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## Cover Crop Evaluations

If you regularly plant cover crops, you probably already have a ‘mix’ you like to use based on the purpose for planting a cover crop in the first place. If you’re new to cover crops, the options can be overwhelming. While there are lots of local resources available to assist you, if you want to do some exploration and forward planning, on your own, consider a couple of lesser known resources available to producers as well.

The first is the Midwest Cover Crops Council Decision Tool available online at: <https://midwestcovercrops.org/covercroptool/>. It allows you to input a location, reason for planting a cover crop (multiple ones if needed) and the cash crops you are managing around. With this information, it assembles a list of possible crops as suggested by a collaborative group of University Extension Specialists, NRCS Technical Service Personnel, and Seed Industry Experts. It no doubt misses a few crops, but it will give you a great first step about what crops to consider, plus provides planting/management information on individual crops as well.

Once you get a crop (or three...) selected, you may be curious about varieties. A 2020 publication summarized a two-year evaluation of 56 commercially available varieties of eight different cover crops, including black oats, cereal rye, crimson clover, and daikon radish. Similar to variety trials for our commodity crops, this study aims to help you choose the best adapted cover crop for your system. It can be accessed at [https://www.midwestcovercrops.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/05/NRCS\\_2020\\_Evaluation-fo-Cool-Season-Cover-Crops-in-NCR.pdf](https://www.midwestcovercrops.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/05/NRCS_2020_Evaluation-fo-Cool-Season-Cover-Crops-in-NCR.pdf).

Not all cover crops or varieties will be available or suited to all potential cost share programs. What these resources *can* do is provide you information as you explore if cover crops are right for you, and if so, what that crop might be.

Reminder: cover crops *will* be a small portion of our September 13<sup>th</sup> Tailgate Talk at Valley Falls as well. We’ll share information on grazing cover crops and how that can affect the weed suppression potential of that cover crop. Find information at [www.meadowlark.k-state.edu/](http://www.meadowlark.k-state.edu/) under the Events tab on the right-hand side of the page, or contact a District Office for details.

## Overseeding Lawns

If drought or other injury has thinned your tall fescue lawn, consider a September overseeding. This will provide newly seeded turf time to establish before winter dormancy.

Start by mowing short – an inch to an inch and a half in height – and remove clippings. This will help increase chances for good seed to soil contact and allow light into the canopy. Look for a thatch layer as well. If it’s less than a quarter of an inch, you should be fine.

For seeding small spots rough up the soil with a hand rake before seeding. If seeding larger areas, consider a slit seeder or core aerator. A slit seeder helps get seed in direct soil contact, but if you are also trying to increase water infiltration, decreases compaction, and increase soil oxygen, core aeration may be your best bet. With any method, apply fertilizer according to soil test or use a blended starter according to directions on the fertilizer bag.