

Interseeding Cover Crops: How It's Getting Done on Farms in Cayuga County

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Have you driven through Cayuga County this fall or winter? Have you noticed a lot of corn land with a fairly large growing crop on it? There are a lot of interseeded cover crops planted in Cayuga County this year thanks in part, to the efforts of Jonathon Martin with Auburn Ag Products.

With the many potential benefits of cover crops and the challenge of getting them adequately established AFTER corn silage or grain it is no wonder why there is such interest in interseeding. The interseeding concept is that a cover can be planted using an interseeder into a growing crop without competing for nutrients while also improving soil quality, organic matter, and reducing the potential of runoff or nutrient loss. Interseeding typically takes place on corn staging V5 to V7 giving the cover the best chance to establish before the canopy closes. The cover crop depends on adequate soil moisture and sunlight to get established. After the canopy closes the cover goes dormant during the warmest parts of the growing season and resumes growth after corn harvest. Interseeding covers have been used on soybeans as well with best results in a ridge till situation.

While interseeding cover crops is not a new practice, in recent years it has grown in popularity. During the 2015 growing season Jonathon Martin with Auburn Ag Products put interseeding to the test. It was their first year attempting the method with a mentality of "can this successfully be done in NY?". He worked with 9 Cayuga County growers on almost 1000 acres to interseed a cover. They used a 12 row interseeder that was transported from Pennsylvania on a low boy and went straight to work seeding until the corn grew too tall. Jonathon Martin along with each grower worked to select a seed mixture that would best suit each farms conditions and current crop rotations. The most popular used were the "Indy Mix" and "Dover Mix" from Cover Crop Solutions. The Indy is a mix of Tillage Radish, Crimson Clover, and Annual Ryegrass. It was interseeded at 15 lbs. /acre at a depth of around $\frac{3}{4}$ of an inch. The Dover is a mix of Tillage Radish and Oats. It was interseeded at 25 lbs. /acre at a depth between $\frac{1}{2}$ - 1 inch. While there is not one specific mix that can be used in every situation and crop rotation in some cases custom seed blends can be tailored to a growers needs.

For the 2016 growing season Jonathon with Auburn Ag Products is back at it again. This year they are looking to capitalize on the knowledge they gained from last year and show that interseeding is a tool that offers a lot of potential to growers. He will be using the same 12 row planter that was used last year along with a rumored 6 row interseeder that's in the works right now. Jonathon is anticipating over 2000 acres this year within Cayuga County. While Auburn Ag Products seeders only interseed cover crops, there are new machines being developed with the ability to apply nutrients and post emergent herbicide applications during the interseeding process. The thought here is that a grower can make less passes through a field reducing compaction and operating costs, while seeding an early cover offering substantially more time for the cover to establish before winter. There has also been use of small aircraft to do a fly on broadcast of cover seed with some success.

If you want more information on interseeding contact your ACS Service Manager or Auburn Ag Products.

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