Cotswold Seeds Ltd
The Cotswold Business Village
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Arable Innovator of the Year Award

Congratulations to our valued customer Jonathan Boaz who has won the prestigious Arable Innovator of the Year Award, for his use of green manures and composting to improve soil organic matter on his Worcestershire farm. The awards are organised by British Media Agriculture, owners of the Farmers Guardian and seeks to 'highlight determination and tenacity of British farmers in ever-changing and challenging conditions and climates', and to 'reward those who are taking positive steps to achieve a bigger and better business through innovation, determination, grit and foresight.'

The soil organic matter levels on Jonathan's farm now range from 5.5-9.5 per cent, which have been attributed partly to the inclusion of four-year grass ley within his arable rotation, as well as to the use of green manures.

Jonathan praises the grass leys and green manures for 'playing an important part in keeping organic matter levels high'.

'Some people complain about the expense of green manures but I'd not use them if they were not cost effective,' says Jonathan. 'I'm all in favour of ten ton per hectare crops but you can't expect the soil to keep on producing that sort of yield if you don't put something back into it.'

The Cotswold Seeds mixes he has used include:

- Longer Term Red Clover Ley - a high protein silage and hay mix
- Early Bite (with red clover added) - a self-sufficient sheep and hay ley which provides high protein grazing with little or no nitrogen fertiliser.
- Summer Quick Fix green manure - Jonathan uses a bespoke version of this, removing the mustard and replacing with Westerwold Ryegrass, which he has found to be 'very successful.'

Jonathan also advocates the use of grass leys to control black grass and other weeds.

'The cheapest tool to combat black grass is a sheep,' he says. 'Grow a grass ley for the sheep to graze and build up the organic matter that way, and the black grass is gone.'

Jonathan was commended by the judges of the Arable Innovator of the Year Award for his experimentation with using compost, made with the green forage, together with home-made woodchip, farmyard manure, and straw. He now produces large quantities of compost on-farm and has also built his own compost tea brewer to produce a form of liquid compost which contains higher levels of beneficial fungi and micro-organisms.

'By introducing innovative strategies to boost soil and crop health, Jonathan has increased the sustainability of his business,' said the judges.

"I feel totally overwhelmed, it's one of the highlights of my farming career," said Jonathan when he found out he had won the award.

He stresses the need to 'understand your own soil' so that you can choose the best mixtures and methods. Jonathan farms 600 acres including 150 acres of permanent pasture, much of which is on difficult lias clay, plus 130 acres of cereals.

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