Green crops are also known as cover crops or manure crops and are grown for the nutrients and organic matter that they give back to the soil. This is a natural method of soil maintenance that will boost and replace nutrients and encourage earthworms and other microorganisms. These crops are also a way to add rich organic matter to the soil and help stop the soil compacting during winter.
Most people plant green crops in early autumn to replenish the garden for spring planting. Green crops are suited to all gardens, whether big or small.

There are many different types of green crops but most common are:

Blue Lupin
A quick, vigorous grower that produces masses of green matter and contains nodules of nitrogen on their roots. This nitrogen-fixing crop is suited to cooler climates and breaks down quickly when chopped prior to flowering and then dug into the soil. Sow at 25 grams per square metre.

Barley
Adds protein, nitrogen and organic matter to strengthen the soil structure. Barley is frost tender however, so this crop should be used in summer or early autumn. Sow at 45 grams per square metre.

Oats
Used to combat soil erosion and to help break up hard clay soils and to reduce weeds. Oats are frost hardy but like soil which is cool and moist. Sow at 45 grams per square metre.

Broad Beans
An excellent crop that will return nitrogen and organic matter (humus) to the soil when dug in. Sow in the cooler season of autumn until spring at a rate of 1kg of seed per 50 square metres, or 4cm deep and 10cm apart. Chop and dig in prior to flowering.

Mustard
Cleans up harmful soil fungi and provides good control of wireworm and nematodes, which often ruin root crops such as potatoes and carrots. Mustard is a good weed suppressant suited to cooler climates but do not use this crop if you are planting cauliflower, broccoli and other brassica in the same area the next season. Sow at 20 grams per square metre and dig into your soil 4–6 weeks after planting and prior to flowering.

Peas
Adds nitrogen to the soil and is incredibly useful for making pea straw for mulching in spring. This fast growing green crop also helps with breaking up soil with deep-penetrating roots. Sow at 100 grams per 15 square metres, or 3cm deep and 8cm apart.

Blue Lupin, Mustard & Grain Mix

If you still unsure which type of green crop to plant then this may be the ideal choice for you. This combination is great as it helps with the prevention of wire worm and adds nitrogen and organic matter to your vegetable garden. Let this green crop grow for 7–8 weeks before chopping and digging in. Sow at 35 grams per square metre.

Whichever green crop you choose they are a good cheap way to add organic nutrients to your soil.

If possible plant the green crop when it is raining because it is essential the seed does not dry out when germinating. Work your soil gently with a rake, then sow your seed over the soil and rake it in. When planting ensure you allow plenty of time for them to establish for frost, generally 3–4 weeks. Cover crops are low-maintenance compared to most crops.

You know the crop is ready to be dug into the soil when it flowers in late winter or early spring, but note that the stems should still be soft and watery. Ideally you should chop most crops before flowering. Chop the foliage off near the ground (using a Weed Wacker is ideal) then wait a day or two until the leaves and stems dry up a bit, then dig it into the first 15cm of soil. An alternative method is to leave the foliage on the garden and then cover it with a layer of compost. By adding blood & bone fertiliser or animal manure you will speed up the breakdown of the crop, but wait at least three weeks after digging in the crop before planting the next crop of vegetables, etc.

Click & Collect

WITH ODERINGS.CO.NZ

GROWING AND NURTURING YOUR GREEN THUMB HAS NEVER BEEN SO EASY.

*T&Cs Apply. Orders placed before 4pm will be available after 9am the following day for pickup.

ODERINGS
GARDEN CENTRES

ODERINGS
GARDEN CENTRES

www.oderings.co.nz

Green Crops

ODERINGS GARDENING *guide*