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Research, Education and Economics



Agricultural Research Service
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Natural Resources Research Update

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Location: Mandan, North Dakota

Title: Outreach Tool for Cover Crops Released by Northern Great Plains Research Laboratory.

Interest in cover crops by farmers and ranchers throughout the Northern Great Plains has increased the need for information on the suitability of a diverse portfolio of crops for different production and management resource goals. To help address this need, NGPRL staff developed an outreach tool called the *Cover Crop Chart* (Figure 1). Patterned after the periodic table of elements, the chart includes information on 46 crop species that may be planted individually or in cocktail mixtures. Specifics on growth cycle, relative water use, plant architecture, forage quality, pollination characteristics, and nutrient cycling are included for most crop species.

Information in the chart was gathered from multiple sources throughout the U.S. and Canada, such as the Midwest Cover Crops Council, USDA-SARE, USDA-NRCS PLANTS Database, and the 3rd edition of *Managing Cover Crops Profitably*. Accordingly, information in the

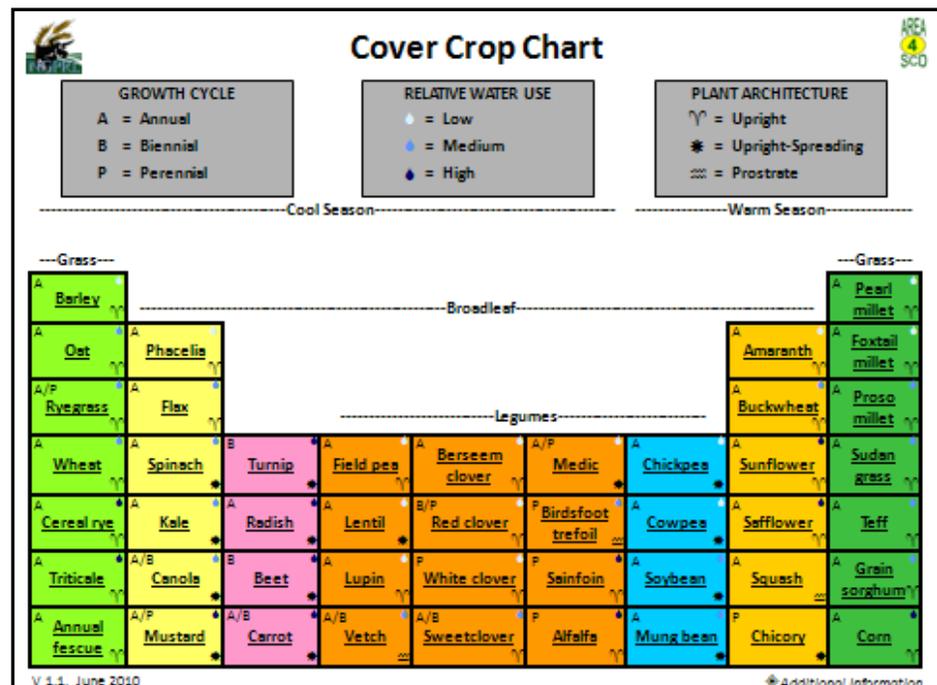


Figure 1. Crop selection screen of the *Cover Crop Chart* (v. 1.1).

chart was not based on research conducted at NRPRL. However, input from local NRCS personnel and producers from the Area IV Soil Conservation Districts was instrumental in deciding which crops and related information to include in the chart.

The chart was developed in Portable Document Format (pdf), requiring only Adobe Reader[®] for use on a personal computer. Using a simple 'point and click' format, users can select individual crop species by clicking on the crop name, which will direct them to additional information about the selected crop. Icons within each crop page return the user to the crop selection screen, thereby easily allowing comparisons of different crops.

The chart can be downloaded for free through the NRPRL website at

www.mandan.ars.usda.gov.

For further information, please contact:

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