Cotswold Seeds Ltd
The Cotswold Business Village
Moreton in Marsh,
Gloucestershire GL56 0JQ

Root Crops: Sowing & Growing

Suitable soils and optimum pH

These crops will grow on most soil types provided they are well-textured and can give a fine tilth when cultivated. However, it is important to sow on well-drained, dry ground for winter grazing. Optimum pH 6.2.

When to sow

Fast growing root crops can be sown anytime from spring through till early autumn providing soil moisture is sufficient, these include forage rape, stubble turnips and hybrid rape/kale species. They can be ready in as little as 10-12 weeks from sowing.

The slower growing crops such as the Hardy Root Mix, maincrop turnip, swede, fodder beet and kale should be sown by late spring (April – June) because they need a wide twenty week growing window (5 moths) before utilisation, however they are very winter hardy for late season grazing.

How to sow

Root crops (except fodder beet) can be direct drilled with a Moore Uni-Drill (or similar). If a root crop is to follow a grass ley, glyphosate can be applied to the grass prior to mowing. Once the grass is removed, seed can be direct drilled into its stubble and can establish quickly unhindered by weeds. A good dose of slurry or FYM should be applied before sowing if possible.

Alternatively a seedbed can be prepared with the seed shallow drilled or broadcast and rolled. Provided moisture is available, quick growing forage brassicas can be broadcast 3 weeks before harvest into standing cereals.

Management

Electric fencing allows the crop to be fed at a controlled rate and should be long enough to give all stock access to the crop face. By doing this there is also less wastage through trampling. Ideally, a grass ‘runback’ should be provided for animals to lie on.

Nutrient requirements

These crops need 70kg N, 50kg P and 50kg K per hectare.

All species are susceptible to flea beetle especially the slower growing species like Kale, flea beetle activity should be monitored during seedling emergence and cotyledon stage.

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