture. Nature always yields incredible diversity—in soil microbes, macro-organisms, plants and animals.

#### Disruption

Nature becomes stagnant if we settle into a routine with our management practices, so introduce periodic, planned disruptions in order to keep things moving forward.

### 4 ECOSYSTEM

#### PROCESSES

#### Energy Flow

Energy flow is all about solar energy or photosynthesis. Unlike the water cycle and mineral cycle, solar energy does not cycle. It flows from the sun to the earth. It is necessary for everything on the planet to survive. Leaving enough plant material behind for its proteins to occur is crucial to all life.

#### Water Cycle

When rain or snow falls on our land, we are responsible for its fate from that point forward. Will it infiltrate and be retained? Will it pond and pond and evaporate or runoff? Will it cause erosion and harmful runoff to others? Can we keep it or do we lose it?

#### Mineral Cycle

The three phases of an effective mineral cycle are 1. moving minerals from below to above the soil surface and 2. moving minerals from above the soil surface back into the soil. This is a crucial part of a large carbon cycle and is enabled by highly functioning water cycle. Grazing, tilling, and burning minerals even impact part of this process.

#### Diversity

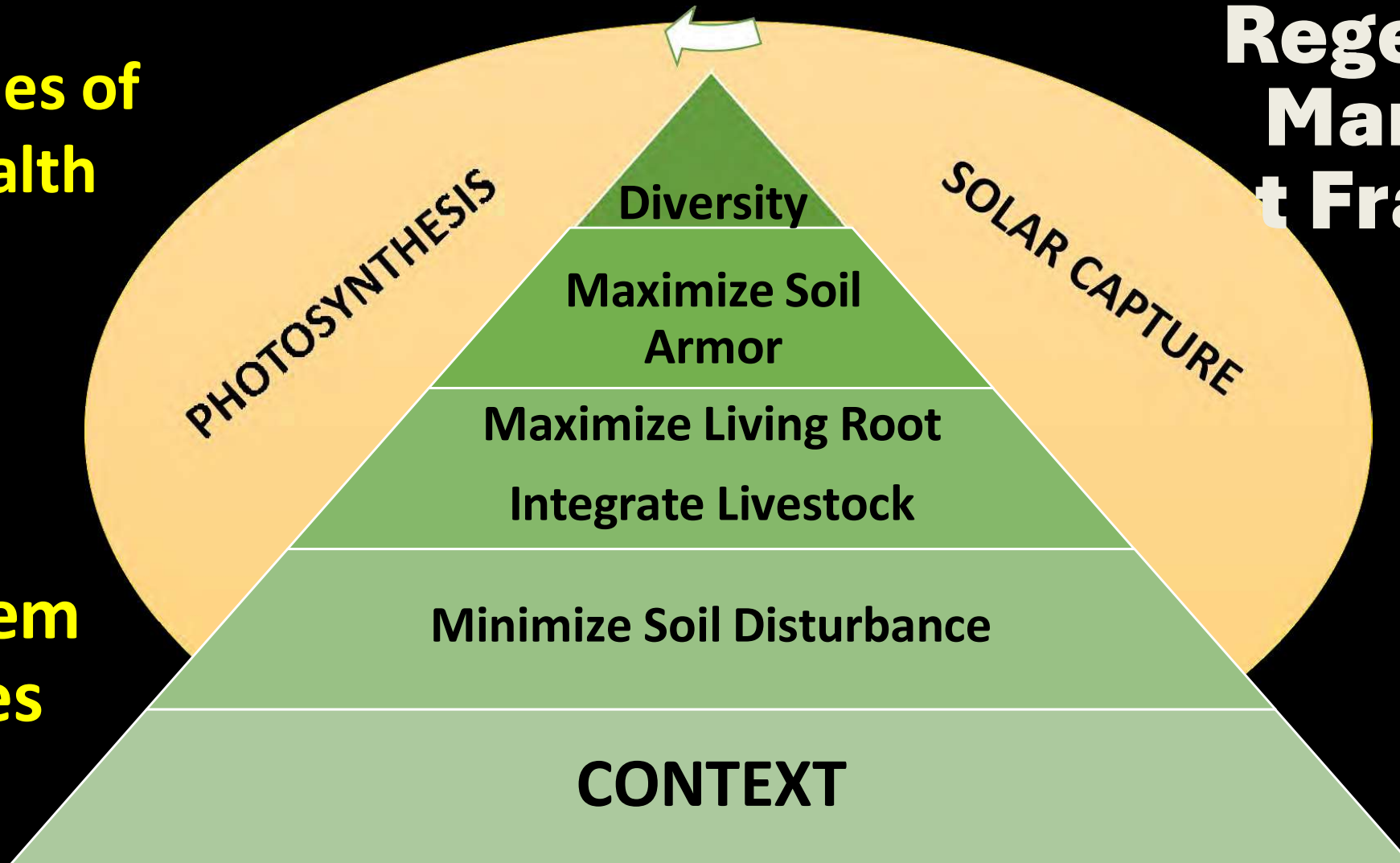
This is also sometimes called biological succession. It involves the changes in the development of all living things. There is a fundamental rule of succession that is defined by the statement from the Brackley-Ward Legacy Trust, "An species will move into an environment when the conditions are suitable for its establishment and will move out of that environment when conditions become unsuitable for its reproduction."





**6 Principles of  
Soil Health**

**Regenerative  
Management  
Framework**

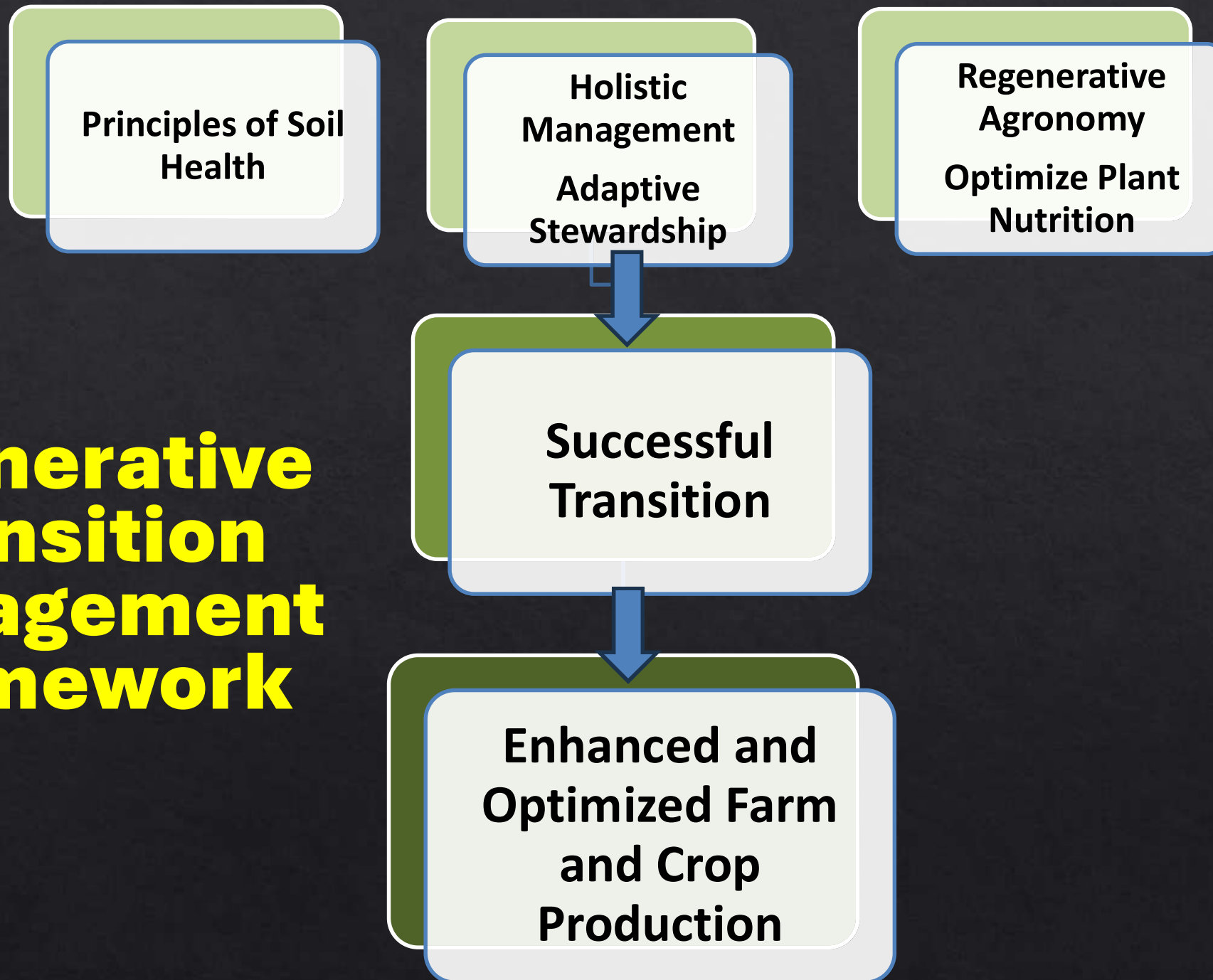


**4 Ecosystem  
Processes**

Developed by  
Chuck Schembre



# Regenerative Transition Management Framework



Developed by  
Chuck Schembre



# BUILDING HEALTHY FUNCTIONING SOIL



UnderstandingAG



# What is a Functional Soil?

**ABILITY TO:**

**Capture, Store & Cycle**

- 1. Water**
- 2. Gases**
- 3. Nutrients**



# Broken Water Cycle



**Dysfunctional**



**Functional**

**Water  
Infiltration  
problems  
are man-  
made**

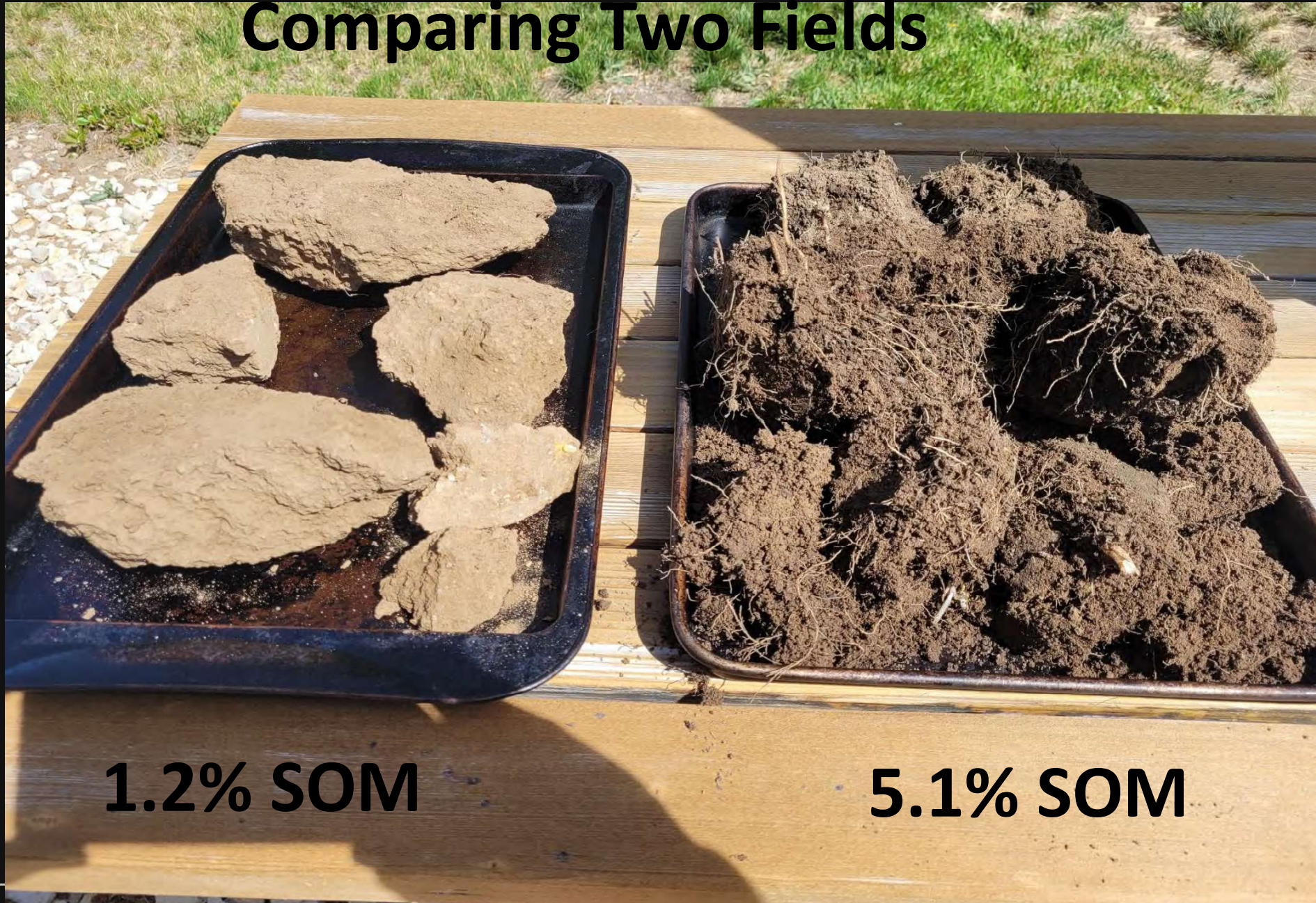
**California Central Valley, Winter 2023**







