

Grass-fed Beef Essentials:

- Genetics – Grass-fed
- High Quality Forage
- Low stress Management
- Proper Harvest/Presentation

Soil Understandings:

Natural systems are about a system that is alive and holds nutrients in an insoluble form but available to the plants! Synthetic systems look at the soil as only a container to hold the plant and nutrients are in a soluble form. Cultural practices are very different for the two systems. Do not try to merge the two. (Not that we can't learn from all systems). Natural systems promote diversity at all levels; synthetic systems promote monoculture.

Soil characteristics (physical, chemical, and biological) are important in both systems. It is the management, outcomes and form of nutrients that is different. Study and understand this.

Forage:

Learn what is growing in your pastures, warm season or cool season; nutritional value, etc. In natural systems we want a great deal of plant diversity – rather than a monoculture.

Weed Signals that help us:

Grassy weeds (Johnson grass, KR bluestem, grass-burrs, etc) usually indicate calcium is unavailable, and when they die back, they release the nutrients held within the plant in a plant available form.

Broadleaf weeds usually indicate that the available P:K ratio (Phosphorus:Potassium) is out of balance. These weeds are trying to 'fix the balance when they die back and release the nutrients.' In natural grass systems we are looking for a 2-4:1 ratio of P:K. Synthetic soil management usually produces a 1:10 ratio of P:K.

Insects:

99% are good. Our modern industry has been created for the 1% of bad guys and has wiped out most of the good. They provide protein to the rest of food chains; move energy along the food chain; balance their populations; pollinate most growing plants; are mama natures quality control and take out what she deems unfit for her creatures.

Microbes (The soilfood web):

Bacteria and Fungi immobilize nutrients in their bodies; Protozoa and Nematodes mineralize the nutrients in the Carbon : Nitrogen (plus all other cycles). Microbes take care of the plants and plants take care of them. We add life back to the environment by use of compost, compost teas, extracts, mob grazing...

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Holistic Goal of Ross Farm: To provide on-farm research and support for main enterprise (Sustainable Growth Texas) – setting up functioning, non-synthetic eco systems; to provide profit via high quality grass-fed beef (Betsy Ross Grass-fed Beef), and other farm endeavors; to share what we learn; and to live in harmony and peace with the land for future generations.

Paradigm: Nothing bad in nature; everything has a purpose (just cause we don't understand it, we don't need to kill it); everything needs air, water, food and shelter; we want everything coming up out of the ground to return to the ground; we want life, life, life above and below the ground, moving energy through all the environment's trophic levels; weeds are helpers and provide feed-back; insects are valued, and our cultural practices should support our paradigm.

Return Life to the Soil:

Tea Brewing: Harvard – How to make a brewer and a fungal and bacterial recipe.

<http://www.uos.harvard.edu/fmo/landscape/organiclandscaping/>

Cultural Practices:

Perfect Bite – try to put the perfect bite together when you can.

<http://www.sustainablegrowthtexas.com/ag/pasture.html>

Labs:

Soil Chemistry: www.loganlabs.com

Soil Biology: www.soilfoodweb.com

Plant & Disease: <http://plantclinic.tamu.edu/forms/>

Forage: Dairy One at <http://www.dairystone.com/>

Read:

www.acresusa.com

HMI 'In Practice'

Essential Readings per Betsy (in this order):

Soil Biology Primer – USDA

Teeming with Microbes (2nd Edition) – Lowenfels & Lewis

Bringing Nature Home – Douglas W. Tallamy

Science in Agriculture – Arden Anderson

Hands on Agronomy – Neil Kinsey

Cows Save the Planet – Judith Schwartz

Prairie Plants and Their Environment – J.E. Weaver

The Holistic Orchard – Michael Phillips

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