



## Ontario Soil and Crop Improvement Association

1-367 Woodlawn Road West, Guelph, Ontario N1H 7K9

Toll: 1-800-265-9751 Tel: 1-519-826-4214

[www.ontariosoilcrop.org](http://www.ontariosoilcrop.org)

### News release

#### **Southern Ontario crop farmer recognized for soil health advocacy *Laurent (Woody) Van Arkel named 2022 Soil Champion***

For immediate release

Guelph ON , 25 February 2022 – Chatham-Kent farmer Laurent (Woody) Van Arkel has been selected as the 2022 Ontario Soil and Crop Improvement Association (OSCIA) Soil Champion. The award, given annually to recognize a strong soil advocate, was presented at the recent OSCIA annual general meeting.

The southwestern Ontario farmer, who grows corn, soybeans, wheat, sugar beets and sunflowers, and finishes hogs, has been looking for ways to reduce tillage and feed the soil's biology for close to 40 years - and he's always ready to participate in research and share his thoughts with others, whether online or in person.

"Woody's passion for soil health and his drive to continually look for new and better ways of doing things make him a worthy recipient of the OSCIA Soil Champion Award," says OSCIA President Warren Schneckenburger. "Through his willingness to share his soil health experiences openly, he has become a valuable source of information for other farmers who are working to improve soil sustainability on their own farms too."

For the last 10 years, Van Arkel has farmed with three goals in mind: disturb the soil as little as possible, leave the ground covered as much as possible, and keep a living root system in the soil as much as possible. He strip-tills corn and sugar beets and no-tills wheat, soybeans, and sunflowers.

Manure from the pigs is applied after winter wheat, followed by a cover crop. For the last three years, he's been using perennial cover crops between his row crops as part of one of Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada's Living Lab projects.

Van Arkel believes there are three changes over the course of his farming career that have had the most impact on his soil's health: GPS guidance for his tractor that has enabled him to adopt precision planting, switching to no-till for his soybeans, wheat and sunflowers, and strip-tilling sugar beets and corn.

In addition to the Living Lab project, Van Arkel also volunteers his time to the Innovative Farmers Association of Ontario and the Ontario Soil Network and frequently speaks at meetings and events in Canada and the United States. He's also active on Twitter, where he showcases his farming practices and experiences with his almost 6,500 followers.

"Soil health and soil sustainability have been important to me for the last 20 years," Van Arkel says. "It's an honour to be chosen as Soil Champion and nice to be recognized for what you're doing."

Nominations for the 2023 Soil Champion can be submitted to OSCIA any time up to November 1, 2022. Visit [ontariosoilcrop.org](http://ontariosoilcrop.org) to learn more.

OSCIA is a unique, not-for-profit grassroots farm organization whose mission is to facilitate responsible economic management of soil, water, air and crops through development and communication of innovative farming practices.

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For more information:

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