

# Cover Crops After Grain Harvest: Get it Right



Drilled/planted  
before Sept. 15

Aerial or  
High-clearance overseeded  
~Aug. 15-Sept.15

**Drilled/planted  
after Sept. 15**

<i>Small Grains</i>			
Winter cereal rye*	~50 lb/ac	60-75 lb/ac	<b>60-75 lb/ac</b>
Winter triticale**	~50 lb/ac	60-75 lb/ac	<b>60-75 lb/ac</b>
Winter wheat**	~50 lb/ac	60-75 lb/ac	<b>60-75 lb/ac</b>
Winter barley**	~50 lb/ac	60-75 lb/ac	<b>X</b>
Oats***	~50 lb/ac	60-75 lb/ac	<b>X</b>
<i>Cool-season grass</i>			
Annual ryegrass**	~15 lb/ac	~20 lb/ac	<b>X</b>
<i>Brassicas (consider planting in a mix)</i>			
Rapeseed**	3-4 lb/ac	4-6 lb/ac	<b>X</b>
Brown mustard***	3-4 lb/ac	4-6 lb/ac	<b>X</b>
Oilseed radish***	3-4 lb/ac	4-6 lb/ac	<b>X</b>
Turnips***	3-4 lb/ac	4-6 lb/ac	<b>X</b>
<i>Legumes</i>			
Hairy vetch**	15-20 lb/ac	X	<b>X</b>
Common vetch**	15-20 lb/ac	X	<b>X</b>
Winter lentil**	50 lb/ac	X	<b>X</b>
Winter pea**	60 lb/ac	X	<b>X</b>

\* = should overwinter \*\* = could overwinter \*\*\* = will not overwinter

X = not recommended for this time and planting

## Cover Crops and Heat Units

Legumes and brassicas need more heat units than small grains to be effective.

The number of heat units (base 50°F) remaining in Iowa declines dramatically throughout the month of September:

After Aug. 1: 1,385

After Sept. 1: 707

After Oct. 1: 246

Source: Iowa Environmental Mesonet

## Minimum Germination Soil Temperatures

Cereal rye: 34°F

Other small grains: 38°F

Annual ryegrass: 40°F

Mustard/Rapeseed: 40°F

Turnip/Radish: 45°F

Vetches: 60°F

Lentils/Pea: 41°F

Source: Midwest Cover Crops Field Guide: 2nd Edition

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