

Short term Root Crops are still on the Menu



After the time has passed for the longer term root crops which are great for providing forage or finishing animals in late winter (kale, maincrop turnip and swede, which takes 20 weeks to mature from sowing to grazing), there's still plenty of time to sow the shorter term species to provide forage from autumn to midwinter. These include the old favourite stubble turnips, forage rape and the more recent addition of Redstart (a hybrid of forage rape and kale).

Why use short term root crops?

These crops typically take 10 to 12 weeks to mature from sowing, which makes them flexible to slot into the rotation. They're an economic forage, sown at low rates, but still providing bulky yields.

What are they good for?

- As a break crop for arable rotations, encouraging the return of manure to hungry arable land.
- As a break crop between grass reseeds to reduce pests and disease, which is particularly important with the withdrawal of key insecticides.
- Clean grazing
- A high protein crop, ideal for fattening and finishing animals.

Which species is best?

Stubble Turnips

Protein Content – 17%

Growth Period – 10-12 weeks

Yield Potential – 4.5t DM/ha

Quick growing and reliable. Some drop the seed rate to increase the size of bulb growth.

Forage Rape

Protein Content – 19%

Growth Period – 12 weeks

Yield Potential – 4.5t DM/ha

Protein rich (higher than stubble turnip)

Leafy growth may not hold stock as long as stubble turnip.

'Redstart' Hybrid Rape/Kale

Protein Content – 18-20%

Growth Period – 12 weeks

Yield Potential – 6-8t DM/ha

Better winter hardiness than stubble turnips or forage rape, so may fill the requirement for an autumn sown crop for utilisation after Christmas. Can offer regrowth with correct management.

‘Early Fold’ Root Mixture

We also have a very popular long standing mixture, combining stubble turnips and forage rape called the ‘Early Fold Root Mixture’. The mixture is less reliant on a single species, as well as providing a high protein leaf from the forage rape and a bulb to hold stock provided by the stubble turnip.

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