

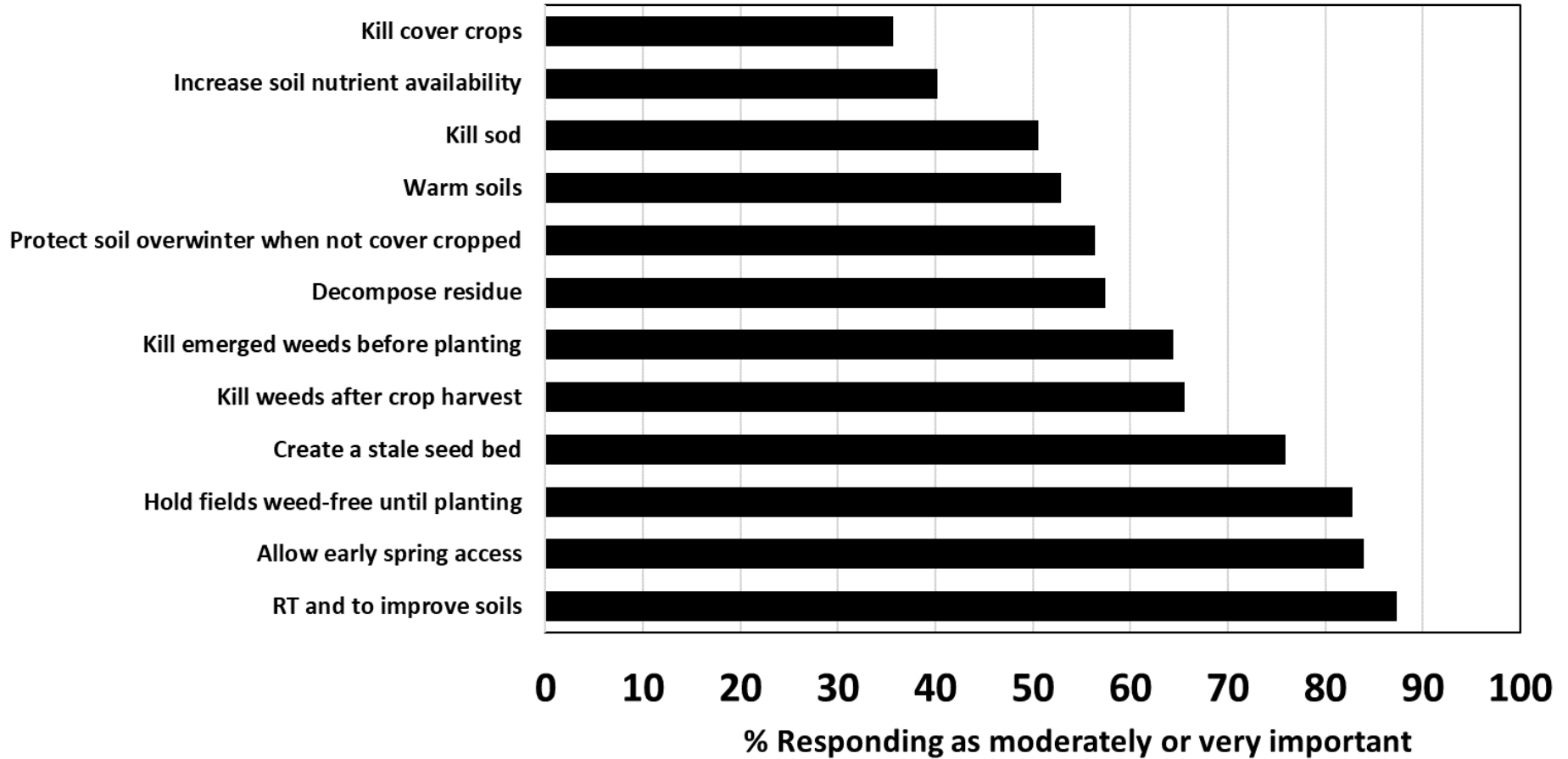


Tarping trials: Now and in the future!

