

Cover Your Acres

Cover Cropping on Vegetable farms

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The Places I farm

- Urban plots – 20'x40' up to 1/4acre
- Suburban plots – 2 to 4 acres
- Rural plots – 2 to 5 acres
- Horticulture crops



Why do I cover crop?

- Weed suppression
- Soil building
- Pollinator habitat



How do I cover crop?

1. Find Windows of Opportunity.
2. Prep soil like any other crop.
3. Seed cover crop seed heavily.
4. I occasionally need to water.
5. Terminate.



Windows of Opportunity

Hardneck Garlic – This crop is planted in October/November.

Plant early peas in April or May and incorporate them in June. Plant summer oats in June and crimp them down in Oct, plant rows of garlic into the mat, and any surviving oats will winter kill entirely in Dec. Add more straw mulch on top of the oat mulch, to the thickness your winter conditions require.

Windows of Opportunity

Hot Peppers or Sweet Potatoes
– This crop is planted in late May or early June.

Plant early peas in March or April and incorporate them in late May. Prep your bed as usual for the transplants when soil temps are consistently over 60°F



Windows of Opportunity

Buckwheat is my Go To for quick warm windows of time.

If I have a spot that spring crops have come out of, but I'm not yet ready to plant fall crops, I will reach for buckwheat.

It will self seed easily, but the seedlings are very easy to identify and terminate if you don't like that. Or terminate the CC at the first sign of flowers.



Buckwheat

- Great for pollinators
- Fast coverage
- Easy to terminate, with a mower, scythe or tarp.

- Self Seeds quickly
- Doesn't outcompete thistle



Allelopathics

Allelopathic cover crops use plants that release chemicals to retard the growth of other plants around them.

Examples: Sorghums, Cereal Rye, Sunflowers





Allelopathics

These get tall.

Be prepared for termination.

Large Tractor + Brush hog

These need time to cover the plot and time for the roots systems of the undesirable things to die off.

I put them where I know I have a whole year to rest that plot.



Tarping and Terminating

Terminating – killing the cover crop

Tarping – Using a tarp to kill weeds or cover crops

Termination Methods

- Tarps
- 4x4's or steel T-posts for "Crimping"
- Scythes
- Winter Kill

- Lawn Mowers
- Weed Whackers
- BCS with Flail Mower
- Riding Tractor with Brush Hog





Who am I?

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