

GVI Gardener Cover Crop Guide

What is Cover Crop?

Winter rain and snow wash away soil for you in the Spring. Cover crop is a great way of saving you time and money when the weather begins to turn.

Cover Cropping Steps:

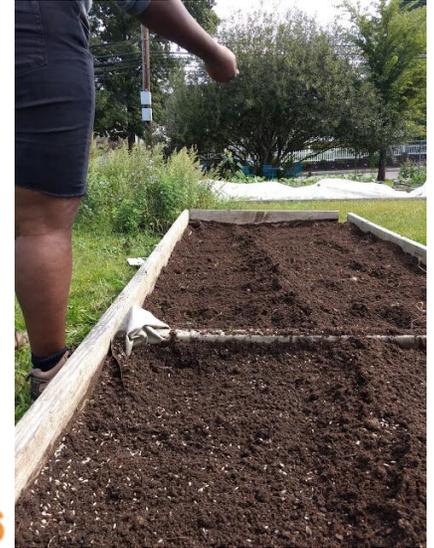
1. Weed Your Bed in the Late Summer or Fall
2. Spread Cover Crop to let it grow before the snow comes
3. Turn the Cover Crop over in early Spring : this will put the plants underground and they will become healthy soil for new plants to grow in

Types of Cover Crop:	
Rye Grass	Grasses grow quickly, grows well in the cold, and outcompetes weeds but grows back <i>very</i> quickly in the spring
Vetch	Vetch is a part of the pea family and are nitrogen fixers. Vetch is a great choice for cold climates and performs well in a range of soil types.
Buckwheat	Is good at weed control but doesn't do well in cold climates and is better to plant in the summer
Clover	Clover has great properties at weed repelling as well fixing nitrogen into soil

How to Plant Cover Crop (with Pictures)



1. Begin by weeding heavily. Remember weeds compete with the cover crop for water and nutrients. Look for deep-rooted weeds and weeds with large root systems. Remove those, smaller weeds will be plucked out while you rake the soil.
2. Rake soil toward you and away from the opposite edge into a mound in parallel rows (Picture 3)
3. Spread seeds evenly and thickly in bed, **don't forget the edges of your bed!** (Pictures 4 & 5)



4. Rake soil from the mound you made in Step 2 over the seeds to cover them
5. To ensure cover crop seed covers the entire garden bed, you must put seed where you just had your mound of soil. Rake soil away from edge where mound was, about half way into bed. **Don't forget the edges.**
6. Spread seeds in second half of bed you have just raked and over the mound of soil
7. Gently push soil back away from you and pull remaining soil to cover seeds.
8. If possible, water seeds to help them get started, after planting. Check back in one week to cover areas you missed with more seed
9. In early Spring, when the snow melts, go inspect your cover crop. As soon as the rye grass begins to grow again, grab a shovel and "turn it in!" Shovel up slabs of 2 inches of soil, cover crop plant and it's soil underneath and "flip it" so that the cover crop is no longer on the surface, but it's roots are
10. In two weeks the cover crop will be turned into fresh soil for you to plant in!

Raking Tips

- Bend your knees not your back to avoid pain!
- It is always easier to pull soil rather than to push it with your rake
- Call up a local farmer friend or visit Reservoir Community Farm for more tips and ideas!