ILLINOIS Extension
COLLEGE OF AGRICULTURAL, CONSUMER & ENVIRONMENTAL SCIENCES

University of Illinois Extension **RESOURCE**

Quick Guide to Cover Crops for Forage 2019

Cover Crop	Planting Rate (lbs/ acre) Monoculture	Planting Rate (lbs/ acre) In a mix	Seeding Depth (in.)	Planting Date	Days to Emergence	Days to Harvest	Yield (dry tons/acre)	Life Cycle	Cautions	Comments
Sudangrass	20 to 30	2 to 10	1/2 to 1	May- July	10	60-75	3 to 5	Annual	Prussic Acid, Nitrates, Standability/lodging	Multiple cut possible, Dry hay possible, Doesn't like wet feet
Sorghum Sudangrass	25 to 35	2 to 10	1	May- July	10	35-45	4 to 6	Annual	Prussic Acid, Nitrates	Multiple cut possible, Wet baling or chop, Doesn't like wet feet
Forage Sorghum	5 to 8	2 to 4	1	May- July	10	100-120	4 to 8	Annual	Prussic Acid, Nitrates	Single cut, chopping for silage preferred
Grain Sorghum	5 to 10	2 to 4	1	May- July	10	100-120	3 to 6	Annual	Prussic Acid, Nitrates	Single cut, chopping for silage preferred
Pearl Millet	20 to 25	2 to 8	3/4	May- July	7	35-45	3 to 6	Annual	Standability/lodging, Nitrates	Multiple cut possible, Dry hay possible, Doesn’t like wet feet
Japanese Millet	15 to 25	2 to 8	3/4	May- July	10	40-50	3 to 5	Annual	Standability/lodging, Nitrates	Multiple cut possible, Dry hay possible, Doesn’t like wet feet
German Millet	20 to 25	2 to 8	3/4	May- July	10	40-50	3 to 5	Annual	Standability/lodging, Nitrates	Multiple cut possible, Dry hay possible, Doesn't like wet feet
Teff	5 to 10		1/8 to 1/4	May- July	10	45-50	3 to 5	Annual	Seeding depth, Correct seeding rate	Multiple cut possible, Dry hay possible, Doesn’t like wet feet
Cereal Rye	90 to 120	35 to 55	1 to 1 1/2	Aug- November	7	60-75	3 to 6	Annual	Will overwinter, Not ideal in front of corn, Grass tetany	Fall growth is 10 to 12", Spring growth is huge
Wheat	90 to 150	20 to 50	1 to 1 1/2	Aug- October	7	60-75	2 to 4	Annual	Will overwinter, Not ideal in front of corn, Grass tetany	Minimal fall growth, most growth in the spring
Triticale	90 to 120	20 to 50	1 to 1 1/2	Aug- October	10	60-75	3 to 5	Annual	Will overwinter, Not ideal in front of corn, Grass tetany	Minimal fall growth, most growth in the spring
Oats	60-100	20 to 50	1 to 1 1/2	Aug- September	10	60-75	2 to 3	Annual	Germ rate on bin run seed, if planted too early will stunt	Good quality and tonnage for fall hay or grazing, will likely winterkill
Barley	90 to 120	20 to 50	1 to 1 1/2	Aug- October	7	60-75	2 to 3	Annual	Not ideal in front of corn	Yields lower when planted in fall compared to spring
Italian Ryegrass	20 to 30	5 to 10	1/4 to 1/2	Aug- October	14	50-60	2 to 4	Biennial	Will overwinter, Grass tetany	Good quality for fall grazing and grazing the following spring
Annual Ryegrass	20 to 30	10 to 20	1/4 to 1/2	Aug- September	14	50-60	2 to 6	Annual	More difficult to terminate, Will overwinter, Grass tetany	Good quality for fall grazing and grazing the following spring

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Forage Turnip	4 to 6	1 to 2	1/2	April-September	7	50-60	2 to 4	Annual	Very lush, Grass tetany	Best used in grazing mixes
Purple Top Turnip	4 to 8	1 to 2	1/2	April-September	7	50-60	1 to 3	Annual	Very lush, Grass tetany	Best used in grazing mixes
Rape	4 to 8	2 to 4	1/2	April-September	7	50-60	1 to 3	Annual	Potential weed	Best used in grazing mixes
Radish	4 to 6	1 to 3	1/2	April-September	5	50-60	1 to 3	Annual	Odor, less palatable	Not as preffered by cattle as other brassicas
Medium Red Clover	12 to 16	3 to 6	1/4 to 1/2	Feb-May, Aug-Oct	7	60-75	1/2 to 1	Intermediate	Bloat	Great in haying/grazing mixes, gets out-competed in heavy grass mixes
Sweet Clover	12 to 15	2 to 6	1/4 to 1/2	Feb-May, Aug-Oct	7	60-75	1/2 to 1	Biennial	Bloat, Moldy sweet clover = toxin prevents blood clotting	Grazing mixes only
Crimson Clover	10 to 20	2 to 6	1/4 to 1/2	Feb-May, Aug-Oct	7	60-75	1/2 to 2	Annual	Bloat	Great in haying/grazing mixes, gets out-competed in heavy grass mixes
Winter Pea	60 to 80	10 to 20	1/2 to 1	Mar- Apr, Aug-Sept	7	60-75	1/2 to 2	Annual	Green bridge for legume diseases	Vine-like. Not ideal for haying, good CP content
Cow Pea	60 to 80	10 to 20	1/2 to 1	Mar- Apr, Aug-Sept	7	60-75	1/2 to 2	Annual	Green bridge for legume diseases	Vine-like. Not ideal for haying, good CP content
Hairy Vetch	15 to 25	5 to 8	1	Aug- October	14	60-75	1/2 to 2	Annual	Potential weed, Likely overwinter	Poor grazing, Nitrogen fixer, not best choice for livestock feed
Buckwheat	40 to 50	5 to 8	1/2 to 1	June- July	7	50-60	2 to 3	Annual	Poor palatability, potential weed	Best used in grazing mixes
Chicory	4 to 5	2 to 3	1/8 to 1/4	Aug- September	12		1 to 3	Intermediate	Potential weed	Best used in grazing mixes
Sunflower	25 to 35	4 to 6	1	May- June	7	60-75	2 to 4	Annual	Potential weed	Best used in grazing mixes
Corn	25	2 to 10	1 1/2	April- June	7	100-120	4 to 8	Annual	Higher inputs required for top-end yields, herbicide restrictions	Can be grazed or chopped for silage on 2019 PP acres
Soybean	50	5 to 15	1 to 1 1/2	May- July	7 to 10	75	2 to 6	Annual	Leaf loss, best harvested as baleage, herbicide restrictions	Not an allowable cover on soybean PP acres