

Stewardship News

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.



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) and any grazing livestock must be removed by 15th March. **Nesting plots for lapwing and stone curlew (AB5)** – plot must be cultivated by 20th March. **Flower-rich margins and plots (AB8)** – if grasses are threatening to smother the flower species then you can cut before April. **Supplementary winter feeding for farmland birds (AB12)** – you must keep feeding until 30th April

RURAL PAYMENTS AGENCY PERMISSIONS: Please be aware that the RPA has introduced a new annual check that landowners have to undertake to ensure their agent permissions are correct. You have to log in to the RPA site to check and confirm. If landowners don't do this, then existing agent permissions will not work which will further slow down CS applications!

Spring Newsletter – if you haven't received your 2022 Oakbank Magazine 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

Oakbank is pleased to announce that it has now taken on the agency for SMART Radish and BOSTON Plantain in the UK from the NZ breeder, Norwest Seeds.

Smart Radish is a unique type of fodder radish that has been bred specifically for forage and soil health. It produces significantly more palatable forage in the same time period as alternative radishes and would make a very good substitute for other brassica crops in a slightly later sowing slot. The root is similar to the “tillage radish” varieties that you may have seen, with two distinct improvements. Firstly, as well as the large, penetrating tap root common to tillage radish types, Smart radish also has side laterals that explore the soil around the root and anchor the plant. This leads to a second advantage, which is that the root is pulled down, rather than exposing a significant proportion above the soil. Oakbank, together with our seed partners, will be conducting further investigations into how to get the best from this excellent variety.

Boston Plantain was developed in New Zealand as a forage crop and has been shown to be much higher yielding than the more popular varieties in the UK. This is largely because it is much later to flower, meaning that it remains leafier for 25-28 days longer, producing excellent forage even when drought causes stress in other species. Oakbank’s work with GS4 legume fallow crops has shown that focusing on productivity, rather than just claiming the CS payment, is still a key driver of economic output. For more details about either of these seed varieties, please contact Ian Gould at the office.



Woodland & Trees

‘Regenerative forestry’

A Soil Association report promotes the planting of more diverse forests in the UK, a practice which is increasingly being implemented when dealing with ash rich woodlands. See here [The Mail online](#) article.

UK Deer survey

Periodically the British Deer Society & the Mammal Society updates the distribution maps of Deer in the UK, based on data supplied by landowners and land management organizations. This survey is a ‘citizen science’ project, meaning everyone is welcome to take part. Here’s how to [get involved](#).

Blooming early

Trees in the UK are coming into flower some 2 to 4 weeks earlier in response to an ever-warming climate. This can cause mismatches with insects and birds that depend on certain pollinating flowers and trees. Read [The Guardian](#) article here.