COVER CROP

PRACTICE INTRODUCTION

USDA, Natural Resources Conservation Service - practice code 340

NUTRIENT MANAGEMENT

Growing a crop of grass, small grain or legumes primarily for seasonal protection and soil improvement.

PRACTICE INFORMATION

Cover and green manure crops are grown on cropland, orchards, vineyards, and certain recreation and wildlife areas where seasonal benefits of a cover crop are needed. These crops are usually plowed under or desiccated to accommodate the primary crop being produced on the site.

This practice is used to control erosion, add fertility and organic material to the soil, improve soil tilth, and increase infiltration and aeration of the soil. In orchards, this practice is also used to increase populations of bees for pollination purposes.

In addition, cover and green manure crops have beneficial effects on water quantity and quality. Cover crops have a filtering effect on movement of sediment, pathogens, and dissolved and sediment-attached pollutants.

Additional information including standards and specifications for establishment and management of this practice are on file in the local NRCS Field Office Technical Guide.