

Oakbank E-News February 2021

MID-TIER CS AB1 Nectar flower mix (AB1)

If you haven't done so already you have until 30th March to cut your nectar flower plot

Basic overwintered stubbles (AB2)

Can be returned to the farm rotation from 15th Februar

Nesting plots for lapwing and stone curlew (AB5)

Rough cultivated area must be created by 20th March

Whole crop cereals (AB7)

Must retain stubble until 15th Feb. New crop to be established between Feb and Apri

Unharvested cereal headlands (AB10)

Last year's crop can be destroyed from Feb 1st 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

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.



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.

Farmers growing beans needed for new pollination & yield study

The Farmland Ecology Unit at the Game & Wildlife Conservation Trust (GWCT) is looking for field sites for an EU-funded project BEESPOKE. The project aims to improve levels of crop pollination by increasing the area of flower-rich habitats used by pollinators within farmland.

GWCT are specifically looking at factors affecting pollination of field beans; to determine how much flower-rich habitat is needed per farm, to increase levels of pollinators and thereby bean pollination and yield.

What is required from the farmer?

- 1) Access to a field(s) of either winter or spring sown field beans to measure pollination and yield.
- 2) Access to the surrounding fields within a 1 km radius to assess the extent of flowering habitats and pollinator abundance. The 1 km area doesn't all have to be on one farm, if the neighbouring farms are agreeable.

After the project, GWCT will be able to provide information on how well the bean crop is pollinated and the potential impact of flower habitats on bean yield and quality. The Trust also aims to run workshops on how to measure pollination and assess pollinator levels.

If you are interested in participating, then please get in touch with Lucy Capstick (lcapstick@gwct.org.uk or 07708476234). It would be helpful if you could provide a copy of the farm cropping map

Delighted to announce our next Webinar with the excellent Dr Christine Jones, who will be speaking about Biological Pathways to Carbon-Rich Soils Tuesday 9th February @ 7.30pm Pre-registration is essential for this webinar and the sign up page is here:

https://us02web.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_HSyumQFLTPSpG_Z-6ZSMBA



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.

The business of net-zero

This podcast by the CLA, focuses on how the UK's potential for tree planting makes us uniquely placed to deploy these natural climate solutions and tells us how we can increase tree planting, how additional trees can help us reach net zero and the tools landowners need to encourage further woodland creation. Please contact us for further guidance on new woodland creation and maximising production, income and carbon sequestration.

Biodegradable tree shelters?

A New 'biodegradable' tree shelter is being launched. They look impressive, hopefully they will be more successful than previous attempts!

<https://www.forestryjournal.co.uk/news/equipment/19046944.new-biodegradable-tree-shelter-green-tech-alternative-plastic/>

We are about to trial another new wool-based, fully biodegradable tree tube, and we look forward to seeing how they perform over the next few years, we will keep you informed of progress.

Putting a value on natural capital

The term 'Natural capital' is commonly heard nowadays, and it is the stock of natural resources, including plants, soils, air, water and greenspace, which all combine to provide benefits to humans, animals and associated habitats. But what is it all worth in monetary terms ££? A recent study by Scottish Forestry has provided quantitative evidence of the natural capital benefits of planting new woodlands. See the report [Here](#).

Finally the grey squirrel issue is being addressed.

- **The estimated cost of grey squirrel damage to English and Welsh forests** - A new report by some of the largest forestry organisations in England and Wales estimates that grey squirrels will cost the sector through loss in damaged timber, lost carbon revenue and tree replacements, at least £1.1 billion over the next 40 years. The report, [*Analysis of the Costs of Grey Squirrel Damage*](#) was commissioned by **the RFS** in partnership with the Forestry Commission (FC), National Resources Wales, the National Forest Company and the Woodland Trust.
- **Grey squirrel birth control.** The UK government has given its support to a project to use oral contraceptives to control grey squirrel populations, [*reports the BBC*](#). Could hazel nut spread (spiked with an oral contraceptive) be the beginning of the end for the grey squirrel!

Big Farmland Bird Count – a reminder that the BFBC is 5th-14th Feb

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

2021 Magazine and Product Guide – we will be sending out our 2021 magazine later this month. If you have changed your mailing address or would like a copy for someone else, please let us know asap.