

## The Forever Green Initiative: Developing New Perennial and Winter Annual Crops to Enhance Minnesota's Soil and Water Resources



### Why Forever Green?

Preservation of our natural resources is important to the quality of life and health of all Minnesotans. Among these resources, clean water is one of the most important to the citizens of the “Land of 10,000 Lakes.”



- The health of Minnesota's lakes, rivers, and ground water is threatened by non-point sediment and nutrient pollutants originating from urban and agricultural systems.
- The human health risks, ecosystem impacts and economic losses related to degraded water resources result from land-use practices in both urban and rural areas.
- Agriculture can provide the solutions that preserve and conserve two of Minnesota's most precious resources, soil and water.

For Minnesota to meet proposed water quality goals, winter annual and perennial crops need to be integrated into Minnesota's agricultural landscapes. The **Forever Green Initiative** at the University of Minnesota is positioned to develop these new winter annual and perennial crops, with associated efficient farming systems, that will lead to improved water quality, and management of water quantity, while bolstering the rural and agricultural economy with high-value, commercially marketable food, feed, and fuel products. Perennial and winter-annual crops—working in tandem with summer annuals—can capture solar energy, water and nutrients with very high efficiency.

Specifically, these production systems can:

- Diversify economic opportunities for Minnesota's farmers, through the production of new sources of food, feed, and high-value biomaterials, without interfering with current annual production systems.
- Provide ecosystem services such as clean water, healthy soil, pollinator forage and habitat.
- Enable abundant production despite climate variability and new pest and disease pressures.
- Enhance rural communities by creating new industries based on renewable agricultural resources and employment opportunities.
- Attract high quality talent to the University of Minnesota to meet the future workforce needs of the agriculture, food, energy and natural resource based industries in Minnesota.

## PERENNIAL CROPS

- Intermediate wheatgrass Kernza® – wheat-like grain, forage, biomass
- Perennial sunflower – edible seeds, oil
- Native polyculture grassland mixtures – biomass, forage, natural products
- Perennial flax – edible oil
- Kura clover – N-fixing cover crop
- Silphium – edible oil

## WINTER ANNUAL CROPS

- Pennycress – oil, biofuel, cover crop
- Camelina – edible oil, biofuel, cover crop
- Winter barley – food, malting barley
- Hairy vetch – cover crop, N-fixation

## NATIVE WOODY CROPS

- Hazelnut – nuts, edible oil
- Shrub willow – biomass
- Elderberry – antioxidant-rich fruit
- Agroforestry – woody and herbaceous crop mixtures for feed, food and fuel

## WHO IS FOREVER GREEN?

Forever Green is composed of teams of researchers, farmers, food product developers, and entrepreneurs from all aspects of the agricultural supply chain whose goal is to develop and promote the use of new crops that enhance water and soil quality. Each of the new agricultural enterprises listed above requires a unique strategy for implementation. The Forever Green team is focused on ensuring that these enterprises strengthen Minnesota's economy while protecting water, soil, and other natural resources. Partners include: Green Lands, Blue Waters; University of Minnesota Extension; Center for Integrated Natural Resources & Agricultural Management; Minnesota Institute for Sustainable Agriculture; USDA Agricultural Research Services

## WEBSITE

<http://www.forevergreen.umn.edu>

## Contact

Dr. Don Wyse, [wysex001@umn.edu](mailto:wysex001@umn.edu), 651.470.9878

Dr. Nick Jordan, [jorda020@umn.edu](mailto:jorda020@umn.edu)



Camelina



Native plant polycultures



Silphium



Hairy vetch



Perennial sunflower



Elderberry



Perennial flax



Hazelnut



Kura clover



Shrub willow



Pennycress



Kernza® – Intermediate wheatgrass