# Comparing Two Fields



**1.2% SOM**

**5.1% SOM**



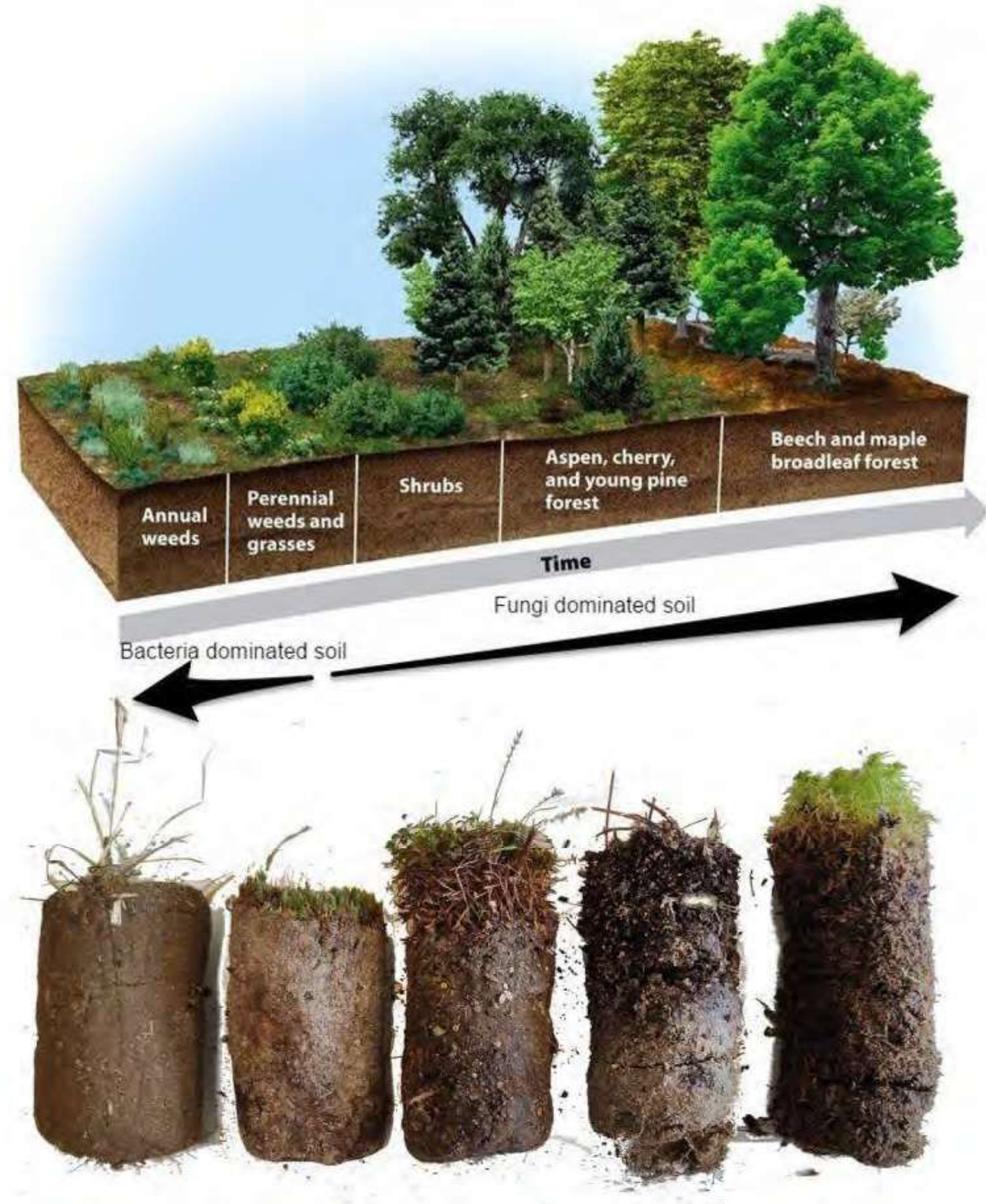
# MIMIC NATURE'S DESIGN

PERENNIAL CROPS THRIVE IN A  
SOIL ABUNDANT WITH FUNGI

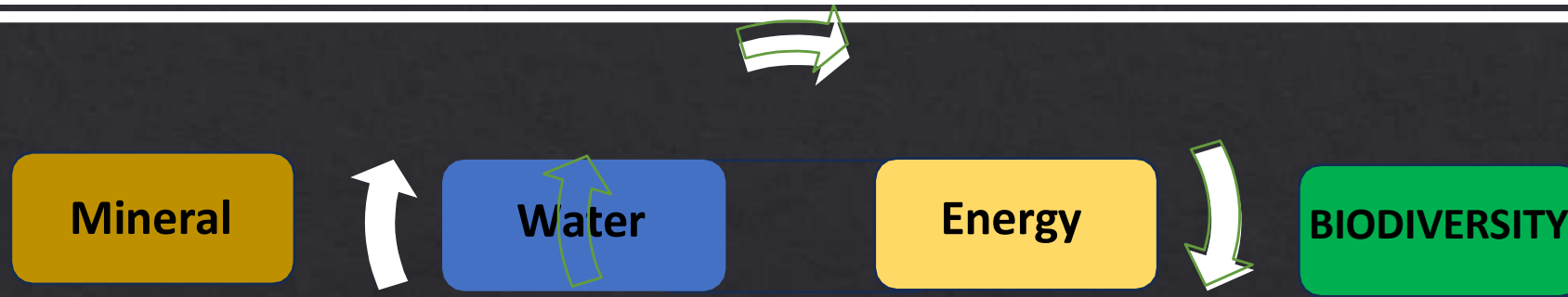
CONTINUOUS FLOW OF  
DIVERSE SOURCES OF ORGANIC  
MATTER



UnderstandingAG

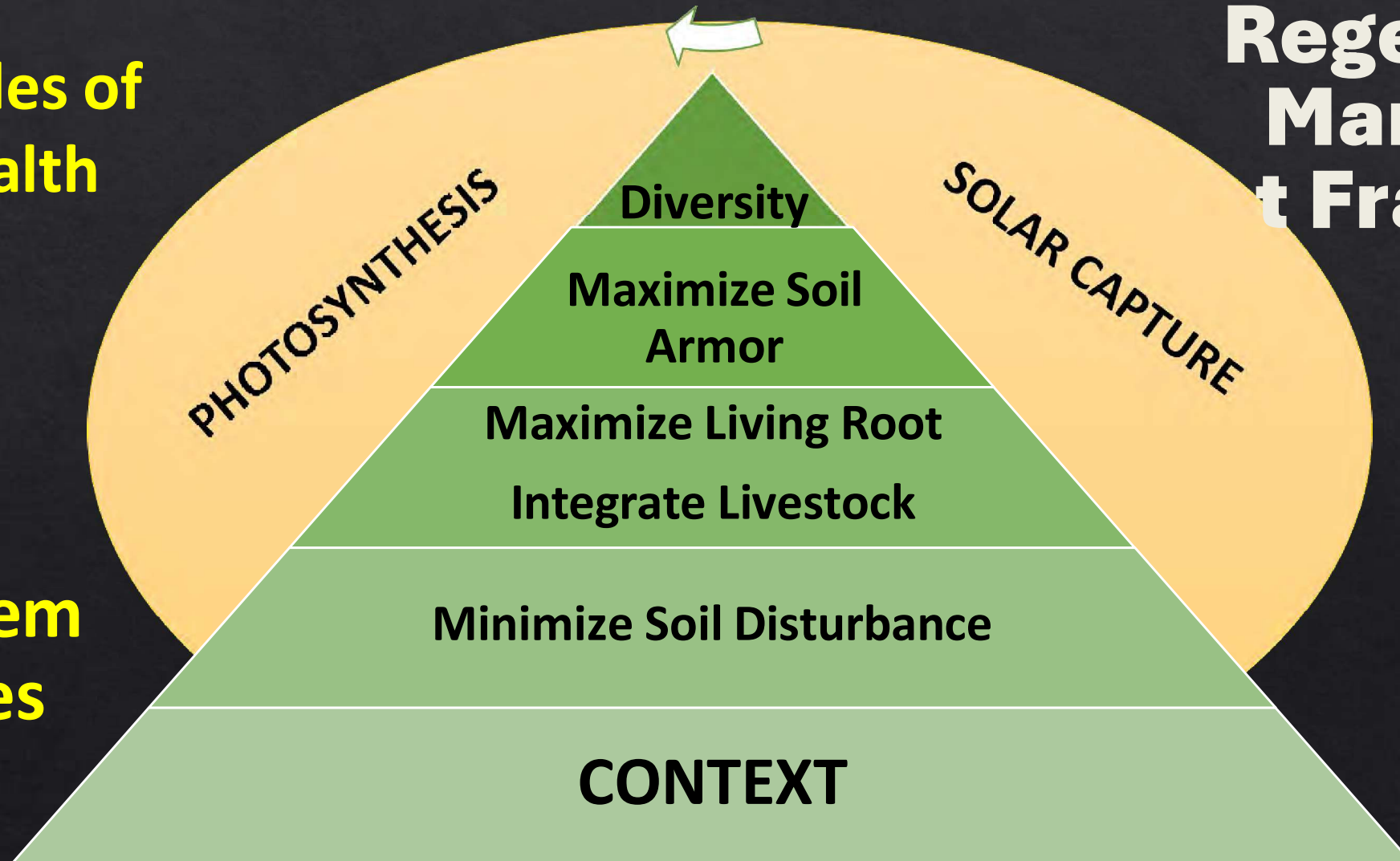






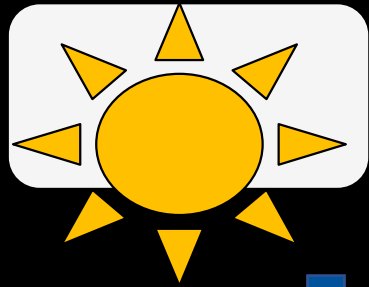
**6 Principles of  
Soil Health**

**Regenerative  
Management  
Framework**



**4 Ecosystem  
Processes**





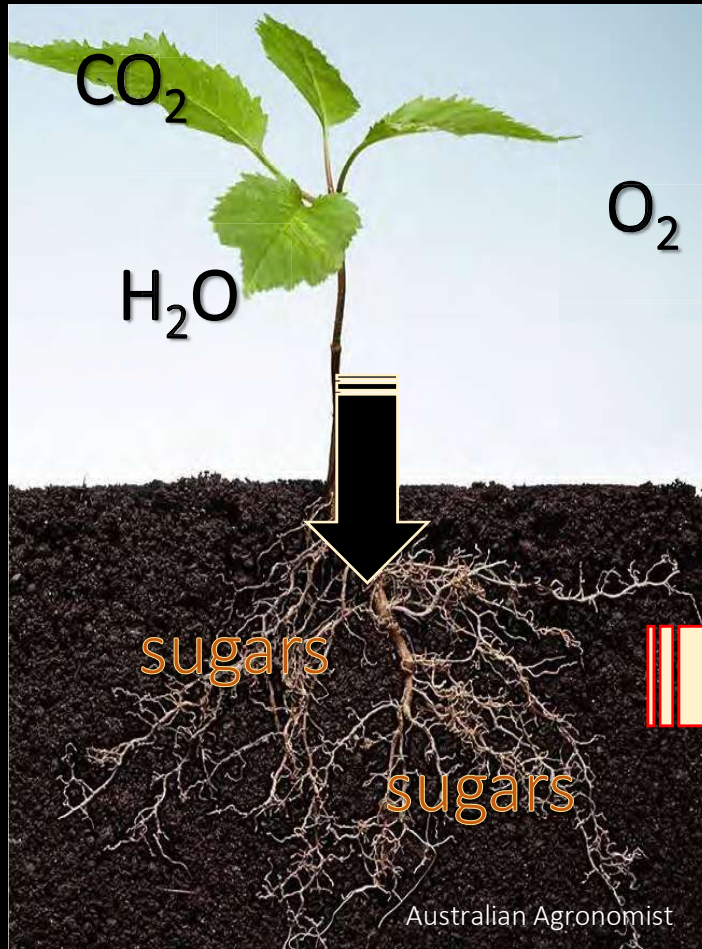
# Photosynthesis

## The Soil Health Driver

1. Solar Energy Flow
2. Liquid Carbon Pathway

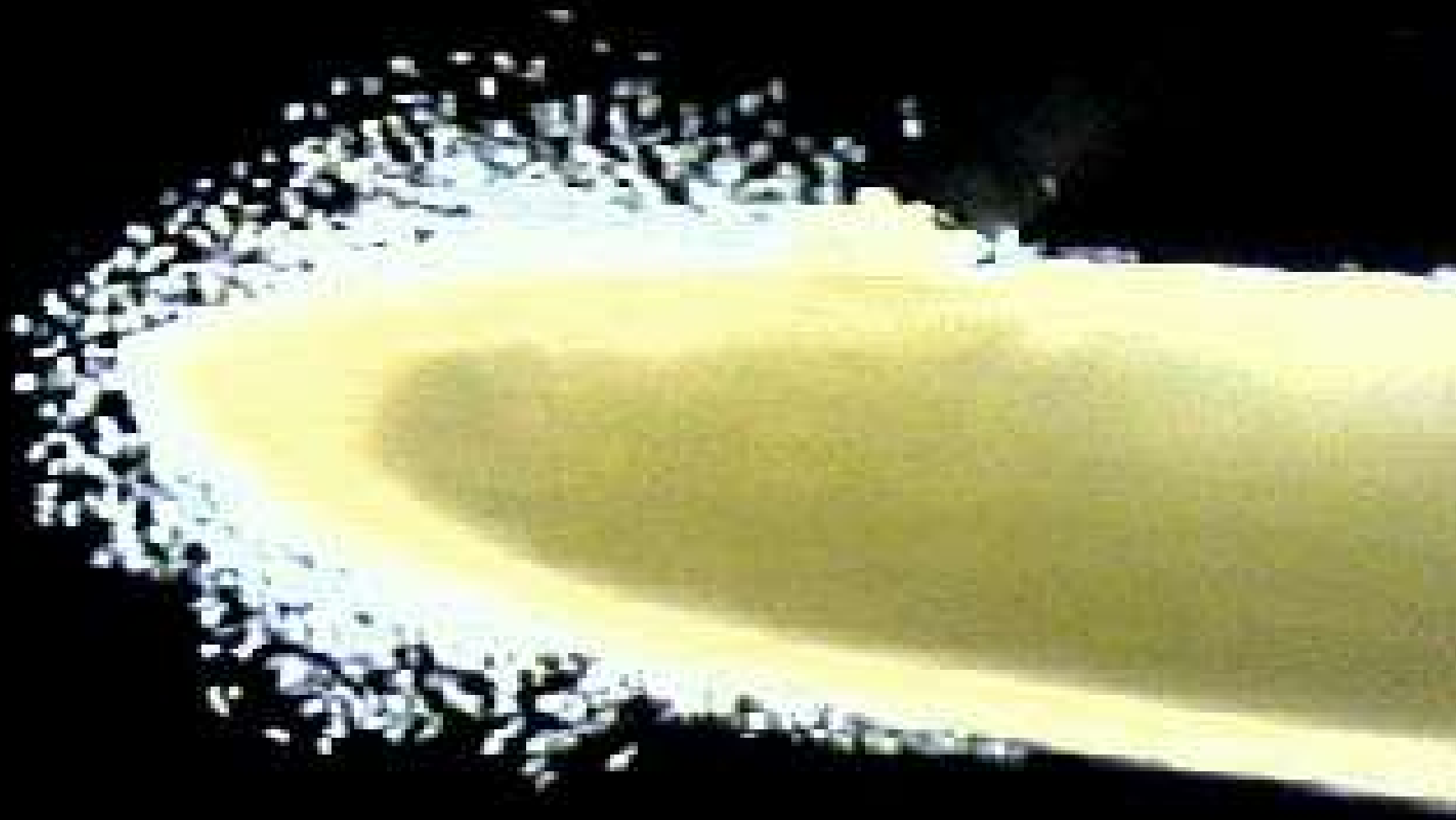
Creates a biological hot spot:

### The Rhizosphere





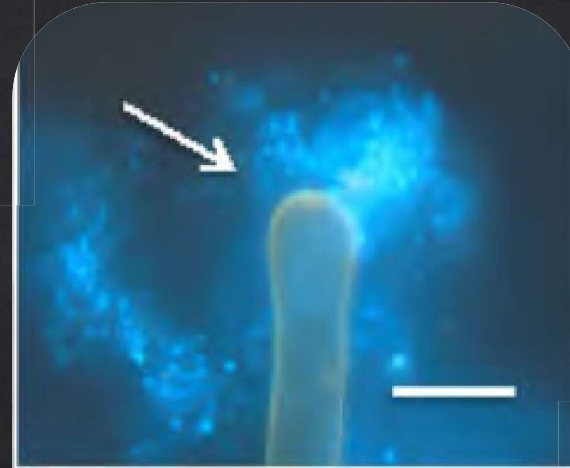
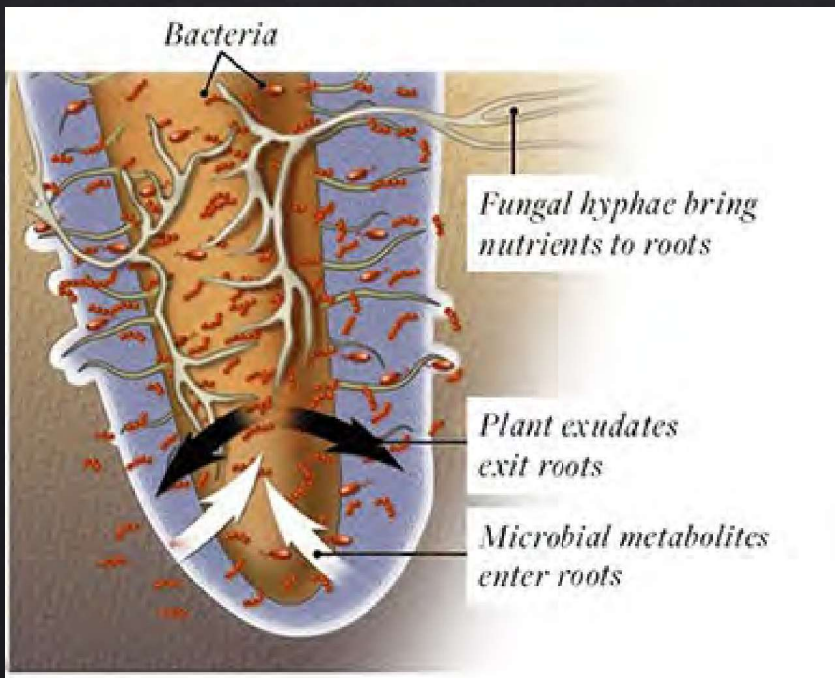
# Liquid Sun: Roots leaking exudates!





# Rhizosphere Biological Hotspot

## Rhizosheaths



Bacteria (arrow) emerging from root hair tip of millet seedling.

