

Sorghum is a traditional crop in the South and can be used as a summer cover crop. It is a drought tolerant and can used alone or in a cover crop mix. Sorghums are quick growing grasses that can suppress weeds and penetrate compacted soils with extensive root systems. Sorghum is very susceptible to infestation by white sugarcane aphid (*Melanaphis sacchari*), which is limiting its use. There are big differences in biomass between grain and silage hybrid sorghum varieties. The silage hybrids are more useful as cover crops. Issues with southern root knot nematodes vary with location and sorghum variety. Consult your local Extension, NRCS, and state Pest Management Handbook. Do not use in front of corn or other monocot crops.

Recommended Varieties

Variety	Reasons Why	Source
Common Sterile	Good biomass.	Jimmy Carter Plant Materials Center data
Egyptian wheat	High biomass, very tall, late maturity. Can get woody. Seed grown in south.	

Planting Information

Information	Comments	Source
Drilled Seed Depth (inches)	½ - 1	Midwest Cover Crops Council Selector Tool
Drilled Seeding Rate (lbs/acre)	15 - 20	Georgia Forages
Broadcast Seeding Rate (lbs/acre)	25 - 30 Check with your state’s wildlife resources department to ensure compliance with dove hunting regulations if fields will be hunted.	Georgia Forages

Termination Information

Information	Source
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. Small scale farmers can use weed-eaters on smaller beds. Residue should be incorporated as soon after mowing as possible. Leave at least 2 weeks for residue to decompose before planting. If there is high biomass, then 3 weeks or more may be needed. 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.	Midwest Cover Crops Council Selector Tool

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Cultural Traits

Traits		Comments	Source
Typical Dry Matter Range (lbs/acre)	4,000 - 12,000	Late summer plantings can produce significant biomass before frost. Higher biomass can be obtained with mowing and letting the over crop regrow.	Jimmy Carter Plant Materials Center data, Midwest Cover Crops Council Selector Tool
Typical Total N Range (lbs/acre)	Not available		
Life Cycle	Summer annual grass		Midwest Cover Crops Council Selector Tool
Growth Habit	Upright		Midwest Cover Crops Council Selector Tool
Preferred Soil pH	5.5 – 6.5		Midwest Cover Crops Council Selector Tool
Relative Seed Cost (\$/acre)	\$\$\$		Based on survey of seed costs using maximum price and max seeding rate
Min. Germination Temp (F)	65°		Midwest Cover Crops Council Selector Tool
Cautions	Severe infestations of sugarcane aphids can occur. Has exudates that can inhibit the growth of many other plant species. Can reseed if not terminated early enough and reseeded can become a weed issue. Sorghum contains allelopathic compounds that can inhibit germination of small seeds. Leave adequate time for decomposition before planting cash crops.		USDA Sorghum Plant Guide

Sources:

Georgia Forages: <http://georgiaforages.caes.uga.edu/>

Jimmy Carter Plant Materials Center Annual Reports: https://www.nrcs.usda.gov/wps/portal/nrcs/detail/ga/plantsanimals/?cid=nrcs144p2_022076

Midwest Cover Crop Council Selector Tool - Missouri data: <http://mccc.msu.edu/covercroptool/infosheet.php>

USDA Sorghum Plant Guide: https://plants.usda.gov/plantguide/pdf/pg_sobi2.pdf