



RE:SEED

Your Seasonal Newsletter

Spring 2024

Conditions for autumn reseed were far from optimal last year with many farmers abandoning plans altogether. A move to spring reseed seems inevitable, but with two dry springs in recent memory, some may feel apprehensive. We can't control the weather but we can take steps to minimise risks associated with spring drilling.

The principles of a successful reseed are quite straight forward. Drill high quality seed (you can be assured of that with Powys Leys), at the correct depth into well structured, moist soil with adequate nutrition. Simple, right? Perhaps not in reality, but we can certainly get some of the basics right without too much trouble.

Assess the chosen site for potential issues which may include one or more of the following:

- Soil structure using the "VESS (visual evaluation of soil structure)" method.
- pH, P, K, Mg (basic soil analysis)
- Soil pests. A discussion about field history may reveal some potential threats and a follow-up inspection could be useful.
- Weeds. It can be hard to identify all species which may appear in a spring reseed, but field history may help identify some common perennial weeds that have been an issue in the past.
- Problems with flooding and/or burning.

Most of these can be rectified easily if we know in plenty of time what we are dealing with. For example, a field may require subsoiling to break up deep compaction over well-travelled areas. A soil analysis may reveal low indices which could be rectified with applications of organic manures already on farm before resorting to expensive post emergence solutions. Soil pests are difficult to control with the loss of key chemical actives, but a well-planned break crop, such as stubble turnips, rape, kale or swedes, will help reduce numbers of wireworm, leather jacket and chafer grub. If troublesome perennial weeds such as docks, thistles and nettles are known to be present from field history, mixture selection and agronomy can be tailored to suit.

Moisture conservation is key in spring and rolling is essential for most direct drilled and ploughed ground to retain precious water supplies for germination and establishment. Drilling depth is also paramount to successful establishment. Too shallow and the seeds will be in danger of reduced moisture and poor rooting, too deep and the crop may fail altogether. It is important to know what species you are planting to establish a correct drilling depth. For example, ryegrass can establish successfully at 20mm whereas white clover will struggle much below 10mm. Often a compromise is needed to satisfy all criteria.

If drilling, try and avoid creating rows. Sow at half rate in two directions, ideally at diagonals to each other to create a "diamond" shape. This will give better ground cover and fill much quicker helping to produce a thick, competitive sward.

At Powys Leys, we not only offer the highest standard of seed quality, we can also advise and support you through the entire process with BASIS and FACTS qualified advice and a range of plant protection and nutrition products available in store.



PRODUCT NEWS...



Get your crops off to a flying start with Umostart. A microgranular fertiliser for precision placement, providing nutrient exactly where it is needed, at establishment. The micro granules provide extremely high interface with the seed and facilitate rapid nutrient uptake. Zinc regulates plant growth and root development, and humates encourage vigorous early growth and proliferation of fine roots. Compared with DAP, Umostart allows for much lower rates and more targeted nutrition, ideal for maize ground where large amounts of organic manures are utilised and NVZ's restrict N usage. Why keep paying for nutrient loss?



AMAZING POTENTIAL...

Maize has certainly been gaining traction as a viable spring crop for many systems, and despite apprehension about ground conditions at harvest, can be a useful break crop. There are some good options available for less favourable sites including extra early varieties which can slot into an arable rotation without too much risk. Locally, the end market is buoyant for both dairy and AD and with many farmers looking to spring cropping after the wash out autumn, maize could be a sensible option.

For anyone not familiar with the crop it may seem a daunting prospect, but it can be a profitable and rewarding crop to grow. Maize is all about establishment and attention to detail early on, starting with field choice. Ideally choose a south facing field at lower altitude with a medium-textured, well-structured soil. Check for any compaction issues and avoid growing on heavy, wet lying soils.

A pH of 6.5 is good and anything below 6 must be addressed. Phosphate requirement is placed in the seed bed to encourage rapid early growth using a precision P fertiliser such as Umostart. Potash is most often supplied from incorporated organic manure which will also supply some of the nitrogen. Top dressing with N after emergence will address the balance.

Maize does not compete well during establishment, so the use of pre & post emergence herbicides is essential to achieve profitable yield and offers an opportunity for foliar nutrient top-up as required. Most of the inputs are front loaded and growers do not tend to apply any inputs after the 8-leaf stage, closing the gate once the crop has established successfully.

Yields >18t/acre can be easily achieved from even the earliest varieties with starch around 37%.

TREADING THE TRAMLINES...

After one of the wettest autumns in memory, we are all looking forward to spring and some better weather. Un-planted and failed winter crops pushed demand on the spring cereal market and for those who secured seed, early establishment will be key to high yields. Our fingers will be crossed for some drier spells.

NUTRITION

It stands to reason that a lot of soil nutrient will have been lost over winter at higher levels than normal. Autumn sown crops will benefit from front loading N due to low soil nitrogen supply. Nitrate and sulphate are easily leached, so an early application of 40-60kg N/ha for winter wheat will not be out of the question this year. The inclusion of sulphur will undoubtedly help with nitrogen use efficiency and offer a good ROI.

SPRING FORWARD

For spring sown crops, ensuring rapid growth early on is key to high yields, and good root development will ensure the plant thrives through drier spells later in the season. Phosphate is an essential nutrient for root development, and utilising soil analysis data we can tailor fertiliser plans to provide enough nutrient in the seed bed to facilitate growth. Foliar top-ups are a great way to boost plant performance, but do not rely on them to make up for low soil indices. It is wise to be ahead of the game when it comes to the basics of soil nutrition (pH, P & K) and allow time to address any issues and create a suitable fertiliser plan.



COMPANY NEWS...



This winter we made some essential changes to our store, including a new chemical storage area, moving our main office (now located to the rear of the warehouse) and a new customer sales office. This has opened more space in our main warehouse allowing us to carry a wider range of products as well as keeping more of our mixtures in stock ready to go. Please feel free to come in and take a look.

We are now able to offer FACTS qualified fertiliser advice and look forward to expanding our crop nutrition advisory services in the near future.

In January, Will was invited to speak at the Upper Severn Grassland Society, this was focused on grassland: weeds, pests, and diseases. Looking at the best management and preventatives for the most common problems in grassland. A good turn out and an enjoyable night.

Again, this year we are looking forward to our local agricultural shows. A great opportunity to come chat to us about any reseeding plans, enjoy a refreshment and pick up one of our new 2024 seed catalogues. You will also see us in Welshpool Livestock Sales in the coming weeks, another opportunity to grab a catalogue.

