

Cover Crops For Prune Production

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What is a cover crop?



What is a cover crop?

- A cover crop is a 'non harvested' crop that is planted or grown to benefit the main crop.
- Dried beans in almonds, alfalfa in young walnuts are not cover crops.

Potential Benefits

- Improved soil structure and water infiltration
- Improved wheel traction
- Addition or conservation of nitrogen
- Addition of organic matter and carbon to soil
- Reduced dust and association webspinning mite pressure
- Reduced soil erosion and nutrient runoff

Potential Drawbacks

- Increased water use
- Competition with prune trees for soil moisture and nutrients
- Increased frost hazard
- Increased vertebrate pests
- Increased costs and management

Two Selection Decisions

- Do you disk or do you mow?
- Is the prune orchard fully irrigated or is it drip or microspinkler?

Disked Orchards (young orchards)

- Oats, bell beans, peas, mustard, triticale, vetch, barley



Benefits of Triticale



Nontill Annuals



- Bur Clover
- Crimson Clover
- Persian Clover
- Rose Clover
- Sub Clover



Nontill Perennials



- Chewings Fescue
- Creeping Red Fescue
- Dwarf Perennial Ryegrass
- Hard Fescue
- New Zealand White Clover

Nontill Perennials

- Flood irrigation
- Solid set
- Microsprinklers ?
- Rarely drip



Management Challenges

- Planting too deep – small seeds
- Brush removal on small seedlings
- Banding potassium
- Drought



