

Perennial Groundcover in Hazelnut Hedgerows

Nutwood Farm • Cummington, Hampshire County, MA • nutwoodfarm.com • @nutwoodfarmers
submitted by Seva Water • nutwoodfarmers@gmail.com

As an alternative to wood chip mulch, which must be reapplied annually and requires labor to maintain, we planted a mix of perennial groundcover species beneath rows of seedling hazelnuts during the establishment phase (the first three to five years). This groundcover planting reduces annual weed growth and improves soil health. We found that planting a perennial polyculture increased organic matter, soil exchange capacity, and nutrient cycling, but may have slowed the growth of the hazelnuts somewhat. However, unlike wood chips, the polyculture needs almost no maintenance after establishment.



BENEFITS:

- reduce annual weed pressure
- reduce labor needed to maintain hedgerows before nut production
- improve soil health
- increase nutrient availability

DRAWBACKS:

- Groundcover may slow the growth of hazelnuts.
- Results may vary by site condition.

YEARS IN SERVICE: 3

YEAR DEVELOPED: 2019

SUPPLY LIST:

- seeds and seedlings

ESTIMATED COST:

\$50 (per acre)



PRO TIP:

Based on our observations, we found these groundcovers to be most hardy, useful, and effective: comfrey, peppermint, coreopsis, geranium, and trefoil.