

J & A Growers Ltd

Nursery Blog – June 2020

Welcome to the thirteenth edition of our Nursery Blog.

Well, there have been several challenges which have hit the industry over the past few months.....

Through the winter 2019/20 there was extreme rainfall which made tree harvesting very difficult for both machinery and staff. With no dry weather in the forecast ahead, it was a matter of just plodding on best you can. Fields and tracks began churning up and tractors started to sink in the fields. We eventually reached the end of lifting and grading in mid-March and who would have believed that a virus could then bring the whole world to a grinding halt. This did affect planting and end of season trade, especially in Scotland where restrictions were more severe than in England, but the timing could have been much worse for our side of the industry. Bedding plant producers and those who rely on spring trading were hit very hard and get our sincere sympathy. Hopefully they can make the books balance through the coming year.

We quickly had to adapt our business to deal with the pandemic, creating a safe working environment for staff and learning how to deal with once routine things such as collections and deliveries. Our grading team had literally just finished for the season, so headed back to Romania where they were quarantined for two weeks on arrival. Thankfully we have a small team of five full-time staff and were able to distance and carry on with dispatches and getting land ready for the next crops. This included sterilising with Basamid which should have been done in the autumn, but it was too wet then. The rain had stopped and next it turned unseasonably warm and dry. The fields became baked on the surface and like porridge beneath, so not the easiest land prep we have ever done.

As growers, it is in our nature to grumble about the weather, the one thing we have no control over. It is just part of the job, accepting what it brings, not fighting it and trying to work with it best we can. The difficulty is the extremes that we are seeing these days. Here are some of the headlines from this spring:

‘The wettest February since records began’

‘March – May 2020, the sunniest spring on record’

‘The driest May for 124 years’

It was just the other day that we received a letter from the Environment Agency forewarning that flow rates on the river Avon were nearing the critical level and if they continue to fall then restrictions will be enforced. You would not have believed this was even a possibility back in March. Thankfully, we have recorded 60mm of rain already this week and the flow rates are climbing by the day. It is a recurring worry that at some point in the future we may get stopped from abstracting, heavy rain just at the right time has saved us twice now. We have recently had planning permission granted to build a reservoir which we intend to create in 2021.



Abandoned crops – unable to be harvested



New fields at J & A Growers

Summer Events

Plant Healthy webinar (25th June)

This webinar examines the new Plant Healthy Scheme which aims to help people and businesses grow and supply healthy plants and to manage the threat posed by pests and diseases. To book a place and for instructions on how to join, contact soniaroberts@smallwoods.org.uk