## Plant Roots Attract Microbes

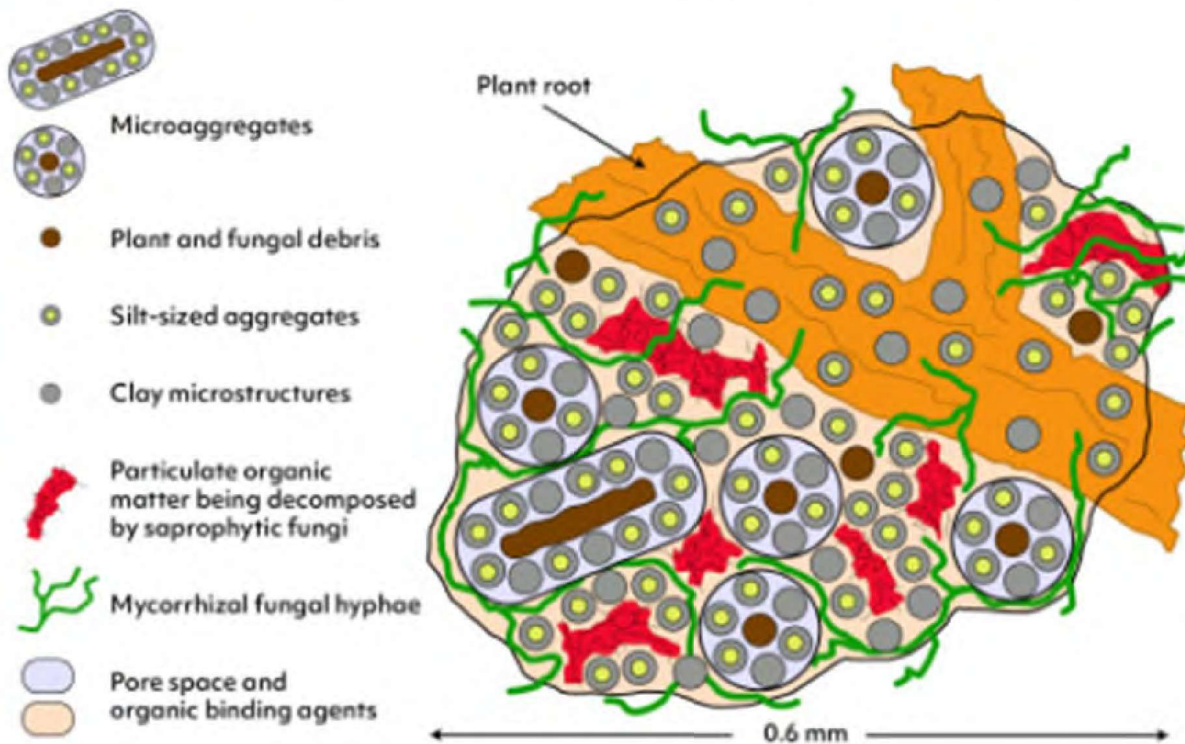




# The Creation of Soil Aggregates

## CONCEPTUAL DIAGRAM OF A MACROAGGREGATE

From Jastrow and Miller, 1998, in *Soil Processes and the Carbon Cycle*, CRC Press.



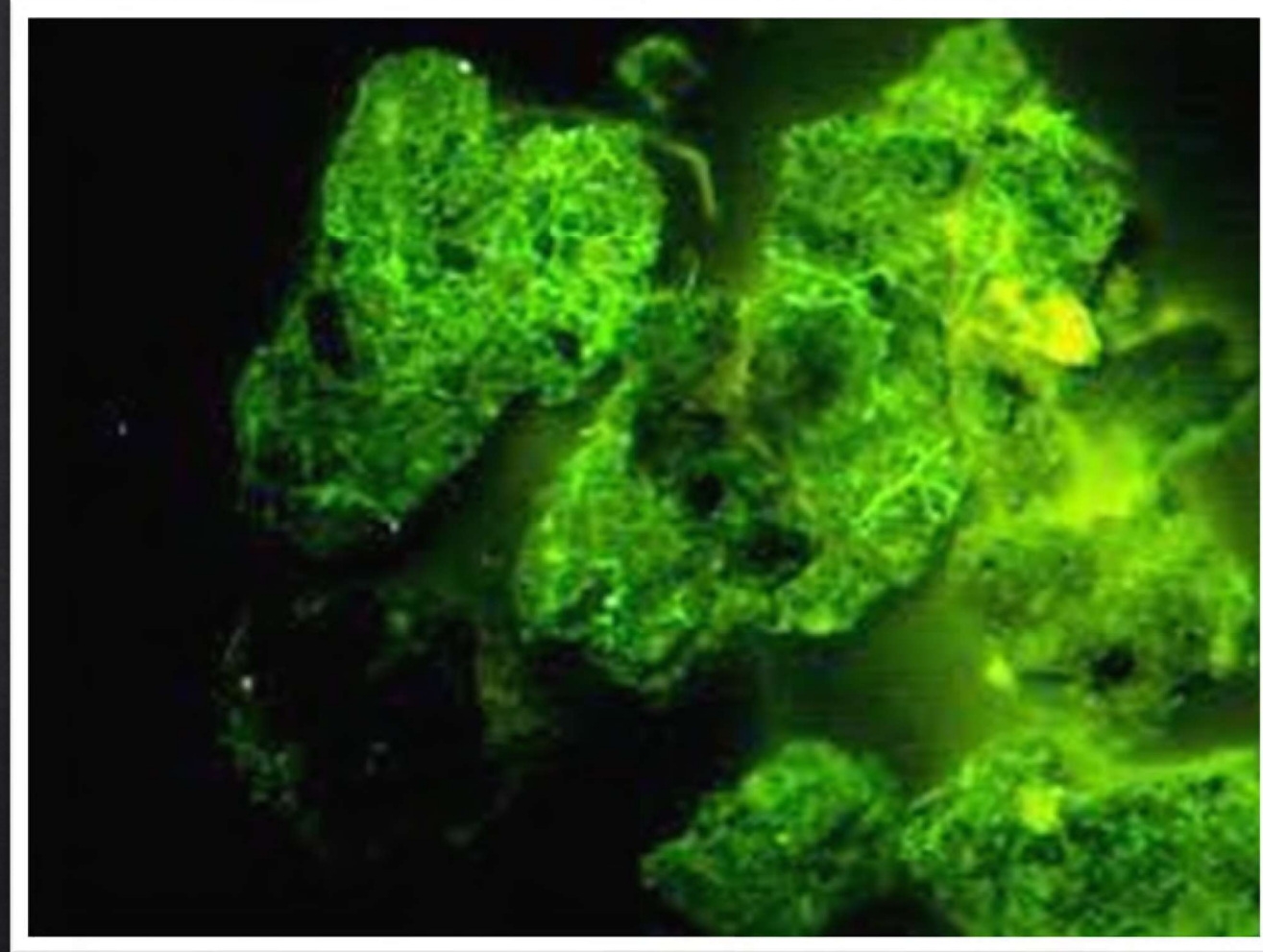


# The Creation of Soil Aggregates

Biological Glues

Glomalin

Mycorrhizal Fungi  
produce Glomalin

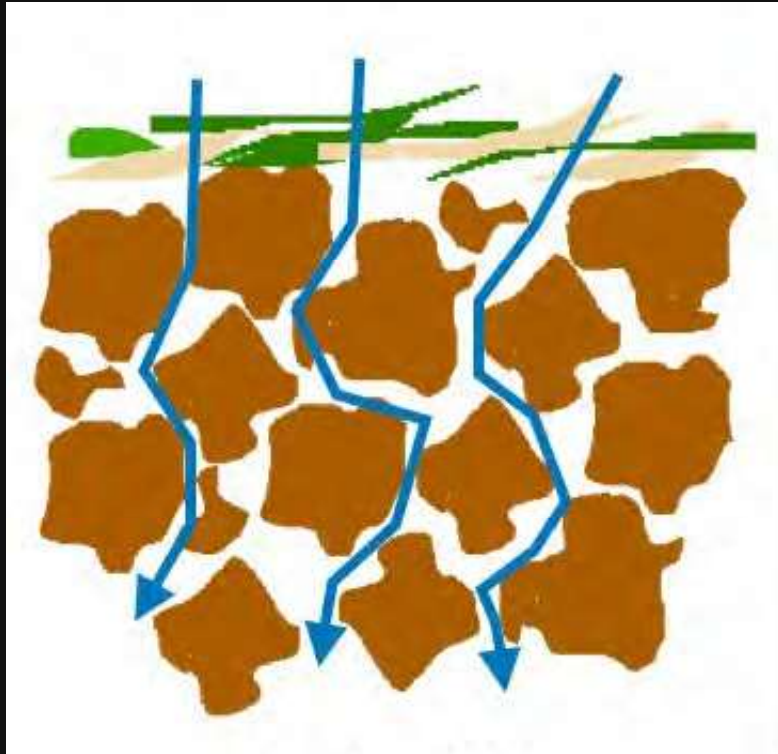




# Good Aggregation

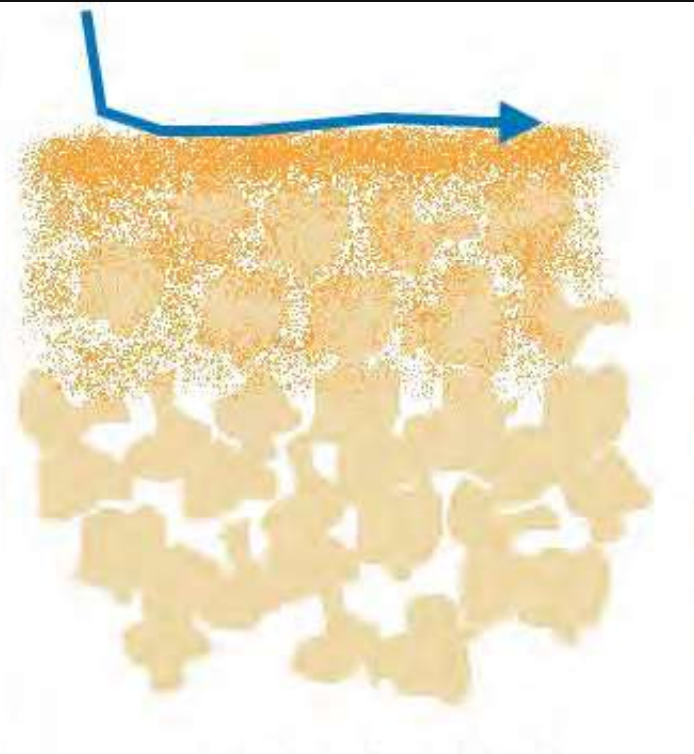


# Good Soil Function



## Healthy Soil

- Good structure
- Water infiltration into soil pores
- Slows water velocity
- Dark color
- High organic matter
- Soil surface is covered with dead vegetation



## Degraded Soil

- Weak structure
- No water infiltration soil pores clogged
- Water runs off quickly
- Light color
- Low organic matter
- Soil surface is covered with a soil crust



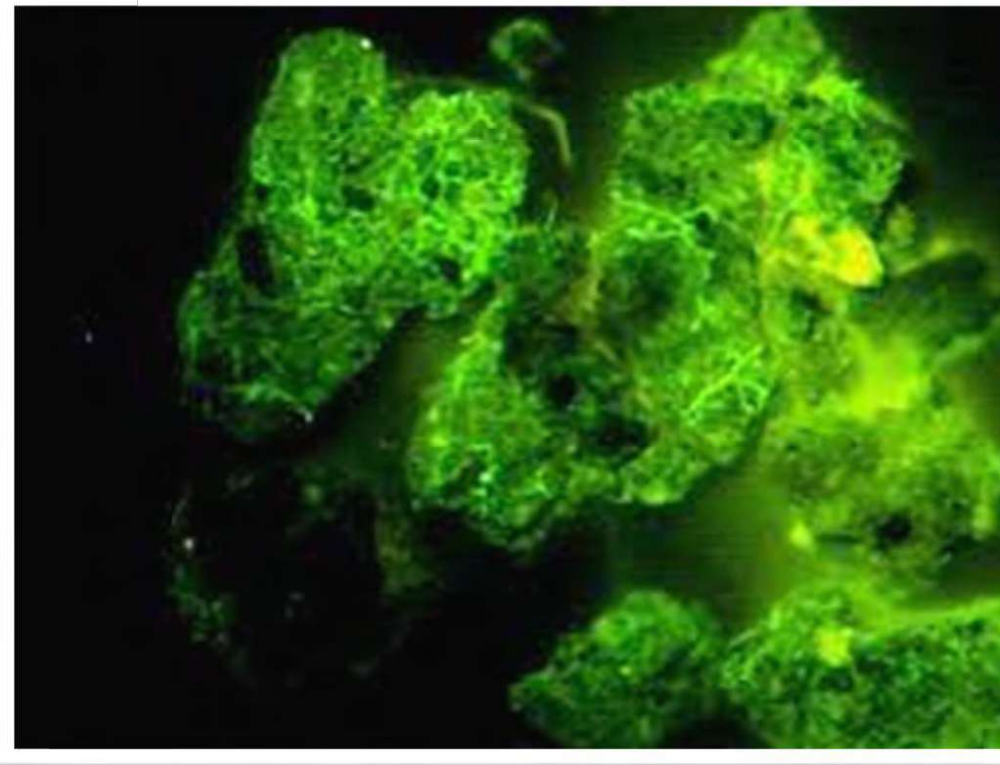
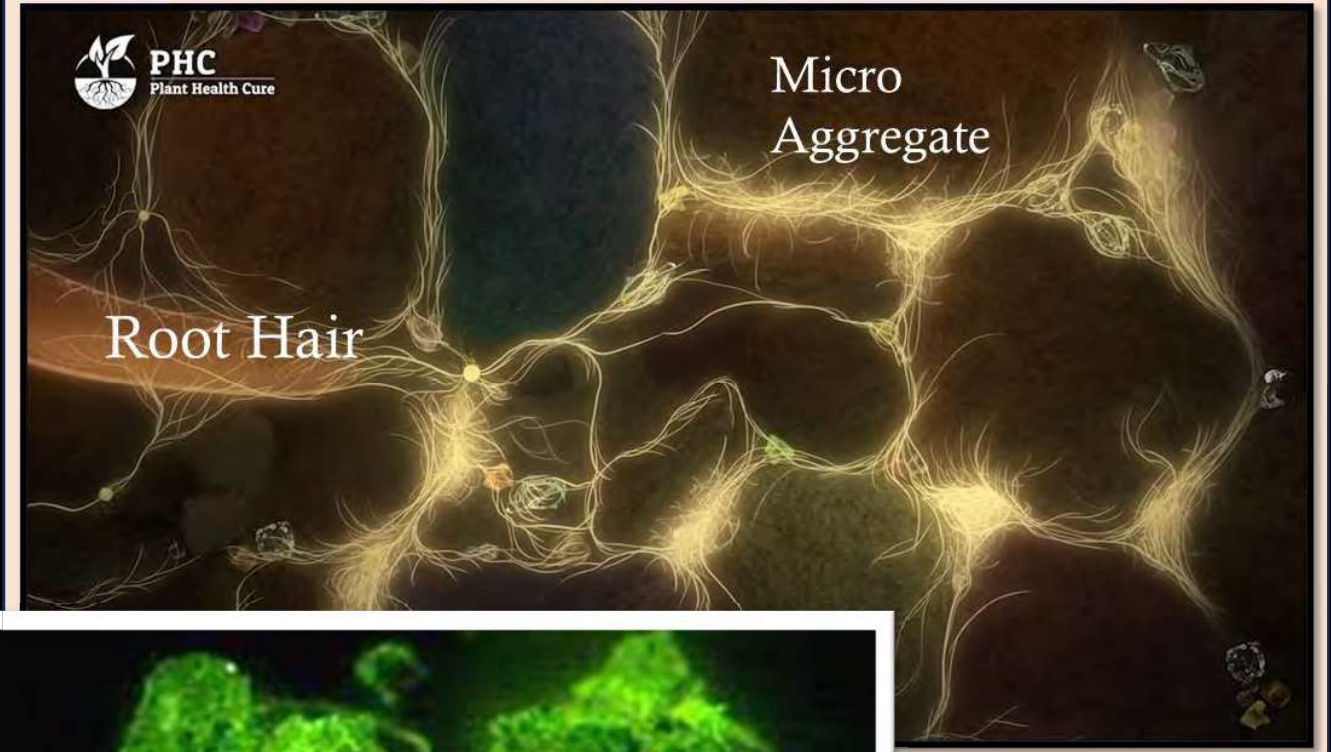
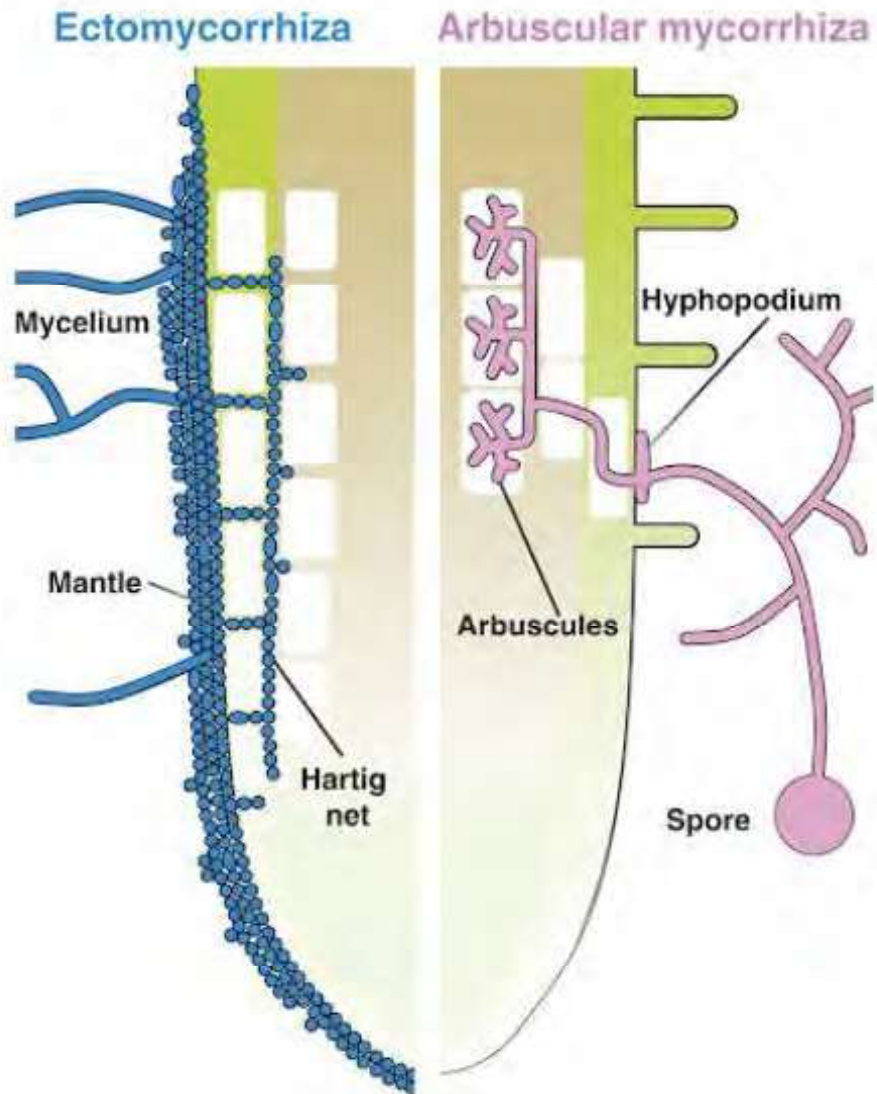


