

# Cover Cropping

**Definition** per Wikipedia: A **cover crop** is a crop planted primarily to manage soil fertility, soil quality, water, weeds, pests, diseases, biodiversity and wildlife in an *agroecosystem* (Lu *et al.* 2000), an ecological system managed and largely shaped by humans across a range of intensities to produce food, feed, or fiber.

## Reasons to cover crop:

- Weed suppression
- Pest and disease suppression
- Increasing organic matter
- Water mitigation
- Increase fertility
- Improving water holding capacity
- Improving drainage
- Mining nutrients and minerals
- Breaking up hardpan
- Reduced erosion
- Nitrogen fixation
- Improve soil biota
- Improve soil aggregation
- Attract beneficial insects
- Grazing opportunities

## Important factors to consider when deciding on cover crop:

1. Goal (ie: weed suppression)
2. Time of year
3. Cover Crop Management
  - a. Equipment- mowing or plowing to kill
  - b. When it will need to be killed and incorporated for the following crop
4. Cost

## Math:

Area to be cover cropped / 43,560 sq. ft. in an acre = % of an acre you are cover cropping

Lb. of cover crop suggested for an acre X % of an acre you are cover cropping = Lb. of seed needed

## Resources:

**Managing Cover Crops Profitably, 3<sup>rd</sup> Edition**, beginning on page 66 there are some very helpful charts giving the benefits of many types of cover crops. All SARE books are available for FREE download.

<http://www.sare.org/Learning-Center/Books/Managing-Cover-Crops-Profitably-3rd-Edition>

## Cornell Cover Crop Guide

<http://www.hort.cornell.edu/bjorkman/lab/covercrops/>

## Cornell Cover Crop Decision Tool

<http://www.hort.cornell.edu/bjorkman/lab/covercrops/decision-tool.php>

## Rodale Institute

[http://www.rodaleinstitute.org/getting\\_started\\_with\\_cover\\_crops](http://www.rodaleinstitute.org/getting_started_with_cover_crops)

**Video from Rodale using a roller crimper, a tool used to turn cover crop into mulch for no till planting**

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PW4mwVJPS9A>