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COVER CROPS FOR BRIDGEPORT SCHOOL + COMMUNITY GARDENERS

What is a cover crop?

A cover crop is grown on otherwise empty land, to “**cover**” the soil. When cover crops are turned under the soil using a pitchfork, they break down and are called “**green manures**.”

If you do not turn it under, some cover crops will die when you cut it or will be killed by frost. These become a healthy layer of mulch for earthworms!

Why should every gardener use cover crops?

- outcompete weeds - add nutrients - conserve water - keep your soil rich in nutrients - allow helpful worms to thrive - keep soil from washing away with snow and rain

How do I spread cover crop seeds?

- 1.) Use a rake or shovel, break up the first 2 inches of soil
- 2.) Fill one 5-gallon bucket with soil for every 4x8 bed.
- 3.) Using hands or a cup, spread the cover crop seed evenly over your garden bed, about 1 – 2 handfuls of seed
- 4.) Cover with a layer of soil from the bucket.
- 5.) Keep well watered for two weeks until they are at least 3 inches tall!

Cover crops are great to protect the soil in your beds, but keep an eye on it! Cut it before it creates seeds, or you may have a weeding project next season! :)

Cover Crops For School & Community Gardeners

Cover Crop + Major Reasons for Use	Lbs. per 4x8 foot bed	When to Sow	When to Incorporate (turn it into the soil using a pitchfork)
Buckwheat controls weeds, grows quickly in warm weather (50 days)	0.1	Late spring, Early summer	mid summer, late summer
Rye, Winter Winter cover crop, drought-tolerant, can be seeded later than others	0.2	Late summer, early fall	Early Spring, Spring Hurry to do this as it will regrow as soon as the thaw comes!
Vetch, Hairy Adds nitrogen, drought tolerant	0.2	Spring, Fall	Fall, Spring

Where can I find more information?

The UCONN extension website : ipm.uconn.edu

Our friends at the Maine Cooperative Extension have a great resource guide :

<http://www.extension.org/article/18524>