

# Agronomy "Crib" Notes



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This issue builds on the subject of “preventing planting” discussed in *Agronomy Crib Notes Issue 5* and goes into more detail about cover crop selection strategies.

First of all, Dave Robison, the cover crop guru from the seed industry and founding member of the Midwest Cover Crop Council, has a great article on his website <http://plantcovercrops.com/prevented-planting-row-crop-acres-what-can-cover-crops-help/>.

Farmers will first need to decide what resource concern(s) is priority for the cover crops to address. Secondly, they will need to decide when to plant. As stated in the previous issue of Crib Notes (Issue 5), a mix of at least one grass (fibrous root systems), plus a legume and a brassica (each with tap roots) will provide the widest range of benefits.

**Early Summer mixes** can be as simple as a single species, such as oats to control weeds and erosion, and trap any nitrogen that may have been applied. Or better yet, they can be as complex as a 10-species mix to jump start soil health and maximize organic biomass and organic nitrogen. The complex mix may be more for the veteran cover crop farmer.

If the subsequent crop is corn or wheat, then growing some nitrogen makes a lot of sense. Consider adding legumes such as crimson clover, cow peas and/ or sun hemp into the mix.

Most fields can benefit from weed control, so a fast-growing grass cover such as oats, pearl millet, and/or sorghum-sudan would make good choices. Keep in mind that some traditional cover crops are not adapted to the summer heat, or may not be desirable due to their tendency to produce seed (bolt) if planted early.

As we move into **Late Summer** (August), more options become available. This is a good time to add cool season legumes and brassicas to the mix for additional nutrient building and scavenging into the fall. Austrian winter pea, crimson clover, hairy vetch, daikon radish, and forage rape are some great choices. Cool season grasses such as cereal rye, triticale, oats, annual ryegrass, etc. should be considered for their additional nitrogen scavenging and fibrous root systems that build aggregate stability and provide erosion control.

## Reminders!

**Soil Health Workshops** – Multiple dates. The Conservation Cropping Systems Initiative and the Indiana Conservation Partnership sponsor numerous soil health workshops across Indiana. There will be Introductory and Advanced Level courses, as well as farmer specific workshops. Details are available at [http://ccsin.iaswcd.org/?page\\_id=277](http://ccsin.iaswcd.org/?page_id=277). Contact IASWCD at [info@iaswcd.org](mailto:info@iaswcd.org) for registration and location details.

## Additional Resources

**CCSI Cover Crop Resources:** <http://ccsin.iaswcd.org/?p=150>

The **Midwest cover Crop Council (MCCC)** has great tools for cover crop decisions: <http://www.mccc.msu.edu/>

Previous issues of *Agronomy Crib Notes* are available at <http://www.in.nrcs.usda.gov/technical/agronomy/agronomy.html>