



Season 5 Episode 19 — Cover Crops

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Announcer

The Alabama Crops Report Podcast, your trusted information source for Alabama agriculture.

Scott Graham

Hey, everybody, welcome to the Alabama Crops Report podcast. We're coming to you today, Halloween day. Simer we're recording. How about that?

Simer Virk

Yeah, we should have dressed up.

Scott Graham

Well, we've got a pretty spooky topic to talk about.

Simer Virk

Yeah.

Scott Graham

So.

Simer Virk

Hey, you could have come as a cover crop.

Audrey Gamble

But which cover crop would I be?

Simer Virk

What would that be.

Audrey Gamble

If I were to pick any cover crop to be for Halloween? It would be Persian clover.

Scott Graham

Persian clover.

Audrey Gamble

Beautiful pink bloom. Not a very practical cover crop for Alabama because it blooms too late.

Scott Graham

See, I don't think I've ever heard of that one.

Audrey Gamble

Yeah, it's a pretty one, and it smells delicious.

Scott Graham

So, if you don't remember, it's been a while since Doctor Audrey Gamble has been on the podcast. Now that she's in research teaching faculty, she doesn't do extension work anymore.

Audrey Gamble

That's just not true.

Scott Graham

Well, glad to have you here, Audrey. Alright, Chandler, what would you be if you were to be a cover crop?

Chandler Greuner

So, if I was to be a cover crop, I think I'd pick Sun Hemp because it's practical, it fixes nitrogen. But it also is tall, and I'm not very tall person, so I'd like to be tall and be able to see over things.

Scott Graham

Simer what would you be, something you can spread with a drone?

Simer Virk

I don't know too much about cover crops. I would just say rye.

Audrey Gamble

That's a go to.

Scott Graham

Oh, reliable.

Simer Virk

Yeah. Yeah. What about you?

Scott Graham

I wouldn't be.

Simer Virk

Yeah. So, you're not participating in.

Audrey Gamble

What insect would you be?

Scott Graham

I would be probably like a pea leaf weevil. Attracted to all those legume cover crops we got out there.

Simer Virk

There we go.

Audrey Gamble

This is going to be fun.

Simer Virk

Yeah. All right. So sorry. Is this a timely topic to cover, cover crops?

Audrey Gamble

Absolutely. So, it's Halloween. So, we've gotten a good bit of our cover crop research trials in. I think for farmers, depending on what cash crop they're following, some cover crops have been planted in the state. And then, you know, following cotton, peanut, soybean harvest. We'll have some more hopefully being planted soon.

Simer Virk

What is our, for someone like I said, I don't know too much about cover crops. I just work here, a little bit here and there. What is our timing for the State of Alabama for planting or the season for cover crops usually?

Audrey Gamble

So, our timing for planting of cover crops is as soon as harvest ends feasibly, you know, and this can be for someone like you who's doing research with drones. Like there can be ways for us to get in and plant cover crops ahead of harvest as well. But I would say for most of the state, as soon as we can plant, after harvest, the earlier the better.

Audrey Gamble

A lot of the species that we grow, for example, crimson clover or any of the legumes, our ideal planting date for those is going to be mid to late October. So, if we can get in on time, that will give us a lot better biomass and a lot better stand as we move into the spring for some of the cover crops that we grow, though, like daikon radishes, for example.

Audrey Gamble

We want to get those even in earlier. If we can. So those can be really good behind a corn rotation when we can actually plant them in late September and early October.

Simer Virk

So, is that something growers can also see or evaluate? If this is something going off the corn. They might pick?

Audrey Gamble

Yeah, they might that that would be one. I would say there's you could boil it down to more considerations. But three of the big considerations for determining what cover crops you're going to plant, number one is going to be what benefits you're trying to get. Right. So certain species are going to give you specific benefits. Another is going to be the timing of planting.

Audrey Gamble

Because if we can't plant it on time, where it actually gets good biomass production, then it's not worth the money. And then the third would be and this is where Scott will come in, is, you know, what is our what is our cash crop rotation? What pest cycles do we need to be concerned about breaking in order to, you know, prevent buildup of nematodes or, soil diseases, for the following cash crop.

