



# Fall Mustards

*Sinapsis alba* or *Brassica hirta*  
*Brassica juncea*  
*Brassica nigra*

In the Northeast, mustard is used as a fall-planted cover crop that winter-kills. This crop thrives in the cool conditions of fall and can give 100% ground cover. It adds organic matter, breaks up hardpan, and suppresses weeds in the following crop. Soil-borne diseases may be suppressed by glucosinolates in the residue of some varieties. There are three species of mustard (above) that behave similarly when sown in the fall.



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| <i>Land preparation</i> | Prepare a firm, weed-free seedbed to ensure a good stand. Nutrients are often sufficient following vegetables; if nitrogen is depleted, 25 lb/ac <sup>1</sup> improves growth substantially. On low-sulfur soil, add sulfur to improve biofumigant potential. <sup>1</sup> Use ammonium sulfate to give a ratio of 6:1 N:S. <sup>2</sup><br><br>Drill 5-12 lb/ac, depending on seed size, or Broadcast 10-15 lb/ac. <sup>3</sup> Cover ½ inch.<br><br>After seeding, roll the ground to improve seed-to-soil contact but do not break up soil aggregates. |
| <i>Seeding date</i>     | Mid-July through August. Flowers in 4-6 weeks.  |
| <i>Seed sources</i>     | Rupp Seeds (Caliente 199), MinnDak Growers (Tilney), McKay Seeds (IdaGold, Pacific Gold).   |
| <i>Maintenance</i>      | None.   |
| <i>Control</i>          | Winter-kill followed by incorporation in the spring. Do not let mustards go to seed.  |
| <i>Tips</i>             | Do not use in rotations with other Brassicas.<br>Early planting the following spring is possible because fall mustards leave little spring residue.<br>Use to control disease on muck soil after onion and lettuce crops. Use to suppress <i>Verticillium</i> in potato <sup>4</sup> and to reduce weeds in the following crop. <sup>5</sup><br>Mustards attract flea beetles and diamond-back moths, <sup>1</sup> but the risk is lowest in the fall.  |

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**References:**

<sup>1</sup>Björkman and Shail 2008 unpublished.

<sup>2</sup>McGuire, A. 2003. Mustard Extension bulletin 19525

[http://www.grant-](http://www.grant-adams.wsu.edu/agriculture/covercrops/green_manures/index.htm)

[adams.wsu.edu/agriculture/covercrops/green\\_manures/index.htm](http://www.grant-adams.wsu.edu/agriculture/covercrops/green_manures/index.htm)

<sup>3</sup>Clark, A. 2007. Managing Cover Crops Profitably, 3rd ed., Sustainable Agriculture Network. p.70.

<sup>4</sup>Snapp, S.S. et al. Mustards – A Brassica Cover Crop for Michigan,

<sup>5</sup>Snapp, S.S. and D. Mutch, 2003. Cover Crop Choices for Michigan Vegetables Michigan State University Extension Bulletin E 2896

**Disclaimer**

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For more information



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