

RESEARCH PROTOCOL: HORTICULTURE 2017

Garlic Mulch Experiment

Farmer-Researchers

Eric Barnhorst, Eva Mae Farm
Heather Coffey, Fiddlehead Farm
Ken Laing, Orchard Hill Farm

This document outlines the steps that Ken, Eric and Heather will follow to execute the research trial, *Green Mulch Comparison for Garlic*, including design, execution, data collection and data sharing. It also serves as a Memorandum of Understanding between Ken/Eric/Heather and the EFAO.

Ken's Experimental Design

Ken will compare standard spring management (cultivating between garlic rows) to a cover crop treatment (spelt, a fall cereal planted between rows) and a dry mulch treatment (straw mulch between rows). Ken planted the same variety of garlic throughout and he planted all garlic no-till into a cover crop of oats/peas/barley.

The field is set-up in 15 rows x 176'. The field will be split into 15 test plots, each 60' long and spanning 3 rows each for ease of applying the straw mulch, cover crop seed, and cultivating. This results in a *randomized complete block design* with 5 replicates.

Measurements

Management time for each treatment including time mulching, planting cover crop seed, cultivating.

- 1) At harvest, a count of # of fresh heads in each test plot will be recorded along with the total weight of garlic (greens included, dirt knocked off as much as possible). This will give an average weight per plant in each test plot.
- 2) Alternately, at harvest, a count of # of heads of garlic in different size classes (seed, CSA, bad) could be recorded by test plot.

Predictions

Ken predicts that the yields will be highest on average in the straw mulch beds, followed by cultivated (control) beds, and that green mulch will have smallest heads. Production time, however, will be greatest in the straw mulch beds, second in the cultivated beds, and lowest in the cover cropped beds.

Straw mulch will give increased growth due to water conservation, and no cultivation time will be needed (however, mulching time will be recorded per test plot). Cultivated beds, which are free from competition, will be slightly smaller due to water stress. Green mulch plots will have to

compete with the spelt for nutrients and water, but there will only be a small reduction in production with much less cultivation time and better soil quality.

Control (Bare Soil, Cultivated)

Dry Mulch (Straw)

Cover Crop (Spelt)

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15
60'	Green		Green			Brown			Yellow			Brown			
60'	Brown			Yellow			Green			Brown			Green		
60'	Yellow			Brown			Yellow			Green			Yellow		
	Block 1			Block 2			Block 3			Block 4			Block 5		

Statistical analysis

ANOVA (analysis of variance) with complete block design.

Further details

- This experiment assumes that the fresh weight of the garlic including greens is a good reflection of yield (dry saleable/plantable heads).
- In an extraordinary circumstance, Ken would irrigate his garlic with overhead sprinklers that wet a 60' circle, and are 6 or 7 in a line with lines placed at 30'. Because of the small size of the patch, watering would not be even across the beds. Since harvest is in mid-July, Ken hasn't had the need for irrigation in the past (not even 2016) so he doesn't foresee needing it.
- Mulches (dry or green) may affect scape timing by encouraging the plant to continue vegetative growth for longer due to increased soil moisture. Something to observe as scapes start to emerge, and check to see if scape production per test plot should be recorded (if it appears there's a substantial effect on timing).

Research Expense Budget

- Hay: 44 bales @ \$4 = \$176
- Winter Wheat Seed: 10lb @ .25/lb = \$2.50
- Flags: \$22

Total Approved Budget: \$200.50

- Additional research expenses pending approval

Heather’s Experimental Design

Research Question

Does a white clover cover crop planted in our garlic beds (May-July) lead to better garlic yields than our standard bare soil beds?

White Clover will be used as a cover crop, seeded in spring after two passes with hoes to limit weed seed bank pressure. Pathways (very narrow) will be cultivated on all beds. Control will be full hoeing of beds.

The experimental area consists of six 250 foot beds of two rows each, all planted with Fish Lake garlic. For the experiment, beds will be considered blocks; treatment or control will be assigned randomly to either the northern or southern end of the bed for a *randomized complete block design with 6 replicates*.

Cover Crop

Control

Bed/Block	6	5	4	3	2	1
Plot	F	E	D	C	B	A
125'						
Plot	L	K	J	I	H	G
125'						

Prediction

Heather and Steve predict that a white clover cover crop in season will improve the garlic yield when compared to bare soil around the crop.

Predicted Mechanisms

They anticipate that cover cropping will lead to increased soil moisture and retention, allowing garlic to be actively growing better throughout the growing season. There may also be a nutritional benefit of nitrogen from the clover within the season. They are also hoping that the cover crop presence will not increase nematode damage, which would reduce yield.

Measurements

Heather and Steve will measure garlic yield by counting number of mature heads in each of three size classes per plot on harvest, using holes cut in a plastic lid for simple sizing. If size

classes aren't ascertained due to timing during harvest, they will keep yields from each plot SEPARATELY and ENTIRELY until such recording is possible.

- Record weight of clover seed used per patch as a seeding rate proxy.
- Observations in season will be noted down, with dates.

Other notes

- Green garlic will be harvested from a seventh bed, not included in the experiment.
- Beds will be irrigated, with one line of drip down each row of Garlic. All beds will be irrigated simultaneously, as needed.
- If weed pressure in cover cropped beds (not the clover, but other weeds) threatens to shade out the garlic, a line-trimmer will be used to knock back the majority of the weeds a few inches off the ground which should leave the clover intact. Timing will be recorded if this technique is used.

