

Sowing & Growing: Brown Mustard



Brown mustard (*brassica juncea*) is a quick growing annual brassica. It has recently become more popular due to its ability to suppress certain soil borne nematodes in high value cash crops like potatoes and sugar beet.

As a winter hardy mustard, it has shown a useful ability to break up soils that suffer from capping on or compaction just below the surface. Also the potential to reduce soil borne pests through bio-fumigation, due to its high glucosinolate content.

When to Sow: Sow from spring until early autumn.

Sowing Rate: 0.5g/m² - 2 kg per acre - 5 kg per ha

Preparation: The most successful results come from sowing into a newly prepared seedbed. Aim to cultivate the top soil to about 5cm, with a light cultivator or discs. The finished seedbed should be fine but firm, with no clods. Several passes with a cultivator may be needed to achieve this.

Sowing: The seed of mustard is very small and should be shallow sown at no more than a few mm or surface broadcast. Pure stands may become open later in the winter.

Management: It is not usual practice to top mustard, except immediately prior to incorporation. Cutting the plant during or just after flowering will normally terminate it.

If sown in spring, flea beetles can hamper the establishment, although most crops will grow through this, due to the speed of early establishment. As with all brassicas, pigeons can cause devastation at any stage. It is important to bear in mind that mustard is both susceptible and a host to club root, so thought should be given to the rotation if other brassicas like OSR or Sugar Beet are grown.

If planting for biofumigation, a specific incorporation plan is needed. In its most basic form, brown mustard should be mulched and incorporated at the same time when the crop is green and leafy. After incorporation the soil should be pressed or rolled to seal it, enhancing the effect as much as possible on the soil borne nematodes.