# Disease Suppressive Soils

- Must Create Strong Soil Aggregates
- Aerobic Conditions
- Anaerobic Conditions – at the micro aggregate
- Less Oxidation
- More Reduction



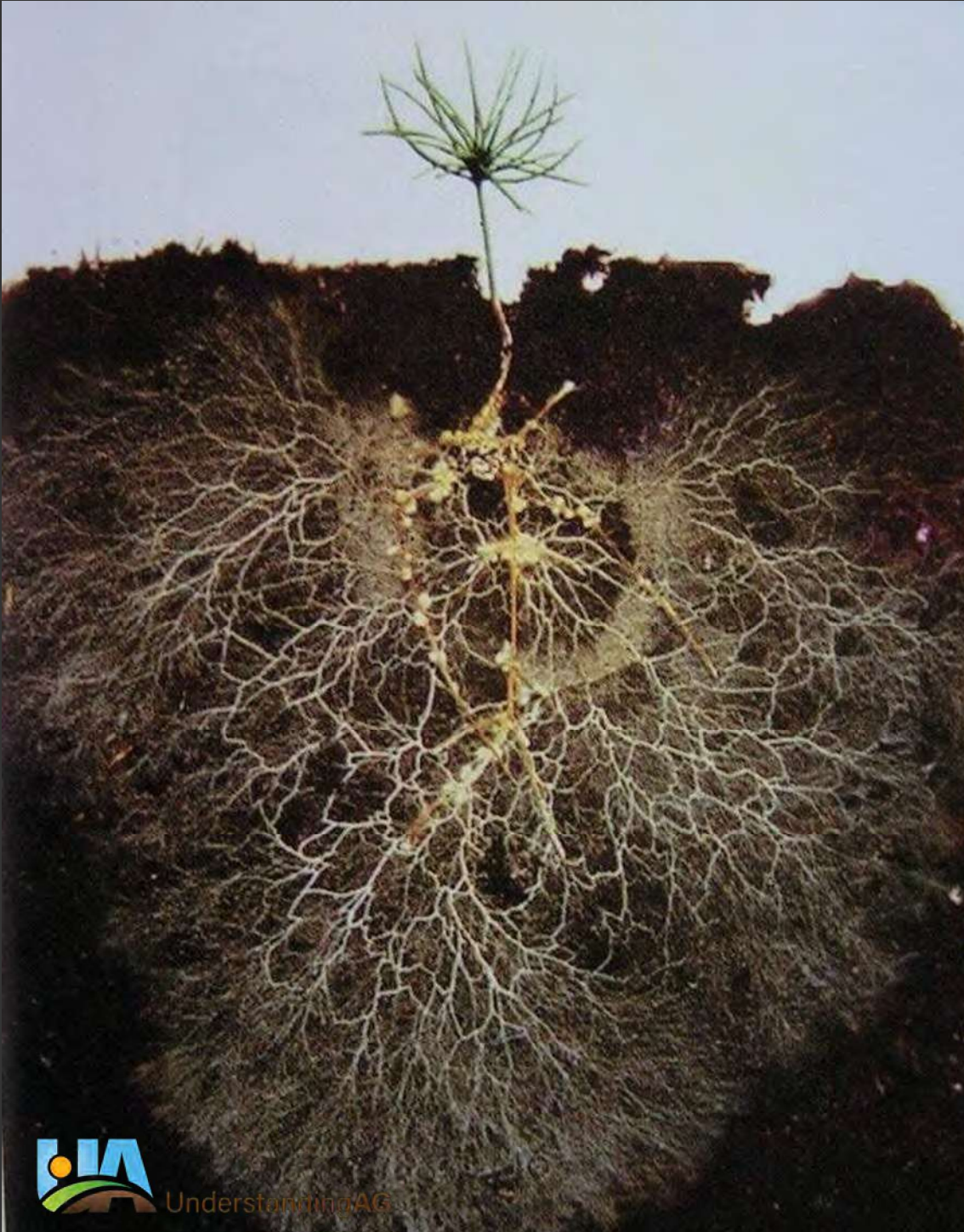
# Mycorrhizal Fungi





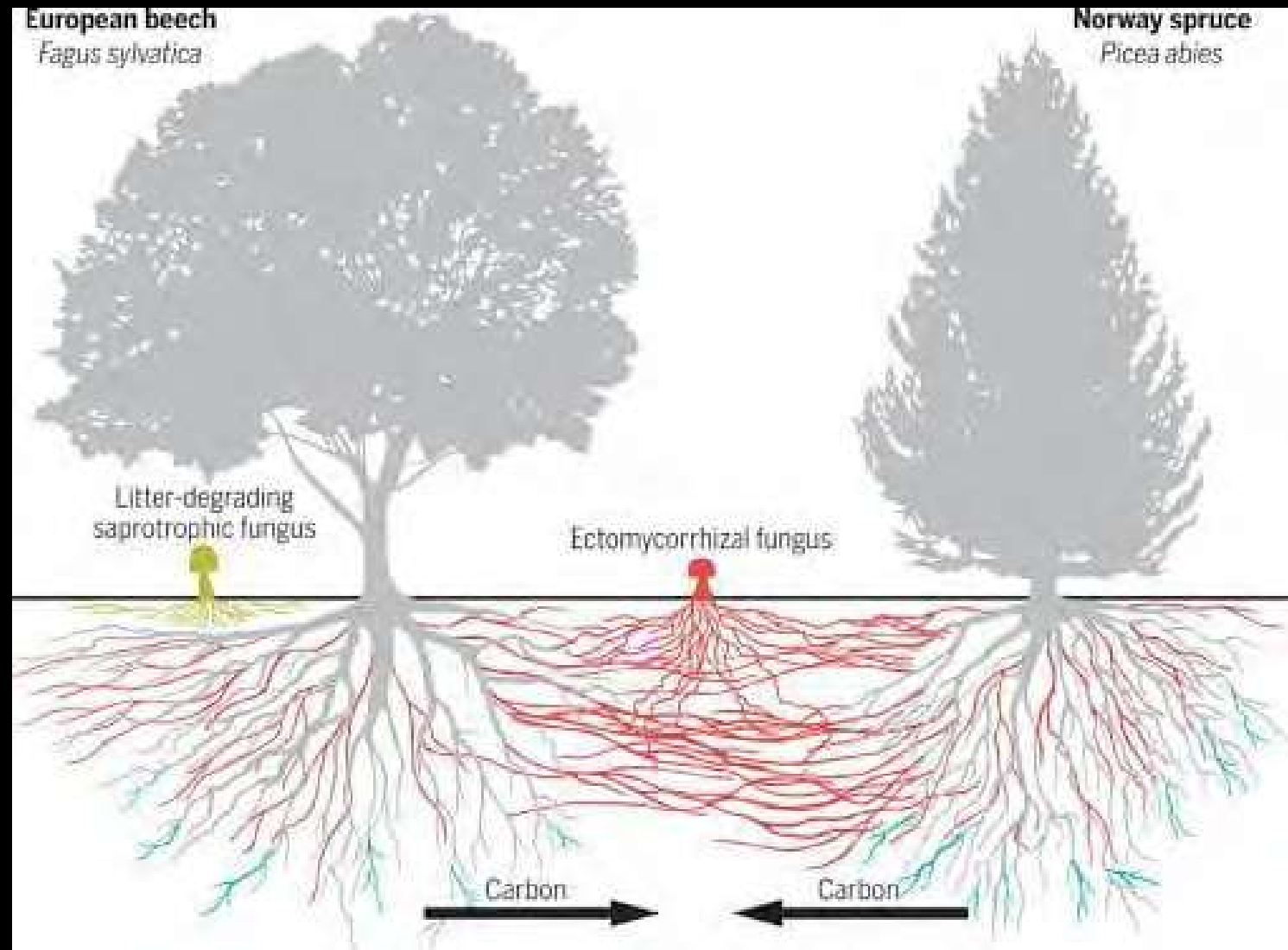
## PERENNIAL CROPS ARE HIGHLY DEPENDENT ON MYCORRHIZAL FUNGI

- Mine nutrients – Trace Elements
- Transports Nutrients
- Reduce fertilizer requirements
- Transports water when soil is nearing critical wilting point
- Critical to building soil aggregation
- Soil Carbon Cyclers





# Fungal Network Connections

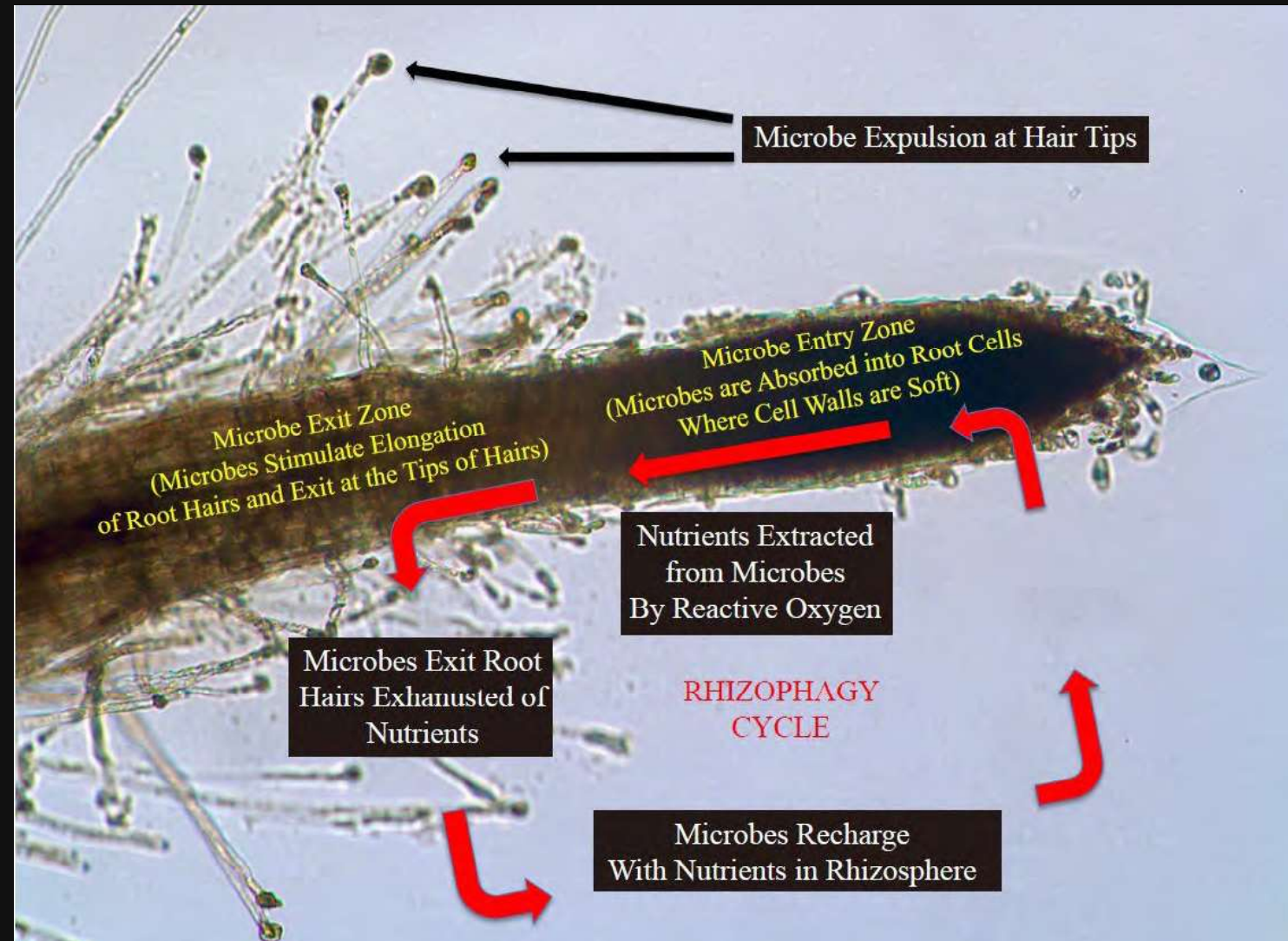
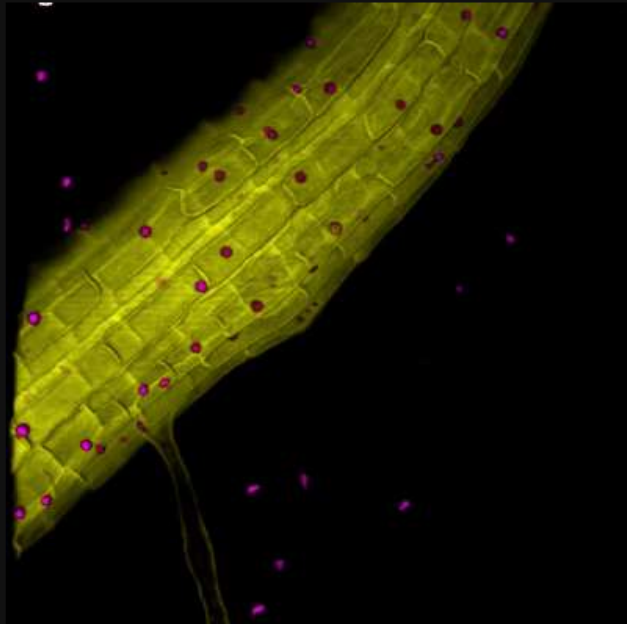




