



UNDER COVER

In exchange for a little TLC, Rich Bennett's fields produce healthy yields of grain, while saving him fertilizer, herbicide, fuel and time.

STORY BY KARL WOLFSHOHL | PHOTOS BY WILLIAM JORDAN

Winter and spring winds can whip up and carry unprotected particles of sandy topsoil off the land. It's a problem that's plagued farmers since well before the advent of modern agriculture. One solution to the problem—the use of cover crops—is also very old, but it's been put aside, if not forgotten, by many producers.

Rich Bennett, his wife, Jeannie, and informal partner on the farm Ken Griffith haven't forgotten and employ the practice each year on their farm in northwestern Ohio, near the town of Napoleon. As a result, they conserve their valuable soil, not to mention improve it, as well as save money on fertilizer and fuel. They do this while maintaining average yields of corn, soybeans and wheat on 1,100 acres.

How Rich Bennett Uses Cover Crops >>

■ In fall, following corn harvest, Rich broadcasts 2 bushels of rye per acre into corn stubble with a fertilizer spreader, disking lightly for good seed-to-soil contact. The seed spreads a blanket of green over the topsoil, until it's terminated for soybean planting in spring.