

J & A Growers Ltd

Nursery Blog – September 2019

Welcome to the twelfth edition of our Nursery Blog.

It has been a pretty dry summer here, but we did get some welcome rain in June and July which has helped the crops and avoided the drought stress that we experienced last year. We have had much better growth in most crops which has allowed us to undercut early to halt growth as well as promoting a more fibrous root system on the plants.

We will enter another season with strong demand for nursery stock and without doubt there will be huge shortages in many species. This is the same story across Europe and with far fewer growers these days the shortfall is not easily plugged. This is impacting upon the current market, increasing plant prices and pushing them to a more sustainable level where growers will be able to invest in their businesses and plan for the longer term. This is a very different outlook to the general trend over the past twenty years.

What a result to see the planting target of 10,000ha of new planting was smashed in Scotland with a satisfactory 11,200ha in the year to 31 March 2019. Our other home nations are getting significantly left behind with their levels being 1,420ha in England, 520ha in Wales and 240ha in Northern Ireland. The Scottish government plans for this annual planting target to be 15,000ha by 2025 and this does actually seem realistic if plant supply manages to keep aligned. Hopefully we have seen the end of the disruptive 7yr funding cycles that caused the nursery trade havoc in the not too distant past. Early indicators are looking good for the hedging market too, but once again more so in England.

We wait in anticipation to see what happens on 31 October and try to be as ready as we can for every eventuality!!!

On the Nursery

Seed was sown into moist seedbeds in the spring and the plants got off to a good start. Plenty of regular sunshine and rain when needed helped to maintain this growth and it has resulted in some good crops that we look forward to harvesting. What a difference a year can make.

The land we have allocated for autumn sterilising was recently ploughed and will have Basamid applied at the next opportunity when conditions are dry and calm. This needs to be done whilst soil temperatures are still above 10 deg C for the sterilant to be activated in optimum conditions so that we get the most effective results.

Plans have been drawn up to build a new reservoir on the nursery to combat the threat of future restrictions on summer water abstraction from the river Avon. A variation to our abstraction license will then allow for the reservoir to be winter filled to secure our water supply for the following summer. Hopefully this will be dug and lined in the summer of 2020 and be full for spring 2021. There is no getting away from the fact that without irrigation we could not grow the seedling crops here.



Prunus Avium 1/0



Crataegus Monogyna 1/0

Summer Events

Confor NPG AGM (12th & 13th June)

The Nursery Producers Group met at FERA in York for the annual AGM and a plant health focused meeting with DEFRA officials. There was some good discussion and it provided an opportunity to strengthen communication between officials and the trade.

HTA Tree & Hedging group AGM (25th & 26th June)

There was an upbeat AGM following a winter of good trade then a tour of J & A Growers. The following day there was a tour of Valefresco who are local salad producers, it gave a fantastic insight into a business with certain similarities yet volatile markets.

Baumschultechnik (27th – 29th August)

There was an organized trip through the HTA Tree & Hedging Group, spending the first day touring three fantastic nurseries. The following day we visited the Baumschultechnik show and were met by a robot standing-out pots. Hopefully our days of hand weeding will soon be over!!!