Scott Graham

And also, what's your government check tied to?

Audrey Gamble

That is a very good point. What is your government check tied to? Do you have to plant a multi-species cover crop if you're planting with NRCs? And that will display as well.

Simer Virk

And this is some of the conservation programs and all that?

Audrey Gamble

(Mhm, Mhm) And there's a lot of industry programs now as well for cover crops. So, depending on what the requirements are for a specific program to get a payment for those cover crops, that may come into play with species selection as well.

Chandler Greuner

And that'll also determine your day too. Sometimes there's a deadline that you have to get planted by, so sometimes you can't wait super late, like you're waiting for that timely rains because that's another factor. People weigh in on is are we going to rain soon? We've pretty dry for the last couple of weeks of planting something. If you weren't going to get the timely rains and wouldn't grow and get good biomass, it may just sit there dormant.

Chandler Greuner

So sometimes people factor. Do I want to spend the money on seed and diesel fuel to put it out there if I'm not going to get the rains?

Simer Virk

Yeah, about the program now I'm somewhat aware about the government programs, but you said industry programs. What all, but also more importantly for maybe some growers or other people who may not be aware, what do they find information on all that?

Audrey Gamble

There. So, there are some government websites to kind of point to what programs are available in specific states.

Scott Graham

Or there will be.

Audrey Gamble

Or there will be.

Scott Graham

They're all down right now.

Audrey Gamble

Yeah. So, that's why I hesitated to make a comment.

Simer Virk

Audrey Gamble

But working with your local, you know, retailers as well, or buyers there, there can be specific programs. A couple of examples, like the Soil Health Institute, has a program to pay for cover crops. Golden peanut, has a program, and then some other industry have programs to, to help with the cost of cover crops, because it is an investment that is providing benefits to the broader public.

Audrey Gamble

And it's not, especially in the short term, providing an initial financial benefit to growers in a lot of in a lot of cases. And so that those programs are intended to offset some of that cost to help get cover crops in the rotation and start building some of the benefits in terms of soil health, that you would want to achieve with cover crops.

Simer Virk

Gotcha. What is our adoption of cover crops in Alabama?

Audrey Gamble

This is a tough question to answer. And the best data comes from probably either the ag census. There was also some good data when, after Covid, there were some payments for cover crops that went out. And it hovers somewhere between around 17 to 25% of row crop acres that are planted in cover crops in the state.

Simer Virk

Wow.

Scott Graham

Would that include wheat or no?

Audrey Gamble

That would not include wheat for harvest.

Scott Graham

Okay.

Simer Virk

I thought for some reason that would be more.

Audrey Gamble

And we're I would say, you know, fairly when you look at the I don't I don't remember what place we are in terms of the state of Alabama, but relatively high for the US.

Simer Virk

For the US.

Scott Graham

I was back home this weekend and or this week and rode through a pretty significant part of the Mississippi Delta, and it was beautiful, beautiful. Everything was all the land was prepped preemergent herbicides were, you know, fall pre's were put out. No cover crops.

Simer Virk

You said beautiful? With a lot of cover crops?

Scott Graham

No cover crops.

Audrey Gamble

He loves some bare soil.

Scott Graham

Just bare soil and everything was already hipped and bedded, ready for next year.

Simer Virk

So, we can say Mississippi's cover crop less than 5%.

Scott Graham

Okay, I can't say that, but it's, it's not very high in the delta. I'm sure it's a lot more in the hills where you need to hold the soil there. Right. But in the delta, where you control the grading of the of every single field, how sloped it is, runoff erosion is not as near as big a deal.

Simer Virk

Yeah, that makes sense.

Scott Graham

But yeah, I think to your point, the reason I made I said that joke was that I do think 17 to 25% is probably a pretty high adoption in the South. Anyway, I don't know about the Midwest, but.

Simer Virk

I think peanuts kind of may affect that for a good bit for us. Right?

