
Sowing & Growing: Hairy Vetch



Hairy vetch (*vicia villosa*) is a forage legume also known as winter vetch. It has a similar climbing growth habit to common vetch and will survive through the winter.

Traditionally it has been used as a winter hardy, ground covering green manure. It is utilised more in the states where it is used for cover crops, fodder and silage mixtures.

When to Sow: Generally it is autumn sown for over-winter cover.

It has one of the latest sowing windows in the autumn and can be sown up until the end of September.

Sowing Rate: 7.5 g/m² - 30kg per acre - 75kg per ha. The sowing rate for larger, pea sized seeds is flexible depending on the budget and desired level of ground cover.

Preparation: The most successful results come from sowing into a newly prepared seedbed. Aim to cultivate the top soil to about 5cm, with a light cultivator or discs. The finished seedbed should be fine but firm, with no clods. Several passes with a cultivator may be needed to achieve this.

Sowing: Seed of hairy vetch is larger than clover seed therefore it should be sown deeper (1-2 cm is ideal). The soil should be rolled after sowing to increase seed to soil contact.

Management: It's best not to top vetch at all as it does not recover well. Its growth is vigorous enough to compete against weeds without the need for cutting.

Severe grazing/cutting for forage or control of weeds during or just after flowering will normally kill off hairy vetch.