

Several vetches can be used as a cover crop in grazing systems including hairy vetch, bigflower vetch, and common vetch. Vetches generally produce more biomass and N than crimson clover. However, vetches can become weed and produce toxins as these mature; consequently, grazing must be managed carefully.

Recommended Varieties

Variety	Reasons Why	Source
Cahaba White	Earlier growth than common hairy vetch. Resistant to root knot and soybean cyst nematode.	Grow Your Own N: Legumes in Row Crop Systems
Purple Bounty	Earlier variety and provides good biomass.	Managing Cover Crops Profitably
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) 1 - 2		Grow Your Own N: Legumes in Row Crop Systems
Drilled Seeding Rate (lbs/acre) 30 - 40	Use <i>Rhizobium leguminosarum biovar viciae</i> inoculant.	Grow Your Own N: Legumes in Row Crop Systems
Broadcast Seeding Rate (lbs/acre)	Not recommended for overseeding in dormant pastures	Managing Cover Crops Profitably

Termination Information

Information	Source
Vetches can be terminated by heavy grazing. Vetches can be terminated by herbicides, rolling & crimping, mowing, or tillage. Mechanical termination is more successful at 80% bloom, but should be conducted before seed set.	Managing Cover Crops Profitably
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Typical Dry Matter Range (lbs/acre)	3,700 - 5,000	Grow Your Own N: Legumes in Row Crop Systems, Unpublished Literature Review in Piedmont – Gaskin
Typical Total N Range (lbs/acre)	130 - 170	Grow Your Own N: Legumes in Row Crop Systems, Unpublished Literature Review in Piedmont – Gaskin
Life Cycle	Annual cool season legume	
Growth Habit	Prostrate viney	
Preferred Soil pH	6.0 – 7.0	
Relative Seed Cost (\$/acre)	\$\$	
Min. Germination Temp (F)	N/A	
Cautions	Abundant hard seed. Hairy vetch can produce toxins.	

Forage Traits

Information	Source
Vetches have a low bloat potential and are usually seeded mixed with a small grain and/or ryegrass on a prepared for winter grazing or silage (harvest at early bloom stage). Hairy vetch can produce toxins as it matures and can cause serious animal health problems. It should be a small portion of the diet and pastures should be kept in less than 10% hairy vetch.	UGA Forages Virginia Cooperative Extension

Sources:

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

Mitchell, C.C. and J. Mosjidis. 2006 Grow Your Own N: Legumes in Row Crop Systems. Agronomy Series Timely Information Alabama Cooperative Extension S-05-06

UGA Forages: <https://georgiaforages.caes.uga.edu/species-and-varieties/cool-season/vetch.html>

Virginia Cooperative Extension: <https://www.pubs.ext.vt.edu/DASC/DASC-93/DASC-93.html>