

J & A Growers Ltd

Nursery Blog – May 2018

Welcome to a tenth edition of our Nursery Blog.

Another 15mm of rain on already wet ground and this has halted seed sowing yet again. Not a great spring so far, but will try not to grumble and remain positive through this blog, so please read on.

Writing this a month earlier than normal, the season is still in full flow for many of the northern nurseries who have full cold stores, but thankfully this stock is demanded. There has been a lot of lost planting time in the hills with regular dumping of snow and sub-zero temperatures. Despite this, demand for planting stock has been strong especially in Scotland, where the Scottish Government is pushing to hit their targets to plant 10,000ha of new woodland each year up to 2021. This allocation has already been filled for the 2018-19 planting season and nurseries are becoming more confident as they can see new plantings are actually happening.

Demand in England seems to have been as good as could be expected, it was encouraging to see the planting commencing at Doddington in Northumberland where 600,000 trees will be planted. This is the largest new planting scheme in England for more than 25 years. There has been the announcement of the new 'Northern Forest' which plans to plant 50 million trees over the next 25 years. The government has also released the 'Environmental Plan' stating the following to help achieve its' goals:- *Increasing woodland in England in line with our aspiration of 12% cover by 2060: this would involve planting 180,000 hectares by end of 2042.* Increasing the woodland area of the UK and with a thought for productive timber is all positive news. Pressure is still needed for this to become reality rather than an aspiration.

There has been a good demand for hedging through the new Countryside Stewardship scheme in England. Hopefully this will build over time and our markets will become more stable as we move away from the European Basic Payment Scheme (BPS) to new environmental payments.

On the Nursery

The winter harvest got off to a good start and we had nice dry conditions through to Christmas. There were a lot more frosty nights than we have experienced for many years, but they usually thawed by mid morning and allowed us to keep lifting. It did turn wet at the start of the year, but we managed to keep moving when we could and got everything into store by the usual time.

There were good early orders for planting stock prior to the winter, then strong demand through the season in spite of the winter conditions. UK grown stock continues to be demanded for many schemes in attempts to reduce pest and disease threats from imports.

Sales for lining-out stock were typically a month later to be dispatched than normal as nurseries across the UK have struggled to prepare the saturated land. This is also true for seed sowing which we started on 18th April but hasn't progressed much since. It is comforting to hear that most nurseries are in the same boat and many haven't yet sowed a seed. To be fair, apart from a few balmy days in mid April, temperatures have been low and seedlings would have been very unhappy emerging in the wet and cold. We just hope conditions improve from now.



Land preparation

Early Summer Events

Confor NPG AGM (12th June)

The Nursery Producers Group will be meeting at FERA in York for the annual AGM and a plant health focused meeting with Nicola Spence as a guest speaker. It is vital that we all work together within the industry to try and improve biosecurity and reduce the risk of importing diseases such as Xylella.

HTA Tree & Hedging group AGM (26th & 27th June)

The AGM this summer will be hosted by Hillier Nurseries in Hampshire and during the two days, there will be a tour of the Sir Harold Hilliers Gardens and around Hillier Trees which I am sure will both be fascinating.

Nursery Machinery web site www.nurserymachines.com

Have you got any unwanted nursery machinery which is surplus to requirements? Remember it is still currently FREE to list any items you would like to sell. If you haven't already registered for automatic notification when new equipment is entered, then please visit the site and subscribe now.