

*Practical information, resources and opportunities for
north-west Tasmanian farmers and agricultural service providers.*

Welcome to the May 2026 edition of *Our Natural Advantage*, Cradle Coast NRM's monthly climate-smart farming snapshot.

The theme of this edition is:

Valuing Cover Crops

Over the past year, the Land team at Cradle Coast NRM have been working hard to deliver a multi-species cover cropping demonstration in partnership with Harvest Moon.

We have shown in previous demonstrations that multi-species cover crops can be a cost-effective means to provide a level of insurance from soil erosion by water on cropping land. This new demonstration aims to compare the physical, chemical and biological attributes of soil with and without a multi-species cover crop, showing the nutrient and soil health benefits.

This demonstration isn't a trial - information and research on cover cropping is already widely available, and the benefits are clear. This demonstration aims to show and communicate practical and profitable ways to incorporate diverse cover crops, ensuring farmers are confident and can get the best value from incorporating them into their production system.

What did we do?

In mid-autumn 2025, a simple mix of species (including Oat, Millet, Pea, Buckwheat, Lab lab, plus a few volunteer species including Fumitory and Pyrethrum) was sown into one plot, while another plot was left bare-fallow.

Both plots underwent a variety of tests, including:

- Soil structure assessed from February to October with a digital compaction meter
- Chemical analysis of soil from February to November
- Biological analysis of soil from February to November
- Electronic/carbon noses deployed in treatment plots for the first week of May
- Plant tissue harvested from cover crop plot and analysed three times (June, July & August)
- Cotton undies buried in both plots as a biological activity indicator

Following this, the crop was terminated and incorporated in spring, ready for a summer crop of radishes.



Harvest Moon staff checking out the progress of their cover crop

The results

All measurements taken showed differences between the two plots. While these findings will be refined when more data is available over the next few seasons, preliminary results analysis shows:

- Once the cover crop is established, penetration resistance is consistently lower in this plot when compared to the untreated (bare-fallow) plot. This indicates it is easier for plant roots to grow down through the soil.
- Organic Carbon, total Carbon, Phosphorus, Potassium, Nitrate-N, NH₄-N, organic Nitrogen and water extractable Nitrogen levels were consistently higher in soil from the cover crop plot.
- Significant quantities of Dry Matter and nutrients are held in the cover crop plant tissue throughout winter. By late August, dry matter contained in the cover crop plot was measured at 4679 kg/Ha. Laboratory analysis shows that per hectare, the dry matter contained 115 kg of Nitrogen, 23 kg of Phosphorus and 54 kg of Potassium.
- Phosphorus Buffering Index (PBI) was lower in the cover crop plot. This indicates that Phosphorus is not as tightly bound in the soil and may be more available for plant uptake when compared to the fallow plot.
- Higher levels of microbial degradation of the organic cotton underwear occurred in the cover crop plot, showing increased biological activity within the soil of this plot. This is also shown through the higher levels of CO₂ respiration, Solvita Microbial respiration and estimated organic matter in the cover crop plot when compared to the nontreated/bare-fallow plot. At the same time, the nontreated plot released significantly higher levels of Volatile Organic Compounds (VOC's).
- By November, the cover crop plot soil reported 6.5 mg/kg of organic Nitrogen compared to 1.5 mg/kg in the bare-fallow or nontreated plot. Exactly when that extra Nitrogen is available for plants to use is difficult to predict and can depend on whether the residue is slashed or disced into the ground, soil moisture available for microbial activity, and rainfall events. However, early analysis of the data indicates that by using a cover crop, the amount of Nitrogen added to the soil may be worth over \$600 per hectare. We will continue to analyse this data over the coming weeks.

If you would like to find out more about the demonstration, why not come and hear us explain the results for yourself?

Join us on May 13 from 5:30pm to 7:30pm at the Forth Football Club to hear our Sustainable Agriculture Facilitator Tom O'Malley break down the data, followed by Jason Lynch of Pinion Advisory on the how and why local farmers are incorporating multi-species cover crops into their growing systems, and a panel discussion hosted by VegNET Tasmania's Prue Rothwell, with Harvest Moon's Agronomist Josh Wing and recent Crop Program Manager Ali Dugand.

