

One of the major problems I encountered was, the large quantity of weed that grew in the asparagus rows. It would be difficult to control these weeds mechanically with out damaging the asparagus. The use of buckwheat or rape planted directly on top of the asparagus was shown in this project to prevent this to some degree. Timely annual cultivation in late winter followed by an spring planting of rape that could smother out early emerging weeds without competing with the asparagus shoots. After harvest (April - May), This cover could be mowed and a buckwheat cover crop planted which would suppress weeds through the summer. In the fall a second mowing of the buckwheat followed by an appropriate winter hardy legume could finish the annual cover crop cycle.

Further investigation of the economic impact of these strategies could also be investigated. One initial goal of the project was to monitor shoot quality in relationship to cover crop type. Different cover crops may reduce insect damage or increase blanching of the stalks that may produce a better appearing thus more valuable product. These effects will need to be determined during the upcoming harvest season. The long term effects of cover crops could also be monitored. For example even though the two clover cover crops did not provide adequate weed suppression, added fixed nitrogen may result in long term benefits not yet observed. A perennial cover crop such as dutch white clover may turn out to be a more appropriate cover crop if and when it establishes a permanent "lawn" of mowable leguminous material that can be distributed to the asparagus rows.

#### **Continued use of this information**

I plan on applying this information in the future in an attempt to develop a less labor intensive way of managing weeds. I am most interested in developing a successive cover cropping strategy.

#### **Outreach**

On January 5, 2001 I presented the findings of this project at the MOFFA (Maryland Organic Food and Farming Association) annual winter meeting at the Maryland Department of Agriculture. It was attended by farmers, representatives from Maryland's state department of agriculture and county extension agents. I have also invited representatives of county extension to the project site.

**Michael Klein January 18,2001**