

Hairy vetch is used as a cover crop in the Piedmont, Mountains, and Ridge & Valley. Vetches generally produce more biomass and N than crimson clover. Vetches are often used in combination with a cereal crop to provide a source of nitrogen with the high biomass produced by the grain. However, vetches can become weed since these are hard-seeded. Woolypod vetch is a subspecies of hairy vetch so is included in this formation sheet. Uncoated (raw) vetches work well and contain ~50% more seed per pound than coated versions.

**Recommended Varieties**

Variety	Reasons Why	Source
Purple Bounty	Earlier variety and provides good biomass.	Managing Cover Crops Profitably
Lana Woolypod Vetch	Earlier than other hairy vetches and similar to Dixie crimson clover in maturity.	Jimmy Carter Plant Materials Center data
AU Merit	Typically 15 days earlier than other vetches and produces high biomass.	Noble Research Institute

**Planting Information**

Information	Comments	Source
Drilled Seed Depth (inches)	½ - 1 ½	Managing Cover Crops Profitably
Drilled Seeding Rate (lbs/acre)	5 - 10 Use <i>Rhizobium leguminosarum biovar viciae</i> inoculant.	Mirsky et al. 2017
Broadcast Seeding Rate (lbs/acre)	15 - 20	

**Termination Information**

Information	Source
Vetches can put on significant biomass late in the season prior to termination. Most vegetable farmers use mowing and incorporation for termination. Flail mowers provide the finest residue and most even distribution, but rotary mowers can be used. Vetch tends to vine out and when present at high levels can cause issues with wrapping around mowers during termination if the cover crop is too robust. This may make it difficult for small -scale farmers to manage. Residue should be incorporated as soon after mowing as possible. Leave at least 2 weeks for residue to decompose before planting. Legumes decompose quickly and most of the nitrogen is released within 1 month after incorporation. Decomposition is greater in moist, warm conditions. If the soil is dry then irrigation may be necessary. Cool soils conditions will lengthen time needed before planting.	Hairy Vetch as a Crop Cover, Managing Cover Crops Profitably, USDA Hairy Vetch Plant Guide
If using herbicides for termination, consult your local Extension and state Pest Management Handbook for herbicide recommendations. Always follow the herbicide label.	

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**Cultural Traits**

Traits	Comments	Source
Typical Dry Matter Range (lbs/acre)	3,500 - 5,000	Managing Cover Crops Profitably, Unpublished Literature Review in Piedmont - Gaskin
Typical Total N Range (lbs/acre)	125 - 175	Managing Cover Crops Profitably, Unpublished Literature Review in Piedmont - Gaskin
Life Cycle	Cool season annual legume	
Growth Habit	Viney, Prostrate or Climbing	Managing Cover Crops Profitably
Preferred Soil pH	6.0 - 7.0	Managing Cover Crops Profitably
Relative Seed Cost (\$/acre)	\$\$\$	Based on survey of seed costs using maximum price and max seeding rate
Min. Germination Temp (F)	60°	Managing Cover Crops Profitably
Cautions	Up to 25% hard seed. Susceptible to <i>Sclerotinia</i> . Not a good choice for fields with a history of problems with <i>Sclerotinia</i> or for use before susceptible spring crop such as lettuce or crucifers.	Hairy Vetch as a Cover Crop; Clemson University; University of Georgia

**Sources:**

Hairy Vetch as a Cover Crop: <https://extension.psu.edu/hairy-vetch-as-a-crop-cover>

Managing Cover Crops Profitably: <https://www.sare.org/Learning-Center/Books>

Mirsky, S.B., V.J. Ackroyd, S. Cordeau, W.S. Curran, M. Hashemi, S.C. Reberg-Horton, M.R. Ryan, and J.T. Spargo. 2017. Hairy Vetch Biomass across Eastern United States: Effects of Latitude, Seeding Rate and Date and Termination Timing. Agron. J. 109:1510-1519.

USDA Hairy Vetch Plant Guide: [https://plants.usda.gov/factsheet/pdf/fs\\_vivi.pdf](https://plants.usda.gov/factsheet/pdf/fs_vivi.pdf)