

# Weekly Article

8-15-2022

## Cover Crops for Weed Control

Hello, my Name is Richard Purdin with OSU Extension, Ag and Natural Resource Educator and Community Development Educator for Adams County. I hope to better inform local producers and the public of the latest news in the world of agriculture. The middle of August is here, and signs of autumn are starting to show across the landscape. Walnut trees are beginning to turn, singing of crickets, longer nights, and waning high daytime temperatures. The middle of August is the mark of summer winding down and temperatures are traditionally decreasing as we enter early fall. Forecast models are still showing higher than normal temperatures and normal to above normal precipitation for southern Ohio. This past week was very busy for field scouting as August is considered the month when diseases and insect pressure reach its peak. I also had a chance to check corn and soybean yields for the Ohio Country Journal. Crops are growing quite well, and yield look to be average to above average. I visited five soybean fields and 10 corn fields, most of the soybeans have a lot of potential and growing left, but on average I saw a lot of 50-60 pods per plant and average of three beans per pod. Corn is looking really healthy and strong at this point; pollination has for the most part completed, and the ear fill is doing very well due to much moisture and heat. On average most of the corn I saw had 16 rows round and 45 kernels per row, Yield estimates came out to be between 170-215 bushels per acre. I saw very little disease pressure on both corn and soybeans, insect pressure was very low as well. After my scouting across the county, I only had one concern and that is WEEDS. 2022 has been a great growing season for crops and it is no different for weeds, they thrive just the same when heat, moisture, nutrients, space, and sunlight is abundant. Herbicides are having a hard time keeping up with the abundant growth, many residual herbicides that work in the soil profile to control young seedlings and future growth. There are many weeds showing herbicide resistance making it very challenging to choose the right herbicide program to keep fields clean until harvest time. Another challenge is that many of these weeds are summer annuals that germinate later in the growing season. During scouting I came up with my top five weed problems for Adams County crop fields. #1 is water hemp, #2 Palmer amaranth, #3 Giant ragweed, #4 Johnsongrass, #5 Giant foxtail.

There are many ways to control weeds but today I challenge you to think outside the chemical jug! Herbicides are an essential tool in weed management but should not be considered the only tool. Other critical tools include planting dates, row spacing, plant population, crop rotation, and cover crops. Yes, cover crops can help control

weeds if managed in the right way. Here are some steps to have a successful weed control program with cover crops.

- **Know your weeds-** Not every weed is the same or have the same life cycle. For example, water hemp is a Summer annual weed that germinates in late May and early June while maretail is a winter annual that begins growth in the fall and spikes in the spring. Knowing when plants begin growth is critical in understanding how to get ahead of their reproductive growth stage.
- **Help cover crops be successful-** Often to many times farmers do not put the same emphases on cover crop establishment as they do their cash crop establishment. The better stand establishment you have with cover crops, the better weed control will be the results. Remember cover crops should be considered a CROP!
- **Sow cover crops and not weeds-** With the rising cost of seed many producers opt to sow bin run cover crops. This is perfectly fine, but I do recommend having the seed cleaned and sampled for germination and weed seed content. Ohio Department of Agriculture will test cover crop seed. Call 614-728-6410 for more details.
- **Choose the right cover crop for the job-** Cover crops that produce more biomasses will give the best results- annual ryegrass and cereal rye tend to be the highest biomass producers but adding legumes like vetch, crimson clover, and cow peas can thicken up the stand and provide nitrogen.
- **Take advantage of allelopathic properties-** Cover crops like cereal rye contain allelopathic properties that reduce and inhibit weed growth. The problem is that it can do the same for crops. This only occurs after the plant dies and begins to decay. This is why I recommend planting in cover crops green, when possible, to avoid crop stunting.

Some other details to go over

- Junor Fair Beef BBQ – September 1<sup>st</sup> at the Ohio Valley Career and Technical Center.
- Jackson Beef and Forage Field Night- August 25<sup>th</sup> at the Jackson Research farm 5:00-8:30pm contact Scott Payne at 740-286-3803 for more details.
- September 26-28, this three-day Artificial Insemination training will be located at the Jackson Research Farm, 19 Standpipe Road, Jackson Ohio. There is a \$100 fee for the course. Registrations will be to the first 20 producers. To learn how to register contact me at (937) 544-2339 or Purdin.19@osu.edu

**Ag Educator Words of Wisdom – “Farming is a profession of hope” - Brett Brian**