Getting Started with Cover Crops:

Common Options for Late Summer or Fall Cover Crops

To select county-specific seeding windows and determine seeding rates, use the MCCC Decision Tool: covercroptool.midwestcovercrops.org.

COVER CROPS

Cereal Rye



- **Cash crop rotations where it works well**
  - After corn or small grains
  - Ahead of soybean
- **Winter survival:** Expected (winter hardy)
- **Cultural traits:** Cool-season annual grass
  - Minimum soil germination temperature: 34°F
  - Cold tolerance temperature: -30°F
- **Top strengths:** Late season planting, quick spring growth, weed fighter, erosion fighter, compaction fighter, nitrogen scavenger
- **Notable challenges:** Requires timely spring termination
- **Suitable planting methods:** Drill, broadcast, or aerial

Oats



- **Cash crop rotations where it works well**
  - After early harvested crops such as wheat and canning crops
  - Ahead of corn, when seeded early enough
- **Winter survival:** Seldom or never (winter-kills)
- **Cultural traits:** Cool-season annual grass
  - Minimum soil germination temperature: 38°F
  - Cold tolerance temperature: 25°F
- **Top strengths:** Quick fall growth, nitrogen scavenger, compaction fighter
- **Notable challenges:** May require pre-harvest planting or planting earlier in the fall than cereal rye
- **Suitable planting methods:** Drill, broadcast, or aerial

Radish (commonly mixed with oats)



- **Cash crop rotations where it works well**
  - After early harvested crops such as wheat and canning crops
- **Winter survival:** Seldom or never (winter-kills)
- **Cultural traits:** Cool-season annual brassica
  - Minimum soil germination temperature: 45°F
  - Cold tolerance temperature: 20°F
- **Top strengths:** Quick growth, compaction fighter
- **Notable challenges:** May require pre-harvest planting or planting earlier in the fall

  Caution: Do not plant as a single species due to erosion concerns.
- **Suitable planting methods:** Drill, broadcast, aerial

  Note for mix: Cut oat rate in half and add 2–3 pounds of radish.

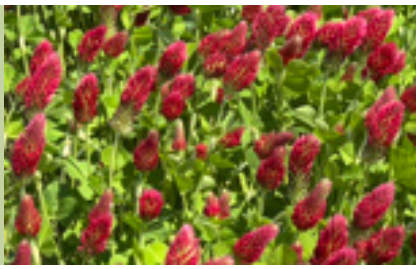
Rapeseed



- **Cash crop rotations where it works well**
- Ahead of corn, soybean, or small grain
- **Winter survival:** Expected (winter hardy)
- **Cultural traits:** Cool-season/winter annual brassica
  - Minimum soil germination temperature: 41°F
  - Cold tolerance temperature: 0°F
- **Top strengths:** Quick growth, later-season seeding, nitrogen scavenger, compaction fighter
- **Notable challenges:** May become a weed if allowed to go to seed.

  Caution: Do not use a herbicide-resistant canola variety.
- **Suitable planting methods:** Drill, broadcast, or aerial

Crimson Clover



- **Cash crop rotations where it works well**
  - After early harvested crops such as wheat and canning crops
  - Ahead of corn, if seeded early enough
- **Winter survival:** Variable, based on latitude and variety
- **Cultural traits:** Cool-season/winter annual legume
  - Minimum soil germination temperature: 42°F
  - Cold tolerance temperature: 10°F
- **Top strengths:** Nitrogen fixer, drought tolerance, compaction fighter
- **Notable challenges:** May require pre-harvest planting or planting earlier in the fall
- **Suitable planting methods:** Drill, broadcast, or aerial

Hairy Vetch



- **Cash crop rotations where it works well**
  - After early harvested crops such as wheat and canning crops
  - Ahead of corn, if seeded early enough
- **Winter survival:** Expected (winter hardy)
- **Cultural traits:** Cool-season/winter annual legume
  - Minimum soil germination temperature: 48°F
  - Cold tolerance temperature: -20°F
- **Top strengths:** Nitrogen fixer, more winter hardy than other legumes, soil builder
- **Notable challenges:** May become a serious weed if allowed to go to seed; possible germination years after planting due to hard seed.
- **Suitable planting methods:** Drill, broadcast, or aerial

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