

Revised June 13, 2016

Grow a Green Manure /Cover Crop

A Blend of Seed Now Available for Alaska soils

You've heard me preach—build your soil fertility with cover crops. Renew your worn-out soil after last year's growing season. This is the heart of organic growing.

But there are always the questions...

- which cover crop for Alaska?
- when do I plant it?
- will it become invasive?
- shipping expenses?



Worn out soil

You see, I recommend a cocktail of cover crops, not just a single one like rye grass. I asked AK Mill & Feed about carrying a cocktail. The answer—YES!

So, I provided the formula, and AK Mill is blending and packaging it. They'll also stock the proper *rhizobia* inoculant for these legumes. Hurrah! It's available now.



...Announcing...

Alaska Soil Booster **A Green Manure/Cover Crop -- Custom Blended** **by Alaska Mill & Feed**

Purpose: this cover crop is specially formulated for Alaska farmers and gardeners as a green manure. Green manure refers to turning the cover crop back under the soil when it's still young and tender. You don't let it get tall, mature, get tough, or make seed heads. When your crop is 4-6" high, you chop and plow it under. Or cultivate it under with a rototiller, broad fork, or garden fork.

You can repeat this cycle up to 3 times per summer. Replant and plow down at least twice more during the growing season. Instead of chopping and plowing the 3rd round, leave it standing for the winter. It will serve to minimize wind & rain erosion. This crop will die or "winter-kill", so it will not interfere next spring's planting. This die-back crop will still store nitrogen and organic matter that will enrich the soil next spring.

Alaska Soil Booster:

- Contains fava, oats, and Austrian pea seed.
- Produces organic matter plus nitrogen (pounds of it!)
- Feeds and maintains high populations of beneficial soil microbes
- Performs well in cool soils



- Includes nothing invasive
- Suppresses weeds
- Winter-kills. It dies over the winter (so you don't fight a living mat next growing season)
- Excellent for green manuring: sow, grow, chop, cultivate, and sow again.

Alaska Soil Booster revitalizes worn out soil, and builds new luscious soil. Grow it right in place. Save your back. You can skip hauling compost & manure.

The Process:

- sow (with inoculant)
 - grow
 - cut while young
 - turn under
 - repeat the above with 2 more sowings this same growing season
- PRESTO! You have renewed & enriched your soil with home-grown nitrogen, superb texture, and an improved soil food web!
Put this section back into production next spring with no composting, & minimal need to fertilize.

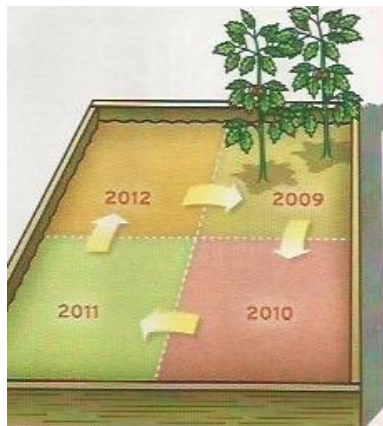


**The Timing:
Five Strategies**



- 1. Before you plant a main crop**
 - a. Delay your intended crop by 4-6 weeks while you green-manure the area.
 - b. Follow with a quick growing crop like leaf lettuce, radish, pak choi, spinach, etc. to fit our short growing season.
- 2. Under-sow an existing crop:** interplant a living mulch amongst crops.
 - a. Plant leaf lettuce under pea vines to shade soil & suppress weeds.
 - b. Grow green manure beside half-matured romaine lettuce or pak choi. When you harvest the crop, plow under the cover crop too.
- 3. Spot treatment**
Fill empty spaces as you harvest (e.g. cabbage, cauliflower) with green manure seed.
- 4. New or resting plots**
Prepare a new field, or resting plot, or high tunnel area with a season's worth of green manuring.
- 5. Do one section of the garden per year**

- a. Take 1/10th or 1/4th (for example) of your garden out of production for Year 1 and grow 3 successive green manure crops in this section. Rotate to next section for Year 2, while putting the first section back into production. Here are 2 examples.



1 First year GM/CC	2 Second year GM/CC	3 →	4	5
6	7	8	9	10

Application rates for Alaska Soil Booster

1.5 lb for 100 sq. feet

3 to 5 lb for 1000 sq. feet

70 to 120 lb per acre. Bulk purchase—call for estimate 907.222.2047 at the commercial & wholesale desk.

Sowing depth: 3/4" to 1" deep.

Apply with the proper inoculant for this blend's legume components.