# Rhizophagy Cycle

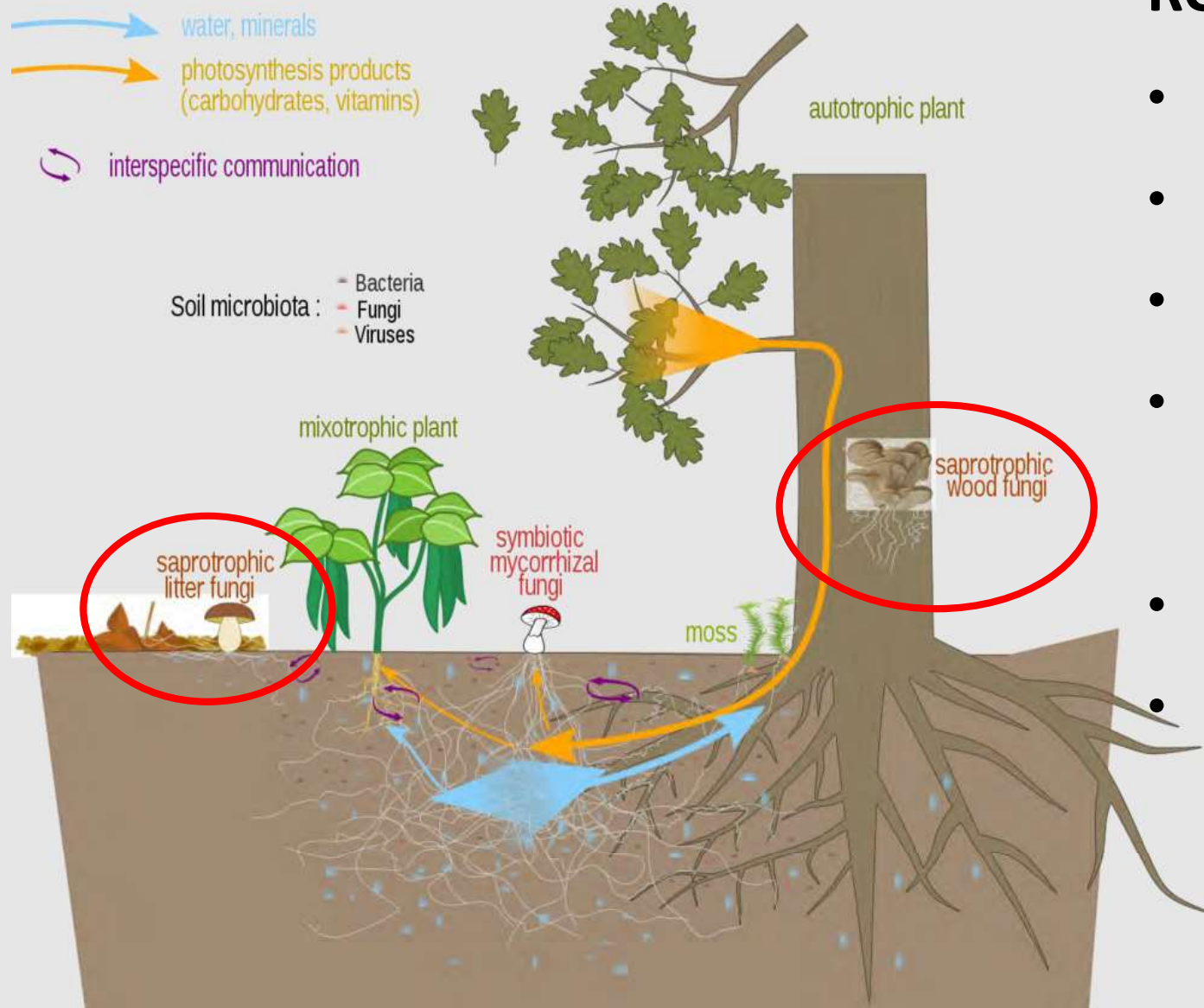
Dr. James White

How Beneficial  
Microbes Feed  
Plants



Chang et. al. (2023) Endophyte Symbiosis: Evolutionary Development, and Impacts of Plant Agriculture. *Grass Research* 2023, 3:18

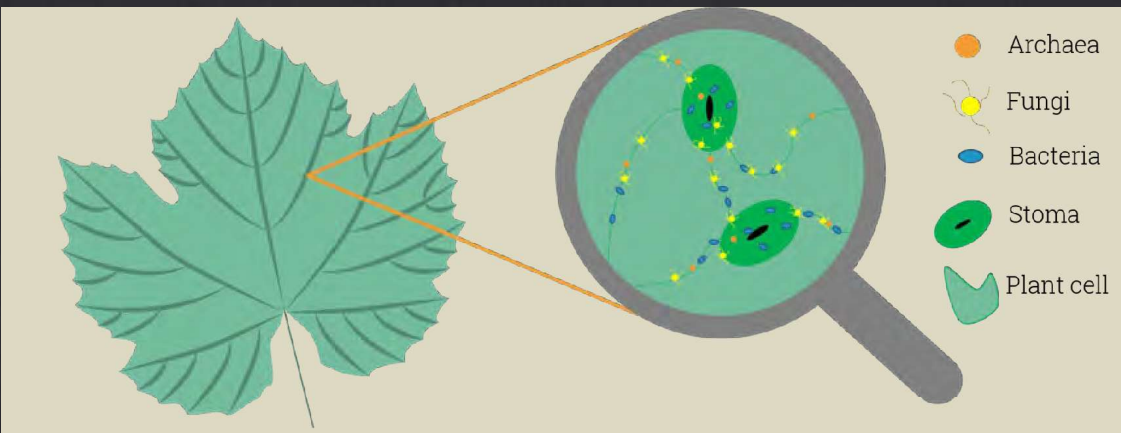




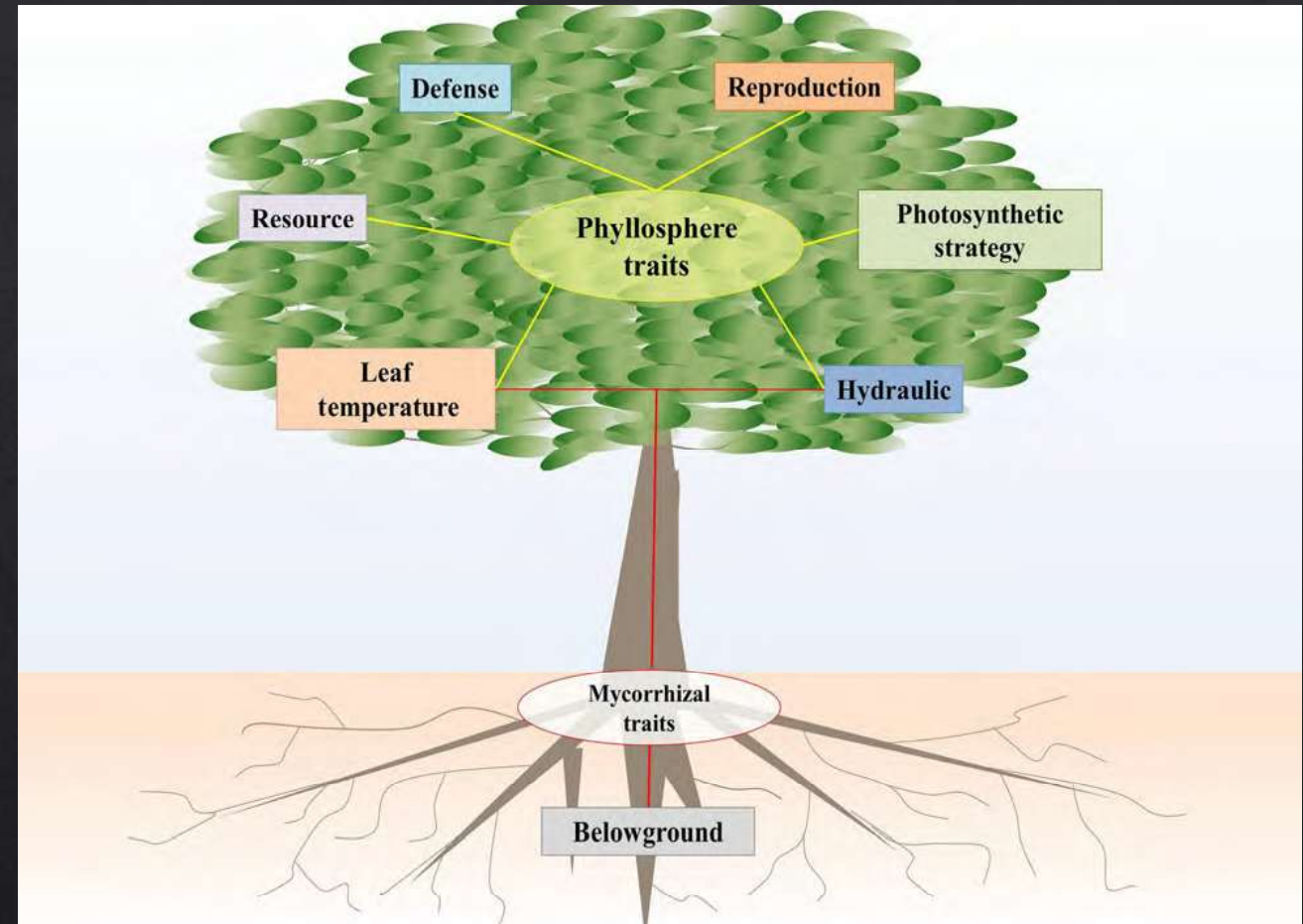
## ROLE OF SAPROPHYTIC FUNGI

- Decomposers of Dead OM
- Nutrient Cyclers
- Suppress Pathogens
- Saprophytes can become pathogenic
- Cellulose and Lignin Food Source
- Sensitive to most fungicides





# Phyllosphere Microbiome



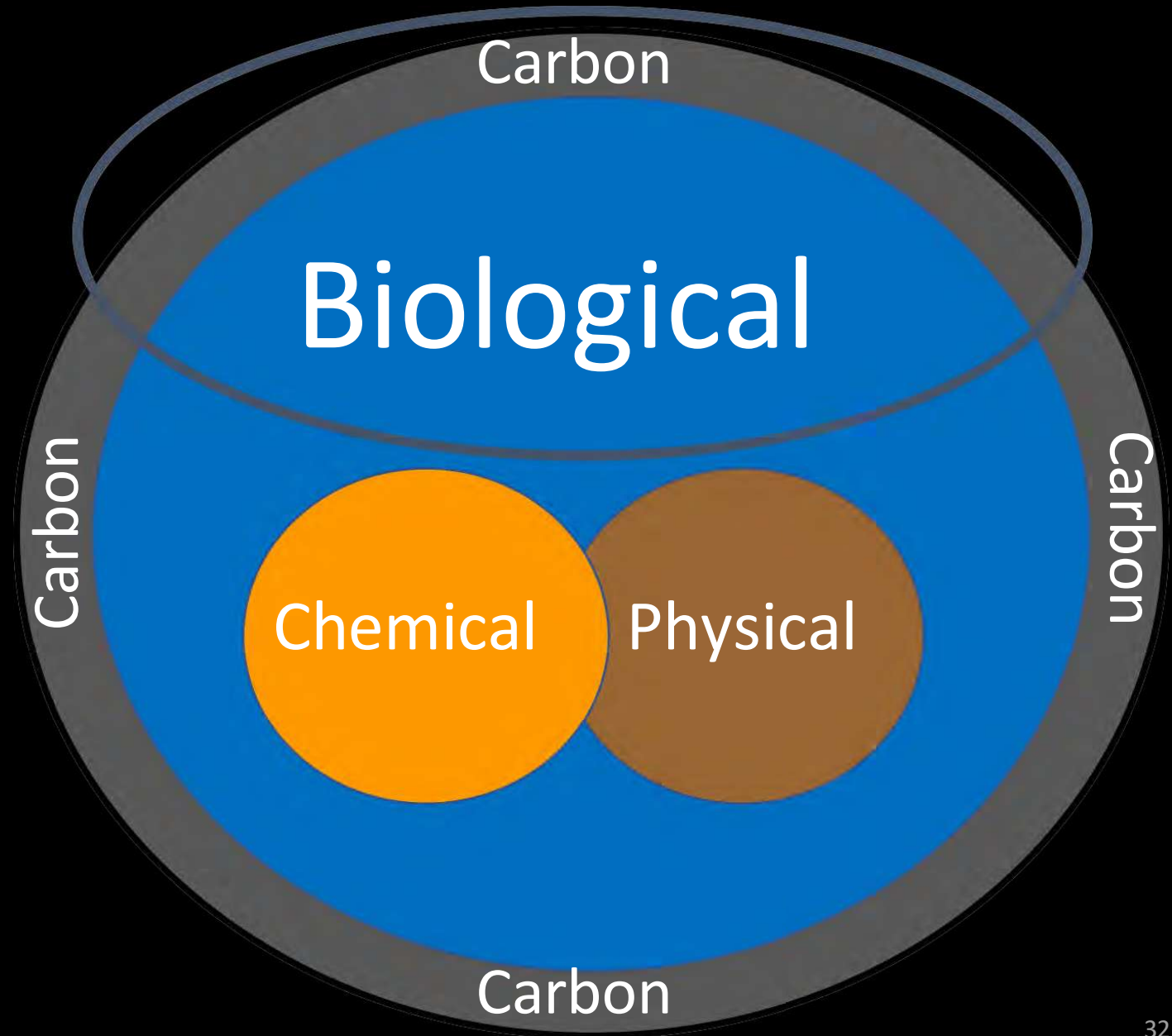
New Phytologist, The importance of phyllosphere on plant functional ecology: a phyllo trait manifesto, 2018

- Biological control – reduce and control pathogenic diseases
- Nutrient Cycling – fixation of N, P, Zn solubilizers
- Soil diversity drives Plant Canopy diversity and function




# Regenerative model of soil function

The value is in **carbon**  
and **biology**





A photograph of a person's hands holding a large clump of dark brown soil. The soil is teeming with a dense network of fine, light-colored roots. The person is wearing a light-colored, long-sleeved shirt. The background is a blurred green field under a bright sky. Overlaid on the image is a semi-transparent grey box containing text.

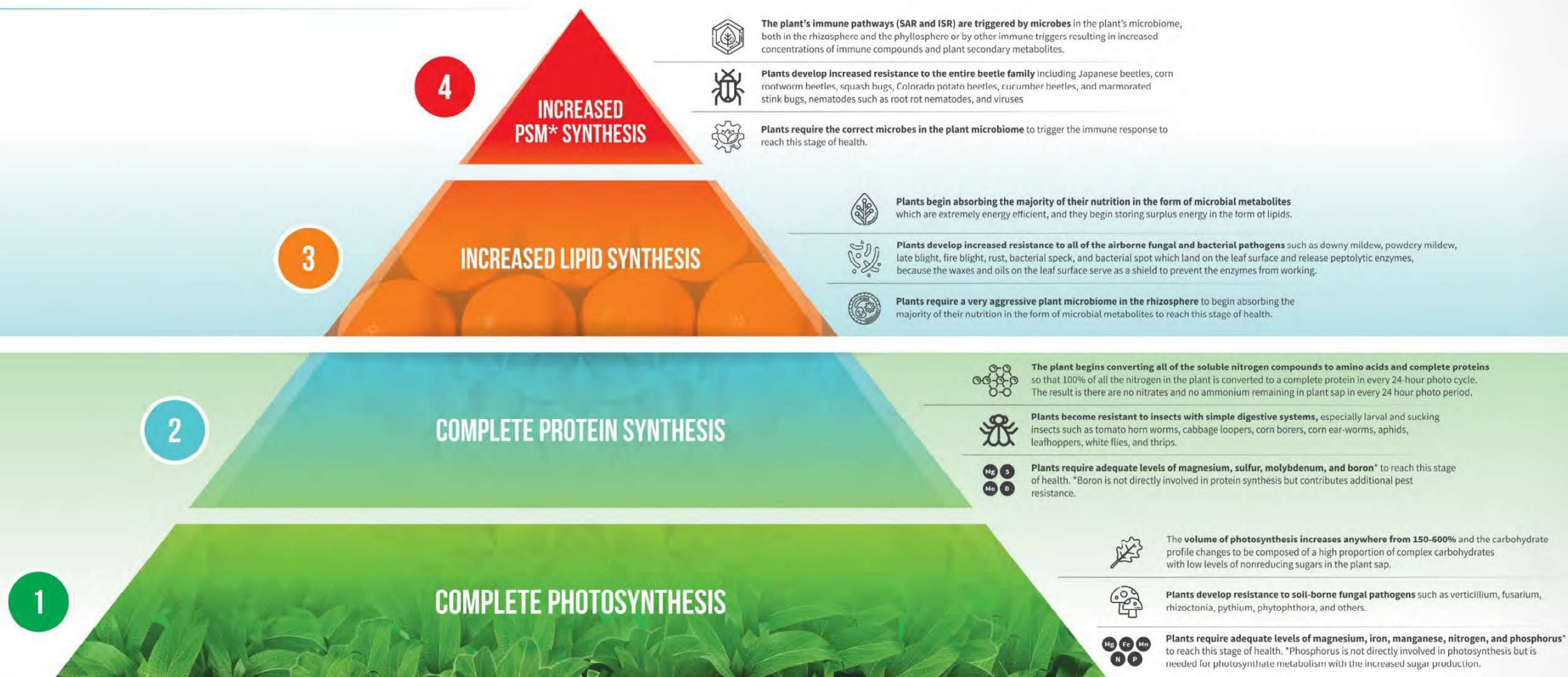
**FUNCTIONING  
SOIL BIOLOGY  
=  
FUNCTIONING  
SOIL NUTRIENT CYCLING  
=  
BALANCED PLANT NUTRITION**



# PLANT HEALTH PYRAMID

er 2 levels are **active immunity**  
based on **vigorous biology**.

er 2 levels are **passive immunity**  
based on **balanced chemistry**.



