

Project needs organic farms

UNIVERSITY of Illinois Extension is looking for organic and sustainable farmers with weed problems to participate in on-farm research.

"In 2008, seven farmers were chosen to participate in the project: five in Illinois, one in Wisconsin and one in Missouri," says Dan Anderson, Extension specialist. "We visited their farms, helped

Key Points

- U of I seeks Midwest organic farmers for weed control trials.
- Most organic farmers say weed control is their toughest issue.
- All applicants will receive a packet on organic weed control.

them identify weed-management issues and developed some strategies to help solve the problem."

This year, Anderson hopes to have a total of 20 participants from across the Midwest in the program.

In many states, organic and sustainable farmers report that managing perennial weeds without chemicals is one

How to participate in the research study

TO apply, visit asap.sustainability.uiuc.edu/org-ag, scroll down and click on "Mini-Grants Apply Now." You can also call Dan Anderson at 217-333-1588 or e-mail aslan@uiuc.edu.

The mini-grant program is supported by funding from the North Central Region – Sustainable Agriculture Research Education Program.



of their most difficult challenges. "We hope to help organic and sustainable ag farmers improve their skills and practices in managing perennial weeds using integrated management approaches," Anderson adds.

Who qualifies?

In order to participate in the program, you must be currently farming in Illinois or in neighboring states within close proximity of the Illinois border.

"We are looking for sustainable and organic farmers working to develop methods to cope effectively with perennial weeds in their grain or vegetable systems," Anderson notes. "We'll be looking at an applicant's farming system, farm location and how open they are to innovative approaches to managing perennial weeds."

Applicants get weed help

All applicants will receive a packet of material on a number of ideas for integrated management approaches to controlling perennial weeds in crop and vegetable farming systems. These might include:

- cover crops
- tillage
- soil balance
- flaming
- scouting/early removal (by hand or tillage)
- rotations
- mowing/fallow or hay rotation
- livestock/rotation
- sprays (organic)
- biological control (release of beneficial, predatory insects or organisms)
- optimizing competition from growing crop

Participation is a win-win

Participating farmers will be chosen from the applicant pool. Those chosen will be contacted by the on-farm research coordinator to develop and finalize plans for their on-farm project.

"In addition to a farmer's originally proposed approach, we'll encourage each participant to incorporate one or more of the integrated management approaches from the info packet," Anderson explains.

Anderson stresses that these on-farm research projects are really a win-win situation.

"The participants will each receive \$500 per year of participation; but, more important, they will benefit from getting the latest research-based info on managing perennial weeds without chemicals and one-on-one assistance in developing a viable on-farm research project," he adds.

Source: University of Illinois

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