

Cikananga Sustainable Farming Program



Producing food for the animals of Cikananga, whilst promoting and demonstrating regenerative practices.



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News from the farm

By Scott Hartle

Towards the end of December, the unusually long dry season finally ended, bringing with it much needed rain. As this is Farm Three's first wet season the Farm Team and I were interested in understanding how water moves within the landscape. We now have an idea of future problem areas and strategies to be better prepared.

With the rain came an explosion of local plant growth and reduced hands-on presence at the farm. Consequently, weeding has jumped to the top of our priority list.

Previously, when initially constructing Farm Three we purposely chose not to dig footpaths between the beds, rather, aiming for a more uniformed footpath-to-bed height. This became a problem after the wedding making it difficult to distinguish between the two. As a result, permanent raised bed construction is currently underway.



Design, construct, and maintain

4-year Crop Rotation

A 4-year crop rotation involves dividing your garden into sections and planting different types of crops in each section over a four-year period. This approach offers several advantages compared to planting the same crops in the same place year after year.

- **Diversity:** Each year, a different crop family occupies each block, promoting a more diverse soil ecosystem and discouraging pest and disease build-up specific to particular crops.
- **Nutrient Efficiency:** Different crops have different nutrient needs. Rotating crops ensures they draw from various soil nutrients, preventing depletion and promoting long-term soil health.
- **Weed Suppression:** Certain crops like legumes (beans and peas) fix nitrogen in the soil, while others like onions and root vegetables release substances that inhibit weed growth.
- **Soil Structure:** Different crops have different rooting systems. Rotating deep-rooted and shallow-rooted crops helps aerate the soil and improve its structure, benefiting all future plantings.



Permanent raised beds are a valuable tool in regenerative farming systems, particularly as we are focused on soil health and minimal tillage. Here's why:

Raised beds are elevated areas of cultivated soil that are permanent fixtures, meaning they are not disturbed or tilled annually.

This approach benefits Soil Health:

- **Reduced Tillage:** Eliminating annual tillage prevents the physical disruption of soil structure, minimizing damage to beneficial soil organisms and organic matter.
- **Enhanced Soil Biology:** Undisturbed soil fosters a thriving microbiome, promoting nutrient cycling, decomposition, and soil fertility.
- **Improved Drainage:** Raised beds drain more efficiently, preventing waterlogging and promoting healthy root growth.

Even though this task is labor intensive, especially using hand tools alone, the long-term benefits outshine the initial hardship.