

HOW TO PLANT A COVER CROP IN YOUR GARDEN.

What is a cover crop?

A cover crop is a crop that is planted in your garden that is for the health of your soil. Cover crops replace lost nutrients in the soil in a completely natural way. They are grown in autumn and winter in areas that have been harvested and that are not going to be used over winter.

Benefits of a cover crop in your garden

- Cover crops add lost nutrients back into your garden after crops have used them up
- Cover crops also act as a weed suppressant
- Stop nutrient leaching in winter from having a bare garden
- Improve soil structure preventing compaction
- Prevent erosion from wind and water runoff
- Add organic matter to stimulate biological activity in the soil
- Has a cleansing effect against pests and diseases

Types of cover crops

Lupins are a great crop as they fix nitrogen from the air which is added back into the soil when dug back in. They are great after a heavy user crop such as root crops, potato or longer term such as onion or garlic

Mustard has a fumigant effect on the soil that can kill pests and diseases. It is a brassica so shouldn't be sown where other brassica have just been grown.

Buckwheat provides phosphorus to the soil and it's also an edible plant. It grows well in poor soil and is a great weed suppressant. Best in a mix of plants as can be frost sensitive

Oats are easy to grow, have strong roots and reduces leaching and erosion

Clover is a low growing nitrogen fixing plant. It is great at suppressing weeds and attracting beneficial insects.

A combination of plants provides a good mixture of benefits for restoring your soil over the winter months. Other plants include broad beans, barley, winter rye, field peas, annual ryegrass.

