

**Game crops in February** – bearing in mind February is one of the toughest months for farmland birds please don't flail off all of your game crops as even a narrow strip will provide some foraging area. THIS IS PARTICULARLY IMPORTANT FOR MISCANTHUS. You must leave the miscanthus 'canes' to completely senesce as the energy from the stems is transferred down to the rhizome. We suggest waiting until mid-March before flailing miscanthus and then spray off any weeds with glyphosate at the beginning of April. Also do not try and work the ground until it has dried out considerably or you will destroy the soil structure.



**Managing Floristic Margins** – whether in an agreement or not the cutting of floristic plots and margins can be done in February. If you weren't able to cut and remove the cuttings in the autumn, Feb and March are good months to flail as the stems of the plants are woody and shatter rather than forming a green mulch. Ensure soil conditions allow you to travel without cutting up the ground (heavy frost or a week of dry weather) and use a flail rather than rotary mower.

#### **Hedging and trees**

Unless it remains cold, February is usually the last month in which we are lifting hedging and trees and is therefore the last opportunity for you to get planting. Please contact us for a quote.

**ELS** – February is the last month for hedge and ditch bank cutting. It is also the last month, in which you are entitled to cut **Field corners (EF1)**, remembering you can only cut once in the five-year agreement period UNLESS you have **added wild flowers** to the field corner (**EE12**), in which case you can cut in March/April and again in August/September; **Wild bird seed mixes (EF2)** must NOT be cut down until 1<sup>st</sup> March; **Overwintered stubbles (EF6)** can be returned to the farm rotation from 15<sup>th</sup> February; **Unfertilised cereal headlands (EF9)** – broad leaf weed control can be carried out between Feb 1<sup>st</sup> and 31<sup>st</sup> March but ONLY with amidosulfuron. Grass weeds can be controlled anytime using only the products list in the handbook; **Unharvested cereal headlands (EF10)** – broad leaf weed control as per EF9 and the headland must be left uncut until 1<sup>st</sup> March; **Uncropped, cultivated areas for ground-nesting birds (EF13)** – rough cultivated area should be created between 1st Feb and 20<sup>th</sup> March.

**MID-TIER CS AB1 Nectar flower mix (AB1)** – if you cut your nectar flower plots; **Basic overwintered stubbles (AB2)** can be returned to the farm rotation from 15<sup>th</sup> February; **Nesting plots for lapwing and stone curlew (AB5)** - rough cultivated area must be created by 20<sup>th</sup> March; **Whole crop cereals (AB7)** – must retain stubble until 15<sup>th</sup> Feb. New crop to be established between Feb and April; **Unharvested cereal headlands (AB10)** – last year's crop can be destroyed from Feb 1<sup>st</sup> and new plots established between Feb and April; **Cultivated areas for arable plants (AB11)** – cultivate between Feb and April (or Sept – Nov).

**Supplementary Feeding (EF23/HF24 & AB12)** – continues through February.

UK Emergency Tree Plan Recently the Woodland Trust unveiled its own vision of how the UK can tackle its biodiversity dilemma and the global climate crisis. It correctly points out that trees won't save the planet on their own and that we mustn't take our eye off reducing emissions and decarbonising our economy long term. The WT is pushing for a 6% increase in UK woodland cover to hit net zero emissions by 2050. The individual targets, by country, to reach this goal means that England needs to go from 1,420ha per annum of new woodland creation (2018/19)

to 10,000ha per annum – that’s some increase! Read the full plan [here](#).

**Further mass tree planting for carbon storage aspirations:**

- The UK’s Committee on Climate Change (CCC) has suggested making major polluters pay for mass tree planting. Oil companies and airlines could fund 100 million trees a year explains [The Guardian](#).
- [Lloyds Bank](#) has announced a partnership with the Woodland Trust to plant 10 million trees over the next 10 years to expand the UK’s carbon sink.
- More large-scale tree plantings are being mooted, with proposals for [Kent County Council](#) to plant 1.5 million trees (one for every Kent resident), while [Edinburgh](#) could be a Million Tree City by 2030.

**Farming carbon** ‘How to make money from new woodland’ is the title of an article in [Farmers Weekly](#) that explains the workings of the [Woodland Carbon Guarantee](#) scheme, which is backed by the Government. The already existing **Woodland Carbon Code** facilitates the trading of carbon credits from newly planted woodlands to corporate buyers who are looking to offset the emissions they generate. The first auction was due to close on 31 January; but this has been extended out to February 14<sup>th</sup>.

**Oakbank Guidance to The Woodland Carbon Code and Woodland Carbon Guarantee** – is available on our website under Latest News

**Government Funded Ash Archive** Three thousand ash trees have recently been planted in Hampshire as part of a pioneering project to tackle ash dieback. The UK’s first ‘ash archive’ has been established using £1.9 million of government funding. Over time, it hopes to spawn a breeding programme of tolerant ash and enable the development of orchards producing commercially available seed. A [Defra blog post](#) explains further. **Controlling Grey Squirrels in Forests and Woodlands in the UK** - Forest Research have recently published a technical note, download [the PDF here](#)



**Big Farmland Bird Count**

A reminder that the BFBC is 7-16th Feb

<https://www.bfbc.org.uk/>



**National Nest Box Week**

Is also approaching, 14-21 February

<https://www.nestboxweek.com/>

*If you would like to learn more about the implications for your land/farm/shoot then we are thinking about running a couple of workshops in the spring. If you would be interested in attending such a workshop, at Ellington, please let us know ([info@oakbankgc.co.uk](mailto:info@oakbankgc.co.uk)). Once we have an idea of interest we will contact you with dates.*

**2020 Magazine and Product Guide** – we will be sending out our 2020 magazine later this month. If you have changed your mailing address or would like a copy for someone else, please let us know asap.