

State 1st

Dear Papaw Warrens,

I watch you bend carefully, a task that is becoming increasingly difficult, and scoop up a handful of rich soil from your garden. I see you bring it to your face and inhale deeply, eyes closed. I then notice how you open your palm and let the dirt fall slowly back to the ground. I sense the pride that you feel, knowing that the Kentucky legacy of gardening is still alive and well in our family. I want to make you aware of some soil conservation practices that will allow us to pass this legacy on to future generations. According to answers.yahoo.com, soil conservation is "a set of management strategies for prevention of soil being eroded from the earth's surface or becoming chemically altered." If we do not learn to practice some soil conservation techniques like no till farming, use of rain barrels, and planting buffer strips, our soil soon may not be fit for use.

I understand that you till, or plow, your garden several times per year. I know, however, that you may not be aware of the damage it can cause. According to Chris Rogers in his article "10 Ways to Conserve Soil", practicing no till farming is very effective. He says, "No till farming allows crops to remain, rather than being plowed under." He goes on to say that this practice keeps the soil in place and keeps the richer soil from being constantly exposed to the elements. In fact, kyfb.com tells us that the best soil is the soil that we keep covered because it is healthier. They recommend that we cover it with growing plants and residue from previous gardens. Maybe we could practice the technique of no till farming this year, Papaw.

Another way we can preserve the soil of your precious garden is to use rain barrels. Rain barrels catch the runoff from the roof (which is considered an impervious surface because it allows water to run freely) to prevent that water from flowing into your garden and eroding the rich soil. Rain barrels not only protect the soil from erosion, but they also allow us to practice water conservation because we can use the excess water for watering plants, washing cars, and other household chores. I know you have used rain barrels in the past, and I think it would be a great idea if we resurrected that practice in the near future.

Yet another method of preserving our greatest commodity is to plant buffer strips. As you are well aware, we live in an area that is prone to flooding during any rainy season. I know that your garden is planted near a stream to allow you to utilize that water for your crops if we experience a dry spell. Planting buffer strips, such as shrubs, trees, and grasses can prevent freely flowing water from eroding the stream's banks and washing your soil away. I think it would be a good idea if we planted some shrubs along that bank before next growing season.

As you can see, Papaw, you have taught me well. I understand how important the soil is to us by watching you tirelessly work on getting your soil in optimal condition, whether by adding manure or by other methods. I hope you will let me help you this year! Let's try to

improve on soil quality by practicing no till farming, using rain barrels, and by planting buffer strips. These are just a few of the many soil conservation methods, but they would make a good starting point. I definitely want to continue eating that delicious corn that we plant, grow, harvest, and can each summer!

Your Grandson,

Jason Blake Warrens

Works Cited

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