



Forage Turnip and Rapeseed

Brassica rapa var. *rapa*
and *Brassica napus*

As fall-seeded Brassicas, turnips and rape are beneficial because they suppress weeds in the following crop.¹ They also decompose quickly after being turned under.¹ Turnip and rape grow quickly and are good at reducing surface compaction while providing winter cover and fall weed suppression. They can scavenge soil nitrogen that has gone below the crop root zone.



Land preparation Smooth, weed-free seedbed, well-drained with enough moisture for germination.

Seeding rate

Turnips
Drill 4-7 lb/ac, 1/2 inch deep or
Broadcast 10-12 lb/ac on firm seedbed, press into soil (1/2 – 3/4 inches).²
Use the higher rate if fall weed suppression is the goal.

Rapeseed
Drill 5-10 lb/ac, less than 3/4 inches deep or
Broadcast 8-14 lb/ac.²
Cover up to 1 inch.³
Seed can be no-tilled into suppressed sod or seeded into a conventionally prepared seedbed.⁴ Till as necessary to kill the first flush of weeds to ensure a weed-free seedbed. After seeding, roll the ground to improve seed-to-soil contact but not so hard that soil aggregates break.

Seeding date August 10-20 for maximum biomass. Establishment is possible until Sept. 5, but with proportionally lower biomass.

Seed sources Ernst Conservation Seed, AMPAC Seed Company.
Appin turnip winter-kills reliably if sown by August 25. Pasja and Bonar rapeseed may have incomplete winter-kill and require control in the spring. Dwarf Essex is not recommended because of insufficient vigor.

Maintenance None required

Control Winterkill. Incorporate survivors in spring, any time before full flowering.

Tips These cover crops can harbor *Brassica* diseases; do not use in rotation with Brassica crops. For scavenged soil nitrogen to benefit the subsequent crop, the cover crop should not die until after spring snow melt.⁵

References:

- ¹Snapp, S.S. and D. Mutch, 2003, Cover Crop Choices for Michigan Vegetables, Michigan State University Extension Bulletin E 2896.
- ²Clark, A. 2007. Managing Cover Crops Profitably, 3rd ed., Sustainable Agriculture Network. p. 89.
- ³Johnny's Selected Seeds. 1997. Green Manures A Mini-Manual. p.6.
- ⁴Appin Forage Turnip, fact sheet, AMPAC Seed Company.
- ⁵Thorup-Kristiansen.

Disclaimer

This fact sheet reflects the current (and past) authors' best effort to interpret a complex body of scientific research, and to translate this into practical management options. Following the guidance provided in this fact sheet does not assure compliance with any applicable law, rule, regulation, or standard.

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For more information



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