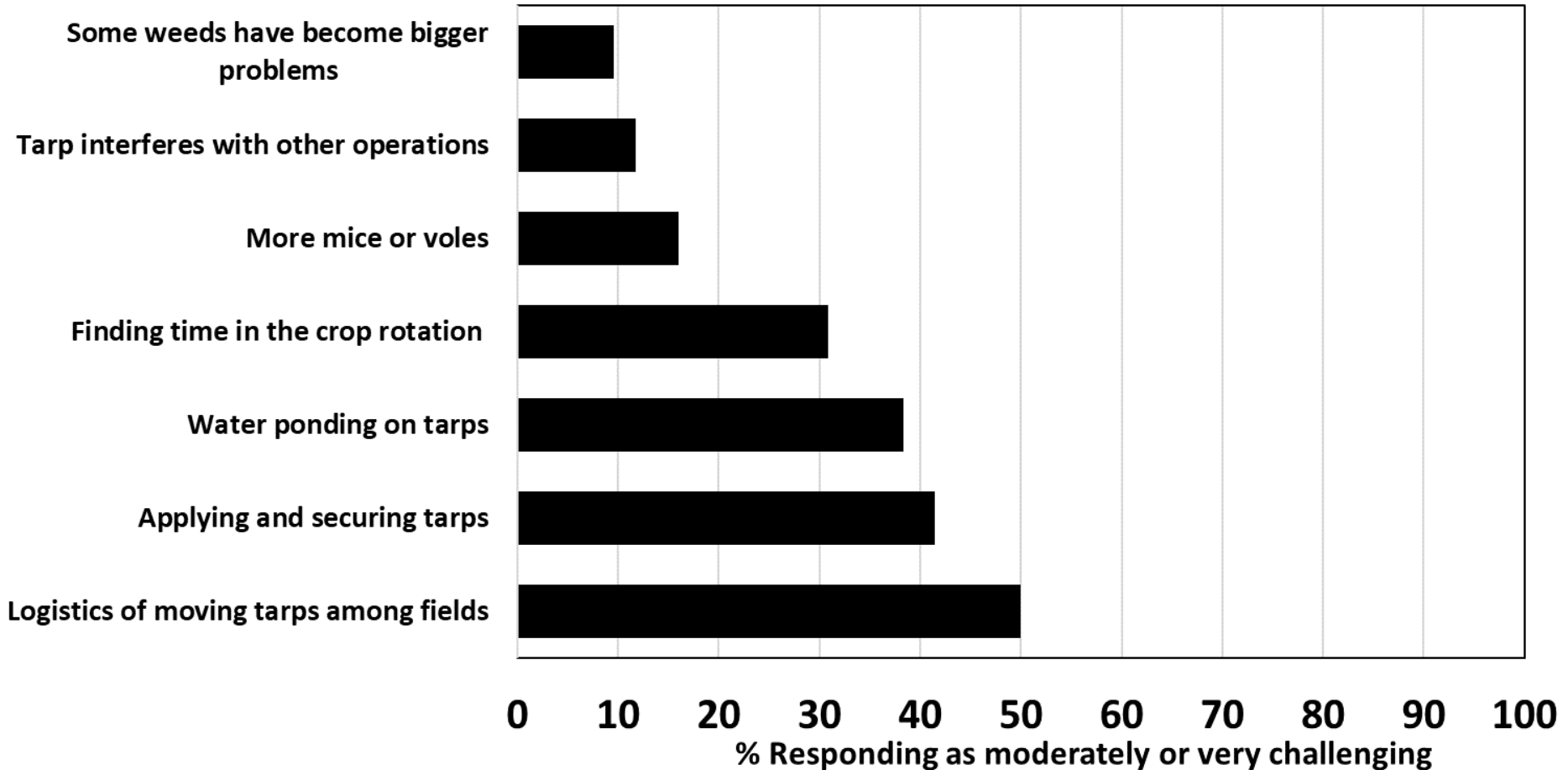
Crystal Stewart Courtens
Eastern NY Commercial
Horiculture



A multifunctional tool...



with logistical challenges.