Audrey Gamble

It does. There's less cover crops. Not to say that there's no cover crops that are going ahead of peanuts, but there's less cover crops going into peanuts. But I like your point about highly erodible. And so, if there's different reasons that we plant cover crops and every farm is different in every form has to figure out what what's going to work best for them.

Audrey Gamble

But if we don't have soil to farm in the future, then.

Simer Virk

Yeah.

Audrey Gamble

You know, insect control doesn't matter if we don't have the soils to grow, to grow the crops. And if we lose that land, if we lose that soil. It takes hundreds of years for one inch of topsoil to form. And so, if once we lose it, we can't get it back. So, a lot of times we'll talk about it takes several years to see the benefits of cover crops to accrue in terms of building soil health there.

Audrey Gamble

On the inverse side of that, if we're losing a lot of soil to erosion, we're going to see degradation in the long term of that soil as well. So, there's it's not only, a building of soil for the long term, but also in avoiding of degradation of soil in the long term.

Simer Virk

It's a good point, is our? Going back to the adoption thing, I know our agriculture is kind of so diverse or even like where we have North Alabama, even Tennessee Valley and then central and south from the and we usually when we talk about row crops or something, we discuss like, well, it depends on what part of the state are we talking about.

Simer Virk

Does that also kind of apply to some extent to how the cover crops are being grown managed across the state.

Audrey Gamble

Yeah, it does. And just thinking about what species are grown because we've done a lot of surveys, of, of the reasons that farmers plant cover crops. And if you're in the southern portion of the state, if you're in the coastal plain, the top two reasons tend to be soil moisture retention and weed suppression.

Simer Virk

Okay.

Audrey Gamble

Those tend to be the top two goals.

Audrey Gamble

If we're in it. And not to say that those aren't important in the Tennessee Valley, for example. But you see more, in terms of trying to build overall soil health, reduce soil compaction is a really big one. I would say in the Tennessee Valley, moisture retention can be a double-edged sword in some soil types because it can hinder planting.

Audrey Gamble

If we've got cover crop residue out at cash crop planting. And we see that a lot in the Tennessee Valley or especially in the Black Belt, where if we've got heavy rain falls and a lot of residue out, it can be too wet to get in a plant. You want that moisture eventually. You just don't want it when you're trying to get in the field.

Simer Virk

Yeah, and not to mention all the, I usually say most of our planters are not normally equipped or set up to plant and cover crops or even heavy residue or something. So that even requires considerations on changing your planter setups and other to get the crop in.

Audrey Gamble

Yeah, and that's part of the investment. We can talk about the cost of seed and the cost of chemical to terminate a cover crop. But if you're switching your system that's a much larger investment. You know, maybe it requires different tillage equipment as well. And so to get started with cover crops, it can have a significant cost associated with it.

Scott Graham

Yeah. And you also, most of the wheat production would be in the Tennessee Valley also. So that would impact their adoption of cover crops because there which this year I think wheat is supposed to be down. It's been down the last couple of years. But I think this year it's going to again. So, they may grow more rye or something.

Simer Virk

I don't know. So, you said earlier mid-October or early to mid-October for some of the like the best timing wise.

Audrey Gamble

So, depending on what you're planting and in I would even say for a lot of this. So, our small grains are going to be our big cover crops species are Rye, Triticale, Wheat and those. Yeah. Getting in this time of year is great. We can often get really good cover crop biomass. So even planning well into November and the further you go, the riskier it gets.

Audrey Gamble

But even into December as well. And if the weather cooperates, there is still potential to get a good biomass even in under late planting. There are some variety selections that farmers can make to help minimize that risk. So, for example, some earlier maturing varieties of rye and oat can help to provide some benefit in terms of risk aversion if we're planting late.

Audrey Gamble

So, we've seen that varieties, for example, like Florida 401 rye that's a very early mature performs better when we plant it late when we compare it to some of the typical rye cover crop varieties like Elbon or Renza Breezy.

Simer Virk

So as a grower, how do I kind of make that decision or what helps them make that decision on? Because I've even heard, like, about single species, 2 or 3 species mixes and all that. Like if, if a grower is making that decision or if someone's just planting rye and they want to like, consider maybe going into looking to some other species and stuff, how do they kind of make that?

