

Cover crop funding – Species guidance list for Winter 2023/24

Wessex Water's major objective is to fund cover crops that most effectively reduce Nitrate leaching. Examples of single species cover crops that best achieve this goal are listed below. However, it is recognised that mixes are often preferable in achieving multiple benefits. Where mixes are used for Nitrate leaching reduction in drinking water catchments, mixes should include one or more of the species below as a dominant component of the mix. Seed rates used for mixes will vary depending on species in the mix.

Species / Mix*	Estimate of N capture in above ground material (kgN/ha)	Latest establishment date**	Suitable for use after a cereal?	Suitable for use after maize?	Suggested minimum seed rate (single species) (kg/ha)	Comments
<i>Oil radish</i>	50-100	Mid September	Y	N – unless very early maize harvest	August drilling: 10 Sept drilling: 15	The most effective species at capturing N and the most versatile of all cover crops. Some varieties are sold as club-root resistant so can be used in the same rotation as oilseed rape.
<i>Mustard</i>	40-70	Mid September	Y	N	14	Not clubroot resistant so beware in an OSR rotation. Not usually frost hardy so a frost-hardy companion species is recommended to ensure ground-cover later in the winter.
<i>Turnip rape</i>	40-70	Late September	Y	Possibly, if maize is harvested early	10	Not clubroot resistant so beware in an OSR rotation. Possible to establish in late September to early October, although earlier establishment is better.
<i>Barley</i>	20-50	Early October	Y	Y	100	A useful addition to mixes.
<i>Oats</i>	20-50	Early October	Y	Y	125	A useful addition to mixes.
<i>Forage rye</i>	30-60	Early October	Y	Y	75	Good partner for one of the brassicas on this list. Can be grazed before maize is drilled.
<i>Italian ryegrass</i>	30-60	Early October	Y	Y	35	Good option if cover crop follows a maize crop, and a silage cut may be taken in May.
<i>Westerwolds</i>	30-60	Early October	Y	Y	35	Good option if cover crop follows a maize crop, and a silage cut may be taken in May.
<i>Linseed</i>	20-30	August	Y	N	50	A useful addition to mixes. A good break cover crop as not related to many other cash crops.
<i>Phacelia</i>	20-40	Mid September	Y	N	6-10	Could reduce main species seed rate slightly if including phacelia in a mix. A good break cover crop as not related to many other cash crops.

Please refer to the notes on the next page

***Legumes** such as vetches, pulses or clovers are not included on this list as although they are good fertility builders, they can lead to increased nitrate leaching when incorporated into the soil. These can be included in mixes, as long as they do not form more than 20% of the mixture. If you are unsure, please contact your Wessex Water Adviser.

This refers to the **latest date that it is worthwhile sowing a cover crop. Many of the species on this list will emerge after this date but are unlikely to grow enough before the winter to capture enough Nitrogen to make them worthwhile. This date is the latest date, not the optimum date for establishing each species. The optimum date for all of them is as soon after harvest of the previous crop as possible.

Home saving of seed: Growers are encouraged to purchase certified seed and not to use home-saved seed. Not all species can be home-saved within the rules. If home-saved seed is used it is the grower's responsibility to ensure that any Farm Saved Seed Payment due is made to BSPB. With regards to cover crops, BSPB states that: '*Regardless of whether a crop is taken to harvest, the seeds regulations and farm-saved seed rules apply. You must use either certified seed purchased from a licensed seed merchant **or** farm-saved seed produced on your own holding. In the case of farm-saved seed, if you are using an eligible variety the FSS payment will be due on sowing regardless of whether the crop is taken to harvest*' [source: <http://www.fairplay.org.uk/farm-saved-seed-fags.html>]. More information is available at the BSPB website: <http://www.bspb.co.uk/farmsavedseed/index.php> or if there are any doubts about the rules please contact BSPB's farm-saved seed team – contact details are on the website.

For more information please contact:

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