

# Mustards

*Brassica spp., Sinapis spp.*



Season type: Winter annual

## Uses

Compaction reduction	G	Attract beneficials	G
Residue persistence	F	Nitrogen scavenger	G
Erosion control	VG	P&K scavenger	VG
Weed control	VG	Forage quality	G
Nematode control	VG		

E=Excellent; VG=Very Good; G=Good; F=Fair; P=Poor/None

Seeding rate: 5-12 lb/acre drilled; 10-15 lb/acre broadcast.

Planting date: September to early October. Soil temperatures between 45°F and 85°F. Plants should reach 6-8 leaves before a killing frost.

## Production

Residue: 3,000 to 9,000 lb/acre.

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*Brassica spp., Sinapis spp.*



Photo by USDA NRCS SD Jason Miller

## Pest and weed control

Biotoxins produced by brassicas when they decompose are toxic against many soilborne pathogens and pests, including insects, nematodes, and weeds. Mustards generally have the most among Brassicas.

Mustards winter-kill below 25°F.

## Soil builders

Mustards have a fibrous root system, mostly confined to the upper soil profile, and a taproot to about 3 feet.

Mustards prefer well-drained soils with pH between 5.5 and 7.5.

## Fits short windows in cropping calendar

Rapid growth fits short windows. Flowers appear ~ 6 weeks after emergence and last 2 to 3 weeks. Terminate before seeds are produced.



Photo by Celeste Carswell.

## Surface residue

Brassicas grow rapidly in the autumn, producing large amounts of biomass, good for choking out weeds.

## Beneficial insects

Flowers attract honeybees, lygus bugs, and hoverflies.



## Common mustards

*Sinapsis alba* – White mustard

*Brassica juncea* – Oriental mustard, mustard greens

*Brassica nigra* – Black mustard

## Mixtures

Brassicas can be grown in mixtures with winter grains

Adapted from *Managing Cover Crop Profitably 3rd Edition*



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