

COVER CROP

Your mother was right about dirt. It needs to eat its vegetables, too. The carpet of vegetation growing between the rows of grapevines each spring are not just beautiful wild flowers or out-of-control weeds. It is the cover crop, a crop grown specifically to feed the soil. This is not a

new idea, the practice of growing certain crops just to fertilize and build the soil dates back to ancient times. Cover crops add organic matter to the soil and nitrogen to feed the grapevines. They improve soil health and consistency, attract beneficial insects and even eliminate harmful ones. At Matchbook, we plant a mix of legumes, barley and brassica to give our soil a balanced diet of nutrients.

Field Peas



Valued as high nitrogen fixers; the succulent leaves break down easily for a quick source of available nitrogen. The residue from the husky stems and leaves (green manure) builds up the soil health and prevents erosion. The pretty purple and white flowers are a source of nectar for bees.

Crimson Clover



A legume, crimson clover is a fixer as well as a scavenger. The beautiful flowers produce abundant nectar that attracts bees.

Fun Fact: The blooms contain minute pirate bugs that prey on small pests.

Common Vetch



The workhorse of cover crops. Vetch's rapid growth out-competes weeds by shading the soil; the rapid rate of desiccation quickly adds nitrogen and phosphorus into the ground. Its dense biomass improves soil tilth, promoting good drainage.

Barley



Can scavenge significant amounts of nitrogen that is returned to the soil when tilled. The barley residue also improves potassium and phosphorus. It's abundant biomass and thick root system improves soil structure.

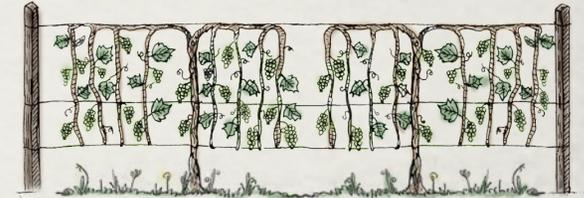
Fun Fact: Barley outcompetes weeds by soaking up all the moisture in the soil.

Dwarf Rapeseed (Canola)



A brassica that is valued for substantial biomass and its nutrient scavenging capability. The deep roots break through compacted soil layers, easing the way for the vine roots to grow.

Fun Fact: Releases chemical compounds that may be toxic to soil borne pathogens and pests, fungi and some weeds.



Fixer: a plant that absorbs nitrogen from the air

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**Scavenger:** a plant that absorbs nitrogen from the soil