Planting Dates by Crop

COVER CROP*	SEEDING RATE PER ACRE*		STATEWIDE PLANTING PERIOD
	BUSHELS	POUNDS	
Barley	2.50	120	08/15-10/15
Canola/Rape (Brassica)	0.16	8	08/15-10/01
Forage Radish		10	08/15-10/01
Rye	2.00	112	08/15-11/05
Ryegrass	0.83	20	08/15-10/15
Spring Oats	3.00	96	08/15-10/01
Triticale	2.00	112	08/15-11/05
Wheat or Spelt	2.00	120	08/15-11/05
Must be Planted as Part of Cereal Grain Mix:			
Crimson Clover		20	08/15-10/01
Hairy Vetch		25	08/15-10/01
Winter Peas		60	08/15-10/01

*Aerial and aerial ground seeding rates must be increased by 25%

Planting Deadlines and Incentives

Incentives are available to farmers who plant their cover crops by October 15, however, all cover crops must be planted by early November to qualify for payment and ensure their success. Farmers may qualify for additional incentives by planting rye as the cover crop.

Certification Requirement

To qualify for payment, farmers must certify acres planted with the soil conservation district within one week of planting and after kill down or suppression, which takes place between March 1 and June 1. Soil conservation districts conduct field checks on a percentage of certified acres to verify program compliance.

Maryland's 24 Soil Conservation Districts

Allegany	301-777-1747, ext. 3
Anne Arundel	410-571-6757
Baltimore County	410-527-5920, ext. 3
Calvert	410-535-1521, ext. 3
Caroline	410-479-1202, ext. 3
Carroll	410-848-8200, ext. 3
Catoctin	301-695-2803, ext. 3
Cecil	410-398-4411, ext. 3
Charles	301-638-3028
Dorchester	410-228-5640, ext. 3
Frederick	301-695-2803, ext. 3
Garrett	301-501-5856, ext. 3
Harford	410-638-4828
Howard	410-313-0680
Kent	410-778-5150, ext. 3
Montgomery	301-590-2855
Prince George's	301-574-5162, ext. 3
Queen Anne's	410-758-3136, ext. 3
St. Mary's	301-475-8402, ext. 3
Somerset	410-621-9310
Talbot	410-822-1577, ext. 5
Washington County	301-797-6821, ext. 3
Wicomico	410-546-4777, ext. 3
Worcester	410-632-5439, ext. 3

Maryland
Department of Agriculture

Office of Resource Conservation

Cover Crop Program
50 Harry S. Truman Parkway
Annapolis, MD 21401
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Maryland's Cover Crop Program

Providing grants to help farmers protect the Chesapeake Bay

MACS

Why Plant Cover Crops?

Cover crops are important to the health of the Chesapeake Bay and the productivity of Maryland's farmland. In the fall, cold-hardy cereal grains such as wheat, rye, and barley (and cereal grain/legume or radish mixes) are planted as cover crops in newly harvested fields. Once established, cover crops recycle unused plant nutrients remaining in the soil from the previous summer crop and protect fields against wind and water erosion. In addition to their water quality benefits, cover crops improve soil health, increase organic matter in the soil, reduce weeds and pests and provide habitat for beneficial insects.

Nothing says "conservation farmer" like a green field of cover crops in late autumn or winter. Maryland's nutrient management regulations require farmers to plant cover crops when applying organic nutrient sources to fallow ground in the fall. Cover crops are one of the most cost-effective best management practices in Maryland's Chesapeake Bay cleanup strategy.

Grants to Plant Cover Crops

To help offset seed, labor and equipment costs associated with planting cover crops, the Maryland Agricultural Water Quality Cost-Share (MACS) Program provides farmers with grants to plant cover crops on their fields immediately following the summer crop harvest. Cover crops may be grazed or chopped for livestock forage for on-farm use after becoming well established.

Sign-up for the cover crop program is held in early summer at soil conservation district offices. Cost-share rates vary from year to year, however, in recent years farmers have received up to $75 an acre to plant cover crops on their fields. Participating farmers can receive attractive field signs for their farms to help educate the public on ways agriculture is protecting the Bay.

Maryland's Cover Crop Program is funded by the Chesapeake Bay Restoration Fund and the Chesapeake and Atlantic Coastal Bays Trust Fund.

General Guidelines and Conditions

Although cost-share eligibility requirements and guidelines may change from year to year, the following provides a basic overview:

- Cover crops may be planted after corn, soybeans, sorghum, tobacco or vegetables.
- There is a five acre minimum. There are no acreage caps.
- Barley, canola, rapeseed, kale, rye, ryegrass, spring oats, triticale, forage radish and wheat may be used as cover crops. To help create diversity, legume mixes containing crimson clover, Austrian winter peas or hairy vetch are eligible for grants.
- All seed purchased for cover crops must be tested and labeled following Maryland Seed Law and Regulations. Seed must be free of prohibited noxious weed seeds, have a minimum germination rate of 80 percent, and no more than 16 restricted noxious weeds per pound.

- Homegrown seed must be tested for germination and noxious weeds by the Maryland State Seed Laboratory before planting. Seed bags are available at district offices.
- Cost-share is available for seed testing. The current year's seed tag for all purchased seed must be attached to the fall certification.
- Fertilizer applications are prohibited in fall and before March 1.
- Applicants must be in good standing with MACS and in compliance with Maryland's nutrient management requirements.
- Additional restrictions and guidelines may apply.

Sign-Up

Farmers who want to participate in the Cover Crop Program must sign up at their local soil conservation district office during the annual enrollment window, which usually takes place in early summer and runs for approximately three weeks. Beginning in June, farmers should check the department's website or contact their soil conservation district for sign-up details.

Contractor Planting Directory

A list of contractors who can plant cover crops in the fall is available at **mda.maryland.gov**.