Light food will be provided throughout the night, with drinks available for purchase from the bar.

To RSVP, contact Cradle Coast NRM via landprogram@cradlecoast.com or on 6433 8400.

The value of multi-species covers

Quantifying the financial and soil health benefits of cover crops

13 May 2026
5:30 to 7:30 PM
Forth Football Club

Finger food provided, drinks available for purchase from the bar

RSVP to 6433 8400 or email landprogram@cradlecoast.com

Hear about the benefits of multi-species cover crops to north-west Tasmanian vegetable growers, including:

- Results of Cradle Coast NRM's latest cover crop demonstration, grown by Harvest Moon
- Financial and soil health benefits included
- How growers are integrating diverse covers into their growing systems
- Farmist panel hosted by VegNET Tasmania

This project is supported by the Australian Government through funding from the Natural Heritage Trust under the Climate Smart Agriculture Program and delivered by Cradle Coast NRM, a member of the Cradle Coast 2011 Regional Delivery Partnership.

Sustainable Communities | Our Natural Advantage



Resources

Cover Crops Termination Guide: Make sure your cover crop is terminated before seed set to prevent it becoming a weed. Download the guide [here](#).

Losing less, using less: Practical nutrient management with Joel Williams: This article summarises key takeaways from a recent event, including the Efficiency, Substitution and Redesign approach. Read the article [here](#).

2021 Autumn Cover Crop Trial by Cradle Coast NRM: read about our previous demonstration, including practical tips tailored to north-west Tasmania. View the resource [here](#).

Protecting our Productive Soils - Cover Crop Establishment Guide by Cradle Coast NRM: A practical guide to hillslope erosion risk reduction using autumn cover cropping. Download the resource [here](#).

Events and Opportunities

The value of Multi-Species Covers

Hosted by: Cradle Coast NRM

Date: 13 May 2026, 5:30 to 7:00 PM

Location: Forth Football Club

Hear from farmers about the value of multi-species covers and the results of our latest demonstration with Harvest Moon.

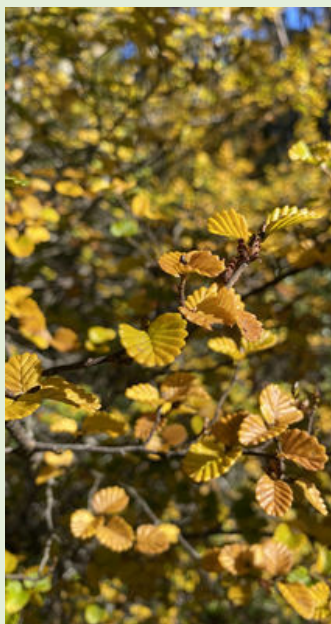
RSVP to landprogram@cradlecoast.com or 6433 8440

Find us at Agfest 2026!

It's confirmed: Cradle Coast NRM will be back at Agfest this year. Find us in the NRE tent at site S70 to S72 on South Street.

Location: Carrick

Dates: 7 to 9 May



Workshop: Building climate resilient soils with effective nutrient waste management

Hosted by: Tasmanian Institute of Agriculture and NRM North

Date: 14 May, 10 am to 2 pm

Location: Elizabeth Town, Aurora Dairies

RSVP [here](#).

Farm Dam Enhancement: Blythe Field Day

Hosted by: Landcare Tasmania

Date: 20 May, 10am to 1pm

Location: Sulphur Creek

Register [here](#).

Missed a previous edition? Browse other topics from *Our Natural Advantage* below.

[View past editions](#)

If you would like to share a relevant resource, event or opportunity, please email landprogram@cradlecoast.com by 20 April to be considered for the next edition.

Edition 13

5 May 2026



This project is supported by the Australian Government through funding from the Natural Heritage Trust under the Climate-Smart Agriculture Program and delivered by Cradle Coast Authority, a member of the Commonwealth Regional Delivery Partners panel.