

No to bare soil, yes to covering!

Summer is over, nearly everything has been harvested. It won't be long before the last potatoes will rejoin the darkness in the shelter. And what will happen to the soil? If we haven't been/aren't careful, over time it has/will become bare. So we must act to protect it, to nourish the micro-organisms, to make up for the loss of nutrients taken from past growth, to avoid leaching and soil impacts from the upcoming bad weather. How can we do this over the course of harvests?



Several possible interventions:

- **The waste** from current plants after possible crushing, e.g. beetroot leaves, leeks, chicory (but not the bits of roots as they grow back)... anything that does not show any sign of disease.

Add a few dead leaves or other shreds, exactly as you would for composting: this is called ground compost, which will form the soil for the following season.

- **In the same pattern** of thought, cover your soil with a mixed bed of turf and dry leaves shredded with a lawnmower, shavings of different sizes, washed and desalinated seaweed if available...

- **Plant “green manure”**: this name is given to a plant grown to not leave the soil bare or invaded by weeds. These species (rye, phacelia, clover, mustard...) will not be harvested but reintegrated into the soil's surface in spring, after shredding, in order to improve its structure and enrich its humus.



You can then plant vegetables greedy on organic material: courgettes, potatoes, tomatoes... **Leave the vegetation in place over winter.** Even if it is killed by the cold or continues to grow, it will form a protective barrier for the soil.

Bare soil becomes impoverished, other soil gets richer. Mushroom filaments that sheathe roots, called mycorrhizae, risk disappearing in winter, even though they multiply by 20-25 times the surface in contact with roots and allow certain elements to be better absorbed and reinforce plant defence systems. In nature, mature plants are strewn across the soil, leaves fall and protect it all, slowly decomposing and fertilizing it. **It is nature's cycle that we reproduce.**

Josette Marmoret

What can be sown at the end of summer?

Green manure helps with crop rotation. **You should avoid growing consecutively plants of the same botanical family:** near radishes, no cabbage, or turnip, or rocket... not even mustard, or rapeseed as it is part of the same family, the Brassicas. Fabaceae (clover, vetch, pea, bean...) store nitrogen from the air in their roots and pass it onto vegetables grown after them. They therefore precede plants greedy of nitrogen. Phacelia, buckwheat, spinach, rye, oat are important as the vegetables in their family are unusual.

From the end of August to mid-September, choose from: crimson clover, lucerne, bean, rye, phacelia, mustard, oat, according to your garden plan:... for next year!