CHOOSING A GREEN MANURE CROP

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The first stage in deciding which species or mixture to grow is to determine your aims. These will then help you make the right choice. Sowing a mixture of plants will combine the benefits each offers.

SOIL TYPE

The soil type will influence the choice of green manure as some species are better suited to certain soils.

- Acid soils – most legumes do not grow well on acid soils
- Alkaline soils – sainfoin and lucerne thrive on soils with a higher pH and were traditionally grown on the chalky downs of Southern England.
- Neutral soils – most green manures thrive on soils with a neutral pH
- Free-draining soil – with this type of soil deep-rooting grasses like cocksfoot and/or tap-rooted legumes like sainfoin and red clover should be selected. Lucerne prefers a free-draining soil and will not grow under waterlogged conditions. Plentiful rainfall is fine, as long as the soil is free draining.

All green manures will add organic matter

AIM:

Improve soil structure

1-12 months

Overwinter

- Vetch
- Grazing rye
- Westerwolds ryegrass

Summer

- Mustard
- Sweet clover
- Vetch
- Red clover
- Persian clover

1Yr plus

- Cocksfoot
- Red clover
- Chicory
- Sweet clover
- Sainfoin
- Lucerne

Fix N

1-12 months

Overwinter

- Vetch

Summer

- Sweet clover
- Vetch
- Red clover
- Yellow trefoil
- Crimson clover
- Buckwheat
- Fenugreek

1Yr plus

- Red clover
- Sainfoin
- Lucerne
- Sweet clover
- White clover

All green manures will add organic matter

AIM:

Improve soil & fix N

1-12 months

Overwinter

- Grazing rye/ vetch mix

Summer

- Red clover
- Vetch
- Sweet clover

1Yr plus

- Red clover
- Sainfoin
- Sweet clover
- Lucerne

Lift N & control weeds

1-12 months

Overwinter

- Grazing rye
- Italian ryegrass
- Westerwolds ryegrass
- Phacelia

Summer

- Mustard
- Phacelia
- Westerwolds ryegrass
- Buckwheat

1Yr plus

- Perennial ryegrass
- Cocksfoot