Fit to the farm and field application.



A blue tractor is parked in a field. A large black tarp is laid out in a long, narrow strip across the field, secured with weights. The background shows a line of bare trees under a clear blue sky.

Two Big Questions

What's happening under tarps?

How do we use them to be successful with less tillage?

The Long-Term Permanent Bed Exp

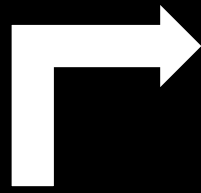


Use tarps as a tillage tool.

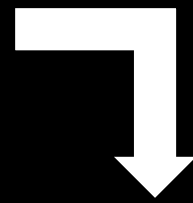


- Make fewer passes
- Reduce intensity
- Try no-till

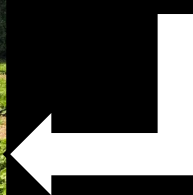
SPRING



SUMMER



Find tarping windows



WINTER



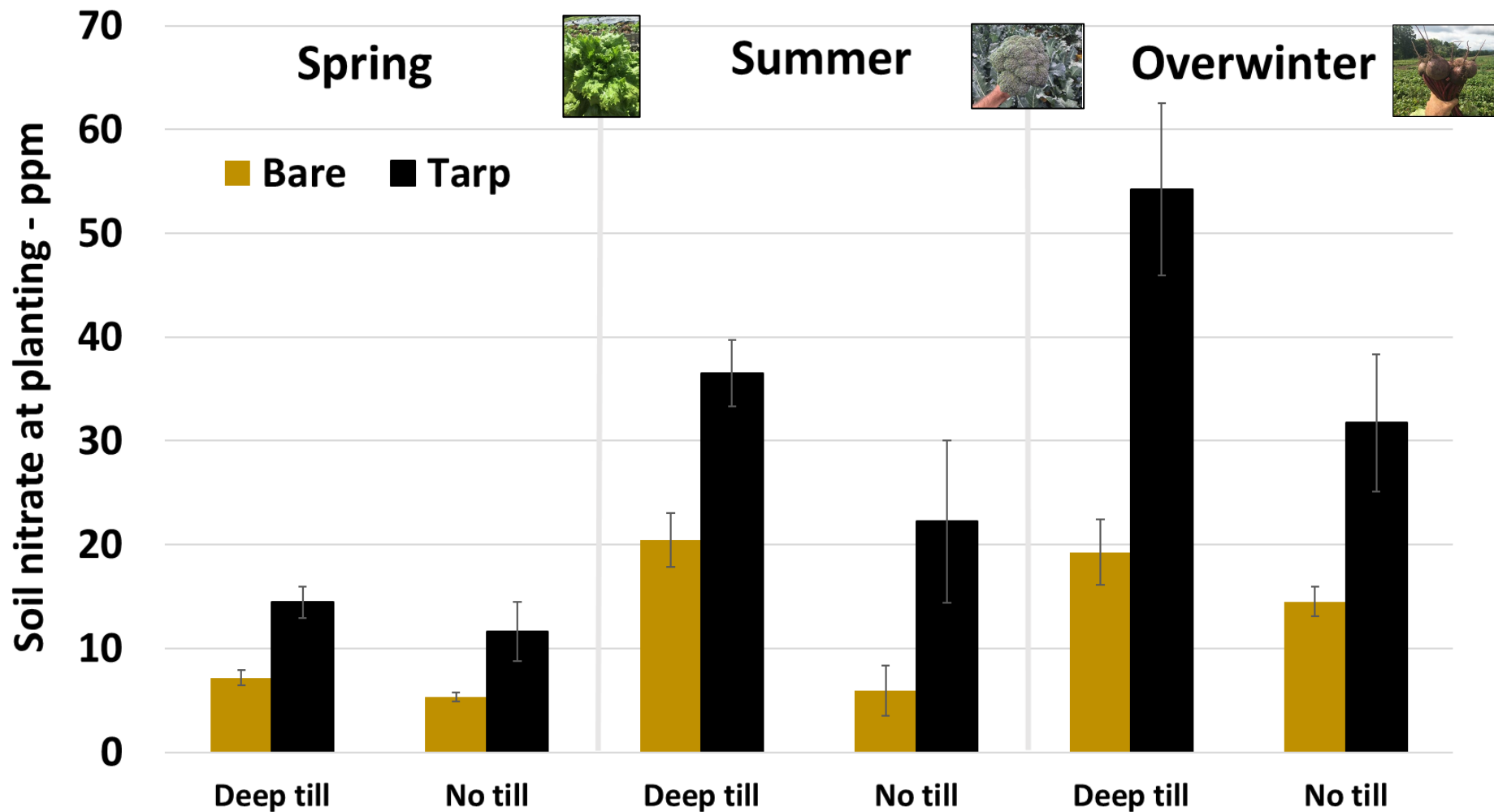
Manage pre-plant soil conditions.

