NO-TILL ORGANIC MARKET GARDEN

Producer Case Study

Building From the Soil Up

The Story of Waylon Breaux and DeLaTerre Permaculture Farm

Jackson Parish, Louisiana



USDA United States Department of Agriculture
Natural Resources Conservation Service

NO-TILL OMG! Organically Managed Gardening

CAMPTI Field of DREAMS

Building a Living System

For Waylon Breaux, farming begins with a simple idea:

Healthy soil is the foundation for everything else.

As co-owner and farm manager of DeLaTerre Permaculture Farm in Eros, Louisiana, Waylon has spent years developing a diversified regenerative farm designed to demonstrate how healthy soil can support healthy crops, healthy livestock, healthy ecosystems, and healthy communities.

Situated on 43 acres in Northeast Louisiana, DeLaTerre combines no-till vegetable production, rotational grazing, composting, agroforestry, and integrated livestock systems into a single working landscape. The farm includes approximately two and a half acres of vegetable production, two high tunnels, and nearly thirty acres of pasture supporting pigs, sheep, goats, poultry, guardian dogs, and other livestock enterprises.

When Waylon joined the No-Till Organic Market Garden project, he saw an opportunity to deepen his understanding of soil health while demonstrating that regenerative agriculture could be both practical and economically viable at a human scale.

More importantly, he wanted to show other farmers what was possible. As he explained during a project interview:

"We want to be a demonstration of what you can do at any scale."

That philosophy would ultimately shape not only the future of DeLaTerre Permaculture Farm, but also the experience of dozens of farmers who participated in the project.



The first no-till production area established at DeLaTerre Permaculture Farm.

> *"We want to be a demonstration of what you can do at any scale."*
> *— Waylon Breaux*

Learning Through Innovation

A Demonstration Farm in Action

From the beginning, DeLaTerre served as more than a production farm.

It became a place where ideas could be tested, demonstrated, and shared.

Through field days, workshops, soil health demonstrations, farm tours, and monthly meetings, participants observed firsthand how regenerative practices could be implemented within a working farm system.



Waylon Breaux hosts Jesse Frost, author of The Living Soil Handbook, and fellow farmers at DeLaTerre Permaculture Farm.

At DeLaTerre, no-till production was integrated with composting, cover cropping, livestock grazing, vermicomposting, and biochar production. Each practice was designed to support biological activity while reducing dependence on purchased inputs.

The farm became a living laboratory where participants could observe:

- Permanent no-till beds
- Compost production systems
- Cover crop management
- Vermicomposting
- Biochar applications
- Intensive rotational grazing
- Livestock integration
- Soil health monitoring

One of the project's most valuable lessons emerged through this work:

Healthy soil is not created through a single practice. It is created through systems that work together over time.

Key Findings

- Demonstrated regenerative agriculture on a working commercial farm
- Integrated vegetables, livestock, composting, and grazing systems
- Reduced dependence on external inputs through biological soil-building
- Hosted field days, workshops, and educational events
- Supported peer-to-peer learning among project participants
- Helped farmers evaluate practical implementation strategies
- Expanded understanding of whole-farm regenerative systems
- Strengthened connections between farmers, researchers, and conservation professionals

Building Healthy Soil

The Foundation of the Farm

At DeLaTerre, soil health is not treated as a separate conservation practice.

It is the foundation upon which every enterprise depends.

Waylon's approach focuses on keeping living roots in the soil, minimizing disturbance, increasing biological activity, and returning organic matter back to the land. Cover crops, compost, biochar, rotational grazing, and vermicompost all play a role in that process.

One particularly innovative practice involved incorporating biochar into livestock bedding. The biochar helped absorb odors, improve bedding quality, support microbial activity, and ultimately become part of the composting system. Once composted, those nutrients were returned to production beds, creating a cycle that connected livestock, compost, and crop production.

