



HOW TO USE GREEN MANURE

What are Green Manures?

Green manures are available in very many different plant types and they all come in seed form. There are hardy and non-hardy species. For autumn /winter sowings the choices should be winter hardy.

What are they used for?

They are used to provide a crop on ground that would otherwise be left empty and are an ideal way to improve soils. They also provide a degree of protection from compaction due to winter rains.

September/autumn sowings will take up excess nutrients from earlier crops. The early sowings can even be incorporated during October digging, rather than the following spring.

Leaving the green manure to grow over winter helps reduce the loss of nutrients leached out of the soil during winter and suppress weeds.

When dug into the soil before flowering, the green manure crop adds organic matter and nutrients to the soil as the plants decompose.

Green manures supplement manures and fertilizer rather than replace them.

Legumes such as field beans, lupins and clovers all fix nitrogen with the help of bacteria in their root nodules and return this on decomposition.

Allow at least 2 weeks after digging in before planting or sowing.

Preparation and sowing

If the soil is compacted a little shallow cultivation will be required, then simply broadcast the seed and lightly rake in.

Which green manure crop?

This is decided by the time of the year and soil type.

Autumn Sowing

Field Beans – good for heavy soil.

Rye grass – all soil types.

Winter tares – heavy soils (not acidic).

Spring/Summer Sowing

Lupins – light acidic soils.

Clovers – light sandy soils

Mustard – moist soils.

Alfalfa – tolerates dry soil, (not acidic).

Buckwheat – all soil types.