

CAPITAL VEGETABLE NEWS

A newsletter for commercial vegetable growers in Albany, Columbia, Rensselaer, Schenectady and Schoharie Counties

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The Capital District Area Vegetable Program provides research-based information to commercial vegetable growers through the county offices of Cornell Cooperative Extension.

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POTENTIAL COVER CROPS FOR THE CAPITAL DISTRICT

by Dale I.M. Riggs
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Increasing numbers of growers are looking for techniques to improve their soil quality and soil health. Long term productivity of your farm is dependent on maintaining soil quality and productivity. The Capital District Area Vegetable Program is part of a statewide team which received a grant from the USDA Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education program to investigate methods for improving soil quality and soil health. We are looking at many different aspects of soil management, including cover crops.

During the summer of 1995, we evaluated seven summer planted cover crops. We also had a "control" plot to compare weed growth between implanted and planted plots. The cover crops and seeding rates are listed below.

Berseem clover *Trifolium alexandrinum*.
 20 lbs/acre.
 Buckwheat and white clover mix -
Fagopyrum sagittatum 30 lbs/A;
Trifolium repens 7 lbs/A.
 Hubam (annual) sweetclover -
Melilotus alba. 25 lbs/A.
 Mammoth red clover -
Trifolium pratense. 15 lbs/A.
 "Nitro" non-dormant alfalfa -
Medicago sativa. 20 lbs/A. ••

Trudan 8 sudangrass hybrid -
Sorghum sudanense 40 lbs/A.
 Yellow-blossom (biennial) sweetclover -
Melilotus officinalis. 15 lbs/A.

The summer cover crops were planted on 5/15/95 and 6/2/95. We ran into some weed problems with many of the summer planted cover crops using these planting dates. Most of the legumes were slow to establish (partially from the dry weather) but they can also be planted earlier than mid-May. We are going to try some earlier plantings in 1996.

WHAT DID WE LEARN?

We found that Hubam sweetclover, Yellow-blossom sweetclover, "Trudan 8" sudangrass, and the buckwheat/clover mix are definitely worth trialing again in the Capital District. "Nitro" non-dormant alfalfa and Mammoth red clover should be tested again to determine if they perform better under different environmental conditions. Comments appropriate for each cover crop are summarized below.

Hubam sweetclover - Established quite well in both plantings, with vigorous growth and nice solid stands. Competed moderately well against weeds by mid-
 See cover crops pg 3.