Row Cover Weight Selection and Installation Checklist

Companion Reference Sheet for: Row Cover Fabric Weight: Choose 0.5 oz, 1.0 oz, or 1.5 oz for Frost and Pests
Save this PDF to your phone or print a copy for field reference. Planting dates vary by site and season. Check your local extension office for your area.

Key Takeaways

- **What weight should you choose?** Use 0.5 oz mainly as an insect barrier, 1.0 oz for a balance of light and modest frost buffering, and 1.5 oz or heavier when extra cold protection is the priority.
- **Does row cover weight tell you the mesh opening size?** No. Weight describes mass per area, while insect exclusion depends on the fabric openings and sealed edges.
- **Do row covers protect against frost?** They can buffer cold, but results change with wind, sky conditions, soil, cover placement, and how long the cold lasts.
- **How do you keep pests out?** Put the cover in place at planting, check for pests first, and anchor the entire perimeter.
- **When should you vent or remove a cover?** Check crops during warm, sunny weather and uncover insect-pollinated crops when they need access to flowers.
- For seasonal vegetable growing, match planting dates to local frost risk.

What row cover weight tells you

Fabric weight	Typical use	Light transmission	Frost versus insects	Handling
0.5 oz	Mainly insect barrier; also useful for light frost buffering.	90% to 95% for lightweight row cover.	Good light access and a physical pest barrier when openings and edges suit the target pest.	Light and easy to drape; anchor it carefully so wind cannot lift it.
1.0 oz	A common balance for cool nights, young crops, and modest frost buffering.	70% to 85% for the medium-weight category.	For medium-weight row cover, the reported frost protection is 4 to 6°F. Treat this as an approximate reference, not a promise for every site.	More substantial than lightweight fabric; hoops can help keep it clear of foliage.
1.5 oz and up	Colder conditions when additional frost buffering matters more than maximum light.	30% to 50% for heavyweight row cover.	Provides more frost buffering than lighter grades; insect exclusion still depends on openings and sealed edges.	Plan supports and anchoring, and check crops for heat when the sun comes out.

Match the weight to crops, growth stages, and pests

Check	What to do	Why it matters
Support	Add hoops where frost or crop growth could bring fabric into contact with leaves.	Clearance helps keep fabric off foliage during cold conditions.

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Anchored edges	Pin or bury the full perimeter and close gaps at the ends and around supports.	Open edges can let wind lift the cover or allow insects underneath.
Pest timing	Inspect plants, then cover at sowing or transplanting and seal the edges.	A barrier works best before pests reach the crop.
Forecast	Check the expected low, wind, cloud cover, and duration of the cold event.	These conditions affect how much frost buffering the cover provides.
Ventilation	Inspect under the fabric during warm, sunny weather and vent or remove it as needed.	Covered beds can heat up even when the air outside feels comfortable.
Removal	Uncover crops when flowers need pollinators or when the protection is no longer needed.	Plants need access to pollinators, light, and open air as they grow.

Field Checklist for choosing and using row cover

- ☐ ☐ Name the main job: exclude a pest, buffer a cool night, or protect against colder weather.
- ☐ ☐ Choose the lightest weight that suits the job and the crop's need for light.
- ☐ ☐ Compare labels in ounces per square yard, and judge mesh opening size separately for insect exclusion.
- ☐ ☐ Inspect plants for pests before installation, then cover at planting and seal all edges with soil or pins.
- ☐ ☐ Add hoops where frost could bring fabric into contact with foliage.
- ☐ ☐ Anchor fabric against wind without letting it rub on plants, and leave space for growth.
- ☐ ☐ Recheck the forecast and crop condition; vent or remove the cover during warm, sunny weather.
- ☐ ☐ Uncover flowering crops when pollination is needed.

For spring planting decisions, use the Spring Vegetable Planting Dates: Read Frost Windows Correctly guide to combine a local frost estimate with crop tolerance, soil temperature, and the near-term forecast.

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