



# USING COVER CROPS IN OREGON

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Cover crops usually are not grown for harvest, but they serve many other functions in crop production systems. For example, they are used to enrich soil with organic matter; cycle nutrients; protect soil from water and wind erosion; and suppress weeds, insect pests, and diseases.

Cover crops are used successfully in Oregon in both annual and perennial systems.

- In rotations of annual crops, covers are planted during the fallow season or when crops are not being managed. When they are planted to improve soil fertility they sometimes are referred to as green manures.
- Soil covers, living mulches, and floor management in orchards, berries, vineyards, nurseries, and Christmas trees often involve perennial sods or ground covers. Traditionally, vegetation management in perennial systems has focused on the alleyway between rows. However, there is growing interest in managing selected vegetation within rows.

When managed creatively, cover crops can meet a variety of needs in many different cropping systems. For example, you can manipulate the cover crop species; residue management; and planting, killing, or mowing dates and methods to achieve particular goals and avoid potential problems.

Soil variability, microclimate, and pest ecology all affect the success of cover cropping. Experiment with a small acreage to find out which cropping system best meets your needs.

The information in this publication is intended to help you make cover cropping management decisions. This publication is organized into two sections. The first provides general information about managing cover crops. The second section contains specific information about individual crops or mixes of crops.