

J & A Growers Ltd

Nursery Blog - May 2016

Welcome to a seventh edition of our Nursery Blog and we hope that it finds you well.

We are desperately trying to blank from our minds the season just passed. To sum it up **'It's not been an easy one.....'**.

There was so much uncertainty going into this winters harvest as there always seems to be at the time of CAP reforms. We were hopeful of a smooth transition to the new Woodland Creation Grant schemes but unfortunately this wasn't the case. By Christmas we realized there was a complete lack of demand for hardwood nursery stock within the UK. The main reason for this was down to administrative failure in the grant system and approvals not being released in both England and Scotland. As a nursery sector we had lobbied hard in an effort to prevent this from happening and for all involved to learn from past experiences of CAP reforms. We already knew there was going to be a depressed market from woodland creation this past winter, but trusted assurances that approvals should come through without delay. The situation did improve marginally in the spring as FC was put under increased pressure to speed things up.

Harvesting the trees was no easy task from start to finish. There was unseasonably mild weather from October until Christmas and rain became an almost every day occurrence. As you growers know, this is a dreadful combination for plant storage and made the lifting process very much hand to mouth. The Saga went on into the new year, with more wet weather and a tough slog.

The hedging market was as good as could be expected considering there were no associated grants to incentivise. Hopefully we will see demand increase next year with a capital works grant now available for planting new hedges under the Countryside Stewardship in England.

On the Nursery

It has been a cool and damp start to the spring with regular morning frosts through the month of April. Our patience was tested once again when choosing the right moment to make seedbeds but we got there eventually and began sowing Oak seed on 20 April. Most crops are now emerging quickly, so hopefully temperatures will not drop too low and allow for a good establishment.

Spraying days have been few and far between so herbicide applications have been a top priority when possible. We have replaced the oldest tractor in the fleet with a new sprayer tractor with high clearance. This will help avoid the tractor catching the top of the crops on the sprayer beds once they are reaching their terminal height.

The network of irrigation pipes have been assembled around the nursery in preparation for the dry spell when it arrives. Surely this will be the case this year as the mature Oak trees are now in full leaf whilst the Ash are only just waking up!!!!

As part of an AHDB project, we have allocated an area for trials on residual herbicides but with a difference. They will be applying residual herbicides through a band spraying system, where two different herbicides as straights or mixes can be sprayed over a newly sown crop in one pass. One band is sprayed onto the soil above each line of tree seeds and using chemicals expected to be safe to the crop being tested. A separate band width is also sprayed between these rows using chemicals which have a better residual action but are known to be detrimental to the crop. This system has been trialed in the veg sector with success so fingers crossed. We are always keen for improved ways to prevent and control weeds and avoid the need to remove by hand.



Quercus Robur growing for a 2/0 crop

Early Summer Events

HTA Tree & Hedging group AGM (14th & 15th June)

The AGM this summer will be jointly hosted by Johnsons of Whixley and Thorpe Trees near York. During the two days, there will be a tour of both production sites which covers a huge range of species and several growing techniques from open ground to containerised production.

Since last year`s meeting, there have been six proposals for research projects pushed before the AHDB research panel. These projects were chosen by members of the Tree & Hedging group then fine tuned by a working group made up from interested members. It is important that we push ideas forward so we reap the best value possible from our levies paid.

Confor NPG AGM (22nd June)

The Nursery Producers Group will be meeting at Alba Trees near Edinburgh for this year`s AGM. The day will include the annual industry meeting, aimed to keep communication and knowledge flowing between the private and public sectors. This has become an important platform over recent years. The day will finish with a tour of the production site at Alba Trees and showing the large scale cell growing operation.

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.