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Sowing & Growing: Cotswold Game Kale Blend

Kale can provide a very useful, winter hardy game cover for 2 years. The broken canopy and strong kale stems can provide leafy cover and space for game birds to move through the crop.

When to Sow: Between April and June , due to its slow establishment, kale is not suitable for autumn plantings.

Sowing Rate: When drilled sow at 2 kg per acre. (Rates may be increased if broadcasting the seed).

Ground Preparation: Root crops such as kale can either be broadcast or shallow drilled.

When sowing into bare soil, aim for a firm, fine and level seedbed. This can be achieved by ploughing or cultivating and working down to a fine tilth, the ground should then be rolled to achieve a firm finish. Rolling twice after sowing will help lock in maximum moisture.

Sow in wide rows to give game birds easier access to move through the crop.

Kale, like other root crops is hungry for fertiliser. A good dose of FYM before sowing can benefit this brassica crop.

Nutrient Requirements: A fast establishment is essential for kale, it should receive 70kgs Nitrogen, 50kgs of Phosphate and 50kgs of Potash.

Pests: Cabbage Stem Flea Beetle can be a major brassica pest. Kale is unfortunately vulnerable to attack from early germination to the 3-4 leaf stage, due to its slow early establishment. It is important to keep a close eye on the kale crop in the early stages. Several post-emergence insecticide sprays may be needed to control the flea beetle. (Seed treated with an insecticide treatment is no longer available).

The appearance of small pin prick-like holes on the young kale leaf (known as shotholing) are classic signs of flea beetle attack.

Slugs can also be a problem especially when the crop is direct drilled. Slug pellets may need to be applied if slugs are evident after monitoring.

Rabbits and pigeons are also known to attack kale crops so measures may be needed to bring these under control.

Disease: Clubroot disease can occur when growing kale and other brassica crops, especially on heavier, more acidic soils.

A break between sowing brassicas of 4 years will help alleviate this issue, there are also kale varieties available that show good resistance to clubroot, such as the variety Caledonian.

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