Research Expense Budget

- \$ 0 Field stones to mark plot boundaries
- \$ 10 White clover seed (from a bag we have)
- \$ 20 Hand held broadcaster from canadian tire
- \$ sorting or weighing equipment, none foreseen as needed
 - Additional research expenses pending approval

Eric's Experimental Design

Eric wants to know:

Does the cover crop make a difference to garlic yield and labour?

What is best way to manage the cover crop?

Eric will be looking at two key response variables: Survival and size breakdown.

In addition to a bare soil control, two different treatments will be tested with this plot size and number of varieties.

- 1) Oats and garlic planted together the first week of September.
- 2) Planting of oats (or oat/pea/barley cocktail) in treatment plots the first week of September, followed by mowing in late October prior to planting garlic.

Eric has 6 beds, with three rows each, of garlic, and he plants 6 varieties of garlic across the beds. Given the limited bed space given the scope of the trial (6 varieties, 2 treatments + control), the design is semi-randomized with each variety considered a replicate. Measurements will be based on a response ratio between treatment - control.

garlic and cc planted together

garlic and cc staggered planting

bare soil control

Bed 1			Bed 2			Bed 3			Bed 4			Bed 5			Bed 6		
1A	1B	1C	2A	2B	2C	3A	3B	3C	4A	4B	4C	5A	5B	5C	6A	6B	6C
V4			V6			V5			V1			V1			V3		
V2			V5			V4			V4			V3			V1		
V6			V3			V2			V2			V5			V6		

Note: Eric will divide beds by seed availability for each variety. He will split the seed from each variety into 3 groups (2 treatments + 1 control). For the purposes of depicting the design, the

beds are divided evenly into 3 sections. In reality, Eric will fill in with better yielding varieties for varieties that take up less than $\frac{1}{3}$ a bed, marking where the varieties change in the bed.

Measurements

- In the spring 2018, survival in each plot will be assessed through observation of the number of heads lost per plot.
- Eric will note the weed pressure developing in spring, and the date if/when he decides to jump into the patch to hoe.
- At harvest, Eric will measure garlic yield by counting number of mature heads in size classes, per plot, using his nail board technique.

Statistical analysis

T-test comparing response ratio of treatment vs bare for each section including for total yield and each size class.

Notes

- The hope is that the oats will provide sufficient dead mulch to suppress weeds in season, however, if weed pressures rise Eric will (hoe?) the whole plot following his standard weed suppression methods.
- PFI project Oat cover crop vs. Straw mulch by Mark Quee suggests that September planted garlic with oats did no better nor worse than October planted.
- Ken used to use just oats. He switched mostly because cocktails are supposed to be better for the soil. He has noticed that oats and barley just grow better together. Peas have a relatively low nitrogen contribution. He suggests oats or a cocktail would have very similar spring/winter biomass and neither are sufficient for season-long weed control the following summer. So you get to choose, we'll suggest oats alone since that's what you're used to!
- Ken says oats are very sensitive to planting, and he never plants them after the first of September. If planted in mid-august, the oats risk going to seed. First week of September leaves 8-10" growth for garlic planting in the first week of October.

Research Expense Budget

- \$ Flags for marking varieties
- \$ Cover crop seed (oats) ~ \$10
- \$ Potential for in-kind contribution of a "working field day" in 2018
- Additional research expenses pending approval

Memorandum of Understanding for Eric, Heather and Ken

Compensation for farmer-researcher

- Farmer-fee of \$500 per farm per experiment
 - \$250 receivable upon acceptance of this Research Protocol and Memorandum Of Understanding (MOU)
Acceptance form: <https://goo.gl/forms/0wMjDHmoLzRwLJIE3>
 - \$250 receivable upon remittance of the experimental data and photos, no later than October 31, 2017 (or October 31, 2018 for experiments with data collection in 2018)
- Reimbursement for approved research expenses
 - See budget above for approved research expenses
 - Fill out Reimbursement Form and send receipts (digital or hard copy) to Sarah
Reimbursement form: <https://goo.gl/forms/6Rkj75dU7QGxBNDj2>
- Reimbursement for hotel stay, one per farm per experiment, for the Farmer-led Research Workshop in conjunction with the EFAO Conference, November 28, 2017 in Collingwood, Ontario. For experiments with data collection in 2018, the 2018 workshop is also included in our offer of lodgings/registration.

In addition to the compensation above, the EFAO will

- Help set up Research Protocol, write and post Protocol in the Research Library
- Monitor progress of project, including check-ins and help with troubleshooting
- Deliver or mail a Farmer-Researcher farm gate sign
- Conduct training program related to on-farm research
- Help analyze data, write and post a Research Report in the Research Library

Farmer-researcher will

- Maintain current membership in EFAO
- Establish and conduct experiment as outlined in Research Protocol above
- Record data outlined in Protocol and/or data collection sheet
- Take high quality photos throughout the project
- Keep in contact with EFAO with updates, problems and questions
- Turn in data in a digital format and 3-10 best photos by October 31, 2017
- Complete feedback surveys related to the program
- Provide upto 1 hour of mentoring, including reviewing related protocols in 2017 and/or 2018, and phone consultation with fellow farmer-researchers on related projects.

If possible, the farmer-researcher will

- Host a Field Day on their farm or participate in a “Field Day” webinar
- Attend and present at the Farmer-led Research Workshop November 28, 2017 in conjunction with the EFAO Conference in Collingwood, Ontario

Contact

Sarah Hargreaves, sarah@efao.ca

Heather Coffey, heather@efao.ca

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Ontario
Trillium Foundation



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