season flowers as dandelions. As the weather warms, they disperse to alfalfa or wheat before moving on to corn. Each component of biodiversity — whether planned or unplanned — is significant. For example, if dandelions are destroyed during spring plowing, the ladybugs lose an important food source. As a result, the ladybugs may move on to greener pastures, or fail to reproduce, reducing the population available to manage aphids in your cash crop.

Research shows that farmers can indeed bring pests and natural enemies into balance on biodiverse farms by encouraging practices that build the greatest abundance and diversity of above- and below-ground organisms (Figure 1). By gaining a better understanding of the intricate relationships among soils, microbes, crops, pests and natural enemies, you can reap the benefits of biodiversity in your farm design. Further, a highly functioning diversity of

Figure 1. The pillars of ecological pest management, explained in this book, can be categorized into above-ground and below-ground principles and practices. Ecological pest management is based on the use of multiple tactics to manage pests in the agroecosystem, rather than a “silver bullet” to control them.