

Tarping for Reduced Tillage in Small-Scale Vegetable Systems

Spring 2020 Planning: Example comments

How are you planning to use tarps on the farm this year?
Covering beds prior to transplanting. Rolling back small sections as needed. Helps us control the field with a small crew. Has been very effective so far.
I have had tarps down all winter and plan to move them as weed control
We covered our front field --about 3/4 of an acre--with tarps in mid-March. The tarps went over winter rye.
Now tarping beds that will be planted to crops in June. Will do some tarping in the Fall.
In high tunnels pre-plant for spring greens, overwinter weed control, outside for early direct seeded weed free beds
Early spring-late spring tarping before Solanaceae transplants, and early spring-midspring tarping over winter killed oat crop before planting spring brassicas
For weed control in direct seeded crops, holding beds over, killing cover crops, and for keeping out rain
To smother cover crop and to hold prepped beds until we're ready to plant
Rye cover crop termination, weed management.
Weed smothering, soil preparation, cover crop killing
We're currently using tarps to suppress weeds before planting leeks and some of our winter squash. Will probably have about four weeks of tarping before leeks and six weeks of tarping before winter squash. Planning on using tarps at other points of the season as needed to get a weedy area back in control after harvesting a crop or stop weeds from getting out of control if there's a few weeks before the first planting being harvested from a bed and the second planting going into that bed.
New ground, sprayed and tilled in the fall. suppress and kill perennial weeds this year prior to planting next year.

What issues or concerns do you have?
Tarps make excellent habitat for meadow voles and I am utilizing organic principles, so I don't have a viable control for them.
My main concern is not knowing how long to keep the tarps on and when the tarps have "done their job," and/or if we need to repeat this process again--cover crops, then cover.
So many rock bags!!!
I'm confused about galinsoga germinating and the need for light. I should take my tarps off and then recover?
Wind and tarp management in wind
Wind!!!
Getting the timing right of tarp placement
Holding down the tarps!
Concerned soil will get too hard, compacted. Probably do a spring harrow, maybe cover crop, then tarp. Compost at 2in makes everything easier