



Event Summary – UVM Extension Champlain Valley Crop, Soil & Pasture Team

EVENT TITLE: Cover Crop Mixes Workshop
EVENT DATE: October 23, 2015
EVENT TIME: 1:00 pm – 3:00 pm (2 hours)
EVENT LOCATION: Cher-Mi Farm,
224 North Orwell Rd, Orwell, VT.
AUDIENCE: 14 total attendees (6 farmers, 2
Agribusiness, 3 Service Providers, 3 Extension)



SUMMARY:

On October 23rd UVM Extension and the Champlain Valley Farmer Coalition held Cover Crop Mixes Workshop at Cher-Mi Farm in Orwell. Individuals were notified of the event via email and mail, and then received a phone call the day before the event.

The goal of the workshop was to show farmers cover crops individually and in mixes with the end goal of having them better understand the roles, benefits, and possible issues when selecting cover crop seeds. The field was planted the same weekend that corn silage was harvested, the weekend of September 12th. With timely rain and about 40 days of growth, the cover crops were well established and were looking very vigorous for our field day.

Nate Severy began the afternoon with introductions, and then the group promptly went out to go see the field trials. The first trial consisted of straight winter rye, planted at 112lb/ac. The next strips consisted of winter rye and radishes; radishes alone; oats, rye, and radish; and barley, field peas, rye, and radishes. The planter had malfunctioned part of the way though the radishes, so we were able to see radishes at a high seeding rate, and also at a low seeding rate. While describing what he did, you could tell that Miles enjoyed planting his trials.

As we went up the hill looking at the various strips, we would stop and dig up samples to look at. The group was especially interested in seeing the differences in root mass between barley and rye, and also seeing root nodulation on field peas. We also showed the group earthworm castings, and talked about basic nutrient cycling in cropland with cover crops.

One topic that received a lot of discussion was how to both reduce tillage and get a cover crop planted early. Farmers expressed their concern about planting shorter day corn, but most of them felt like it was the right thing to do. There was also a lively discussion about no-till corn, and Miles indicated that with some assistance, he is thinking of planting some acreage to no-till corn in 2016. Several other farmers indicated that they are going to try or expand their no-till corn and cover crop acres next year.

Overall the event was very successful. There was a lot of great discussion about crop management, land management, and water quality. Farmers and service providers who attended walked away with a better understanding of how to incorporate cover cropping into their crop systems and how it can benefit their farm and improve water quality in Lake Champlain.

SPONSORS:

Champlain Valley Farmer Coalition