Waylon also developed a composting system designed to move materials through multiple stages until they were ready for field application. Finished compost became an essential component of bed preparation, seedling production, and long-term soil fertility management.

Over time, field observations and soil monitoring revealed improvements in:

- Soil structure
- Water infiltration
- Moisture retention
- Aggregate stability
- Biological activity
- Root development

These observations reinforced a core principle of regenerative agriculture: Healthy soil improves at its own pace, but the benefits extend far beyond the soil itself.



NRCS EQIP funded composting/animal mortality facility.

"Our goal is to build our health from the soil up."
— Waylon Breaux



Producing biochar in a Ring of Fire kiln for use in composting and livestock bedding systems.

Growing a Farm and a Community

Growing a Community of Farmers

One of Waylon's greatest contributions to the project occurred outside the production fields.

Throughout the grant period, he became a trusted resource for fellow participants navigating challenges both large and small.

Questions often extended beyond vegetables and soil health.

Farmers sought advice related to irrigation systems, fencing, rotational grazing, predator control, composting, erosion management, drainage issues, livestock integration, and farm infrastructure.

Through site visits, soil sampling trips, field days, and informal conversations, Waylon shared practical knowledge gained through years of experimentation and observation.

His involvement extended far beyond his own farm. DeLaTerre hosted workshops, equipment demonstrations, and educational events that brought together farmers, researchers, conservation professionals, and community members from across Louisiana.

The farm also became home to one of Louisiana's earliest off-campus Mesonet weather stations through a partnership with the University of Louisiana Monroe. The station now provides valuable weather information that supports climate resilience and farm decision-making throughout the region.

Perhaps most importantly, Waylon helped foster the peer-to-peer learning culture that became one of the project's defining strengths.

Farmers learned from farmers.

And those lessons often carried more weight than any textbook or presentation.



Dr. Todd Murphy, Executive Director of the Louisiana Mesonet Program at the University of Louisiana Monroe and students Emily and Dylan installing Mesonet #2 at DeLaTerre Permaculture Farm.

"There's a pretty good chance you already have what you need."
— Waylon Breaux

Looking Forward

Continuing the Demonstration

Today, DeLaTerre Permaculture Farm continues evolving as a demonstration of regenerative agriculture in practice.

The farm remains focused on producing nutrient-dense food while improving soil health, reducing external inputs, expanding livestock integration, and strengthening local food systems.

Future plans include expanded direct-to-consumer marketing, increased livestock production, agroforestry development, and continued investment in conservation infrastructure.

Yet the larger vision remains unchanged. To demonstrate what is possible when farmers work with natural systems rather than against them.

For Waylon, regenerative agriculture is not simply a collection of practices. It is a way of thinking about the relationship between land, people, and community.

Key Lessons Learned

- Healthy soil is the foundation of every successful farming system.
- Regenerative practices work best when integrated into whole-farm management.
- Observation is one of the farmer's most valuable tools.
- Peer-to-peer learning accelerates innovation and adoption.
- Small farms can have a significant impact when they focus on soil health and stewardship.



Meishan pigs on pasture at DeLaTerre Permaculture Farm.

Key Themes from Waylon Breaux's Journey

- Soil Health
- Regenerative Agriculture
- Demonstration Farming
- Farmer-to-Farmer Education
- Livestock Integration
- Climate Resilience
- Conservation Innovation
- Local Food Systems
- Farmland Preservation
- Stewardship
- Agricultural Leadership
- Peer Learning

Closing Reflection

Waylon Breaux's participation in the No-Till Organic Market Garden project demonstrates the power of leading through example. Through DeLaTerre Permaculture Farm, he showed that regenerative agriculture can improve soil health, strengthen farm resilience, and create opportunities for education and community connection. By sharing knowledge, testing new ideas, and helping fellow farmers solve practical challenges, he contributed to a legacy that extends far beyond his own fields. His story reminds us that healthy soil is not the destination—it is the foundation from which stronger farms, stronger communities, and stronger local food systems can grow.