

Green Manure		Comments	Sowing time	Soil type	Nitrogen fixer?	How to sow	Growing period
Alfalfa (Lucerne) <i>Medicago sativa</i> Hardy perennial		Grown by farmers as a high protein forage crop. The cut foliage acts as a mulch, and the deep tap root helps sort out plough pans.	April - July	Avoid acid and wet soils	Yes	Scatter seeds (2g per m ²)	1 year plus
Buckwheat <i>Fagopyrum esculentum</i> Half hardy annual		Rapid growing. Takes up phosphate and then disperses phosphate in the soil after digging in. Its large leaves suppress weeds, and pink flowers attract beneficial insects	April - Aug	Thrives on poor soil	No	Best sown in rows 20 cm apart. (6g per m ²)	1 – 3 months
Beans, field or broad <i>Vicia faba</i> Hardy annual		Grown by farmers. Best sown in alternate rows with grazing rye to improve weed control. The root nodules fix nitrogen, but to capture it, be sure to dig in before seeds (ie beans) form.	Sept - Nov	Prefers heavy soil	Yes	10 cm between beans, in rows 15 – 20 cm apart	Over winter
Crimson clover <i>Trifolium incarnatum</i> Hardy annual		Short term annual growth, provides a rapid boost to soil fertility. Its dramatic flowers are much loved by bees.	March - Aug	Prefers lighter soil	Yes	Scatter seeds (3g per m ²) and sown at a shallow depth	2-3 months, may overwinter
Red clover <i>Trifolium pratense</i> Hardy perennial		Very popular with organic farmers, it lasts for two years or more. Should be cut regularly, whenever it reaches a height of 30 cm, and used as a mulch. Seen here growing amongst brassicas.	April - Aug	General	Yes	Scatter seeds (3g per m ²) and sown at a shallow depth – too deep will reduce germination	3 – 18 months.
Fenugreek <i>Trigonella foenum-graecum</i> Half hardy annual		Provides a quick boost to soil fertility in just a few months. Rapidly provides a lot of foliage, good at suppressing weeds	March - Aug	Well drained	Unlikely in the UK due to absence of particular bacteria	Scatter seeds (5g per m ²) or in 15cm rows	2 – 3 months
Mustard <i>Sinapsis alba</i> Half hardy annual		A vigorous weed suppressant. A brassica, so should not be sown where club root suspected. Does not do well in dry weather.	March - Sept	Prefers fertile soil	No	Scatter seeds (5g per m ²) or in 15cm rows	1-2 months
Phacelia <i>Phacelia tanacetifolia</i> Half hardy annual		A strong grower, with spreading habit, therefore an excellent weed suppressant. Has beautiful lavender blue flowers which are very attractive to bees and beneficial insects.	March - Sept	Most	No	Scatter seeds (2g per m ²) or in 20cm rows	1 – 3 months
Rye, Hungarian grazing <i>Secale cereal</i> Hardy annual		Excellent for clay soil improvement. Grows throughout winter and frost tolerant. Releases substances which inhibit seed germination thus prevents weed infestation, but wait for 4 weeks before sowing veg seeds	Aug - Nov	Most	No	Scatter seeds (16g per m ²) or in 20cm rows	Over winter
Vetch, winter tares <i>Vicia sativa</i> Hardy annual		Another useful winter tolerant plant. There is a summer species with heavy foliage growth to suppress weeds. Both are good nitrogen fixers.	March – May July - Sept	Avoid acid and dry soils	Yes	Summer 16g per m ² Winter 2.5g per m ²	2 – 3 months
Yellow Trefoil <i>Medicago lupulina</i> Hardy biennial		Low growth habit makes it ideal for under-sowing ie with sweetcorn. Sets seed rapidly, so dig in promptly.	March - Aug	Will stand dry light soil, but not acid	Possibly	Scatter seeds (1g per m ²)	3 months +