

Winter Rye



Rye is an excellent winter cover crop because it rapidly produces a ground cover that holds soil in place against the forces of wind and water. Rye's deep roots help prevent compaction in annually tilled fields and have a positive effect on soil tilth. Because it leaves a lot of residue on the soil surface, rye can be an effective way to avoid erosion and help control weeds without tilling. Rye releases root exudates that can inhibit germination and growth of weed seeds. These allelopathic effects, together with rye's ability to smother other plants with cool weather growth, make it an ideal choice for weed control.

Winter rye can also be grown in mixtures with a legume such as hairy vetch and/or crimson clover. During the fall/winter, rye protects the soil, scavenges soil-nitrogen, and acts as a nurse crop for the legume. In spring, rye provides structural support for the climbing legumes.

