

Spring is here- finally

The window between grape harvest and autumn cover crop sowing is often very tight.

About 200 mm of rain combined has fallen in April and May this year here in Marlborough. We all know what this means – no chance to get onto the vineyard in order to prepare the seedbed and sow especially if there are delays through machinery break downs.

Good news – cover crops that will help lift N levels, suppress weeds and add organic matter can also be sown during the spring. A beneficial practise is called intercropping. Two crops are grown at the same time, using light, water and nutrients much more efficiently, leaving fewer resources for weeds. For an Intercrop to be successful the two crops have to have complementary growth patterns and resource needs.

For example an Intercrop of Peas and Oats controls weeds in several ways:

While peas are becoming established, Oats provide early competition with weeds. Later the peas climb on the oats blocking out light to the soil. Oats also compete more with grassy weeds, while peas compete more with broadleaf weeds for nutrients. Oats take up excess nitrogen, which would otherwise stimulate weed growth.

In late spring, early summer both can be mowed. After working the organic matter into the soil, beneficial plants such as buckwheat can be drilled straight into the rows. Since Buckwheat is sensitive to frost you don't want to sow it too early anyway. Buckwheat is quick to establish and multiple sowing dates can help to extend the flowering period. We have got plenty in stock now.

Other intercrop combinations that have proven to be successful are Oats and Lupins (picture below), Oats and pulses (beans/ lentils), Barley and peas.



The combination of Oats and Lucerne can be turned into a permanent sward by direct drilling clover and grasses into the mowed rows the following autumn. Lucerne is a permanent legume, which needs to be sown in spring. Using this combination you have already added Nitrogen to your soil over the summer months with more N fixation to come adding those valuable clovers in autumn.

By the way Insectary blends are also a form of intercropping.

Alyssum, Buckwheat, Phacelia, Poppies, Cornflowers, Calendula, Yarrow seed and more can all be mixed for your needs here at Kiwi Seed.

Don't be afraid of a bit of colour.



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