

**NATURAL RESOURCES CONSERVATION SERVICE
SPECIFICATION GUIDE SHEET**

COVER CROP

(Acre)

CODE 340

SCOPE

The work shall consist of establishing grasses, legumes, and other herbaceous materials for seasonal cover and conservation purposes

**CONVENTIONAL SEEDING
TECHNIQUES (Drill, Broadcast)**

Seedbed Preparation: A seedbed will be prepared if needed. Seedbed shall be adequate to ensure seed/soil contact.

Legume and grass cover crops can be established by broadcasting seed onto freshly disturbed ground. On more compacted cropland, small grain cover crops may be established after harvest by broadcasting of the seed followed by light disking.

Cover crops in corn can be established by broadcasting seed at last cultivation, seeding after harvest as described above, or by aerial seeding as described later.

Seeding depth: Plant seed at the following depths:

Grasses and legumes: ¼ to ½ inch

Small Grains: 1 to 1½ inches

Lime and Fertilizer: Lime and fertilizer will be applied on the basis of needs as determined by a soil test whenever possible. Without a soil test, determinations of the needs will be met as follows:

1. For annual crops, apply lime based upon the need of the next crop to follow.
2. Add starter fertilizer where needed, i.e., 30 lbs/acre of N for winter crop.
3. For permanent crops, soil amendments will be based on soil tests results.

Cover and Green Manure Crops: Crops most commonly used for cover and green manure are included in **Table 1**. They will be seeded not later than the dates and at the rates shown to provide adequate annual cover.

Biennial and perennial grasses and legumes will be considered within the intent of this practice when they are established on croplands and are managed to provide protection during a definite hazardous period or are grown for the primary purpose of returning organic matter to the soil.

Conservation practice standards are reviewed periodically, and updated if needed. To obtain the current version of this standard, contact the Natural Resources Conservation Service. Contact Paul Hughes, NRCS Agronomist at 207-990-9562 or email concerns to paul.hughes@me.usda.gov.

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Cover and green manure crops shall be plowed or disked under as late as feasible to maximize plant biomass production, allowing time needed to prepare the field for planting of the next crop, unless no tilled.

AERIAL SEEDING

Intent of this section is to maximize chances of successful aerial seeding of "Aroostook" Winter Rye into standing corn grown for silage.

Seed Quality and Rate:

1. Use high quality seed free of disease, insects, and weed seed.
2. Minimum germination of 80 Percent.
3. Use minimum germination of 2 bu./acre (112 lbs.)

Aircraft:

Aircraft must be calibrated carefully and fly at a uniform height above ground.

Seeding:

Seeding will normally take place the first two weeks in August. Seeding will develop under the corn canopy.

Harvesting Corn:

1. Minimize number of trips across the field.
 - a. Change trucks, chuck-wagons, etc., at edges of field only.
 - b. Use two-row choppers, if available.
2. Do not harvest when fields are too wet to support the harvesting equipment.

Chemical Residue: Aatrex (atrazine) when applied at normal rates (not more than 2 lbs./acre) causes few, if any, problems unless seeding is following an unusually dry summer.

Table 1. Crops, Latest Seeding Dates, and Rates for Establishing Adequate Annual Cover. Use the appropriate inoculants when seeding legumes.

Crop	Minimum	Winter	Summer	Fall
	Seeding Rate	Cover	Cover	Cover
	Lbs./acre			
Annual Field Brome	20	9/1	--	8/15
Ryegrass, annual/per.	20	9/15	--	8/15
Wheat, winter annual	100	9/15	--	8/15
Barley, winter annual	96	9/15	--	8/15
Oats	80	9/1	6/15	--
Sudangrass	25	--	6/15	--
Millet	20	--	6/15	--
Buckwheat	75	--	6/15	--
Red Clover	10	--	6/1	8/15
Hairy Vetch (with small grain)	30 vetch, 70 small grain	9/15	--	8/15

“Aroostook” Winter Rye Rates – Bushels/Acre

Location	September				October			
	15	20	25	30	5	10	15	20
Caribou	2.0	3.5	5.5	--	--	--	--	--
Houlton	2.0	2.5	4.5	5.5	--	--	--	--
Corinna	2.0	2.0	2.0	3.5	5.5	--	--	--
Bridgton (1)	2.0	2.0	2.0	2.0	3.0	--	--	--
Portland (1)	2.0	2.0	2.0	2.0	3.0	4.0	--	--

- “Wintergrazer” is recommended for coastal areas.

Source: “Seeding rate recommendations for a winter rye cover crop based on expected leaf area index”. W. J. Grant, C.D. Stanley, G.R. Benoit, and D.B. Torrey. Journal of Soil and Water Conservation, July-August 1983. Volume 38, Number 4.

(1) Per discussion with W.J. Grant, A.R.S., Orono, Maine and adjusted based on 3 year study on winter cover crops conducted in Cumberland County 12/90.

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