

J & A Growers Ltd

Nursery Blog – June 2017

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

Thankfully, the 2016/17 planting season was much better than the one previous with a kind winter for harvesting and almost all species selling out. This has been echoed by other nurseries at the recent HTA and Confor trade meetings. Unfortunately this is not necessarily due to increases in market activity, but a swing towards more customers requesting UK grown stock to strengthen UK biosecurity. Whilst this is helping UK nurseries, we still need to maintain the pressure upon government through our trade bodies as levels of new woodland creation are still desperately low, especially in England and Wales. As stated in the FC England 'Corporate Plan Performance Indicators 2017' document, there was only 23ha of woodland creation through RDPE funding from Oct – Dec 2016 and 43ha from Jan – March 2017. When will they grasp the fact this system is not working!!!!

The farm hedging market seems to have found its level but there was little evidence of any significant demand through the new Countryside Stewardship scheme in England. Hopefully the uptake for this hedging option will build with time.

The threat of Xylella entering the UK is a serious worry to all nurseries and a big threat to trees in the wider environment. An outbreak within 10km of any nursery would destroy the business overnight. We must work together to help mitigate these risks of entry and lead by example through not importing stock originating from regions where Xylella is present. The public needs to become more aware of the massive range of host species and the devastation an outbreak would cause. A greater awareness should help reduce purchases from importers who are prepared to run the risk.

On the Nursery

It was another cool spring with biting winds from the east until conditions started to improve in mid April and soil temperatures began to rise. We thankfully managed to get sowing a week earlier than in 2016 and conditions since have been pretty good on the whole. There are never enough calm days for spraying so have to grab every opportunity as it arises. The plants responded better than staff to the recent temperatures registering in excess of 30 deg C which we have experienced on several occasions already this summer. Is this to become the new norm?

A new purpose built accommodation block to house the grading team is nearing completion. This will replace the portakabin units previously hired over the winter months. It is a considerable investment but one we hope will help to safeguard the business in future years. We totally rely upon these overseas workers as part of the team to make the business operate in the way it does and we know there aren't sufficient local workers who are prepared to fulfill this roll. By building a comfortable place to live, we expect the same pool of workers will continue coming for the winter harvest for years to come. We cannot change the type of job, but improving the

facilities helps these people choose grading trees over other types of seasonal work. The building will be hugely more efficient than the portakabin units which heated the whole of Warwickshire. With the cold stores running flat out at the same time of year our electricity demand was nearing the max available.

Irrigating crops has been part of the daily routine for many weeks, experiencing long periods without rain and soils drying out very quickly. This reminds us how reliant we are upon irrigation, we couldn't grow the crops on this land without it. We do wonder when the first abstraction restrictions will be imposed as water levels were already low following the drier than normal winter. It would be good to find a more efficient watering system which still allows all of the mechanical operations such as spraying and undercutting.

Recent photos of the nursery



Seedling Prunus Avium



Seedling Quercus Robur

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.