

# Checking in on 2019 Cover Crops

Published on Mar 31, 2020 by Mollie Aronowitz, AFM

Spring is around the corner with most of the Midwest now awake from the long winter. Now is a good time to check in on the cover crops planted last fall.

The advantages of cover crops are many:

- Reduces erosion, keeping valuable topsoil on the farm.
- Increases organic matter.
- Extends months of the year with living cover, increasing soil biodiversity and biological activity.
- Scavenges nutrients, keeping expensive crop inputs in the field versus in our water sources.

Cover crops are typically planted late summer to early fall, depending planting method and the timing of the cash crop harvest. Below are photos of a turnip, cereal rye and radish cover crop mix planted late summer 2019. Mimicking Mother Nature with a diverse seed mix has significant advantages for feeding the soil's biology.





In this example, the radish and turnips would have winter killed while the cereal rye will have growth this spring. We typically put cover crops in two categories: winter hardy (overwinters with growth the following spring) and winter kill (no growth the following spring).

- Winter Hardy Cover Crop Examples: Cereal Rye, Winter Wheat, Hairy Vetch, Red Clover
- Winter Kill Cover Crop Examples: Oats, Spring Wheat, Turnips, Rapeseed, Radishes

The most common cover crop this spring is likely cereal rye. As the temperatures rise, we will begin seeing green growth in fields like the photo below (spring 2019 cereal rye coming in with corn residue from previous fall).



If this April proves to be rainy, cover crops like the above photo will significantly reduce spring soil erosion. The roots of the cereal rye will hold the soil in place until terminated for planting of the 2020 cash crop.

Peoples Company wants to see your spring 2020 cover crops hard at work! Post on social media and use the hashtag “Put a Root In It” (#PutARootInIt) to show off your spring green.

If you are a landowner wanting to invest in conservation practices to protect long term land value, let an experienced Peoples Company Land Manager help you. We will work with you and your farm operator to create a cover crop plan and execute planting in the fall of 2020.

For more information, please visit [www.peoplescompany.com](http://www.peoplescompany.com) or email [landmanagement@peoplescompany.com](mailto:landmanagement@peoplescompany.com).