



Sunflower

MICHIGAN - COVER CROP FACT SHEET

Sunflower (*Helianthus annuus*)



Identifying Features:

- Oval to spade shaped alternative leaves
- Grows 2–10 feet tall with thick stems covered in dense hairs and yellow flowers
- Taproot

Planting Tips

- **Drilled Seeding Depth:** $\frac{3}{4}$ –1.5"
- **Drilled Seeding Rate:** 2–4lbs pure live seed (PLS)/Ac in a mix
- **Broadcast Seeding Rate:** Not recommended unless shallow incorporation used, 3–5lbs PLS / Ac in a mix
- **Seed Size:** 8,000 seeds/lb
- **Seeding Dates:** May – August
- **Frost Seed:** Not Recommended
- **Aerial Seeding Rate:** Not Recommended



Termination Tips

Winterkill, Tillage, Chemical, see <https://www.canr.msu.edu/resources/cover-crop-termination> for more information.

Performance

Dry Matter: 1–5,000 lbs/Ac (highly dependent on planting and termination dates)

Soil Builder: Good

Erosion Fighter: Good

Weed Fighter: Good

Good Grazing: Fair

Mechanical Forage Harvest: Good

Cash Crop Interseed: Poor

Attract Beneficial Insects: Excellent

Residue Decomposition Rate (C:N Ratio)



Additional Considerations

- Best in a mixture with other warm season species
- Tolerant of heat and drought
- Prefers full sun

This fact sheet is a collaborative effort of Michigan State University Extension (MSUE) and the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) to provide information on cover crops. For more information consult <https://www.midwestcovercrops.org/michigan/>.

USDA participants should follow the specifications in their conservation plan and the NRCS Cover Crop Termination Guidelines.