

Game Cover Crops



"We have tried out various different methods of achieving a reliable game cover crop with varying successes and find that using tic beans with triticale establishes incredibly well, we run two passes right after one another on the beans and the cereals. With the beans providing tremendous feeding quality for the pheasants. It also allows plenty of room for the birds to run about within and I couldn't be happier with the results."

Bill Short, Balquhudlie, October 2016

SUNFLOWERS

Not only is a field of sunflowers in flower a colourful sight, the crop is of huge benefit to a wide range of wildlife. Sunflowers provide highly nutritious seed of a high oil content which is loved by all game and song birds and the nectar is of great importance to bees and other insects. In most situations sunflowers are grown in conjunction with many other game crops such as game maize or kale, either in mixtures or in adjacent blocks. The young seedlings are very vulnerable to spring slug attack and to wireworm in ground that has previously been in grass, so a close eye must be kept on the newly planted crop. Cambridge rolling following drilling into a good seed bed will help to protect against rook damage.

STANDARD TYPE



Large attractive flowers of variable height, but generally tall. For best utilisation of this crop it should be "swiped down" to enable game birds to reach the nutritious seeds. They can be drilled with maize to brighten up your maize crop.

Sowing rate 12kg/ha

Pack size 10kg

Treatment Untreated

DWARF TYPE



A short hybrid variety with good standing ability. The seed-heads tend to be larger than those of the standard type. These are also best "swiped down" to enable birds to reach the large seed-heads, providing plenty of nutritious seeds.

Sowing rate 12kg/ha

Pack size 5kg

Treatment Fungicide treated



Sunflower

TRITICALE



A wheat/rye hybrid cereal providing good cover and feed in marginal low fertility areas where it will thrive with little input. Useful in situations where maize and millet are not options and where brassica sickness is a problem. Further important advantages are its ability to withstand rabbit attack, winter hardiness and good disease resistance. When sowing in the spring, a true spring type must be used which does not require a period of vernalisation, otherwise the plant will not produce grain.

Sowing rate 125kg/ha

Pack size 25kg & 500kg

Treatment Untreated

BORAGE



Borage, also known as starflower, is a quick growing annual herb, to a height of 2-3 feet with bright blue flowers; there is also a white flowered variation. The crop was traditionally grown for culinary and medicinal uses, although the crop is commercially grown today for its oil content. Borage's star shaped flower attracts bees all summer long. Borage is a self seeding plant and likely to reseed itself for many years to come.

Sowing rate 12kg/ha

Pack size 5kg

Treatment Untreated



Quinoa

QUINOA



Quinoa is capable of producing a plentiful amount of seed and therefore is a popular choice of crop for holding partridge and pheasants. Many species of seed-eating song-birds are also attracted to the crop. Commonly grown with kale, quinoa provides cover and feed until it begins to collapse in the first frosts with the kale providing more permanent cover.

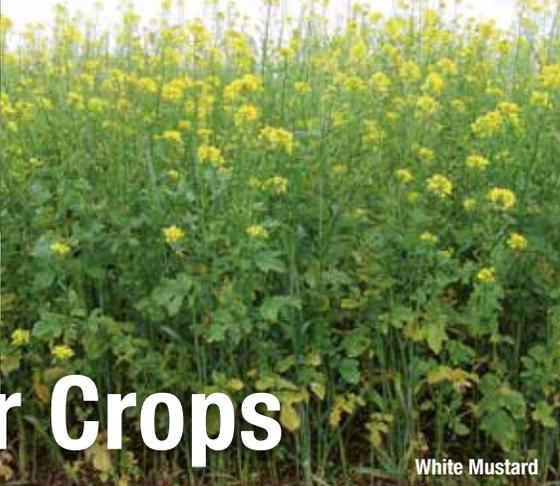
Sowing rate 5kg/ha

Pack size 2kg

Treatment Untreated



Phacelia



White Mustard



Brown Mustard



Buckwheat

Game Cover Crops

PHACELIA



A prolific seeder, very fast to establish and a good weed suppressant. It produces a mass of sweet smelling purple flowers providing a good source of nectar, beneficial to a large variety of insects. It is not winter hardy and therefore for game cover it is best sown as part of a mixture. Phacelia is likely to set seed and reseed itself for many years to come.

- Sowing rate** 7.5 - 10kg/ha
- Pack size** 2kg & 5kg
- Treatment** Untreated
- Organic seed available in 25kg packs (limited)**

BUCKWHEAT



A rapidly growing short term crop highly attractive to pheasants, partridge and deer both as cover and feed. The large amount of nectar produced attracts bees and other beneficial insects which in turn provide added interest for game birds. It is a useful component to add to mixtures due to its bulkiness and its ability to continue to provide holding cover and feed after the first frosts when the crop has fallen. Buckwheat thrives best in sunny rather than shaded areas.

- Sowing rate** 50kg/ha
- Pack size** 10kg & 25kg
- Treatment** Untreated

BROWN MUSTARD



A green manure crop with biofumigation properties, i.e. it suppresses soil-borne pests and diseases. It is an easy to establish 50 - 70 day crop that can be sown between April and September. Unlike white mustard, it is winter hardy. It will improve the health of the soil by increasing organic matter and acts as an excellent weed suppressant. It is also especially useful as over-wintering green cover after maize, potatoes and sugar beet crops, reducing soil erosion, fertiliser leaching and water run-off.

- Sowing rate** 2.5 - 7.5kg/ha
- Pack size** 5kg
- Treatment** Untreated

WHITE MUSTARD



A relatively inexpensive and highly versatile cover crop either sown alone or as a companion to other species. It is ideal for early cover and although killed off by frost, the fallen woody stems will create shelter for the birds below. This is especially useful when sown with seed producing species which alone would provide no cover. Popular as a green manure crop (see green manure section page 42 & 43).

- Sowing rate** 6 - 17kg/ha
- Pack size** 10kg & 25kg
- Treatment** Untreated
- Organic seed available in 25kg packs**

FODDER RADISH



(Oil Radish)

A fast growing cover crop, its prime usefulness being where brassica sickness is a problem due to its immunity to the disease. Other qualities are its speed of establishment which aids weed suppression and its use as a green manure crop. It is useful as a catch crop in northern regions if sown in July as it will be ready to provide cover within six to eight weeks, just as birds are losing cover from the cereals being combined. Due to its fast growth it is valuable as a replacement for failed crops, and will continue to provide cover right through the season. In addition, it holds its seed in pods which shed in late winter/early spring, thus providing feed during that all important 'hungry gap'.

- Sowing rate** 6 - 8kg/ha
- Pack size** 10kg & 25kg
- Treatment** Untreated
- Organic seed available in 25kg packs (limited)**



Fodder Radish

LINSEED



Traditionally grown for its oil, linseed has become popular in recent years as game cover and is particularly attractive to partridge. It is an easy to grow crop and is tolerant of many soil types, performing well on thinner soils e.g. Cotswold Brash. Although not frost hardy it will continue to provide cover and interest well into the winter especially if sown as part of a mixture. It is also another option where brassica sickness has been a problem.

- Sowing rate** 60kg/ha
- Pack size** 25kg
- Treatment** Untreated

GOLD OF PLEASURE - CAMELINA



Another crop well suited to poorer and nutrient deficient soils. It is a fast maturing, free-branching plant producing a seed very attractive to birds, especially partridge. A useful mixture for exposed areas is produced by combining gold of pleasure with triticale, barley and linseed (see Partridge mix page 20).

- Sowing rate** 12kg/ha
- Pack size** 5kg
- Treatment** Untreated