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# Sowing & Growing: Buckwheat



Buckwheat *(fagopyrum esculentum)* is a short term, aggressive weed suppressor. It is good at scavenging for phosphate in the soil, breaking it down and then making it available to subsequent crops after incorporation.

With its quick growth this can establish from sowing in 8 - 10 weeks, helping it to fit into lots of areas within the planting rotation.

Buckwheat is one of the quickest growing, soil improving species meaning it can be used to fill in narrow gaps within the rotation, producing dense green cover quickly.

Although there is still work to understand buckwheat's affinity with phosphate, current understanding is that the area around the plant root zone is slightly acidic helping it break down 'locked up' phosphate, especially in alkaline soils. This makes it more available to other crops.

The flowers are white/pink in colour in branched clusters. The roots are shallow but with a dense cluster of lateral side roots. Buckwheat flowers are very attractive to bees and other pollinators.

**When to Sow:** Sow from late April when there is lowest risk of frost.

**Sowing Rate:** 7 g/m2 - 20 kg per acre - 50 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:** Should be shallow drilled at about 10-15 mm. The soil should be rolled after sowing to increase seed to soil contact.

**Management:** Flailing buckwheat will normally kill it off, however frost kill is also a useful tool to terminate buckwheat.

Be aware that grazing livestock (especially pigs) on dense strands of buckwheat can cause issues with skin hypersensitivity known as fagopyrism.

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