



Cover Crops

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BENEFITS

WEED CONTROL: Because of their fast growing nature many cover crops can outcompete or suppress weed growth to a manageable level.

DISEASE/PEST CONTROL: Removing weeds and other common host plants can aid in the suppression of problem insects and diseases.

SOIL HEALTH: Organic matter provides food for earthworms and soil microorganisms, increasing the health of the soil and future plants. Root growth can help loosen hard soils, especially Buckwheat, Oats & Crimson Clover.

When grown in the fall and left for the winter, many crops will protect the soil. The plant material above ground will help hold snow and rain to allow for more even penetration and prevent excessive runoff or erosion. In spring when the decaying plant material is worked into the soil the organic matter improves the soil texture and aerates the soil.

Natural Fertilizer! All cover crops increase the fertility of the soil and some have special abilities...like legumes that can take nitrogen from the air and convert it into a form in the soil available for other plants to use...or buckwheat that collects phosphorus from the soil and makes it available to others when decayed.

GROWING TIPS

After sowing, keep the ground moist until plants emerge. If sowing is not during our extremely short rainy season give them some additional water as they develop. Most people prefer to cut cover crops before they go to seed to prevent adding to the collection of random seeds we all deal with in our gardens (most of them weeds of course). If sowing in the fall the whole plant can remain for the duration of the winter. Otherwise, small plants can be tilled directly into the soil. Larger plants can be mowed or weed wacked, left to dry for a couple days and worked into the soil. Plants can also be composted or used as a surface mulch. Allow 3-4 weeks after tilling for the plants to break down before you start seeding.