**“Healthy plants can become completely resistant to diseases and insects.”**


- John Kempf -

**AdvancingEcoAg.com**

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Carbohydrate Storage  
Winter Survival  
Bud Break and Pollination  
Disease Resistance



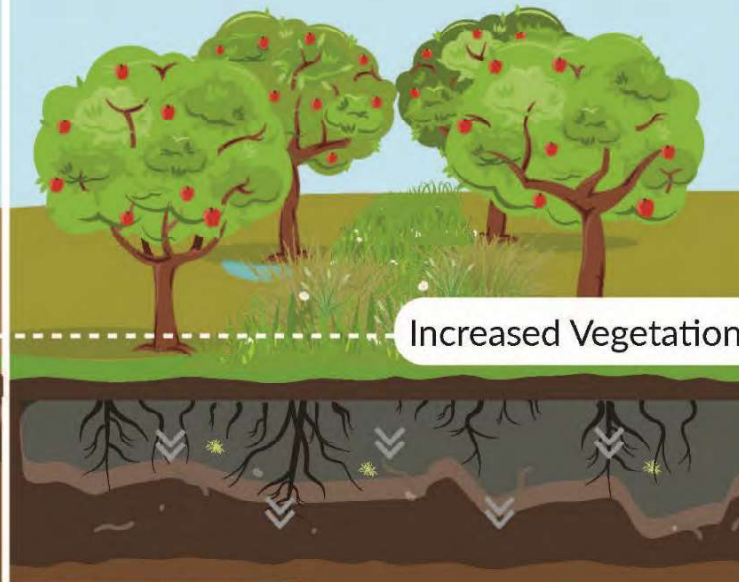
# REGENERATIVE ORCHARD MANAGEMENT

STANDARD CONVENTIONAL



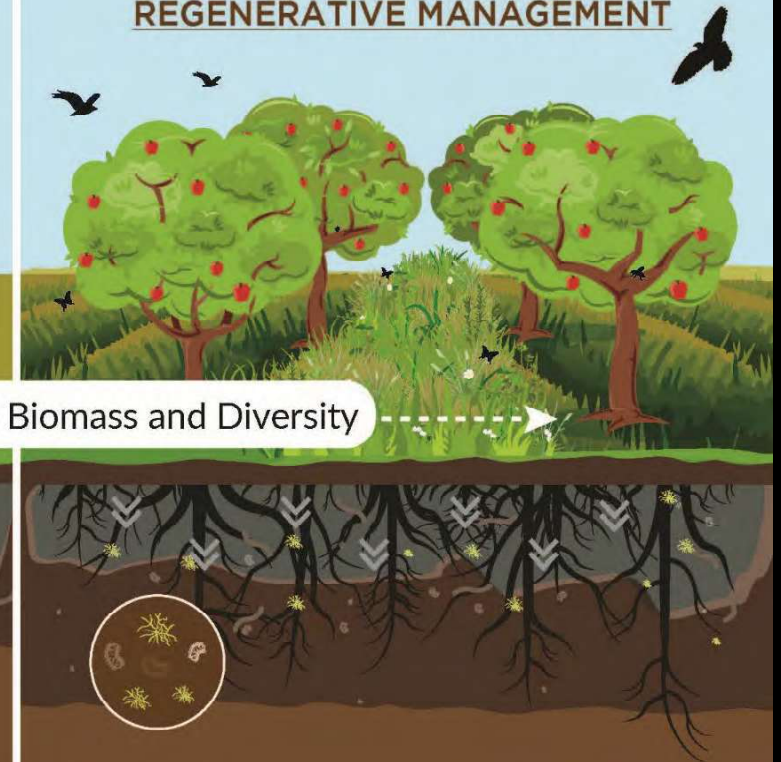
Increasing Microbial and Mycorrhizal Activity

TYPICAL COVER CROP MANAGEMENT



Increased Vegetation Biomass and Diversity

REGENERATIVE MANAGEMENT



Increasing Soil Health and Ecosystem Function



# Build Soil Aggregation



Vine Row



Middles



# Low Mowing – Cascading Negative Effects



**SOLAR ENERGY  
CAPTURE**



**Cascading  
Negative  
Effects**





# **CONTINUOUS LOW MOWING**

## **CASCADING NEGATIVE EFFECTS**



**SOLAR ENERGY  
CAPTURE REDUCED**



**SHALLOW  
ROOT SYSTEM**

**Reduced  
Nutrient Cycle**





**50% Use**



Roots do not stop growing with 50% of the plant removed.

**70% Use**



With 70% of the plant removed, 50% of the roots stop growing for 17 days.

**90% Use**



With 90% of the plant removed, 100% of the roots stop growing for 17 days.

**More Roots = Greater Fungal Opportunity**



# Capture More Sunlight as Many Days as Possible



**SOLAR ENERGY  
CAPTURE**



**Cascading  
Positive  
Effects**



# Capture More Sunlight as Many Days as Possible



**SOLAR ENERGY  
CAPTURE**



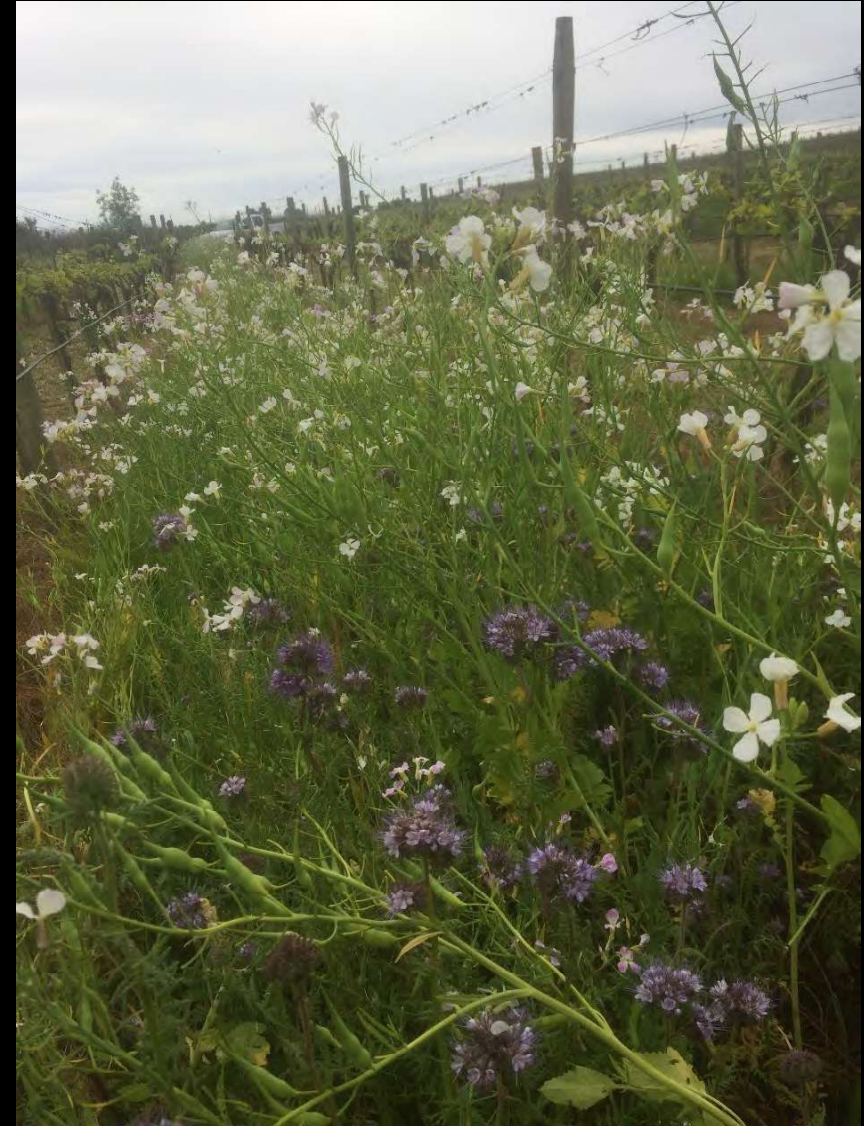
**Cascading  
Positive  
Effects**



# Build Vineyard Floor Diversity



Annual and Perennial flower strips in fruit orchards, 2018, FiBL





# **SOLAR LEAKAGE = BROKEN ECOSYSTEM**



**SOLAR ENERGY  
CAPTURE**



**Cascading  
Negative  
Effects**



# SOLAR LEAKAGE = BROKEN ECOSYSTEM



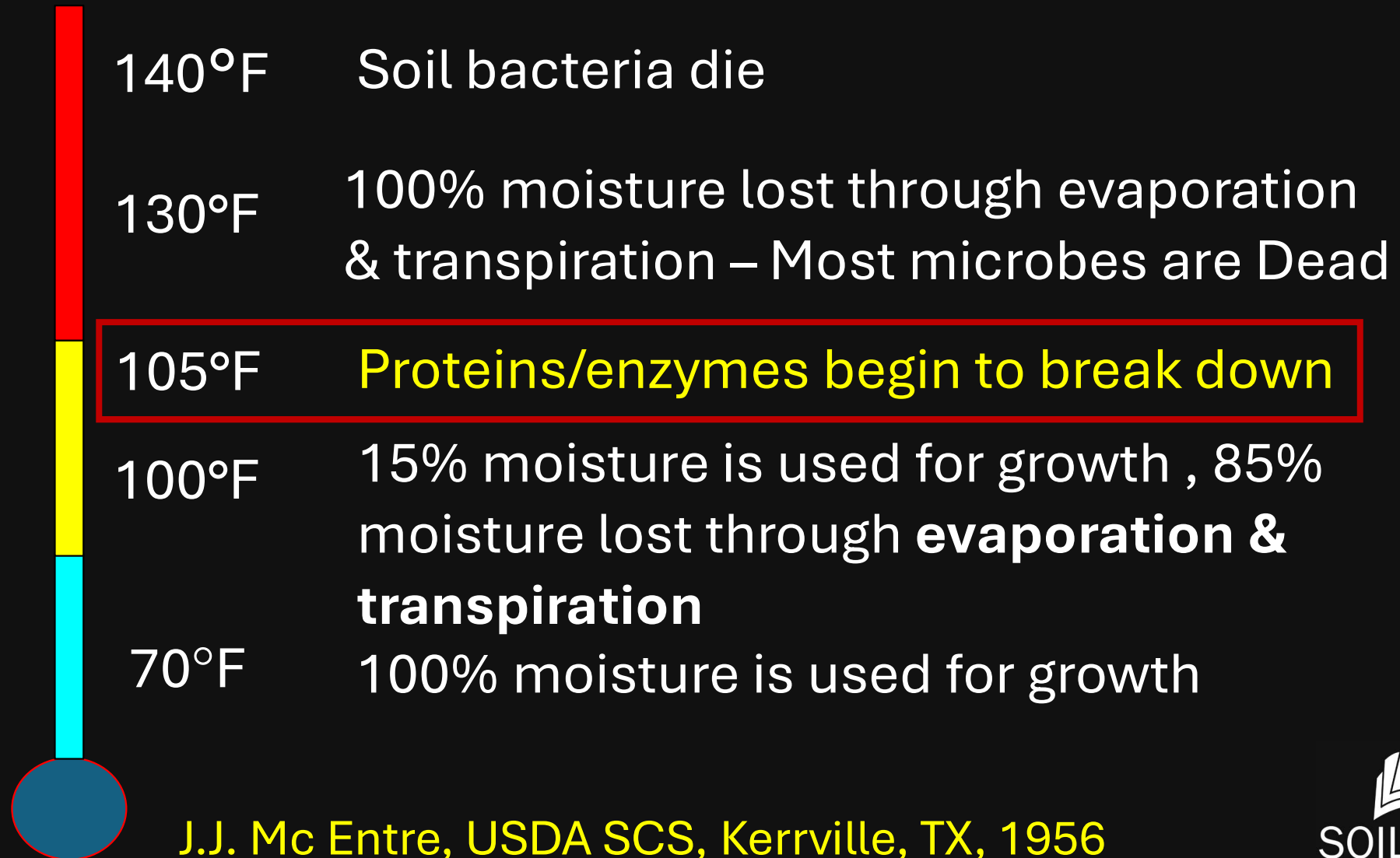
**SOLAR ENERGY  
CAPTURE**



**Cascading  
Negative  
Effects**



# When soil temp reaches. . .



J.J. Mc Entre, USDA SCS, Kerrville, TX, 1956



# Living Plants = More Soil Armor = Reduce Temperatures in the FIELD



**SOLAR ENERGY  
CAPTURE**



**Cascading  
Positive  
Effects**



Ma





# REGENERATIVE TRANSITION

## PUTTING CONCEPTS INTO PRACTICE

- REMOVE DOGMA
- EMBRACE YOUR CONTEXT
- PIVOT WHEN NEEDED
- FARM WITH INTENTIONALITY
- FOLLOW UP A DISTURBANCE WITH A STRONG POSITIVE
- DO NOT ALLOW TOO MUCH IN ROW VEGETATION COMPETITION – **FOR TOO LONG**
- **GOOD NUTRITION MANAGEMENT IS CRITICAL**
- GET YOUR NUTRITION RIGHT – LBS OF NUTRIENTS DAYS ARE OVER



# NO TILL TRANSITION



## TRANSITIONING FROM EXCESSIVE TILLAGE TO REDUCED TILLAGE

- What is the current state and condition of your soil?
- Compacted?
- What is our main goal when seeding a cover crop?
- You are a cover crop/forage farmer – it needs to grow well in Year 1
- Light tillage in fall to get better seed to soil contact and break up the surface compaction always leads to better cover crop establishment and growth
- Common Issues: NT seeding into highly compacted ground = poor cover NT cover crop establishment



# How to establishment and Manage a Productive Successful Cover Crop

Maximize your cover crop benefits for soil health and Ecosystem Function

- Allow cover crop to grow tall – Put on Good Biomass
- Create lots of vegetative biomass in alleyways
- Be sure to manage vine row early and often as needed
- First Mow – DO NOT MOW TOO EARLY!
- Height of cover crop DOES NOT increase frost damage
- Cover Crops moderate SOIL and FIELD temperatures
- Regen field management reduces early onset of bud break



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# Cover Crop Termination Discussion

- UNDERSTAND YOUR GOALS
- KEEP THE SOIL ARMORED...LIMIT SOIL EXPOSURE
- MAINTAIN PHOTOSYNTHESIS = CARBON INPUTS
- DO NOT MOW TOO EARLY OR TOO OFTEN
- HIGH MOWING: 6-8 in minimum height
- SPECIES SELECTION – ANNUALS V PERENNIALS



# LOW TILLAGE to REDUCE COMPACTION



Understanding



# LOW TILLAGE to REDUCE COMPACTION



Rinieri Subsoiler



Clemens Bison Subsoiler



# NO TILL TECHNIQUES

## ROLLER CRIMPING DISCUSSION





# Vine Row Management



**Vine Row**



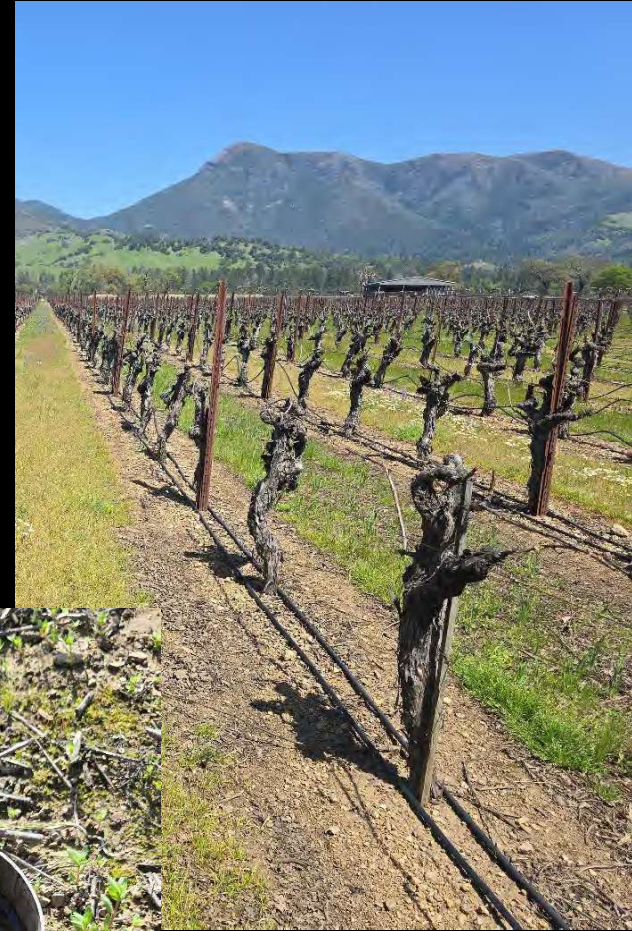
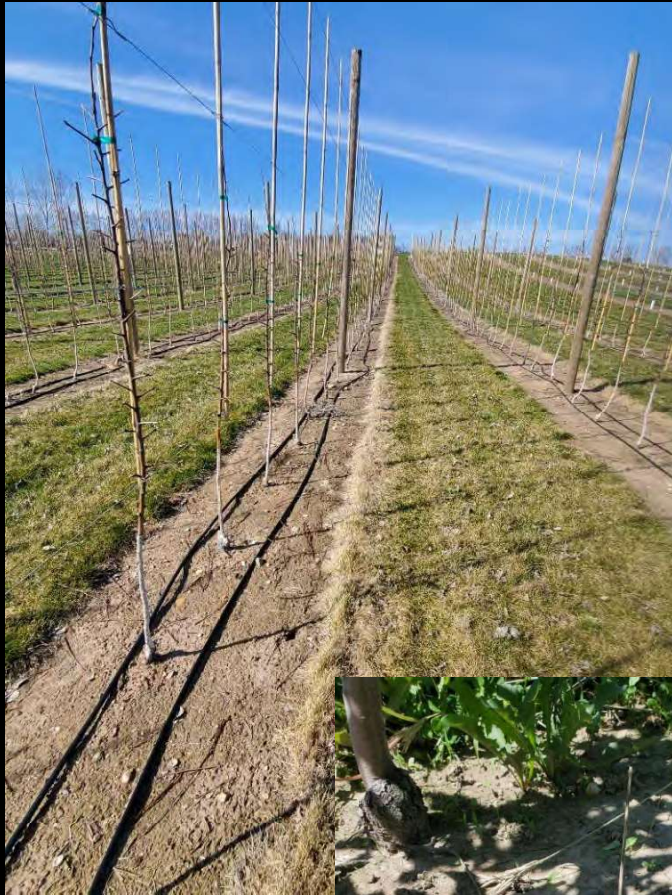
**Middles**



