

Agriculture

To cover or not to cover

A natural cover may not be the cheapest option for farmers

By W.R. JESTER, III
County Extension Chairman

Many farmers have been asking about cover-crops for "set aside acres". Here is some information that should help you.

First, although natural vegetation is allowed, I would encourage you to plant a cover. Some growers indicate that a natural cover is the cheapest option. Is it really that cheap?

If a grower chooses to allow weeds to grow and seed out, he is increasing his cost of weed control sometime in the future. Multiple mowings or disking reduces the seeding out problems, but the cost of fuel and labor should be considered.

Growers who decide on a cover need to consider the fertility and pH of the land before planting. I would still recommend a soil test for this

purpose. Legumes are fairly sensitive to pH, requiring a pH between 5.6 and 6.0. Some grasses such as fescue, tend to be less sensitive to lower pH levels. This needs to be considered when deciding on what to plant as a cover.

You need to decide whether to plant a legume or a grass cover. Legume covers can provide considerable benefit in the form of nitrogen carryover, if the land is rotated to corn, sorghum or cotton.

Grasses are probably the best choice on land being rotated to peanuts since disease and insect problems may carry over from any legume cover that is planted to the peanut crop.

Grazing is permitted by the program from October thru April. If one is considering a winter cover and



grazing is in the program, a species should be selected that will produce the most growth during this period. First choice would probably be rye in pure stand or in a crimson clover mixture. Fifty to one hundred pounds of nitrogen will be needed in this case.

If a winter cover is desired and no grazing is needed and the land is to be planted in corn the next spring, then crimson clover or hairy vetch would be good choices. Both of these would provide nitrogen to the following crop. Hairy vetch would provide up to 90 pounds per acre of nitrogen to a corn crop. Crimson clover would provide about 60 pounds.

Let's deal with some specific choices, first with summer covers and then with winter covers.

Summer covers could include either of the following: sorghum-sudan, pearl millet, annual lespedeza, pigeon pea, or tall fescue.

The sorghum sudans, pearl millet and fescue will need at least 50 pounds of nitrogen per acre to provide a stand. Fescue, depending

on moisture, could be planted as late as March 30. The sorghum sudans and pearl millet could be seeded as late as August 1 for cover, so planting is not a problem.

Pigeon pea would make good cover but the seed is hard to find. Keel Peanut Co. of Greenville is one source that I know about. The germination of these seeds is low (about 50 percent). They will give them to you if you will pick them up.

Annual lespedeza makes excellent cover and will produce 60 to 70 pounds per acre of nitrogen. Kobe would be the variety of choice. This cover would be the most expensive to establish of any we will discuss here.

Winter covers would be planted this fall and could consist of either ryegrass, crimson clover, hairy

vetch, tall fescue, subterranean clover or red clover.

The fescue cover would last several years if there is a program next year. The same would apply for red clover.

I will finish up by listing an average price of seed in cents per pound for the cover crop mentioned and the seeding rate per acre for each. This information is as follows: Red Clover 1.10, 10 lbs.; Crimson Clover .55, 15 lbs.; Austrian Winter Peas .25, 25 lbs.; Hairy Vetch .55, 20 lbs.; Ryegrass .30, 25 lbs.; Lespedeza .70, 30 lbs.; Sorghum-Sudan .35, 35 lbs. and Millets .30-.60, 20 lbs.

Contact us at the Perquimans County Office if you need information on seeding methods and varieties. Phone 426-5428.

Spring comes in Sunday

It's time to prune butterfly bushes and vitex, hybrid roses

- Happy St. Patrick's Day.
- Spring begins at 11:39 P.M. on the 20th.
- Prune butterfly bushes, vitex.
- Plant cannas outside. Try the new dwarf ones in containers.
- Pencil in planting dates on your gardening calendar. This is particularly helpful for reminding ourselves of succession plantings, such as gladiolas. First plantings may begin now. Make a note on the calendar every 10 days to 2 weeks to go out and repeat plantings until July.
- While gladiolas corms may be retained in the ground for several years, good gardeners dig them up after foliage has turned yellow. They discard the large thin ones, and store

others in a porous bag. I know some good gardeners who are also lazy; they do none of the above and everything seems to work out anyway.

- Plant Swiss chard.
- Bare-rooted ornamentals and trees shipped from nurseries should be soaked in water 24 hours before planting.
- Prune hybrid roses when buds begin to swell. Check for cold damage and remove questionable canes. Leave 4 to 8 canes on each bush about 12 inches in height.
- Climbing roses bloom on year-old canes. Don't prune until after blooming.
- Mark daffodils you prefer. After



foliage has died down you'll know which ones you want to divide.

New Trees & Shrubs Bigger & Better
And how!
There are some wonderful offerings I want to share with all you southern folks love our magnolias.

Gosler Farm Nurseries, 1200-FG Weaver Road, Springfield, Oregon 97477 (\$1 catalog) offer 2 from the Washington National Arboretum. 'Galaxy' bears showy large red-purple blooms in late spring. 'Nimbus' is semi-evergreen, bearing very, very aromatic 8-petal ivory-white flowers. The bark is interesting smooth gray texture.

Wayside Gardens offers the dogwood 'Gold Star' of the kousa family. I saw a picture of 'Strawberry Parfait,' its new crabapple. It has very dark red buds in May that open to pink single flowers. It is recommended for a street tree, as it is highly resistant to mildew, fungus, and apple scab. Gardeners on the coast could easily

incorporate this tree in pine and oak groves because the limbs are wind-firm and leaves are scorch resistant.