- Warm soils
- Manage water





Increase plant-available soil N.





Till

Tarp

Kill living weeds.





**Reduce the weed seed bank
over the long-term.**

Till

Tarp



Tarp



Tarp + mulch

Mulch for long-season weed suppression.



Give perennials more attention.



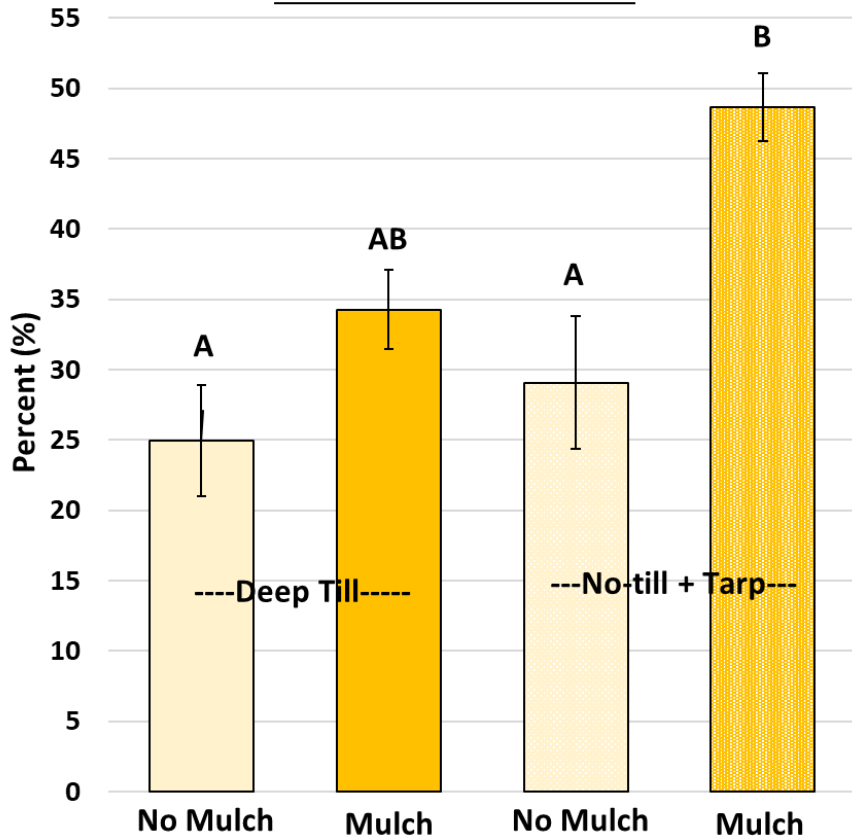
Terminate winter hardy cover crops



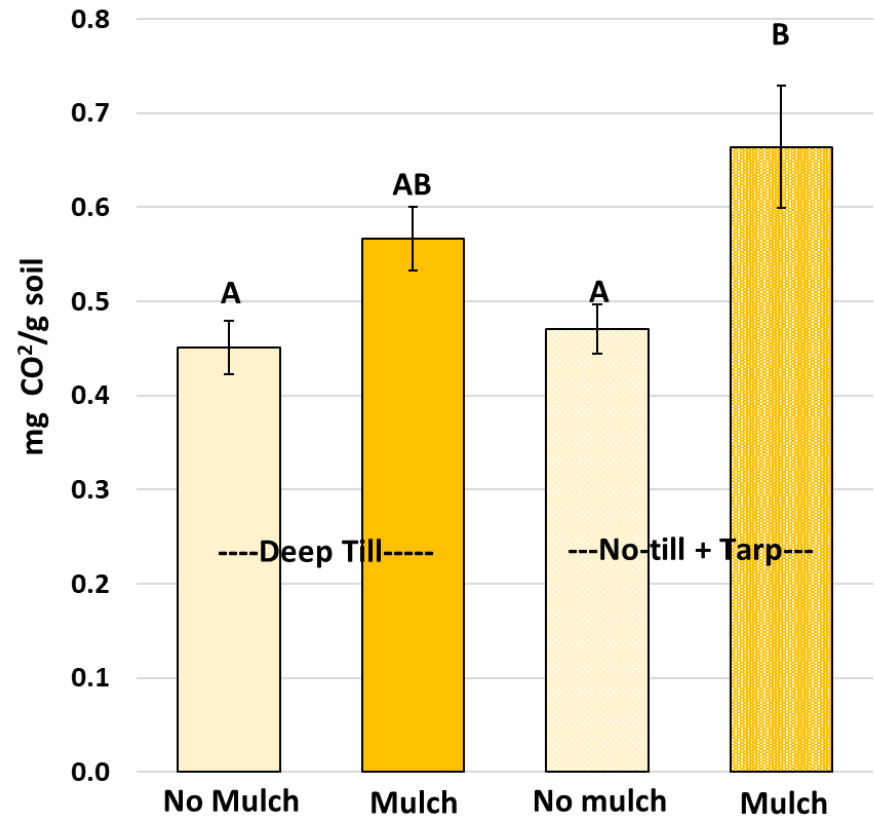
Nook & Cranny Farm, NY

Use tarps + other soil health practices

AGGREGATE STABILITY



SOIL RESPIRATION





Cornell CALS College of Agriculture and Life Sciences

SEARCH

This Site Cornell

About Projects Courses Resources News Events Quarterly Contact

Tarping

[Home](#) » [Projects](#) » [Reduced Tillage in Vegetables](#) » [Tarping](#)

Tarps have become a multifunctional tool for small-scale and organic vegetable farms. Tarping, or occultation, involves the use of durable black plastic, often sourced as silage covers, that is applied to the soil surface between crops and removed before planting. Tarps are reusable over multiple years and adaptable to different applications and planting times over the season. They function as a soil health and weed management tool and serve as a valuable "placeholder" on the farm to hold beds weed-free between plantings. Tarps are working to do many different things - create a stale seed bed for the following crop, kill crops and weeds after harvest, terminate cover crops, and control soil moisture to improve field access in spring. Many of the challenges associated with tarping are logistical, including applying and securing them, moving them across fields, water ponding, and finding time in the rotation to fit them, especially in the middle of the season.

Bulletin #1075, Tarping in the Northeast: A Guide for Small Farms




Tarps covering beds and integrated into the field planning at Centurion Farm. Photo: Nina Saeki.

View Slide

Authors:

SMALL FARMS QUARTERLY

Good Living and Good Farming – Connecting People, Land, and Communities



www.smallfarms.cornell.edu

Anu Rangarajan, Brian Caldwell, Haley Rylander

Cornell University

Mark Hutton, Peyton Ginakes, Mark Hutchinson, Nick Rowley

University of Maine



United States Department of Agriculture
National Institute of Food and Agriculture

