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RE: COOL SEASON COVER CROPS Cereal Rye Grain, Alfalfa, Crimson Clover
Native American Seed's experience after 24 years in native restoration is:

Cereal Rye Grain *Secale cereale* is the best cost-efficient, one-time winter cover crop in Texas. We use it for native restoration because Cereal Rye Grain...

- has longer germination period and the plants withstand colder temperatures.
- seeds can germinate and grow at temperatures as low as 33 degrees F.
- planted in fall rapidly produces vigorous growth.
- has deep, fibrous root systems perfect for stabilizing soil and preventing erosion.
- has extensive root systems that help prevent compaction and have positive effects on soil tilth.
- is environmentally benign, does not come back in subsequent years.
- with appropriately adapted seeding rates can also be utilized as a nurse crop planted with natives.
- if allowed to mature, seeds are so palatable and nutritious that birds, rodents, ants, insects eat them.
- *Secale cereale* should not be confused with Rye Grass.

Alfalfa *Medicago sativa* is not an ideal winter cover crop in Texas for native restoration because Alfalfa...

- is a long lived perennial and can persist in the environment.
- has a tap root that is not as good for preventing erosion.
- seedlings are slow growing.
- grows a tough crown at top of tap root that enables it to re-grow many times after being cut.
- if not completely eradicated, competes for light, water and nutrients with future native plantings.
- often is affected by leaf / root diseases and poor soils that limit vigorous growth.
- Roundup Ready alfalfa, a genetically modified variety, poses concerns such as increased spread of glyphosate resistant weeds and possible genetic contamination to other nearby organic or conventional growers.

Red Crimson Clover *Trifolium incarnatum* is not an ideal winter cover crop in Texas for native restoration because Red Crimson Clover...

- exhibits a unique characteristic of producing what's known as "hard-seed". Up to 30% of the dormant hard-seed will not germinate the first year and in turn comes up the following year competing with natives.
- is a heavy seed producer. Thereby amplifying the hard-seed characteristic if allowed to mature.
- although an annual, it is able to persist in the environment due to the hard-seed characteristic.
- has a tendency to become very competitive and crowd out other native wildflowers the subsequent fall.
- tends to eliminate all other desirable spring and early summer species of native vegetation in the area where it is planted.

NOTE: Most natives do not require the extra nitrogen fixing properties of a cover crop. However, there are options for using native nitrogen-fixers such as Texas Bluebonnets *Lupinus texensis*, Purple Prairie Clover *Dalea purpurea* or White Prairie Clover *Dalea candida* if desired.

Every citizen, urban and rural, can explore and utilize the full pallet of readily available native wildflowers, prairie grasses and diverse native mixes when engaging in land management activities. By working together to restore native vegetation, we can all help maintain an adequate supply of fresh, quality groundwater for our future. Native plants & grasses know exactly how to live right here with no extra care.