

BRIGHT SEEDS

MISCANTHUS

LONG TERM GAME COVER

Information for growers 2020



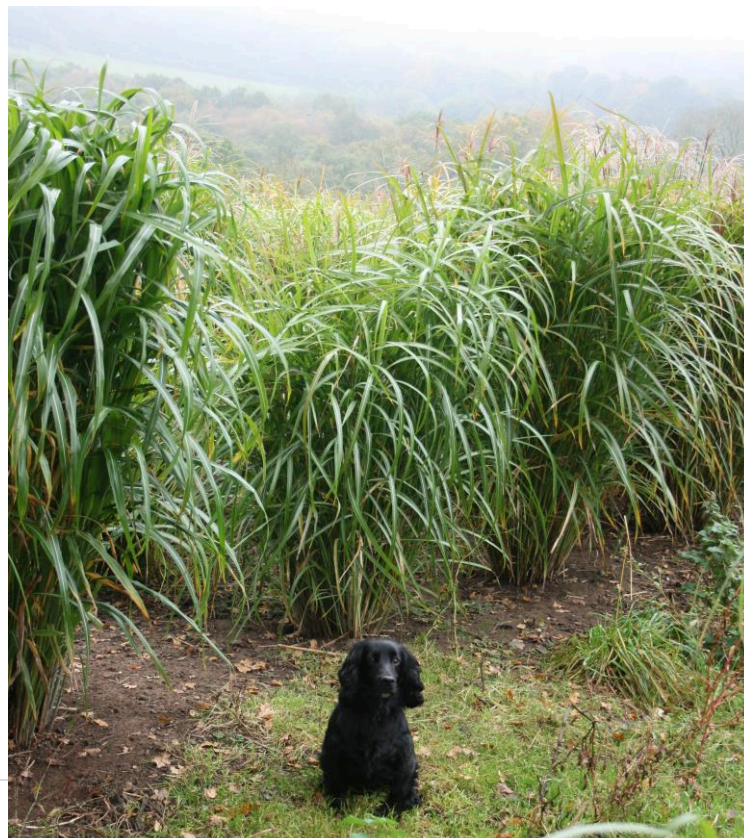
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Key facts...

- Miscanthus provides a permanent cover that can last well over 10 years.
- Miscanthus is growing in popularity because it reduces the dependency on annual game cover crops.
- Miscanthus is sold by the plant, we sell plantlets that are approximately 6 inches tall.
- Ideally planting should be carried out in May.
- As a guide Miscanthus should be planted at 1,500 plants per acre, although this will depend on the situation.



Miscanthus provides a permanent cover...

- Once established, Miscanthus provides a permanent cover that will last well over 10 years.
- Permanent cover reduces the stress of annual establishment of game cover in difficult sites.
- Ideal for awkward sites such as steep slopes or areas inaccessible with machinery.



Other reasons to grow Miscanthus...

- Works well as a wind-break either along the edge of a wood or surrounding an area of maize game cover.
- Provides a warm and dry cover, ideal for both pheasants and partridge.
- Easy to manage once established.
- Produces a physical barrier which is useful for reducing public access to private areas.
- Can be grown on a range of soil types (from sandy to heavy clay).
- Miscanthus has been successfully grown at 1,000 feet above sea level.



Tips for establishing the crop...

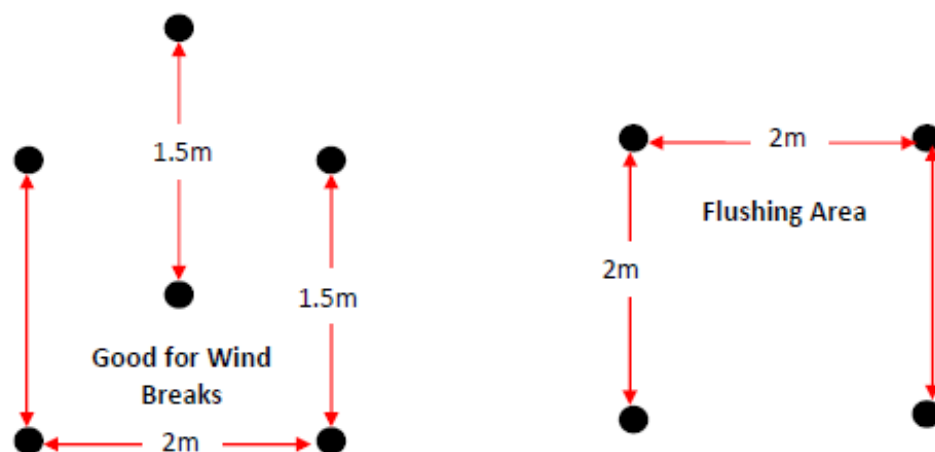
- Planting rate of approximately **1,500 plants per acre**, although this can be adjusted depending on the situation (often planted at a higher rate for pheasants than for partridge).
- We supply Miscanthus by the plant. Miscanthus seed is sown in a nursery in August and grows to 5-6 inches before being planted in April/May. This method greatly increases plant survival, and the first year is vitally important in producing a successful crop.



