

Are you covered?

Stop soil erosion on row crop acres

Developed by the BALMM Cover Crop Strategy Team



Winter wheat protected the soil over the winter and is shown emerging in the spring.

Row crop production often leaves fields vulnerable to erosion. Cover crops can protect soil that has been exposed to erosion after harvesting corn silage, soybeans, or other low residue crops. Cover crops provide multiple benefits beyond soil conservation. A vigorously growing cover crop can tie up nutrients until the following cash crop can utilize them. Cover crops can provide quality forage for grazing or haying. Here are some windows of opportunity for maximizing the sunshine you can harvest with cover crops:



Broadcast seed winter rye after harvesting soybeans or corn silage. The rye cover crop will supplement the crop residue for greater soil erosion control.



Aerial seed winter rye into standing field corn in August. This establishes a cover crop prior to cash crop harvest. Spring regrowth of the rye can be grazed and killed back in time to plant no-till soybeans.



When planted after mid-summer canning crop harvest, oats may mature enough to head out in the fall. Green chop or bale the oats for livestock feed. When planted after sweet corn, oats can be baled with the corn stalks and still leave enough residue for erosion control.



Plant cover crops after manure is applied in the fall or apply manure after the cover crop is well established. The growing cover crop ties up nutrients in the manure. A vigorous cover crop can be grazed, hayed, or chopped for forage.

The Basin Alliance for the Lower Mississippi in Minnesota (BALMM) is an ad-hoc coalition of groups formed to coordinate efforts to protect and improve water quality in the Lower Mississippi River Basin. Contact the MN Pollution Control Agency in Rochester for more information at (507)285-7343 or at www.pca.state.mn.us.

In cooperation with the MN Department of Agriculture. Contact Mark Zumwinkle at 651-201-6240

Local NRCS offices: Olmsted County 507-289-6239 / Wabasha County 651-565-2646
Winona County 507-523-2171 / Steele County 507-451-6730 / Mower County 507-433-8429
Fillmore County 507-765-3878 / Dodge County 507-374-6364 / Goodhue County 651-923-5285
Houston County 507-724-5261 / Rice County 507-334-1887

NRCS website: www.nrcs.usda.gov

Maximizing Sunshine! Windows of Opportunity for Cover Cropping

CROP	GROWING SEASON												
	APR	MAY	JUN	JUL	AUG	SEP	OCT	NOV	DEC	JAN	FEB	MAR	APR
FIELD CORN	Plant Crop												
						Aerial Seed Winter Rye							GRAZE
CORN SILAGE	Plant Crop												
							Plant Winter Rye						GRAZE
SOY-BEANS	Plant Crop												
					Aerial Seed Winter Rye		GRAZE				GRAZE		
PEAS	Plant Crop					Plant Oats/Barley/Soybeans							
								Harvest: Green Chop or Round Bale					
					Plant Winter Rye		GRAZE				GRAZE		
SWEET CORN				Plant Oats/Barley		Winter Kill / Pre-season Cover Crop							
	Pre-season Cover Crop		No-till Sweet Corn										
					Plant Alfalfa								
					Plant Winter Rye		GRAZE				GRAZE		
LIMA/SNAP BEANS			Plant Crop										
					Aerial Seed Winter Rye		GRAZE				GRAZE		

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For information on aerial seeding winter rye, see the MDA Greenbook at www.mda.state.mn.us. Contact your local ag supplier for information on killing back winter rye; can be done at the same time as killback in preparation for no-till seeding. Prepared by the BALMM Cover Crop Strategy Team 3/05.