Audrey Gamble

So yeah, the economics will come into play heavily. So, what's available in your region? I'm always happy to talk to people about, you know, seed availability and where what supplier sells specific varieties if they're looking for early varieties of small grains or even earlier varieties of legumes, that would fit in their system. But yeah, price of seed and what's available in their area will dictate some of that.

Audrey Gamble

But I do encourage people to think about think about species selection and think about variety selection intentionally instead of just going to the co-op and saying, you know, what do you have that we could plant as a cover crop? Because.

Audrey Gamble

There's again, there's probably some benefit that you're trying to get out of that cover crop. And depending on what that benefit is or what pests that you have in your area, in your fields, some species selection may help you in the long term.

Simer Virk

Could Henry's does the Henry's variety tool has information on that? Or is that only for you?

Audrey Gamble

So, there are a lot of species that we grow as cover crops, including. So, Henry has small grain variety trials for forage, and he has small grain variety trials for grain. And so, the especially the ones for forage, can give an idea of the biomass production for certain varieties as well as maturity. But it's important to remember that in those variety trials for grazing, is being managed a lot differently.

Audrey Gamble

So, the seeding rates are going to be higher, the nitrogen fertility rates are going to be higher because we're putting more inputs into forages in order to get more, more feed produced. So those, the variety trials can be useful. Henry's variety trials, the OVT trials. They can be very useful. Just know that that's one caveat is that there's a higher level of management.

Audrey Gamble

We've also done some multi state cover crop variety trials over the past four years. And that effort is led by Virginia Sykes at University of Tennessee. And we've had locations in Alabama since that, since that variety trial started. And those are available if you just search, "Southern cover crop variety trials", that will be the first item that comes up and there will be information, in terms of, about the biomass that's produced with different, cover crop species.

Audrey Gamble

And then there's also some data for certain locations on weed suppression and nitrogen credits as well. So, that can be a useful tool to look at or document to look at.

Simer Virk

Okay.

Scott Graham

Before, it was before Chandler started, but you've got a really good, extension factsheet or whatever on the different types of cover crops. Right. And what benefits they provide and those kinds of things on the extension website.

Audrey Gamble

Yeah. If you search cover crops for Alabama, that should be the first document that comes up. And that was, initially written by, Dennis Delaney, who's a retired extension specialist, and Kip Balcombe and Arnold Kaylor, who's a retired, research station director. So, they initially wrote that article and it's been updated throughout the years. It has some information about benefits, seeding rates, planting dates, all of that, that good stuff.

Simer Virk

Okay. So given we are October 31st, let's say this episode comes out within a week. What are some things right now that the growers should be considering, given the time of the year and where we are, you know.

Audrey Gamble

Getting, making it a priority to get it out early. And it's, I understand it's hard, because there's so many different operations going on at the farm this time of year, but making it a priority to get it out as timely as possible is, you know once you're hearing this because, Kip Balcombe, who's with the USDA lab, has done a lot of research on planting dates of cover crops and particularly rye.

Audrey Gamble

And so, the later we get. So, let's say we have kind of four planting notes that we're looking at starting with mid-October. And then we've got early November, late November and early December as our as our cover crop planting date options. If we plant a cover crop in mid-October with no nitrogen, we will get approximately the same biomass as a cover crop that is planted in December with 90 pounds of nitrogen.

Audrey Gamble

That 90 pounds of nitrogen is a much higher cost for the producer. So we can make up for biomass by applying nitrogen. But that's expensive. And we typically don't want to do that. So, by getting out particularly small grain cover crops on time or as early as possible, we start to get some of that biomass benefit without having to spend any money.

Audrey Gamble

And if we're looking for a benefit like weeds suppression or moisture retention, where you have to have high biomass.

Audrey Gamble

Then you need to make that biomass production a priority. If that's if that's your goal, moisture, talking about moisture retention, weeds suppression, those, those benefits that really require high biomass.

Simer Virk

So, do growers have these nitrogen tracks and all that kind of figured out in a way of like, hey, I'm planting this because I'm going into this cash crop next season. Hopefully I'll get this. Do they deduct that from your fertility program?