# Vine Row Management

The Strip can be a dead zone

When the Vine Row  
Berm turns into  
concrete



After 20 minutes  
the Water still did  
not Infiltrated





PLFA BIOLOGICAL METRICS	CC	TR	Target Range
Total Living Microbial Biomass, PLFA ng/g	1509.22	757.71	5000+
Functional Group Diversity Index	1.397	1.433	1.5+
Total Bacteria, PLFA ng/g	599.7	324.04	
Total Bacteria, % of Tot. Biomass	39.74	42.77	
Gram Pos Others, PLFA ng/g	255.16	132.88	
Gram Pos Others, % of Tot. Biomass	16.91	17.54	
Actinomycetes, PLFA ng/g	91.32	62.46	400+
Actinomycetes, % of Tot. Biomass	6.05	8.24	
Gram Neg Others, PLFA ng/g	253.22	128.7	
Gram Neg Others, % of Tot. Biomass	16.78	16.99	
Total Fungi, PLFA ng/g	116.54	71.29	800+
Total Fungi, % of Tot. Biomass	7.72	9.41	
Arbuscular Mycorrhizal Fungi, PLFA ng/g	39.24	17.53	400+
Arbuscular Mycorrhizal Fungi, % of Tot. Biomass	2.6	2.31	
Saprophytic Fungi, PLFA ng/g	77.29	53.76	400+
Saprophytic Fungi, % of Tot. Biomass	5.12	7.1	
Protozoa, PLFA ng/g	0	0	0.50+
Protozoa, % of Tot. Biomass	0	0	
Undifferentiated, PLFA ng/g	792.98	362.38	
Undifferentiated, % of Tot. Biomass	52.54	47.83	<40.0
Fungi:Bacteria	0.1943	0.22	0.3
Protozoa:Bacteria	All Bact	All Bact	

Vineyard with  
Tillage and lots  
of Chemicals



Sample ID	Tree Row	Cover Crop	Target Range
Total Living Microbial Biomass, PLFA ng/g	3560.15	9276.27	5000+
Functional Group Diversity Index	1.378	1.568	1.5+
Total Bacteria, PLFA ng/g	2119.6	4101.8	
Total Bacteria, % of Tot. Biomass	59.54	44.22	
Gram Pos Others, PLFA ng/g	964.56	1656.49	
Gram Pos Others, % of Tot. Biomass	27.09	17.86	
Actinomycetes, PLFA ng/g	434.63	838.27	400+
Actinomycetes, % of Tot. Biomass	12.21	9.04	
Gram Neg Others, PLFA ng/g	720.41	1607.04	
Gram Neg Others, % of Tot. Biomass	20.24	17.32	
Total Fungi, PLFA ng/g	297.11	1403.37	800+
Total Fungi, % of Tot. Biomass	8.35	15.13	
Arbuscular Mycorrhizal Fungi, PLFA ng/g	135.23	696.86	400+
Arbuscular Mycorrhizal Fungi, % of Tot. Biomass	3.8	7.51	
Saprophytic Fungi, PLFA ng/g	161.88	706.51	400+
Saprophytic Fungi, % of Tot. Biomass	4.55	7.62	
Protozoa, PLFA ng/g	0	46.19	0.50+
Protozoa, % of Tot. Biomass	0	0.5	
Undifferentiated, PLFA ng/g	1143.44	3724.92	
Undifferentiated, % of Tot. Biomass	32.12	40.16	<40.0
Fungi:Bacteria	0.1402	0.3421	0.3
Protozoa:Bacteria	All Bact	0.0113	

Orchard with  
No Tillage and  
lots of  
Chemicals in  
Tree Row



# Vine Row Management

## Chemical Reduction



### THE STRIP CAN BE A DEAD ZONE

- Complete Reduction in chemicals
- Eliminate Glyphosate – chelates and locks up nutrients (i.e., Ca, micros)
- Eliminate Pre Emergent – Soil Sterilization
- Use Contacts – Use with Precise Timing and Coverage
- Fertilizer Disturbance – high salt nutrient concentrations
- Irrigation Water Quality



# Restoring Soil Function in Vine Row

## The ART OF TRANSITION





# Regenerative Vine Row Management



- Reduce fear of competition
- Allow vegetation to grow through winter into Spring
- Begin Termination before shoot growth becomes vigorous
- Symbiosis of living roots – Biology, Nutrients, Porosity
- Narrow Chemical Strip – Reduce Chemicals

**Adaptive approach within Context**

**Long Term Mindset**



# Non-Chemical Weed Management



## In Row Cultivation – Pros & Cons

ID David Weeder, Vine Tech Equipment



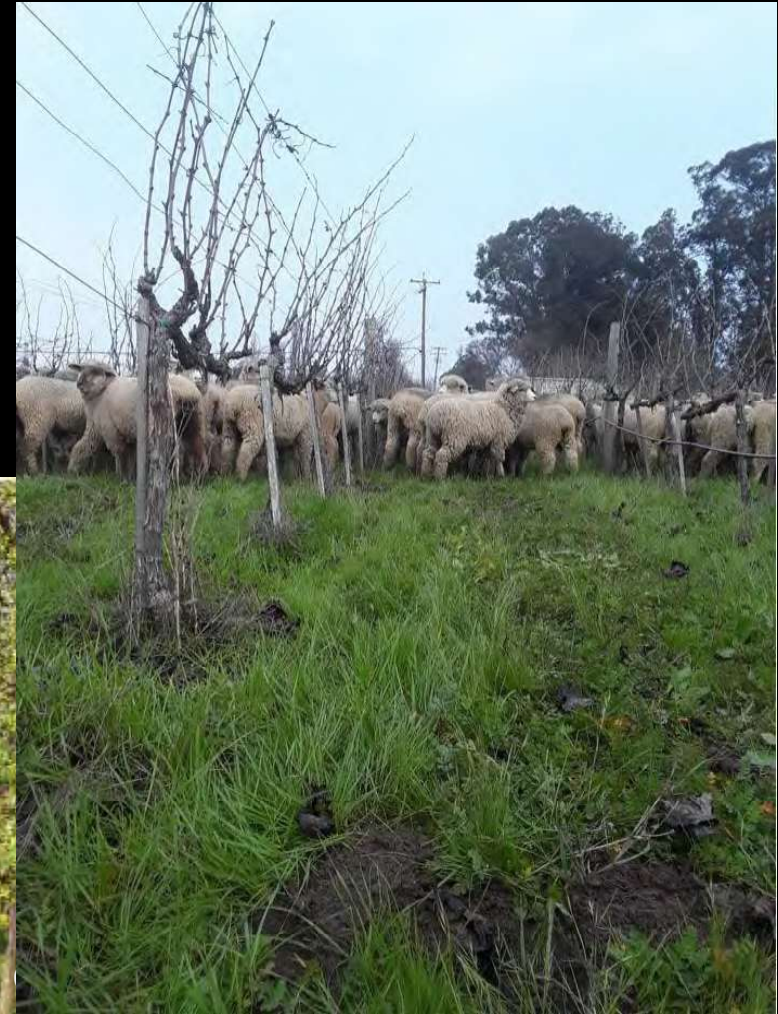
# Non-Chemical Vegetation Management



Nobili SDS 210 Flail Mower – Mow and Blow



Aedes Side Mower, FiBL Switzerland



Napa RCD, Huichica Creek Vineyard



# REDUCING CHEMICAL DISTRUBANCES



Perfect Mower FV2 series



Fischer GL4K



# REDUCING CHEMICAL DISTURBANCES

## Multi-Prong Approach





# Building Soil Fungal Life





# COMPARING TWO TREE ROWS ON THE SAME FARM

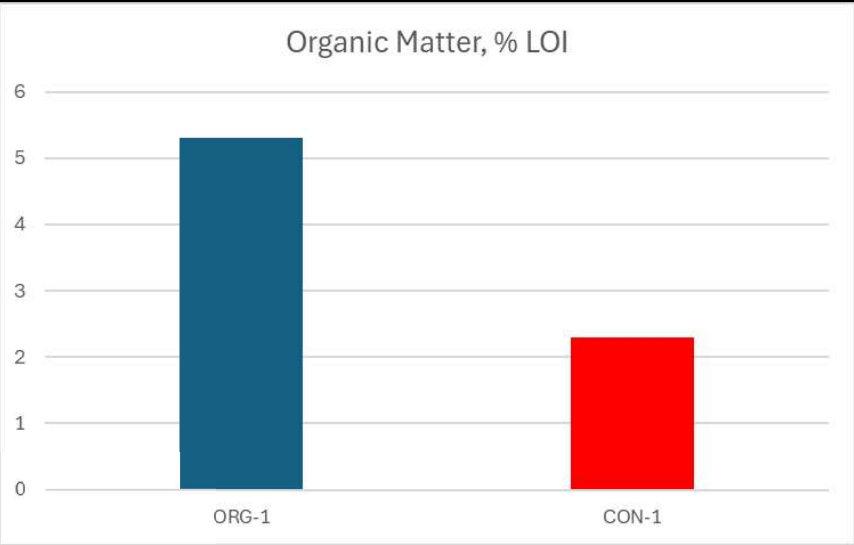
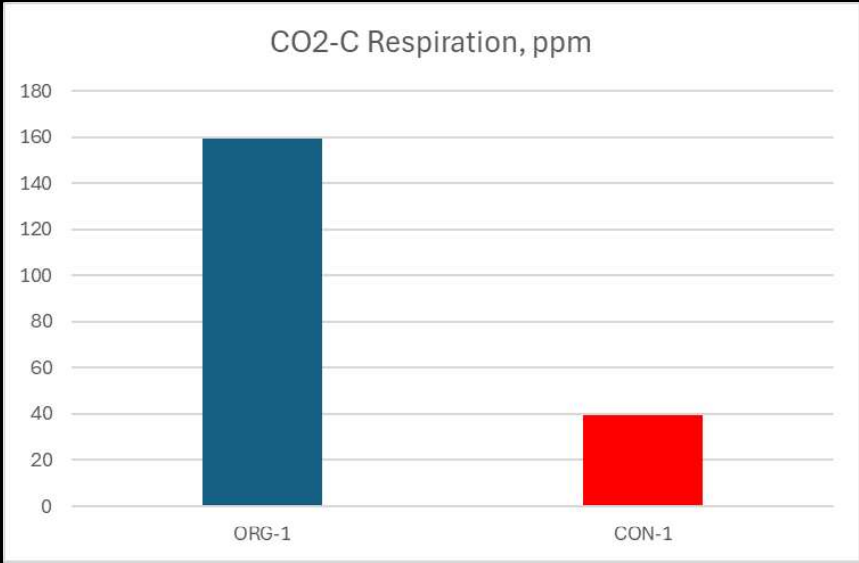
MULCH V NO MULCH

Mimicking a  
Forest Soil



COMPARING TWO TREE ROWS ON THE SAME FARM

MULCH V NO MULCH  
ORGANIC VS CON. TRANSITION



Sample ID	ORG Tree Row	CON Tree Row
Total Living Microbial Biomass, PLFA ng/g	4837.7	3188.67
Functional Group Diversity Index	1.447	1.381
Total Bacteria, PLFA ng/g	2512.83	1212.31
Total Bacteria, % of Tot. Biomass	51.94	38.02
Gram Pos Others, PLFA ng/g	1055.51	545.8
Gram Pos Others, % of Tot. Biomass	21.82	17.12
Actinomycetes, PLFA ng/g	401.83	180.2
Actinomycetes, % of Tot. Biomass	8.31	5.65
Gram Neg Others, PLFA ng/g	1055.48	486.31
Gram Neg Others, % of Tot. Biomass	21.82	15.25
Total Fungi, PLFA ng/g	498.57	198.92
Total Fungi, % of Tot. Biomass	10.31	6.24
Mycorrhizal Fungi, PLFA ng/g	233.64	93.94
Mycorrhizal Fungi, % of Tot. Biomass	4.83	2.95
Saprophytic Fungi, PLFA ng/g	264.93	104.98
Saprophytic Fungi, % of Tot. Biomass	5.48	3.29
Protozoa, PLFA ng/g	20.78	2.47
Protozoa, % of Tot. Biomass	0.43	0.08
Undifferentiated, PLFA ng/g	1805.53	1774.98
Undifferentiated, % of Tot. Biomass	37.32	55.67
Fungi:Bacteria	0.198	0.164
Protozoa:Bacteria	0.008	0.002
Gram+:Gram-	1.381	1.493