Benefits

- grow miles of roots
- suppress weeds
- build microbe & worm populations
- store soil nutrients, minimize wind & water erosion
- improve tilth
- draw up subsoil minerals, & accumulate them in the topsoil

Do the math—a mere 15 lbs of green manure with inoculant produces up to 20 lbs nitrogen by autumn.

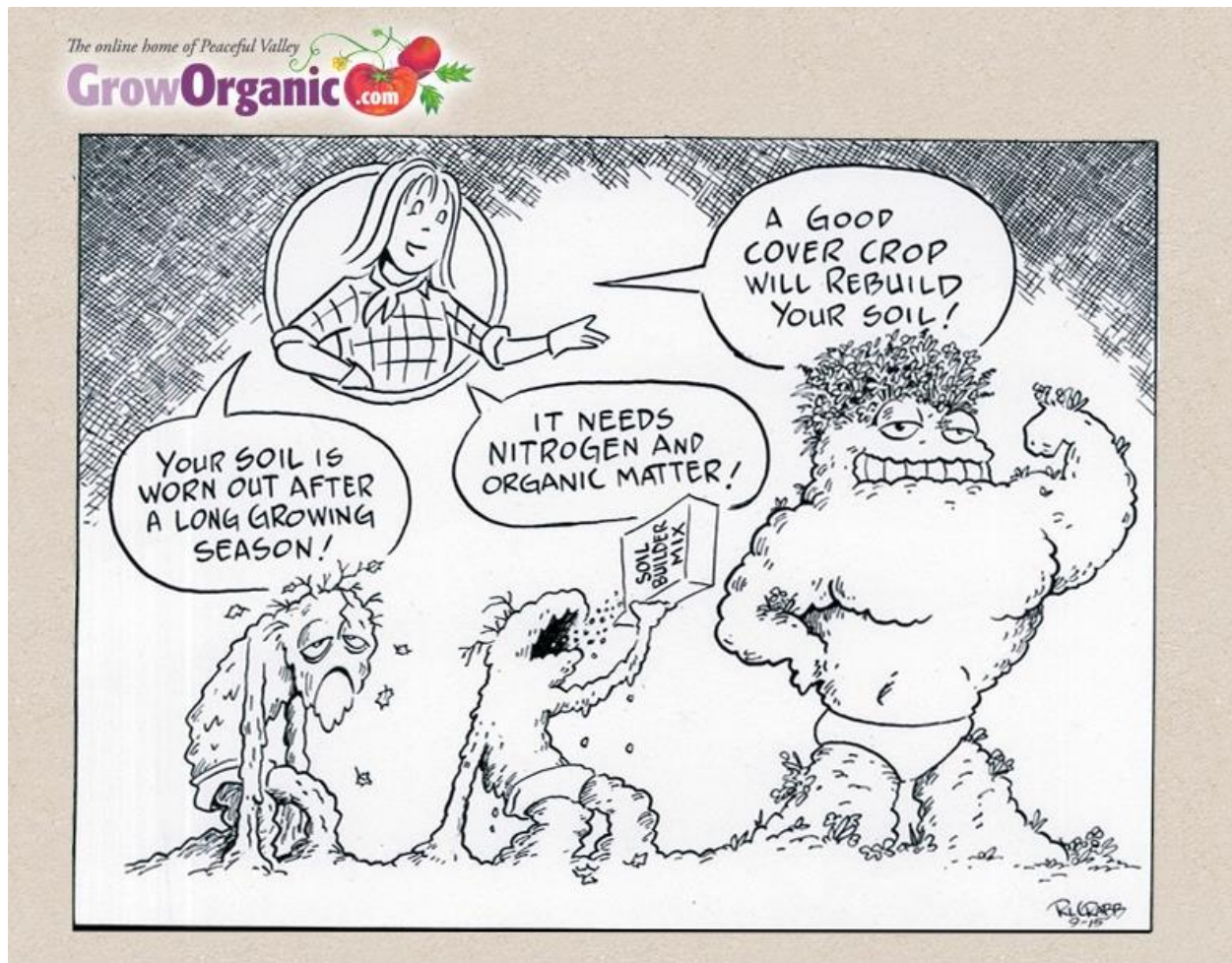


Inoculant

refers to the *Rhizobia* strains of bacteria that partner with the legume to fix nitrogen. For this blend, you want the specific species for inoculating fava and Austrian peas. AK Mill & Feed carries this little packet of powdered inoculant. It will look something like this:



Thanks to Peaceful Valley Farm Supply for this!



Read more in this excellent reference by SARE
(Sustainable Agriculture Research & Education program www.sare.org)

