Planting Before Soybean Harvest
Piedmont Early Planting 2009 Test Report

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In North Carolina, the ideal dates for planting wheat herald the beginning of soybean and cotton harvest. Consequently, wheat planting is often delayed until cold wet weather has set in, and wheat development suffers. In the Piedmont[1] a new wheat no-till early planting system has been shown to work for beating soybean harvest.

How Does Early Piedmont Wheat Planting Work?

Early Piedmont wheat planting can take place from around September 28th through October 8th. To avoid barley yellow dwarf virus, aphid feeding, and Hessian fly the seed must be treated with Cruiser or Gaucho. To avoid excessive growth wheat is planted with 1/3rd less seed then normal. Normal seeding rates are around 1.4 million seeds per acre (or 32 seeds per square foot). For early planting this is reduced to 934,000 seeds per acre (or 21 seeds per square foot). Finally, to avoid late Spring freeze damage, only late-heading varieties can be used for early planting. This system has been tested with NC-Neuse and Roane (two late-heading wheat varieties) for six years in Salisbury NC, and been shown to work well.

2009 Piedmont Early Planting Variety Test

In 2008-2009, we tested 8 late-heading varieties recommended for early planting, and also 3 medium and 4 early varieties seeded on Sept. 29th (before soybean harvest) and on Nov. 17th (after soybean harvest). Early planting seeding rates and seed treatments were as described above. For the late planting the insecticidal seed treatment was not used, and seeding rates were increased to 42 seeds per square foot.

There was no hard Spring freeze in 2009, so all varieties yielded better when planted with the early system. The average early planted yield was 95.9 bu per acre compared to 81.3 bu per acre for late planting. In addition to yielding more, the early planting system had lower seed costs ($32 per acre) compared to $47 per acre for the late planted wheat[2].

Variety	Heading Date	Early Planted Yield (bu/a)	Late Planted Yield (bu/a)	Use For Early Planting?
P 26R12	late	106.1	93.1	Yes
SS 8302	late	102.6	84.5	Yes
USG 3665	late	102.4	83.2	Yes
DG V9713	late	99.5	79.1	Yes
P 26R15	late	99.0	80.6	Yes
Roane	late	93.5	78.4	Yes
NC Neuse	late	86.4	74.3	Yes
C 9436	late	85.5	68.8	Yes
SS 8308	medium	109.3	86.9	No
USG 3592	medium	102.0	87.6	No
DG Dominion	medium	97.0	86.3	No
SS 520	early	93.7	90.6	No
C 9553	med-early	92.6	91.2	No
USG 3209	med-early	85.2	68.4	No
Panola	med-early	84.3	66.4	No
Average		**95.9**	**81.3**	

[1] Early planting is currently not recommended for other regions of North Carolina.

[2] Assuming wheat seed cost $16 per bag, and insecticidal seed treatments cost $5 per bag.