Audrey Gamble

So, you're talking about do they deduct nitrogen from their cash crop from what they put on their cover crop?

Simer Virk

No no no, from the cover, making the decision.

Scott Graham

If I know I'm planting...

Simer Virk

Corn next year

Scott Graham

Planting corn and, I have a, clover cover crop. I expect this much nitrogen out of it.

Audrey Gamble

Okay. So now we're on legumes, which is different. Different nitrogen benefit and this one is. But let me go back to that other topic really quick before we move on and say cover crops are rarely going to get more than 30 pounds of nitrogen put out on them. So, if you're if you're planting late, there's probably going to be some biomass penalty. So just be aware of that.

Simer Virk

When does that nitrogen go out on the cover crop?

Audrey Gamble

So Kip, a shout out to Kip again because he's done some research looking at fall application versus spring application. And in general the fall applications, you know, do just as good in terms of getting that biomass produced for the cover crop as spring. Okay. So now talking about legumes and Chandler has done a lot of work with, with legumes as well.

Audrey Gamble

Clover and vetch and some of the other legumes that we plant, we can get up to about 30 to 50 pounds of nitrogen per acre credit by following a crimson clover or hairy vetch cover crop. The benefit there or the likelihood of getting that nitrogen credit is increased by waiting until we have maximum biomass production. So, for corn that can be difficult because if we think about when we're planting corn and when not when legumes like crimson clover are producing their biomass, they're producing the majority of that biomass in late March and early April.

Audrey Gamble

So, if we're terminating it in early March, we're missing a lot of that. So, if we want the nitrogen credit, then letting it get to full bloom is going to be important. There are other agronomic considerations to make when you are deciding when to plant corn, but just solely focusing on getting a nitrogen credit. Then we need to wait until it reaches maximum biomass production.

Audrey Gamble

Also, minimizing the time frame between termination and planting will help us to get that credit. So, if we terminate you know, let's say we do wait until mid-April to terminate our legume cover crop, but then we don't plant our cash crop, let's say cotton, until mid-May. We've had a lot of time for that nitrogen to be lost between termination and planting.

Audrey Gamble

You know, if we get rainfall, it can leach, it can volatile or it can denitrify and enter the atmosphere. And so, keeping that window narrower will help to maximize the likelihood of getting a nitrogen credit.

Simer Virk

What is the optimal time?

Audrey Gamble

So, for cotton, we don't, Scott's input needed here. Cotton, we do like to have two weeks just to prevent a grain bridge. But in corn in general a lot of times if we plant corn grain into a living cover crop, you may have some specific insect issues that could be an issue, could be a problem. But we do that quite a bit on, on the research stations where we plant corn directly into a living cover crop and then terminate it and, and, you know, get a, get a good benefit out of that in terms of nitrogen.

Audrey Gamble

But what do you want to say, Scott?

Simer Virk

He's been quiet today.

Scott Graham

2 to 3 weeks?

Simer Virk

2 to 3 weeks? Okay. Now you said the nitrogen benefit only comes from like hay which and crimson clover.

Audrey Gamble

Any legumes. But those are the two that are going to be the most consistent in terms of production in Alabama. Those are the reliable.

Simer Virk

Yeah, but the point I was trying to make was, isn't most of our, the most widely planted cover crop is rye. So, are there any benefit, nitrogen benefits associated with that at all?

Audrey Gamble

No, there's the opposite. But that's okay. It depends on what benefit you're trying to get. But if we've got rye you've got a material with a very high carbon and nitrogen ratio. Which means it's going to actually tie up. It could actually tie up some nitrogen. So, for let's say we're following a high biomass cover crop of rye with corn.

Audrey Gamble

We probably want to put a little bit more of our nitrogen out at plant in order to prevent some of that immobilization or tying up of nitrogen by the rye cover crop. Chandler, I know you've done a lot of research with living mulches. So that's legumes that are planted and cash crops directly planted into those. So, what's your take on legumes and living mulches for nitrogen benefits?

