



Cover Crop Considerations for Prevented Planting

The Midwest Cover Crops Council (MCCC) recommends the use of cover crops for prevented plant acres when feasible for several reasons. Cover crops can be a good way to take advantage of an otherwise unfortunate situation. A full season cover crop is a great opportunity to improve soil health and function. Cover crops can help to reduce soil erosion and compaction, capture nutrients, fix nitrogen, suppress weeds, moderate soil moisture, and build soil health. Benefits accomplished with these cover crops will put farmers at an advantage for the following cash crop and for years to come. A full season legume cover crop can provide considerable nitrogen for next season’s corn crop. This is also a good opportunity to capitalize on the benefits of a diverse cover crop mix. Mixing species is a good way to compound the benefits from multiple species.

As with typical crop planting, make sure to plant when field conditions are fit. Field work under wet soil conditions can impact soil function for years to come.

Consult with your insurance agent and FSA before making planting decisions.

Summer annual cover crop species are ideal for prevent plant situations, but each come with their own concerns. Some of these species include:

Species	Drilled Seeding Rate (for single species, reduce rate in mix)	Drilled Seeding Depth	Minimum Soil Temperature
Grasses			
Sorghum-Sudangrass	15-30 lbs/A	½ - 1½in	65°
Sudangrass	15-20 lbs/A	½ - 1in	65°
Pearl Millet	10-15 lbs/A	½ - 1in	65°
Japanese Millet	12-15 lbs/A	½ - ¾in	65°
Teff	4-8 lbs/A	¼ - ½in	65°
Legumes (<i>inoculate</i>)			
Cowpea	60-120 lbs/A	1 - 2in	65°
Sunn Hemp	10-15	½ - 1½in	42°
Non-Legumes			
Buckwheat	20-35 lbs/A	½ - 1in	50°
Sunflower	5-7 lbs/A	1 - 1½in	44°

Consult your local extension educator or trusted seedsman to adjust seeding rates based on variety and goals.

There are reasons to look beyond these species to meet your cover crop needs. A few of these considerations are listed below.

- Cover crop seed availability is limited for many species. Contact your seed dealer to find out what species are available and affordable to you.
- Teff is small seeded and does well when planted with a Brillion seeder or cultipacker.
- Sunn Hemp thrives in warm climates and will have more nitrogen benefit in southern regions of the Midwest.
- Sunflowers are susceptible to white mold.
- Buckwheat is successful in a short timeframe, but goes to seed quickly.

Additional Prevented Plant Cover Crop Species

Be aware that planting some species out of season is not ideal.

- Cool season cereals such as rye, wheat, and barley planted in the heat of the summer will not produce as much biomass, may not overwinter successfully, and will be at increased disease risk.
- Oats are generally a good cover crop for any window outside the winter months. Be aware that the heat of summer is not ideal for oats, but they can be successfully utilized. They can be drilled at 30-60 lbs/A at a depth of ½ - 1½ in.
- Brassicas, especially radish and mustard, planted before August will begin to bolt before producing much biomass. Mowing can be used to help prevent bolting in some cases.

Management Considerations

- **Managing Weed Pressure** - If you are planning to use cover crops in fields with heavy broadleaf weed pressure (i.e. marehail, waterhemp, etc.), consider using a grass species as a cover crop so that broadleaf herbicides can be utilized to manage weed populations over the summer.
- **Seed Availability** - If summer annual cover crop (listed above) seed availability is low, you might consider controlling weeds until August and then planting a cool season species or mix.
- **Grazing/Forage Harvest** - Discuss insurance details and payments with your agent. Cover crops may be harvested/grazed after November 1, or harvested/grazed before November 1 for partial payment on prevented plant acres.
- **Residual Herbicides** - Consider herbicides that may have already been applied in anticipation of cash crops. Refer to herbicide labels for details. Brassica and legume cover crops can be especially sensitive to residual herbicides.
- **Preparing for Wheat** If you plan to plant wheat this fall, a cover crop that fits in a short window and produces nitrogen is ideal. Cowpea and Mung Bean are legumes that are appropriate for a short window in the summer months. Wheat contaminated with buckwheat seed can affect export to Japan. Other cereal crops such as rye can also be a problematic contaminate in wheat.

Additional Resources

Midwest Cover Crops Council - <http://mccc.msu.edu>

Midwest Cover Crops Council Selector Tool - <http://mccc.msu.edu/selector-tool/>

Prevented Planting Standards Handbook, 2019 and Succeeding Crop Years; USDA - <https://www.rma.usda.gov/-/media/RMAweb/Handbooks/Loss-Adjustment-Standards---25000/Prevented-Planting/2019-25370-Prevented-Planting-Standards.ashx?la=en>

Corn Herbicide Carryover Table; Penn State University Extension - <https://extension.psu.edu/corn-herbicides-and-rotation-to-cover-crops>

Soybean Herbicide Carryover Table; Penn State University Extension - <https://extension.psu.edu/soybean-herbicides-and-rotation-to-cover-crops>