Young Miscanthus plants in a nursery bed; 24 plants to a module in 7 inch pots

- Ideally spray off the site to produce a stale seed-bed prior to planting, a pH between 5.5 and 7.5 is favorable, and an application of FYM can help to get the plants growing quickly.

- Plants should be planted in 1.5 metre rows, with a gap of 2 metres between each plant within the row. Spacing the plants out like this optimizes individual plant growth and results in a warm canopy; ideal for game cover.



- Once planted the young plantlets should be protected using a tree guard, this reduces weed competition around the plant and also reduced damage by pests. On more extreme sites the plants can be planted into biodegradable matting covered with mulch to retain moisture.
- Once the plants have matured the tree guards can be removed and, from year 2 onwards the crop can be managed by topping just above the fresh growth early in the spring.

Our variety...

- Miscanthus is a perennial rhizomatous grass that originated from Asia.
- There are over 70 strains, some more suited to game cover than others.
- With this in mind, Bright Seeds have trialled a range of varieties and chosen a dwarf variety that grows to approximately 6 ft tall. It develops a strong root ball

which improves the overall standing ability and ultimately produces a warm game cover crop.



Game cover variety (right) produces a much stronger root ball and more tillers compared to the weaker biofuel variety (left), giving it superior standing power and increasing its suitability as a wind break.

Case Study 1

Brian Mitchell - Castle Hill Estate, Devon

- *Brian has used Miscanthus now for 15 years.*
- *He finds the best way for growing on windward sites is to plant 4 metres of Miscanthus alternatively with twelve metres of maize.*
- *Brian finds it protects and breaks the maize crop up whilst helping to hold birds throughout the season within the*

crop. This system also enables more control when flushing birds on a shoot day.



15 year old established Miscanthus plants

Case Study 2

Donhead Hall Estate

- Donhead Hall Estate planted Miscanthus by hand in early June. The land is managed organically so the first weed control was carried out using a garden rotavator and strimmer in early August.

- Miscanthus was planted because it offers a cost effective solution without all the stresses and hassles of an annual crop.
- The crop was topped off in February/March with a hand trimmer for the first 2 years until the plants were well established, then after that a tractor topper was used.
- There are options available for spraying (always consult your agronomist prior to spraying).



A second year plant just after early spring topping.

Management in the first year...

- It is vitally important that the plants are looked after in the first year.
- A weed-free seed-bed prior to planting is important, along with the use of tree guards to protect the young plants from deer, rabbits and hares.
- For **weed control** after planting, most broad-leaved weed chemicals suitable for maize are also safe to use on Miscanthus, avoid the grass killing chemicals such as Samson. In a well-established crop Glyphosate can be used early in the spring before fresh growth has emerged. Organic crops can be inter-row cultivated to reduce the weed burden. Also, 'Harmony M' is viable to use to control some of the more pernicious broadleaved weeds (mayweed, thistles, fat hen etc).
- Miscanthus requires the same **fertilizer** application as maize in the first year (80:30:60, depending on existing soil status). FYM is also beneficial.



Young plant in year 1

Longer-term management...

- In the third season, the *Miscanthus* can be topped at the end of February/early March, just as the spring growth starts. The debris can be left on the surface which acts as a mulch, suppressing weed growth, maintaining moisture and releasing plant nutrients.
- By this stage the crop will be well-established and no more fertilizer or weed control should be necessary.



Miscanthus topped off in year three



Miscanthus in its 3rd year.

Acknowledgements

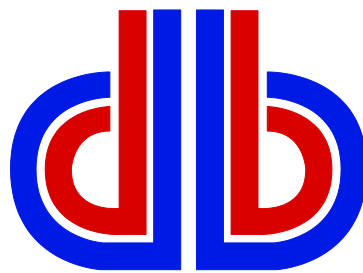
Our sincere thanks must be offered to the following:

- ❖ Brian Mitchell for all his great advice, help and access to his Game cover during a very busy period of time.
- ❖ Robert Mitchell for allowing us access to his estate and to look at his Miscanthus and Sedge.
- ❖ Jerry Turner for his enthusiasm, brilliant ideas, wealth of knowledge and for following the project through from start to finish.
- ❖ Lindsay Jack for kindly providing information about the Miscanthus at Donhead Hall Estate.

ORDER PROCESS

We have limited stocks available for 2020. These plants will be ready in March/April.

Please contact Arthur Barraclough or Ben Dolbear in the office on 01722 744494 to place a forward order or to discuss how Miscanthus may work on your shoot next season. They'll be happy to help.



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