Sunsweet Berry and Fruit Nursery, Box D, Summer, Ga., didn't have anything absolutely brand new, but they have bred some persimmons especially fine for this area. So, for variation on an old theme, you may want to try 'Tani-Nashi' and 'Eureka,' both self-pollinating and deliciously prolific.

One of my recent orders to Wayside Gardens include the wiggelia 'Eva Supreme,' which was written up in Flower and Garden Magazine. This one is compact with crimson red flowers that will grow in full sun.

Wayside is offering Robin Hill azaleas also. These are small like Satzuki azaleas, but are easier to grow and are longer blooming.

Monrovia has developed 'Tickled Pink' azaleas for warm climates. It's so pretty it may be worth pampering in a protected spot.

Greer's 'Creamy Chiffon' rhododendron sounds wonderful in the description: "creamy yellow flowers in profusion above rounded

deep green leaves..."

While cool early spring days are ideal for planting trees and bushes, let's remember that nature's bounty of fruits and berries are far from maturing-so we need to continue helping the birds, right? Duncraft suggests that since temperatures are no pretty well over 32 degrees, birds do not really need the highly-caloric "Frost Formula." Oh, no. Now it's time for local "Warm Weather Treat," a hybrid formula guaranteed to prepare fat fluffies for summer get-togethers.

You can just imagine what this will mean to little girl birds who want to start slimming down now for forays to the neighborhood watering hole. It even changes the melodies men songbirds chirp. No more

"When I'm calling you,
Who, who, who,
Who, who, who..."
Spring songs sound more like
"Come to me, my we chickadee,
Fly up and be my petite towhee;
A pipit sleek and slim as you
Restores youth's hues
To this faded cockadoo..."

Conservation District hosts recent no-till meeting

By TONY SHORT
District Conservationist

A meeting on no-till farming was held recently at the Center Hill Community Building. This meeting was sponsored by the Albemarle

Conservation District, Dupont Chemical Corporation and Chevron Chemical Company. The meeting was for both Chowan and Perquimans producers.

One of the speakers for the meeting

was Wayne Nixon, a graduate student at N.C. State University. Wayne has done research on burning wheatstraw verses leaving it for double cropped soybeans. In conjunction with that he has done work with applying Nitrogen to double cropped soybeans.

One of his important findings is that moisture retention is much better in unburned straw. The ground temperatures are cooler under the mulch and thus more moisture is available in the soil. Wayne is the son of Mr. and Mrs. Thomas Nixon of Hertford.

Dr. John Anderson of the N.C. Extension Service have an update on no-till equipment. He noted that all no-till planters must have sufficient weight to properly put the seed in the ground. Spray equipment must be calibrated accurately because proper application of chemicals is critical for good no-till results.

Anderson said that no-till is certainly not for every field. He stated that fields with infestations of johnson grass should be avoided until the weed is eradicated.

Harvey Roberts, a farmer from Currituck County, also spoke at the meeting. Roberts has been no-tilling since 1974. He and his father plant

both no-till soybeans and no-till corn. He stressed that good herbicide application was necessary for good results. His success has come gradually. Each year he said that he learns more and more about no-till farming.

When Roberts plants his wheat, the field is bedded up into rows. This gives him exact planting location for his soybeans and for his corn which will be planted the following year.

Earl White, a supervisor with the Albemarle Conservator District, conducted the meeting. He stated that on the sandy land that he manages, wind erosion was virtually eliminated last spring by using no-till.

The meeting was coordinated by the Chowan and Perquimans Extension Services and the Soil Conservation Service.

Arbor Foundation offers free trees to members

The National Arbor Day Foundation is giving 10 free trees to people who become Foundation members during March.

The free trees are part of the Foundation's effort to promote tree planting throughout America.

A Colorado Blue Spruce, Red Maple, American Redbud, Black Walnut, Norway Spruce, Red Oak, White Flowering Dogwood, European Mountain Ash, Flowering Crab Apple and Butternut tree will be given to members joining during March. The 6-12 inch trees will be shipped this spring postage paid with enclosed planting instructions.

These trees were selected because they provide a wide range of

benefits: flowers, fruit and nuts, as well as shade and beauty; according to the Foundation.

The National Arbor Day Foundation, a nonprofit organization, is working to improve the quality of life throughout the country by encouraging tree planting. The Foundation will give the 10 free trees to members contributing \$10 during March.

To become a member of the Foundation and to receive the free trees, a \$10 membership contribution should be sent to TEN TREES, National Arbor Day Foundation, Arbor Lodge 100, Nebraska City, NE 68410, by March 31.

Perquimans farmers win 1982 state corn contest

The National Corn Growers Association has named GT&T Enterprise of Hertford a second place winner in N.C.'s annual Corn Growers Contest.

GT&T operated by Gary Whitehurst, Tilden Whitehurst, Jr. and Tilden Whitehurst, Sr., won second place in the Class AA Non-Irrigated Corn Yield Category with a 39.88 bushel per acre yield.

The N.C. state chapter of the National Corn Growers Association

conducted this annual competition.

In 1982 state Corn Growers association chapters sponsored contests in 46 states. Competition categories were: Irrigated, Class AA Non-Irrigated, Class A Non-Irrigated and No-Till.

Two corn growers in California, Ernest and Leslie Dixon, both of Thorton, topped all U.S. corn Growers with yields of 319.52 and 309.37 bushel per acre.

TIMBER TIPS

Appearing in this space each month, beginning next week, will be useful information for landowners. The material will pertain chiefly to timberland, however, many statements will apply to both timberland and farmland. While subjects will not be covered in great depth, many basic questions will be answered. You, as a landowner, may wish to save these bits and pieces for future reference.

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