

# Maryland's 2023-2024 Cover Crop Sign-Up



## Plant a Cover Crop Mix for Improved Soil Health

### SAVE THE DATE!

Sign-up for Maryland's 2023-2024 Cover Crop Program runs **June 21 through July 17, 2023** at soil conservation district offices statewide. Don't miss this once-a-year opportunity to apply for attractive grants to help pay for seed, labor, and equipment costs to plant fall cover crops. *To improve your customer experience, we have returned to in-person registration at local soil conservation district offices this year.*

### COVER CROPS BENEFIT YOUR FARM

Fall-planted cover crops provide many benefits. Cover crops add organic matter to your soil, control weeds and pests, and protect local streams from sediment and nutrient runoff over winter.

### MIX IT UP THIS YEAR!

Cover crop mixes of small grains and legumes offer an even broader range of benefits since they thrive in different weather conditions. Planting a cover crop mix can increase biodiversity on your farm and protect against weather extremes. Check out our increased rates for mixes below!

### NEW IN 2023-2024

- We've raised the minimum payment for incorporated seed to **\$60/acre**.
- The incentive payment to plant rye and mixed species is now **\$20/acre**.
- Triticale qualifies for a **\$20/acre incentive**.
- **Drones** are now an aerial seeding option.
- You must plant at least **10 acres** to be eligible for our grants.



### APPLY IN PERSON

Contact your local soil conservation district to arrange a time to apply for our grants. Please bring to your visit:

- Your completed **Current Nutrient Management Plan Certification**. This form must be signed by both the farm operator and the person who prepared your nutrient management plan.
- Your completed **Form W-9**.

### 2023-2024 COVER CROP PROGRAM HIGHLIGHTS

- Incorporated seed qualifies for a \$15/acre early planting incentive.
- Aerial seed or aerial ground seed cover crops into standing corn on or before September 10, 2023 to qualify for a \$10/acre incentive payment.
- Terminate your cover crop after May 1, 2024 to qualify for a \$15/acre Extended Season incentive payment.
- Plant cover crops after corn, soybeans, sorghum, tobacco, vegetables, hemp, or millet.
- Total enrolled acres may not exceed acreage managed under the operator's Nutrient Management Plan.
- Direct deposit of cost-share grants is available.

### SEED REQUIREMENTS

- All seed purchased must be tested and labeled following Maryland Seed Law and Regulations.
- Purchased seed must be free of prohibited noxious weed seeds, have a minimum germination rate of 80%, and have no more than 16 restricted noxious weeds per pound.
- Homegrown seed with a germination rate between 65% and 79% may be used. Certain rules apply.
- Cost-share is available for seed testing.



Our cover crop PLUS+ option offers more perks and higher incentives for farmers who agree to a 3-year cover crop commitment. Contact your local soil conservation district for details or visit [mda.maryland.gov/conservation](https://mda.maryland.gov/conservation).

## 2023-2024 COVER CROP PLANTING AND PAYMENT OPTIONS

TRADITIONAL COVER CROPS PAYMENT OPTIONS	NO-TILL	CONVENTIONAL	BROADCAST WITH LIGHT, MINIMUM OR VERTICAL TILLAGE	AERIAL	BROADCAST STALK CHOP AND BROADCAST CULTIPACKER
Base payment:	\$55/acre	\$55/acre	\$55/acre	\$55/acre	\$55/acre
Plant by October 10, <b>add:</b>	\$15/acre	\$15/acre	\$15/acre	\$0/acre	\$0/acre
Plant between October 11 and November 5, <b>add:</b>	\$5/acre	\$5/acre	\$5/acre	\$0/acre	\$0/acre
Aerial seed into standing corn on or before September 10, <b>add:</b>	\$0/acre	\$0/acre	\$0/acre	\$10/acre	\$0/acre
Plant rye, triticale, or a multi-species cover crop, <b>add:</b>	\$20/acre	\$20/acre	\$20/acre	\$20/acre	\$20/acre
Terminate cover crop after May 1, <b>add:</b>	\$15/acre	\$15/acre	\$15/acre	\$15/acre	\$15/acre
<b>MAXIMUM PAYMENT AMOUNT:</b>	<b>\$105/acre</b>	<b>\$105/acre</b>	<b>\$105/acre</b>	<b>\$100/acre</b>	<b>\$90/acre</b>
<b>Flat rate:</b> For cover crops incorpo- rated into fields (November 6 through November 15)	\$45/acre	\$45/acre	\$45/acre	\$0/acre	\$0/acre

### ELIGIBLE COVER CROP SPECIES

- **Cereal Grains** Wheat/Spelt, Rye, Barley, Triticale, Oats, and Ryegrass
- **Brassicas** Forage Radish and Canola/Rape
- **Legumes** Clover, Austrian winter peas, and hairy vetch (must be planted with a cereal grain as part of a mix)

### COVER CROP MIXES

- Two-species cover crop mixes may be planted at a rate of 50% cereal grains and 50% brassicas or legumes.
- Three species mixes (50/25/25) must contain a minimum of 50% eligible cereal grains.

### PLANTING/TERMINATION DATES

#### LATE PLANTING EXTENSIONS

- Plant cereal grains by November 5, 2023. Some species have earlier deadlines.
- Mixes containing legumes, forage radish, canola/rape, or oats must be planted by October 1, 2023.
- The aerial seeding deadline is October 10, 2023. Some species have earlier deadlines.
- Terminate cover crops between March 1 and June 3, 2024.
- Late-planted cover crops must be planted by November 15 using an incorporated planting method and one of the following cover crops: rye, triticale, or wheat to receive \$45/acre. Late-planted cover crops may not be terminated before May 1, 2024. They are **not** eligible for the delayed termination incentive.

### FALL MANAGEMENT OPTIONS

Eligible cover crops may be grazed or chopped for on-farm livestock forage after becoming well-established. Manure may be applied in the fall following Maryland's nutrient management regulations.

### CERTIFICATION REQUIREMENT

To receive payment, farmers must certify their cover crops with the local soil conservation district within one week of planting and by November 12, 2023. Late-planted cover crops must be certified by November 22, 2023. All follow-up documentation must be submitted to the local SCD by December 1, 2023 to be eligible for payment.

### PROGRAM ELIGIBILITY

- You must be in good standing with the Conservation Grants Program and in compliance with Maryland's nutrient management requirements.
- Additional restrictions may apply.

### FIND A CONTRACTOR TO PLANT YOUR COVER CROP

Visit [mda.maryland.gov/conservation](https://mda.maryland.gov/conservation) for a list of contractors who can plant cover crops in your fields this fall.



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