

GREENCOVER

Quick Start Guide

Cover Crops in the Garden



This guide will cover:

Why cover crops?

Potential Applications

Planting

Termination

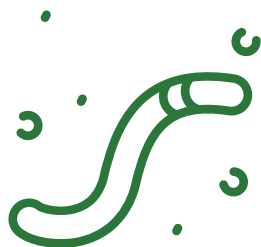
Why Cover Crops?

Cover crops offer a natural, rewarding, and even fun way to improve the health of the soils in your garden. Cover crops suppress weeds, increase soil organic matter, improve soil structure, and make soil nutrients available for your plants, leading to more nutritious produce.

Here's how they work:



By keeping your soil covered with growing plants, you'll keep your microbiology alive, improve soil structure and enhance moisture retention.



By maintaining a diversity of living roots in the soil, you'll provide habitat for earthworms and feed the fungi and bacteria that make nutrients available for your plants.



By increasing plant diversity above ground, you'll also attract pollinators and beneficial insects.

Want to know more about improving the health of your soil?

Learn about the six principles of soil health [here](#).

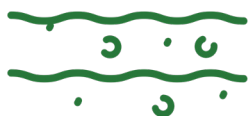
Potential Applications

Applications in the garden are nearly endless. The smaller scale (compared to commercial agriculture) affords gardeners many different options for how to incorporate the soil health benefits of cover crops. Here are just a few ideas of how you could apply cover crops to your garden:

- Plant Overwintering Mix in the fall and crimp in the spring to provide an excellent mulch for transplanting into.
- Plant Cool Season Soil Builder in the fall and let it cold kill over the winter (if you reach lows of 10 °F).
- Plant Cool Season Soil Builder in very early spring and terminate before planting warm season crops.
- Till Overwintering Mix or Cool Season Soil Builder into your garden beds for use as a green manure.
- Plant a cover crop mix in empty beds to keep the soil covered while you wait for your next garden crop planting window.
- Add biodiversity to your garden bed rotation and feed your soil by planting a cover crop every few years or when you have at least 52 days before your next planting date.
- Prepare new garden beds by planting and terminating a cover crop leading up to the first season that garden bed is in production.
- Attract pollinators and beneficial insects to your garden by devoting sections of your garden to cover crop mixes.
- Plant living paths between your garden beds.

Planting

For most gardeners, broadcasting is the most practical method of planting cover crops. Here are a few steps to take for successful planting:



Prepare a clean seed bed to ensure seed-to-soil contact.



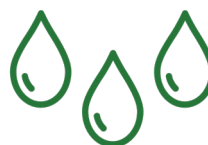
Broadcast cover crop seed in the bed at the product's recommended broadcast seeding rate.



Lightly incorporate the seed into the soil using a garden rake.



Cover the seed with a straw mulch to keep the soil from drying out during germination.



Water regularly until seedlings are established.

Termination

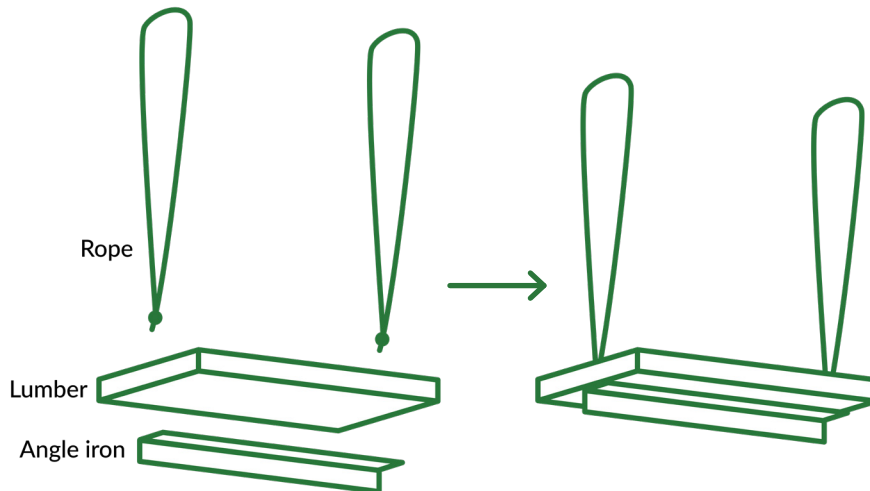
There are many options when it comes to terminating cover crops. The right method of termination for you will depend on your context and your goals. Here are a few methods to choose from:

- For no-till applications, we recommend terminating our Overwintering Mix by crimping or mowing with a flail mower followed by a tarp for 2 weeks before you plant your next crop.
Learn how to make and use a foot crimper on the next page of this guide.
 - Cereal grains will crimp better when they are mature. When rye is shedding its pollen, it is ready for crimping. However, if you can't wait to plant, crimping can still be successful even when the plant is not yet mature if it is followed with a tarp to ensure that it is effectively terminated.
 - With hotter temperatures, the tarp can kill the cover crop in a matter of days and will take longer when temperatures are cooler.
- Cover crop mixes can also be terminated by tilling and incorporating as a green manure.
- Where the context allows, grazing can be effective at terminating cover crop mixes if it is followed by a tarp for a week or two.
- On a very small scale, cutting with a hand sickle or turning the soil over with a shovel and following with a tarp can also be effective.

Foot Crimping a Cover Crop for Garden Mulch

A crimped cover crop makes an excellent mulch for garden beds. And you don't have to own special equipment to do it! You can make a foot crimper with simple items found around the house:

- One piece of 2x6 or 2x8 lumber
- A piece of angle iron
- Two ropes



Simply hold onto the ropes and stomp down on the cover crop. The goal is to achieve a sharp bend in the plant stems without severing them.

After you've laid the cover crop down by crimping, we recommend covering the bed with a black tarp for a week or two to ensure that it is completely terminated.

Want to see this method in action? Check out the following short videos:

- [Foot Crimping Overwintering Mix in a Garden](#)
- [Followup Showing Vegetables Transplanted into Cover Crop Mulch](#)

What crimped cover crop mulch looks like in a garden:



About Green Cover

When you're ready to amp up the diversity in your cover crops look no further than Green Cover.

We believe that the same soil health principles that work in large-scale farming apply to the home garden. Our expertly designed pre-made mixes are some of the most common mixes we create, designed to improve soil health, no matter the size of your field (or garden bed!).

Regenerative Resources

Drawing upon our team's expertise and experience, we collaborate with farmers, ranchers and soil health researchers to produce a bounty of free, [educational resources](#). Each year, we release the [Soil Health Resource Guide](#), webinar series, conferences, field days and more in order to help you to make informed decisions about your soils.

Faith Based, Farmer Built, Family Owned

Like many farmers, faith and family go hand in hand with the day to day operations. We built our company to help people regenerate God's creation to be enjoyed for many generations after us. Together with our family and employees, we're here to serve you and watch your soil health dreams become a reality.



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