



# Forage Turnip and Rape

*Brassica rapa* var. *rapa*  
and *Brassica napus*

As fall-seeded Brassicas, turnips and rape are beneficial because they suppress weeds in the following crop.<sup>1</sup> They also decompose quickly after being turned under.<sup>1</sup> Turnip and rape grow quickly and are good at reducing surface compaction while providing winter cover and fall weed suppression. They can scavenge soil nitrogen that has gone below the crop root zone.



**Land preparation**

Smooth, weed-free seedbed, well-drained with enough moisture.

**Seeding rate**

*Turnips*

Drill 4-7 lb/ac, 1/2 inch deep or

Broadcast 10-12 lb/ac on firm seedbed, press into soil (1/2 – 3/4 inches).<sup>2</sup>

Use the higher rate if fall weed suppression is the goal.

*Rape*

Drill 5-10 lb/ac, less than 3/4 inches deep or

Broadcast 8-14 lb/ac.<sup>2</sup>

Cover up to 1 inch.<sup>3</sup>

Seed can be no-tilled into suppressed sod or seeded into a conventionally prepared seedbed.<sup>4</sup> Till as necessary to kill the first flush of weeds to ensure a weed-free seedbed. After seeding, roll the ground to improve seed-to-soil contact but do not break up soil aggregates.

**Seeding date**

August.

**Seed sources**

Ernst Conservation Seed, AMPAC Seed Company.

Appin turnip winter-kills reliably if sown by August 25. Pasja and Bonar rapeseed may have incomplete winter-kill and require control in the spring. Dwarf Essex is not recommended because of insufficient vigor.

**Maintenance**

**Control**

Incorporate in spring, any time before full flowering.

**Tips**

These cover crops can harbor Brassica diseases; do not use in rotation with Brassicas.

For scavenged soil nitrogen to benefit the subsequent crop, the cover crop should not die until after spring snow melt.<sup>5</sup>

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**References:**

- <sup>1</sup>Snapp, S.S. and D. Mutch, 2003, Cover Crop Choices for Michigan Vegetables, Michigan State University Extension Bulletin E 2896.
- <sup>2</sup>Clark, A. 2007. Managing Cover Crops Profitably, 3rd ed., Sustainable Agriculture Network. p. 89.
- <sup>3</sup>Johnny's Selected Seeds. 1997. Green Manures A Mini-Manual. p.6.
- <sup>4</sup>Appin Forage Turnip, fact sheet, AMPAC Seed Company.
- <sup>5</sup>Thorup-Kristiansen.

**Disclaimer**

This fact sheet reflects the current (and past) authors' best effort to interpret a complex body of scientific research, and to translate this into practical management options. Following the guidance provided in this fact sheet does not assure compliance with any applicable law, rule, regulation, or standard, or the achievement of particular discharge levels from agricultural land.

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For more information



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