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PRACTICAL FARMERS *of Iowa*

Small
Grains
NEWS
July 2022

Equipping farmers to build resilient farms and communities.

Logan Dwyer of Chetek, Wisconsin, drills diverse cover crops each summer after small grain harvest. While the exact mix changes each year, barley and cereal rye are typically at the base, and he aims to graze the cover crop with his family's 100 head of beef cattle. **"My goals are early fall growth and some overwintering. I don't want the cover crop brown the next spring, but I don't want it super lush either," Logan says.** Other species that are a part of Logan's summer cover crop playbook are red clover, peas, rapeseed and turnips, and he mixes the seed himself on farm.



Don't lose GDUs: "I like to drill my cover crop as soon as the small grain straw comes off," Logan says. "That's typically one week after small grain harvest." In his neck of the woods, delaying seeding too long will cost him biomass. Depending on the weed pressure in his fields, Logan sometimes makes an in-season burndown pass of glyphosate and Express to help control broadleaves without residual herbicide, which could inhibit his cover crop germination.

Meter carefully: Logan aims for a seeding depth of 1 - 1.25 inches for his cover crop mixes. Seed size varies amongst species, but he hopes that larger seeds can open soil trenches for smaller seeds to emerge. Logan swears by using his Shoup seed meter on the drill to calibrate his seeding rate. And while the drill box can hold enough seed for 30 acres, he'll only do five acres at a time, which helps ensure his seed stays evenly mixed.

PROGRAM UPDATES

Last chance to apply for small grains cost-share in 2022



Calling all procrastinators! **We're closing our 2022 small grains cost-share on August 1.** If you've been waiting to apply until small grains were harvested, now's your chance.

[The details and application can be found on our website!](#)

We will open enrollment for our 2023 cost-share this fall.

Friendly reminder that only conventional and transition-to-organic acres are eligible for our cost-share programs.

New blog online: Observations on summer cover crops, small grains, and grazing covers with Noah Wendt & Caleb Akin



In July we heard from **Noah Wendt** and **Caleb Akin** about their use of summer cover crops after small grains, including different practices they are testing, and how they make decisions together as they move toward organic farming.

Check out what Noah and Caleb have been up to in our **[recap blog.](#)**

It's not too early to start thinking about seeding your winter small grains!

**Friday, Aug. 5 | Noon-1 p.m. |
Zoom or call-in**

Fall-seeded small grains work a double-shift: they keep living roots in the soil through the winter and provide a crop the following summer.

Kevin Wagner grows corn, soybeans, alfalfa, spring- and fall-seeded small grains, and raises cattle on his farm near Platteville, Wisconsin.

[Join us as Kevin shares his experience](#) growing winter barley, triticale and wheat, and what benefits he sees from incorporating these crops into his rotations.



IN THE FIELD

Summer cover crop run-down



Need a refresher on some of the basics of matching your summer cover crop with your farm goals?

Check out [this blog](#) from 2018 which recaps our call with **Dave Robison**. Here Dave outlines common goals and challenges to getting the most out of summer covers.

(Photo: Melanie Peterson in an August-seeded cover crop)

Grazing summer cover crops

Rotationally Raised - Lives...



Combat the “summer forage slump” by grazing livestock on annual forages.

Check out [this episode of our “Rotationally Raised”](#) series where farmers share their tips for seeding cover crops and incorporating livestock.

Not sure what cover crops to seed? These tools can help guide you:

- [Midwest Cover Crop Council Decision Tool](#)
- [Green Cover Seed's Smart Mix Calculator](#)

UPCOMING EVENTS

Field day: Linking Cover Crop, Cattle and Neighbors



Thursday, Aug. 4 | 10 a.m.-Noon | Mount Carroll, IL

We're headed across the Mississippi River!

Join PFI lifetime members **Justin and Ellen Rahn's** to hear all about cover crops and grazing.

The Rahns also custom seed cover crops through their business, R&H Seed Solutions.

RSVPs for lunch appreciated by July 31! Learn more and RSVP [here](#).

Upcoming small grains events

All times listed are central daylight time

July 28: Workshop - Putting Crop Rotations to Work on Organic Farms

Hosted by: Organic Agronomy Training Service (OATS) & Purdue University Extension

8 a.m.-3 p.m. | West Lafayette, IN

July 29: Field Day - Gwenyn Hill Farm & Midwest Grit

Hosted by: Michael Fields Institute, Linda Halley & Ryan Heinen

9:30-12:30 a.m. | Waukesha, WI

August 2: Field Day - Weed Control Strategies in Organic Corn and Soybeans with Buffalo Cultivators and Planters

Hosted by: Ron Rosmann and Rosmann Family Farm, Eric Madsen & Practical Farmers of Iowa

1-4 p.m. | Harlan, IA

August 3: Field Day - Wilson Family Dairy Farm

August 10: Field Day - Cultivating Soil Health Field Day

Hosted by: Centra Sota

9 a.m.-1 p.m. | Little Falls, MN

August 20: Field Day - Establishing and Grazing Legume Covers and Small Grains in an Organic System

Hosted by: Scott and Shannon Koether & Practical Farmers of Iowa

Noon-3 p.m. | McGregor, IA

August 24: Field Day - Otter Creek Organic Farm

Hosted by: OGRAIN & the Zimmer Family

9:30 a.m.-3:00 p.m. | Spring Green, WI

August 24: Field Day - Organic Transition and Diverse Production Systems at Three Sisters Farm

Hosted by: Ortrude Dial, Matt Miller & Iowa Organic Association

9:30 a.m.- Noon | Williams, IA

Hosted by: OGRAIN & Wilson Family
Farm

9 a.m.-2:30 p.m. | Cuba City, WI

[More upcoming events](#)

Contact taylor@practicalfarmers.org to plan or promote an event.

STRAW POLL

What type of summer cover crops are you using?

Interseedings or underseedings of clover, alfalfa, pasture mix, etc.

Select

Diverse mix planted after small grain harvest

Select

Solid-seeded species planted after small grain harvest

Select

I both interseed AND summer-plant cover crops

Select

N/A - I'm not planting summer cover crops

Select

Previous poll results:

Will you swath or direct cut your small grains at harvest?

- **I'll direct cut my small grains - 55%**
- I'll swath my small grains - 35%
- Still undecided! - 10%

Send us your straw poll ideas! We want to know what YOU want to know. Reply to this email with your ideas for the next poll.

STAY CONNECTED



Looking for more? Contact us today!

Lydia English

Field Crops Viability Manager

lydia@practicalfarmers.org

(515) 232-5661

Taylor Hintch

Field Crops Education Coordinator

taylor@practicalfarmers.org

(515) 232-5661

Rebecca Clay

Field Crops Viability Coordinator

rebecca@practicalfarmers.org

(515) 232-5661