Chandler Greuner

So yeah, legumes and living mulches because I also have experience from like the Midwest. And so green planting is very common practice up there because like that waiting that time period, we want to get maximum thing. And just due to the seasonality it just collides too much. But we also do all that same time planting. So, when we do talk about living mulches, perennial ground covers, so what we do is we have like a clover growing out there.

Chandler Greuner

It's fixing nitrogen. We can get 50 to 60 pounds and some of that white clover nitrogen credits. And so, what we do is we spray out a strip one foot wide and then we plant into the center of that. So, we use precision technology to spray using a hooded sprayer or banded spraying. And then we use a planter that's sitting on the back of that same GPS row and planting right back into it.

Chandler Greuner

So that way you get to take advantage of that nitrogen right away and you plant right away. You don't have to worry about the volatilization and losses of that for the nitrogen. Also, that living mulch is still growing. But it's also slowly dying off throughout the season. And as it's dying back and throughout the season from the cash crop shading it out, it actually is providing nutrients once again to it, slowly as it breaks down over time.

Chandler Greuner

So, it's kind of a little bit different take on it. I know it provides a potential issue for insects as it's living all the time. It's always growing out there, but it does have the great benefits of providing the nitrogen. So, through my work, we always planted cotton into the living mulches. And we actually didn't supplement the nitrogen.

Chandler Greuner

We weren't going for maximum bales of cotton per acre, we were going for maximum profit. So, we were trying to put out the cover crop. It fixes all the nitrogen so that where we to buy urea. I also have worked on some stuff looking at potassium. So, what we notice when we're using that for a long term, that system we're talking about investment in the systems for a long run.

Chandler Greuner

So, when you invest in that system for a long run, we noticed that potassium was being held in the system and it wasn't leaching out. So, all the other nutrients were leaching out of the system. They're being held in place. And when you're holding in place, you could actually slowly, over time, cut back on your potassium fertilization. So, you kind of get multiple benefits out of using that cover crop where, you know, in the traditional system, you know, you still got that summertime where it could still leach out because the crop hasn't taken it off yet.

Chandler Greuner

Or when you talk about the timings of the cereal rice, that was always our comparison, because that is like the status quo a lot of times, what people like to compare to, because there's so much work and there's a lot of great benefits. It does cover the ground, hold the moisture. But like Audrey was talking about, it could tie up nutrients.

Chandler Greuner

And so sometimes people got to factor that into what is your goal. And so that's kind of some of what I like to talk about with people.

Simer Virk

How many growers are actually, doing the living or not living, even planting in the grain and all that in the south?

Audrey Gamble

Not a lot. In terms of a true living mulch. But I do know, you know, in terms of planting grain, especially with a legume, it can be it's more common than if you were doing it with a rye, for example, or a small grain. I know, I even know of a couple of producers that maybe they plant a cover crop mixture that includes a grass and a legume, and they'll actually go in with a grass herbicide, terminate the rye, and then let the legume continue to flourish to get that nitrogen benefit.

Audrey Gamble

But I do understand the caveat, like, know what pests might be an issue in your field because, there could be some potential insects to look out for if you've got that green bridge.

Scott Graham

And there's also outside of insects, there's very little error, very little room for error with your planter set up as well. Right. You got to make sure you do that right, or you're not going to get good seed placement. And you're going to have a poor stand.

Simer Virk

That's something I've noticed. Just a little bit of experience I have on planters with cover crops and all that. And this was all like southeast Georgia. There was a pretty big adoption of cover crops in that part of the state. And then you go to some farmers, and these guys have kind of modified their planters in such a way that they are able to get the seed in the ground, get this proper seed depth and even seeding rate and stuff.

Simer Virk

And where we always talk about some other growers who are just trying to use the normal planter to plant. They're like, well, "I'm always having issues," this and that. And that's where I've seen like some of these crazy modifications done, you know, where you have a so much heavy tool bar or even bunch of, roller crimping units mounted in front of the planter and stuff like that.

Simer Virk

So definitely a lot of consideration to that.

