Supporting guidance for Forage Brassica Crops for Farmland Birds

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Forage brassicas provide a good habitat for a wide range of wildlife, particularly food and cover for wintering farmland birds.

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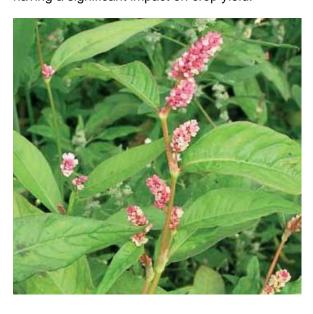
Forage brassicas - Credit: Hywel Maggs

Winter seed sources such as weedy fodder crops and seed-rich cereal stubbles are scarcer today, especially in livestock areas.

The Forage Brassica Crops for Farmland Birds option helps to provide habitat diversity in the wider countryside, reverse the decline in forage cropping and provide food and cover for a range of farmland birds during the winter.

Seeds of certain weed species are an excellent, protein-rich source of food for farmland birds such as twite and linnet. Restrictions on herbicide use allow weeds to establish and set seed, providing a good source of winter food.

Desirable weeds include charlock, fat-hen, knot grass and redshank. These species provide seed without having a significant impact on crop yield.



Redshank - © Plantlife

Establishing and managing the crop

Consider:

- forage brassica crops include turnips, kale, rape and swedes
- establish the crop each spring / summer using standard recommendations for the crop you have chosen
- aim to produce a satisfactory crop yield combined with beneficial weeds
- fertiliser can be applied according to crop requirements
- a moderate weed cover later in the year should have limited effect on the yield of brassica crops as they are good competitors with weeds once established
- the crop cannot be grazed or cultivated until 1 March

Further information

Further information on the benefits of forage brassica crops and how to establish them is available:

• Guidance on Forage Brassica Crops (RSPB)

Recent changes

| Section | Change |
|-----------|--------------------|
| Main text | Minor text changes |

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