Oats & Peas

Oats are a small grain that while not particularly winter hardy, provide a winter-killed ground cover. The residue is incorporated before the early planting of vegetables.

Oats are particularly useful in rotations with vegetable crops because they grow quickly and are easily killed. They are also useful as a nurse crop with legumes, such as hairy vetch and peas, for forage, erosion control and weed suppression.

Peas are a modest nitrogen-fixer on vegetable ground, but are the only choice in spring. In late summer, peas can be interseeded with oats to provide ground cover over the winter. Nitrogen from the peas will aid the growth of the oats, which will frost kill and give ground cover over the winter.

**Seeding Rate:** 4oz/100 sq feet  
**Seeding Date:** August - September  
**Special needs:** Well drained soil, tolerant of low pH

---

**Improve your soil with cover cropping**

Cover crops help to retain the soil, lessen erosion, and decrease the impact of precipitation on the garden by slowing the runoff of water. They also reduce mineral leaching and compaction, and suppress perennial and winter annual weed growth. The top growth adds organic matter when it is tilled into the garden soil. The cover crop’s root system also provides organic matter and opens passageways that help improve air and water movement in the soil.

To plant a cover crop, rake the garden area smooth and remove debris or large stones. Broadcast the seed according to the rates on the chart below. Lightly rake again, and water in the cover crop with your hose set at a fine mist.

For more information and cover cropping resources:  
www.gardening.cornell.edu/covercrop