



Recently, farmers have recognized that the soil is their most important asset and that, if it is lost or ruined by contamination or other cause, crops cannot be raised successfully. No-till methods of planting (seeding in the residue of last year's crop without deep plowing) have helped greatly to reduce soil loss by erosion and, on this hillside, crop production per acre has increased.

## Saving Our Soil

Water, flowing over soil or rock, eventually will erode the surface and begin to cut channels. The ravine at the bottom of the hill to your right was cutting a gully, the top of which was moving up the hillside. In the 1930's, the Civilian Conservation Corps planted Black Locust trees in the ravine and built a spillway to slow this erosion. Now, farmers plant crops along the level contours and across the hillside to slow the loss of soil. In the center of the fields, the swale, where most surface run-off occurs, are planted with cool-season grasses. Their tangled roots hold the soil so they are left undisturbed during the crop season.

Narrative credit: Art Pope, Professor Emeritus UW-Madison