

Cover Crops - Overview

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Factors affecting species choice

- Add Nitrogen
- Scavenge Nitrogen
- Cycle Nutrients
- Suppress Weeds & Insects
- Control Erosion / Improve Soil
- Harvest as Forage
- Length of Growing Season

When to Plant ?

- Look for opportunities in crop rotations
 - Under seedings
- After small grain harvest
 - After fall harvest

Managing Growth

- Winterkill
- Grazing
- Mowing
- Roller
- Tillage



BEFORE YOU BEGIN USING COVER CROPS

- ON-FARM RESEARCH
- SEED SOURCE OR GROW YOUR OWN
- START SMALL
- EDUCATE YOURSELF



Cover Crop Options

- Legumes
 - Hairy vetch
 - Medium and mammoth red clover
 - Crimson clover
 - Austrian winter pea
 - Cowpea
 - Nondormant alfalfa
 - Soybean
 - Annual medic



Red clover



Cover Crop Options



- Non-legumes
 - Small grains: oat, rye, wheat, barley, speltz
 - Sudangrass
 - Forage turnips
 - Oilseed radish
 - Annual ryegrass

Oilseed Radish



Oilseed Radish



Why consider mixtures?

- Complimentary growth (above and below ground)
- Spreads risk of winterkill
- Grasses hold soil well with fine root system
- Easier to achieve a desirable C:N ratio
- Broader spectrum of weed suppression (allelopathic)

Cover Crop Resources

- Managing Cover Crops Profitably-SARE
- Agronomy Journal
- Extension Factsheets
- On-Farm Research reports
- SARE State Coordinator
- University Research Station
- Field days
- Private companies

USDA Sustainable Agriculture
Research and Education
Program - SARE

(www.sare.org)

- Farmer/ Rancher Grant Program
- Up to \$6000/individual; \$18,000/group of 3
- Call for proposals posted in early fall;
proposals due late fall

Thank-You For Attending

Please Complete Evaluation

Next Organic IP Video Program

Organic Weed Control
March 15, 2007