

Oakbank E-News March 2021

ELS MARCH – NO MORE HEDGE OR DITCH BANK CUTTING. You may still cut 6m grass buffer strips but ONLY if they contain some flowers. **Wild bird seed mixes (EF2)** can now be flailed off and the ground cultivated.

Unfertilised cereal headlands (EF9) – broad leaf weed control can be carried out until 31st March but ONLY with amidosulfuron. Grass weeds can be controlled anytime using only the products list in the handbook.

Unharvested cereal headlands (EF10) – can now be cut down and returned to the rotation. **Uncropped, cultivated areas for ground-nesting birds (EF13)** – rough cultivated area should be created by 20th March. **Low input grassland (EK2 and EK3)** – 31st March last opportunity to cut, harrow or roll before the summer.

Supplementary Feeding (EF23) – you must keep feeding until 31st March



AB8 Floristic Margin

MID-TIER CS MARCH – NO MORE HEDGE OR DITCH BANK CUTTING. **Nectar flower mix (AB1)** – if you haven't done so already then these must be cut down before 30th March (and ideally cuttings removed or shredded).

Nesting plots for lapwing and stone curlew (AB5) – plot must be cultivated by 20th March. **Flower-rich margins and plots (AB8)** - If plant growth is more than 15cm in height before 31 March, cut it (and remove if dense) to achieve a plant height of between 5cm and 10cm. **Supplementary winter feeding for farmland birds (AB12)** – you must keep feeding until 30th April

Countryside Stewardship – key dates:

Request wildlife offer application packs by **28th May**

Application deadline for Mid-Tier and Wildlife Offers **30th July**

The capital-only grant schemes will look a bit different this year. There will be capital-only grants for hedges and boundaries, for water items, and for air quality. Each topic will have a maximum grant of £20k, and a total agreement cap of £60k.

Requests for CSFO endorsement for capital only applications must be made by **19th March** (There will be a simple form to submit.)

Application deadline for capital-only applications **30th April**

Requests for CSFO endorsement for MT applications must be made by **18th June**

If you want any assistance with your application, please contact the office asap as we have a limited number of agreements that we can handle. If you want to have a look at the options available under CS try this link <https://www.gov.uk/countryside-stewardship-grants>

Spring Newsletter – if you haven't received your 2021 Oakbank Magazine (complete with Product Guide) or would like additional copies to give to your friends/colleagues, please let us know!

Perennial Crops – check all of your perennial crops this month to see whether they need any inputs/management. If you are not sure what you are looking for please check with us before doing anything drastic! Miscanthus can now be flailed off ready for a glyphosate spray (if necessary) in early April. We will be lifting miscanthus rhizomes later this month and putting them into cold store. If you are thinking of planting any miscanthus this season, then please get your order in asap. Planting time is not until mid-late April but lifting will have been finished by then so we won't be able to lift to order.

Regenerative Agriculture

It has been a busy month for the Oakbank team, fielding calls and emails about diverse seed mixes for Cover and Companion Crops, plus the important Countryside Stewardship options AB15 (2 year Sown Legume Fallow) and GS4 (Legume and Herb Rich Sward). The excellent webinar with Dr Christine Jones on “Biological Pathways to Carbon Rich Soil” obviously struck a chord with all those that watched it. If you missed it then go to our website to catch the recording - <https://www.oakbankgc.co.uk/biological-pathways-to-carbon-rich-soils-webinar-with-dr-christine-jones/>

Our next webinar will be with Nicole Masters, author of “For the love of soil” which we highly recommend you read if you have an interest in Soil Health. Nicole is world renowned for her expertise and she will be discussing how to “Transition from a high input system, to a lower risk, lower input but profitable system”. The webinar is being held next Tuesday 9th March at 7.30pm. Pre-registration is essential and can be found here - <https://www.oakbankgc.co.uk/transistion-from-high-inputs-to-a-lower-risk-lower-input-profitable-system-with-nicole-masters/>

If you are interested in discussing Cover and Companion Crop options for the summer, please get in touch with Ian. The results we had with our Summer Fallow mixes in 2020 were remarkable and we learned a great deal in the process. The multi species mixes provided some great benefits above and below ground, if only they could change the October weather too!!



Woodland

Agroforestry Study

Agroforestry is recognized by researchers as contributing to a range of public goods such as carbon sequestration, increased biodiversity, water quality and flood mitigation. Farmers and researchers are teaming up for a farmer-led study into the pros and cons of agroforestry in the UK. The 12-year project will test whether the practice is a viable way to address the climate crises while maintaining productive farmland. See FarmingUK [Link](#) here.

Hedges and 'super-plants' absorbing roadside air pollution Scientists at the Royal Horticultural Society studied the effectiveness of hedges at soaking up air pollution, comparing different types of woody species shrubs, including cotoneaster, hawthorn, and western red cedar. They concluded that in just seven days a 1-metre length of well-managed, dense hedge will mop up the same amount of pollution that a car emits over a 500-mile drive. [Read article here.](#)