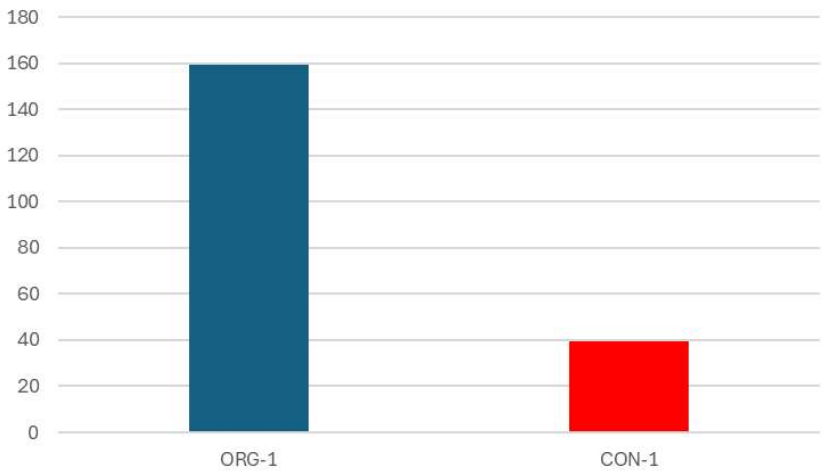


# COMPARING TWO TREE ROWS ON THE SAME FARM

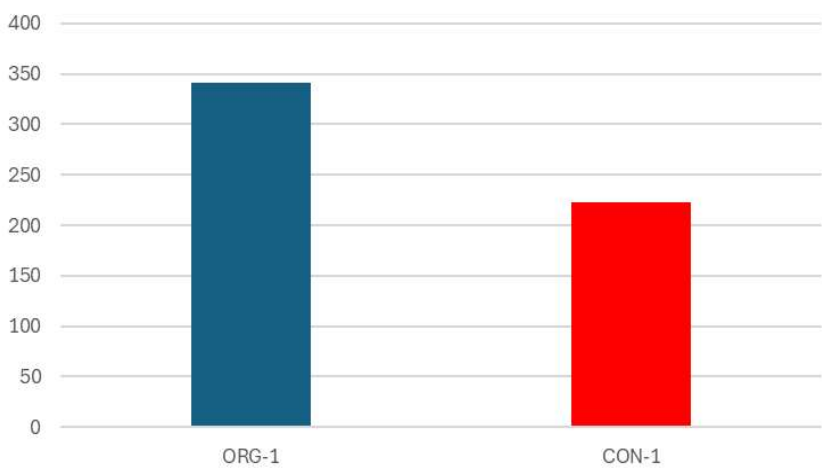
MULCH V NO MULCH

ORGANIC VS CON. TRANSITION

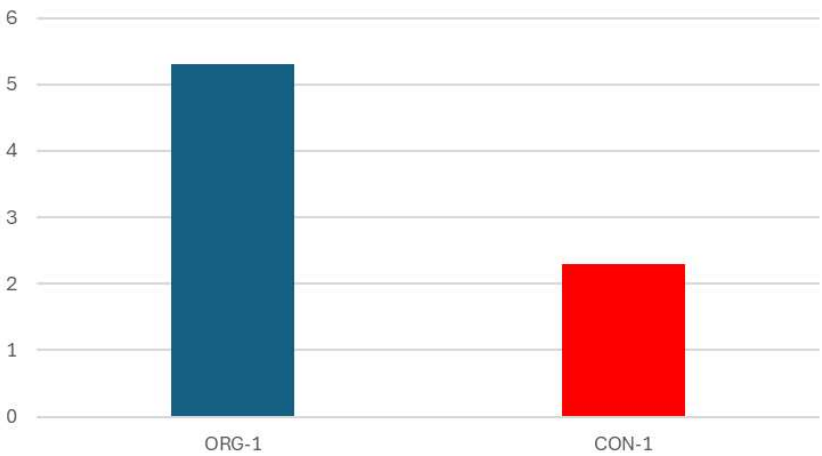
CO2-C Respiration, ppm



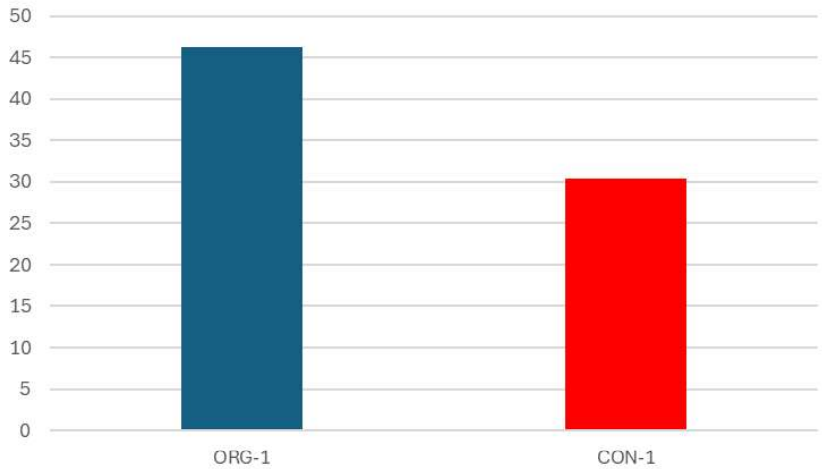
H2O Total Organic C, ppm



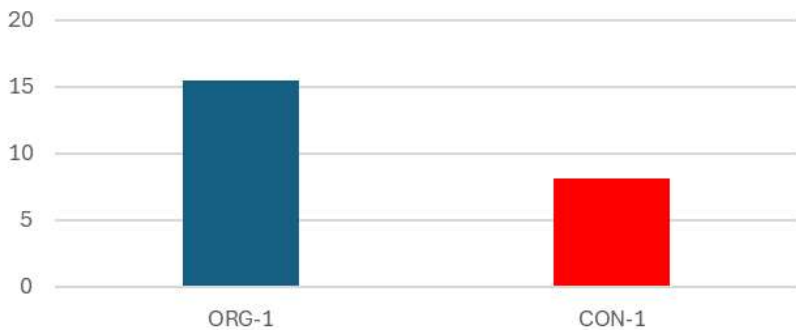
Organic Matter, % LOI



H2O Total N



Organic v Conventional Transition Tree  
Row  
CEC, meq/100g





# Ensuring NO Vigor Loss

## Advancing Nutrition for Successful Transition

- Optimize Plant Nutrition
- The Power of Sap Testing
- Biostimulants: Biological and Carbon based nutrition – Enhance nutrient availability and nutrient cycling
- Always add a carbon source to your fertility inputs
- Managing Micronutrients – the X-factor in optimizing nutrition and solving many problems
- DO NOT SKIP on nutrition in Year 1- ENHANCE NUTRITION
- Greatly reducing high salt index based fertilizers
- Reduce dry fertilizer – Increase liquid fertility through drip and foliar



# REDUCING HIGH SALT INDEX FERTILIZERS

## REDUCE

### **Nitrogen-based Fertilizers:**

- Ammonium Nitrate
- Urea Ammonium Nitrate
- Anhydrous Ammonia

### **Potassium-based Fertilizers:**

- Potassium Chloride (Muriate of Potash)
- Potassium Nitrate

### **Phosphorus-based Fertilizers:**

- Monoammonium Phosphate (MAP)
- Diammonium Phosphate (DAP)

## INCREASE

- **Organic Forms of Nutrients**
- **Biostimulants**
- **Lower Salt Index Fertilizers**
  - Urea
  - Potassium Acetate
  - Sulfate of Potash
- **MicroNutrients**
- **Less Soil Applied – MORE FOLIAR**
- **Manage for Nutrient Cycling**





# On Farm Biofertility

- Compost Teas – Liquid Biological Amendment
- Foliar Spraying – Biopesticide and Nutrients
- Root Dip and Seed Treatment
- BioStimulation

Stimulate Plant  
Immunity





# Bionutrient Brew and Tea Recipe

- Generalized recipe or used as base
- Boost microbial foods and nutrient cycling
- 5-20 gal per acre

## Compost Tea Recipe (250-Gallon Batch)

Ingredient	Amount
Non-chlorinated water	250 gallons
Humic acid	2 cups
Unsulfured molasses	3 cups
Fish hydrolysate	2 cups
Kelp extract	5 cups
Fermented plant extract	1 cup
High-quality compost (or worm castings)	20 lbs
Liquid microbial inoculant ('microbes in a jug')	1 gallon



# BIONUTRIENT BREW INJECTION

Critical in Yr 1 Transition to fix vine row soil

- High Rates of Fulvic and Humic
- Silica Soil Applied
- Aminos





# Livestock & Animals



## Powerful Ecosystem Service Providers

- Stack Enterprise and Farm Diversity
- Enhance Vegetation Production – Carbon Managers
- Increase soil microbiome
- Nutrient Cyclers
- Increase leaf decomposition and residue cycling
- Pest Larvae Scavengers



**DISEASE AND PEST MANAGEMENT SQUAD!**



**50% Use**



Roots do not stop growing with 50% of the plant removed.

**70% Use**



With 70% of the plant removed, 50% of the roots stop growing for 17 days.

**90% Use**



With 90% of the plant removed, 100% of the roots stop growing for 17 days.

**More Roots = Greater Fungal Opportunity**



# Grazing – How Much to Graze and Leave?







## High Density Sheep Grazing

## Priming the Pump Before Planting





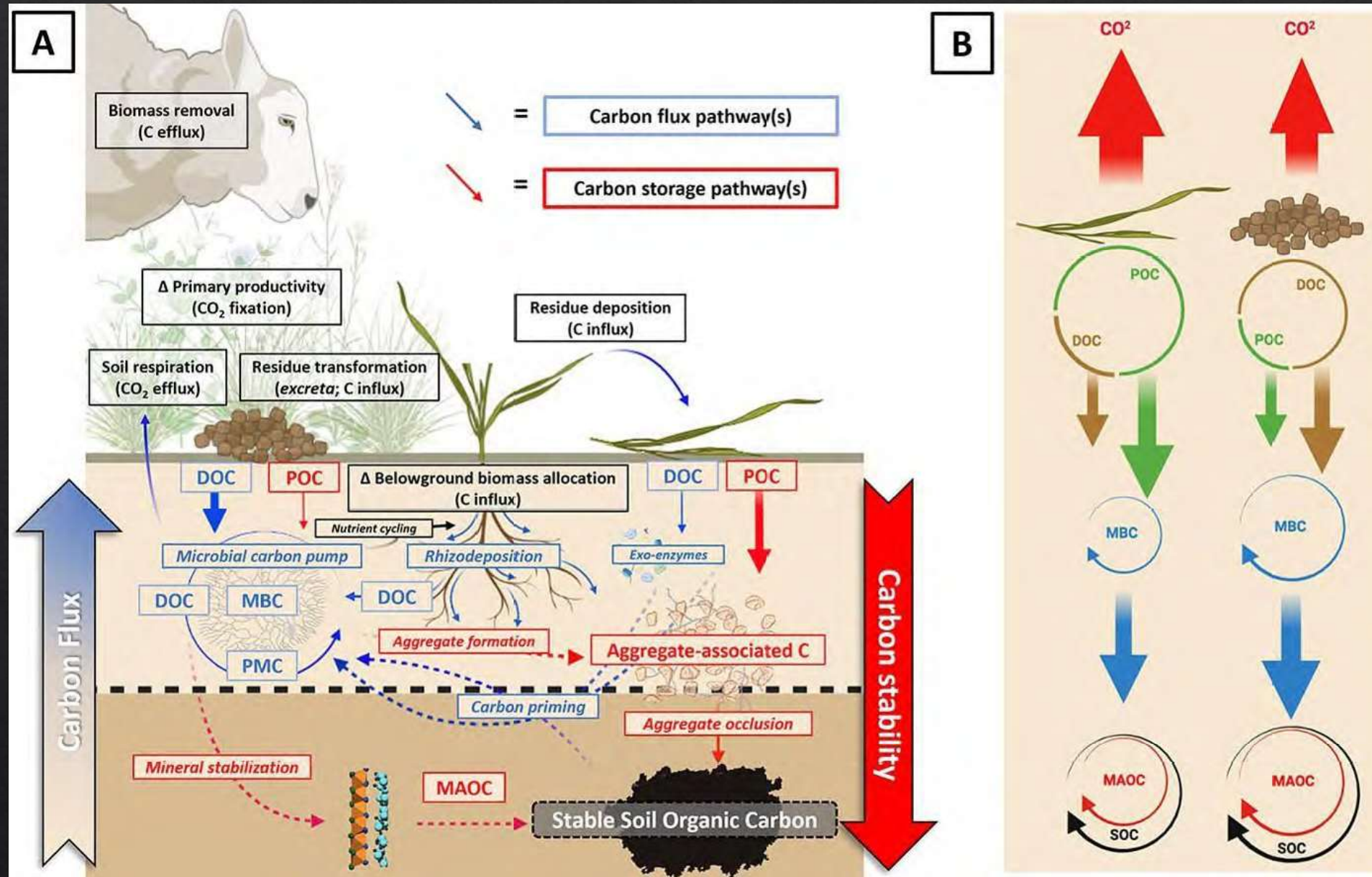




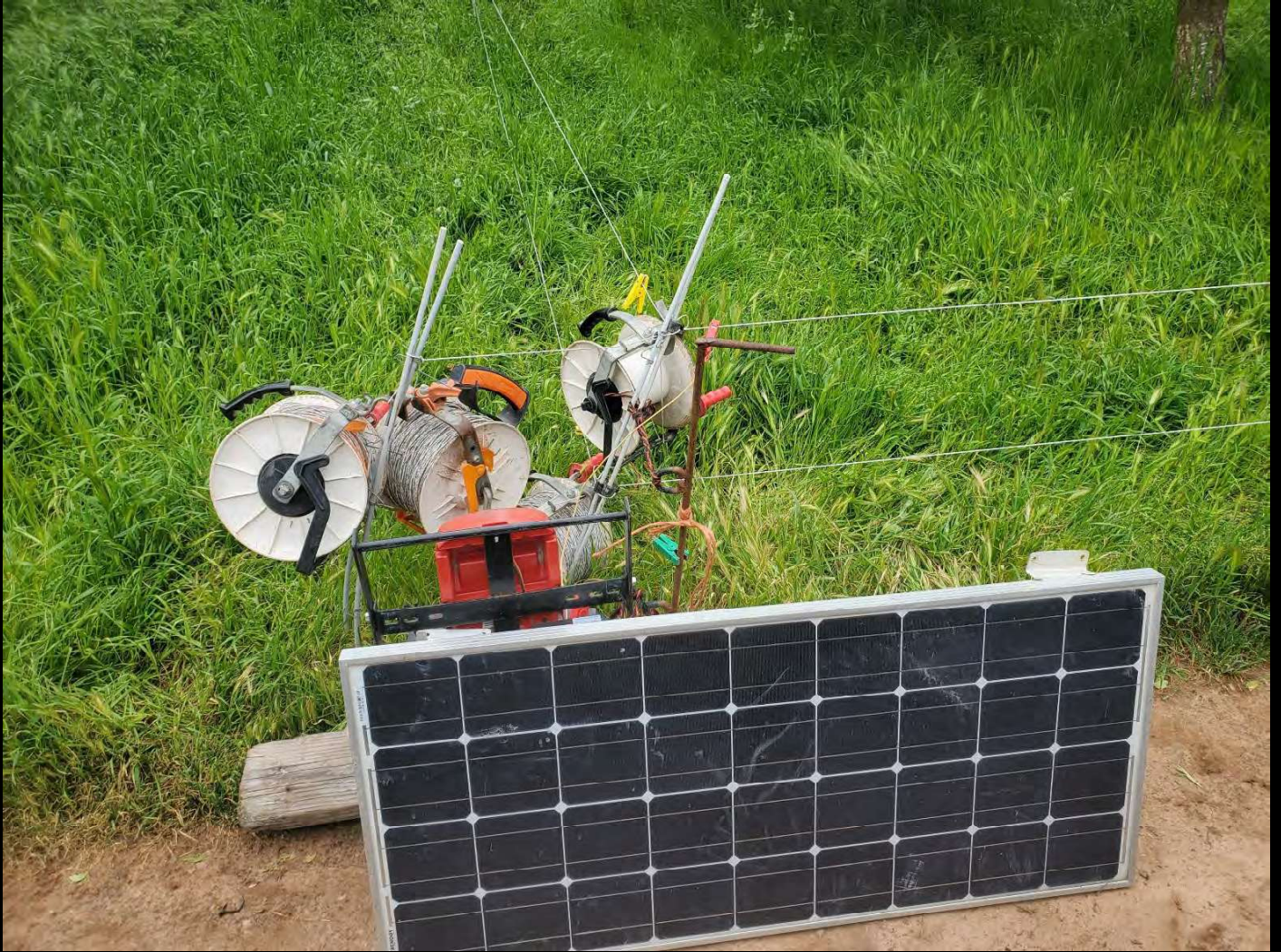




# Livestock Cycle Organic Nutrients













# NOT RREGEN OR HOLISTIC GRAZING





# New Plantings Standard Approach



Central Valley, Table Grapes



WSU Apple  
Soil Health Project Replant

**Ecosystem Processes  
Already Broken**

- No ecological support from the beginning.
- Soil microbial symbiosis not present – No Fungi
- Stressed conditions
  - Heat
  - Evaporation



# Vineyard Replant

## A Regenerative Approach



**Huichica Creek Vineyard**  
Napa Resource Conservation District

  
**SOIL HEALTH  
ACADEMY®**



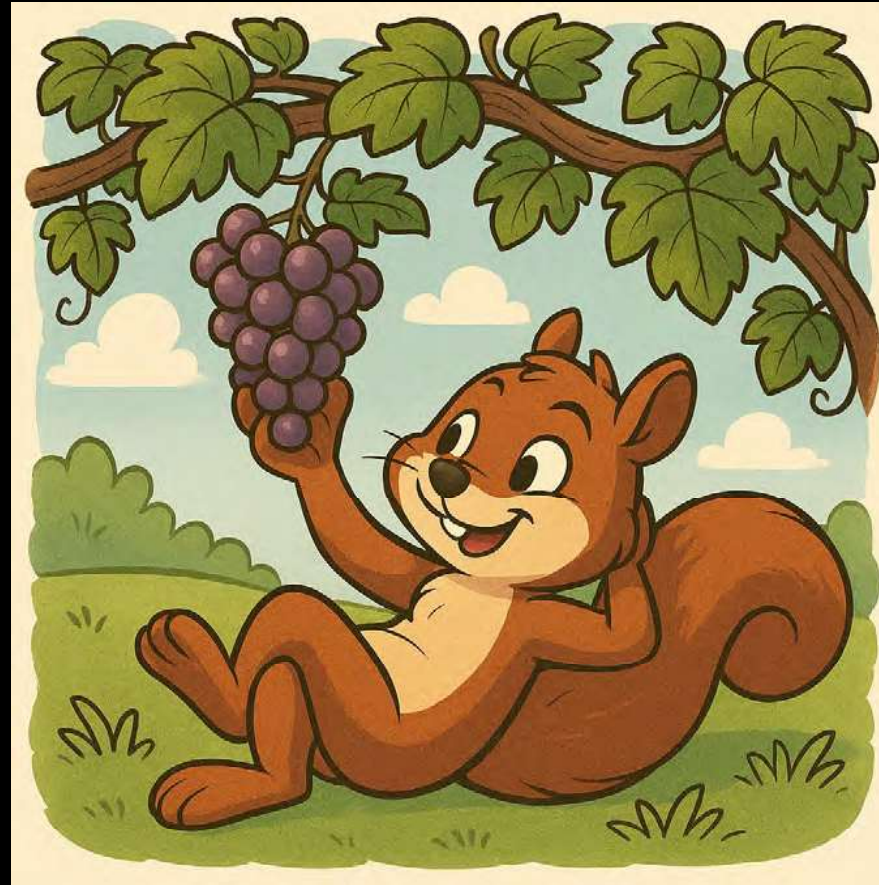
# Vineyard Establishment A Regenerative Approach





# Thank You!

Identify  
your low  
hanging  
fruit



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*Regenerative Ag Consultant*  
*Certified Professional Soil Scientist*

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