



# Small Scale Solutions for your Farm

## Vegetative Barrier



### Do You Have Problems With:

- Soil Washing From Your Field(s)

### What is a Vegetative Barrier?

A vegetative barrier is a 3–5 foot wide strip of perennial plants placed in lines across the dominant slope of your field. Additionally, vegetative barriers can assist on reducing gully erosion.

### Purposes and Benefits of Vegetative Barrier

- Trap soil
- Slow down running water
- Reduce gully erosion
- Take less land out of production than a traditional terrace and diversion system
- Can serve as an added source of income
- Can be planted with a hand-held seeder
- Benefit wildlife such as quail by providing cover, food and shelter
- Can provide a source of forage for livestock
- Attract beneficial insects

### Maintenance

Once established, raspberries and blackberries should be pruned annually for optimum fruit production. Tilling beside the vegetative barrier will stop non desired shoots from spreading into your field.

Be sure to keep the area free of invasive weeds and remove any tree seedlings that may sprout in between the shrubs.

Switchgrass and Eastern gamagrass should not be mowed or hayed below 6 inches. Excessive mowing will decrease their stem size. This will weaken your vegetative barrier.



Example of soil erosion.



Vegetative barriers.





## Plants Used as Vegetative Barriers

The plants used in a vegetative barrier must have strong, upright stems to slow down water runoff and trap soil.

You will get additional benefits depending on the plants you choose.

**Switchgrass** and **Eastern Gamagrass** are native, perennial bunch grasses. They are very drought tolerant and thrive in a wide range of soils. Both can be grazed or cut for hay. Since they are warm season grasses, they provide a source of forage during mid to late summer when cool season grasses, such as fescue, are in a slump. Their upright, bunching growth form provides excellent cover and shelter for ground nesting birds like quail.

**Blackberries** and **Raspberries** can help attract beneficial insects and pollinators. They can also provide an additional source of income through sales as a “pick your own” operation, the local farmers market or other cooperatives.



Blackberries.



Sunflowers encourage pollination from bees and other insects and can also be used for barriers.



Vegetative barriers can provide food for pollinators.



Switchgrass is drought tolerant and can thrive in a wide range of soils.





## Technical and Financial Assistance

Whether you measure your farm in terms of feet or acres, your local Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) office has experienced conservationists that can help you develop a Conservation Plan to conserve, maintain, and restore the natural resources on your land and improve the long-term health of your operation.

There is no charge for our assistance. Simply contact your local office to set up an appointment. You may also be eligible to receive financial assistance. Your NRCS office will explain any programs that are available so you can make the best decision for your operation. All NRCS programs and services are voluntary.

## For More Information

Visit the Natural Resources Conservation Service or visit [farmers.gov/service-locator](https://farmers.gov/service-locator) to find your local NRCS office. You can also check with your local USDA Service Center, then make an appointment to determine next steps for your conservation goals.



NRCS partner assisting small scale farmer with developing a customized conservation plan. Photo by Erica Quinlan.

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