Scott Graham

Yeah. If you're if you're going to plant green, you got to take a little bit of time and investment and do it right. If you're going to do it.

Audrey Gamble

What would you say are the biggest insects to be on the lookout out for that time of year? Following?

Scott Graham

Well, it partly would depend on what type of cover crop. There's a lot of insects that are attracted to legumes. Pea leaf weevil was one of the big ones. And so, if you're planning soybeans behind a legume cover crop, that's one that we're really concerned about. But then also things like wire worms, root worms, you know, those kind of soil insects.

Scott Graham

That's mostly what we're concerned about. Something that we don't know yet, Chandler. But we're going to get some information, hopefully this spring. This winter is cotton jassid. What's it going to survive on? Was it not

going to survive on? Is it going to survive the winter at all? We don't know. As we talked today, it got down to 38 or so at Prattville.

Scott Graham

And so Blake is supposed to be going to the station to see how well did the Jassids do last night. My guess is they'll be just fine. But we're going to go see, but so that's something that we just don't know. My, my gut says if there's anything they probably won't do very well on, it's, it's the grasses.

Scott Graham

And so that's mostly what we plan, I think is rye, or oats or whatever. So that will probably help. But yeah for that we, we just don't know right now.

Simer Virk

Since we don't know. And this has come up few times even in our podcast for last at least 2 or 3 times about the jassid situation. And maybe the cover crops this fall, all that, since we don't know yet what's going to happen, how they're going, and all that. Are we suggesting changing anything from normally what the growers do?

Scott Graham

Maybe. So, the philosopher Francis Bacon, have y'all ever heard of Francis Bacon from the like...18?

Audrey Gamble

Sir Francis Bacon.

Scott Graham

Sir Francis Bacon from a long time ago, he had a quote. I won't use the Old English version. I'll use the Mississippi version. But it goes along the lines of "Few things, make a man suspect much, then to know little." And right now, we're doing a lot of suspecting. With this thing, we've learned a lot in a short amount of time, but there's still stuff like this.

Scott Graham

Like that question we just can't know.

Simer Virk

Yeah.

Scott Graham

So, I know Philip Roberts at Georgia is telling folks to consider ripping stalks, cotton stalks.

Simer Virk

Go right behind it.

Scott Graham

Yeah.

Simer Virk

Mowing or ripping?

Scott Graham

Ripping them out, ripping them ripping them out.

Simer Virk

Like a shredder puller?

Scott Graham

Something. Yeah. I'm not quite there yet. Just mow them down as low as you can, and the frost is going to kill out eventually. You know, most places. But he might be right. I don't know, that's just a big investment. I don't know how many people are even set up to rip stalks anymore. Probably not many.

Simer Virk

No, that's why I said, KMC make these special or whatever those instrument, you know, stalk puller, stuff that you actually got to run through and you know, whereas mowing you just taken mower. Right. Like a big.

Scott Graham

Yeah. Yeah. You just take a bush hog. Yeah. Yeah. You gotta, you gotta do that anyway, that's, you know, it's part of boll weevil erad. But so yeah, yeah, we don't know. There's even, I've even talked with people about should we go ahead and spray a herbicide on these on the regrowth now and kill it. And I'm like, well, maybe that's just another added trip across the field.

Scott Graham

More herbicides to spray. So, we just don't know. So right now, I'm not necessarily recommending we go add a whole bunch of expense and do different stuff that we don't normally do, because we don't know if it'll matter or not.

Simer Virk

So, follow your normal approach, whatever you've been.

Scott Graham

Yeah.

Simer Virk

Kind of doing.

Scott Graham

I suspect, so.

Simer Virk

All right. Well, we got just a few minutes here, I guess. Anything else important you guys want to touch on related to cover crop considerations, where we are in the season, and we can probably do it. Maybe another podcast if needed, you know, later.

Audrey Gamble

Yeah, absolutely. We need to do one. In the spring. Talk about.

Scott Graham

Killing them.

Audrey Gamble

Killing cover crops. Maybe get David Russell in to talk about burn down and that kind of thing.

Simer Virk

What would be the best time to do it? So, let's say given a week timeline to get it, posted and all that. February, March?

