

# Weed Control for Inter-Row Cover Crop

## Fruit Growers Victoria Infosheet #4



Implementing cover crops in an orchard inter-row will require a weed management plan before sowing and throughout the season. This will depend on various factors - time of the year, chemical/organic, orchard practices, and types of dominant weeds (perennial/annual, broadleaf/grass). Here we cover some considerations with weed control when deciding to sow a cover crop.



Summer weeds at trial site in Toolamba orchard include marsh mallow, pas pallum, purple pigeon grass, oxalis, nutgrass, wire weed.

### Some considerations before sowing:

- **Chemical** (herbicide) or **Organic** (flame, mulching, weed mat, solarisation, slashing) control methods
- **Residual** herbicide/ **Contact** herbicide
- Will sowing be with physical disturbance (**tillage**)? Will this expose weed seeds to surface? Or minimal disturbance (**direct drill**)?
- What weeds are you targeting? **Weed ID**. Broad Leaf, Grasses or Both?
- **Impact** on orchard - What time of year? Is there fruit on? Are the trees growing or dormant? Age of tree?
- May need a multiple action approach



## What is a weed?

"invasive alien plant species that can cause loss of productivity and impacts on biodiversity and ecosystem function"  
(Source: Apple and Pear IPDM 2020)

## Reasons to remove?

- Limit competition with Young Trees for water and nutrients (aggressive and denser root systems)
- Blocking sprinklers
- Host for pest or disease? (Example: capeweed is a host for Light Brown Apple Moth over winter)
- Difficult to correctly identify and choosing effective chemical to spray

## Reasons to keep?

- Offering adequate ground cover to protect from soil erosion, water runoff
- Offering flowers for pollinators and nectar for beneficial insects
- Is not causing any issues
- More costly to remove than to leave



Different weed control in orchards- solarisation, flame weeding, using mulch.  
Source: <https://treefruit.wsu.edu/crop-protection/weed-control/organic-weed-control/>

## Further Information

- **IPDM 2020 Australia Apple and Pears** - <https://www.horticulture.com.au/globalassets/hort-innovation/resource-assets/2020-21-australian-apple-and-pear-ipdm-manual.pdf>
- **EcoVineyards Factsheet Weeds**- <https://ecovineyards.com.au/wp-content/uploads/EcoVineyardsKIWeeds.pdf>
- **Goulburn Broken Catchment Management Authority Weeds Booklet** - [https://www.gbcbma.vic.gov.au/publications/published\\_documents/pest\\_plants\\_and\\_animals](https://www.gbcbma.vic.gov.au/publications/published_documents/pest_plants_and_animals)