

**NATURAL RESOURCES CONSERVATION SERVICE
CONSERVATION PRACTICE SPECIFICATIONS**

**COVER CROP
(Acre)
CODE 340**

DEFINITION

Grasses, legumes, forbs, or other herbaceous plants established for seasonal cover and other conservation purposes.

General Specifications

Plant species, seedbed preparation, seeding rates, seeding dates, seeding depths, and planting methods will be consistent with approved local criteria and site conditions in Arkansas.

CROP	SEEDING RATE	PLANTING DATE
Oats	90 lbs/ac	North 09/10 - 10/15 Central 09/15-10/20 South 09/25-11/01
Barley	80 lbs/ac	Statewide 10/01-11/01
Rye	85 lbs/ac	Statewide 10/01-11/01
Wheat	75 lbs/ac	North 10/01-11/01 Central 10/10-11/01 South 10/15-11/15

Use code 512, Pasture and Hayland Planting, for seedbed preparation and planting depths. Match planting depths based on seed size of other plants when the above crop is not listed under

the above code.

The species selected will be compatible with the nutrient management and pest management provisions of the plan.

Cover crops will be terminated by harvest, frost, mowing, tillage, and/or herbicides in preparation for the following main crop (corn, soybean, rice, cotton, etc.).

Herbicides used with cover crops will be compatible with the following crop
Cover crop residue will not be burned.

Cover crop establishment, in conjunction with other practices, will be timed so that the soil will be adequately protected during the critical erosion period(s).

Plants selected for cover crops will have the physical characteristics necessary to provide adequate protection. Cover crops may be used to improve site conditions for establishment of perennial species.

The amount of surface and/or canopy cover needed from the cover crop shall be determined using current erosion prediction technology (RUSLE2, etc.).

Cover crop species will be selected on the basis of producing high volumes of organic material to maintain or improve soil organic matter.

The NRCS Soil Conditioning Index (SCI) procedure will be used to determine the amount of biomass required. Consider using plant species that enhance biomass collection opportunities.

Conservation practice standards are reviewed periodically, and updated if needed. To obtain the current version of this standard, contact the Natural Resources Conservation Service.

**NRCS, AR
December, 2004**

The cover crop will be terminated as late as feasible to maximize plant biomass production, considering the time needed to prepare the field for planting the next crop.

Maintain an actively growing cover crop as late as feasible to maximize plant growth, allowing time to prepare the seedbed for the next crop.

Use deep-rooted species to maximize nutrient recovery.

Consider that grasses utilize more soil nitrogen,

and legumes utilize both nitrogen and phosphorus.

Avoiding cover crop species that attract potentially damaging insects.

For most purposes for which cover crops are established, the anticipated benefits are usually accomplished when the plant density is at least 25 stems per square foot, the combined canopy and surface cover is at least 60 percent, and the above ground (dry weight) biomass production is at least 2700 lb/acre.