Audrey Gamble

For termination? Oh, it depends on, what cash crop you're going into and the benefits. But, I would say most cover crops are being terminated in the month of April.

Simer Virk

April, okay. Alright.

Audrey Gamble

Yeah, and March.

Scott Graham

One thing I am suggesting we change with cotton is planting earlier. And so that would play into that if, if you got decent soil temps and moisture around April 15th, I'd start planting cotton next year. So.

Simer Virk

April 15th.

Scott Graham

April 15th. They can in a lot of years they can get by with that in the Tennessee Valley. Yeah, believe it or not.

Simer Virk

But we don't start here until the first week of May.

Scott Graham

Normally. Yeah. First, where some of it's planted around the 20th of April, but the majority of it is planted that first two weeks in May. Yeah. But we suspect early planting cotton is going to have less pressure early season than late, later planted cotton from jassids. We suspect that. So that's one thing we are going to recommend so that again, that might change your timing of when you're going to start terminating cover crops.

Scott Graham

It might not.

Simer Virk

Yeah. Yeah. What other I guess the last kind of thing maybe if you all are aware about, I think it would be good maybe to mention what are some of the resources, information available on our website or somewhere that the growers can go access and could gain some of this information as well.

Audrey Gamble

So, the cover crops for Alabama is one publication on our website. I'll make a plug for the southern cover crops Council as well. So that's a group of researchers, farmers throughout the southern region of the U.S., and we will also be having a cover crop conference in February, late February in Gainesville, Florida. So, that we usually have, very good attendance from, from producers.

Audrey Gamble

And we have a lot of producer panels and producer speakers to talk about their experience for cover crops, with cover crops, and what's been working on their farm. I always learn a ton, from the producers at that meeting. So, if you're interested, go check out the Southern Cover Crops Council website as well. And, yeah, also plug because we have the USDA National Soil Dynamics lab here in Auburn, and they have a lot of good web resources as well.

Audrey Gamble

Talking about different cover crop species.

Simer Virk

And you also do your cover crop field days.

Audrey Gamble

Oh yeah. Me and Chandler have some cover crop field days to plan for the spring. We just set the date for the Wiregrass cover crop field day for March 6th. But other than that, I think it's March 6th. Other than that, we'll have to plan for some field days in different parts of the state.

Chandler Greuner

Yeah, they'll be that one. They'll be a couple other ones down in the South region. I've been working with some different groups and different interest because there's a lot of different stakeholders like we talked about earlier, like the Soil Health Institute. There's also the Sand County Foundation, which is a similar organization that's also very interesting cover crops. And they work throughout the South here.

Chandler Greuner

And there's some other ones that have been reaching out. And so, I've been working with different people, because, there's many different stakeholders, many different producers that are interested in using cover crops but new to it and trying to learn, especially with this cotton jassid like Scott talked about. We'll have some of that information hopefully available in the spring too.

Chandler Greuner

Some of the early observations, not all the way, but some early observations going through. And so, we'll have different meetings throughout the springtime that we're starting to plan. Like Audrey talked about, we'll have that one in Headland and then we'll also have some other ones up in the Tennessee Valley area and some throughout the state that we're starting to work on planning.

Chandler Greuner

That's why I can't share the dates yet, but once we get the venue locked down, we'll be able to share them.

Simer Virk

Okay. Good deal.

Scott Graham

Spooky stuff.

Simer Virk

Yeah.

Scott Graham

And also, while we're on topic of meetings, the 13th Alabama Row Crops Short course will be in Prattville January 20th and 21st. So, get that. Start talking about that some. Yeah. Registration coming soon. If you register before January 11th, it's free, how about that.

Simer Virk

What's after that?

Scott Graham

\$40?

Simer Virk

Oh, man. It's a way to save \$40.

Scott Graham

That's right. Yeah, yeah. All right, well, Audrey, Chandler, appreciate your time today and information. Always good to have y'all on the Alabama Row Crops podcast, as always, if any of us, with Alabama Extension could be of any help, please don't hesitate to reach out and let us know.

Announcer

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