

Sugar Beet VNS

Key Features

Sugar Beets are an excellent cover crop. When given adequate growing time (60-90 days), they can grow more than five feet deep by fall. Sugar Beets will tolerate temperatures down into the single digits, and August plantings can still achieve a deep root by the first freeze. With a higher tolerance for colder temperatures than radishes, winterkill is postponed giving the sugar beet more growing time in the fall.

Sugar Beets have a higher C: N ratio than radishes leading to a slower decomposition. The more gradual decay enables the Sugar Beets to release the nutrients they have sequestered closer to when the next crop will need them and helps build organic matter quicker than radishes. The exudates from the sugar beet root are excellent feed for the soil microbes and worms.

Sugar Beets will not push out of the ground like radishes. They stay rooted and expand in the hard soil to help reduce soil compaction. Sugar Beets provide good forage for domestic livestock and wildlife that will forage the entire plant including the root.

Sugar Beets generally produce around 1-2 tons of dry matter, but can reach up to 3-5 tons when given a longer growing period.

Application

Cover Crop
Grazing

Planting Time

Spring to late Summer

Establishment

Similar to radishes in seed size, they can be broadcasted, seeded, or drilled. For the first month, Sugar Beets need daytime temperatures of 65-80 F, and nighttime temperatures of 40-50 F.

Management Keys

Termination shouldn't be a problem because Sugar Beets will winterkill in Iowa and further north. It's possible that like radishes, they may overwinter south of I-70.



Seeding Rate

Drilled	4-6#
Precision Planting	3-4#
Broadcast	6-8#

Seeding Depth

¼ to ½ inch

Characteristics

Nutrient Scavenging	4
Nutrient Release Rate	4
Compaction	5
Soil Builder	4

Scale 1-5 (1=Poor, 5=Excellent)

