

## Herbal Leys

### 'HERBAL' Dual Purpose

#### Four Year Ley

##### Ref. MIX20

Based on Newman Turner's original recommendations this all round mixture provides wholesome and substantial forage for grazing and cutting. It can provide grazing for early turnout and continues to produce forage right through the summer and autumn. Containing deep rooting ingredients this ley not only improves soil structure but also draws essential vitamins and minerals for the ruminant animal.

1.50 kg certified ABERSTAR perennial ryegrass  
1.50 kg certified PORTRUSH perennial ryegrass  
1.50 kg certified SPARTA cocksfoot  
1.50 kg certified PROMESSE timothy  
0.80 kg certified ROSSA meadow fescue  
0.50 kg certified BARCEL or similar tall fescue  
0.75 kg certified ALTASWEDE late flowering red clover  
0.30 kg certified ABERPEARL white clover  
0.30 kg certified ABERHERALD white clover  
0.25 kg certified S184 wild white clover  
0.50 kg certified AURORA alsike clover  
0.50 kg certified SANS GABRIELLE birdsfoot trefoil  
2.00 kg commercial SAINFOIN  
1.00 kg commercial SWEET CLOVER  
0.90 kg certified PUNA chicory  
1.25 kg BURNET  
0.25 kg YARROW  
0.50 kg SHEEPS PARSLEY  
0.20 kg RIBGRASS

16.00 kg per acre £84.40 (40 kg/ha £211.00)

#### Addition

The two herbal leys on these pages can be enhanced by the addition of Italian ryegrass. This would be appropriate if a direct reseed is to be carried out. (It is not recommended or required for crops undersown to cereals.)

A great feature of Italian ryegrass is that it produces forage very quickly after sowing and provides an earlier grazing in summer from a spring sowing or an early bite from an autumn sowing.

Italians only last for two years but are very productive whilst some of the slower species become established.

**Cover Crop 3.0 kg Italian ryegrass £6.63 per acre**

### 'HERBAL' Very Dry Soil

#### Four Year Ley

##### Ref. MIX21

A further Newman Turner based ley but this time for light, thin soils where resistance to extreme drought is required. This ley excludes ryegrass and contains a predominance of the deepest rooting varieties available, consistent with their production above the ground. This ley should be used on thin soils, those close to rock and also in excessively dry regions. For good, deep soils please use the dual purpose mixture on the previous page.

2.50 kg certified SPARTA cocksfoot  
1.20 kg certified ROSSA meadow fescue  
2.00 kg certified BARCEL or similar tall fescue  
1.50 kg certified VELA lucerne  
3.00 kg commercial SAINFOIN  
0.75 kg certified ALTASWEDE late flowering red clover  
0.75 kg certified AURORA alsike clover  
0.50 kg certified SANS GABRIELLE birdsfoot trefoil  
0.50 kg certified VIRGO PAJBERG yellow trefoil  
0.20 kg certified ABERPEARL white clover  
0.20 kg certified ABERHERALD white clover  
0.10 kg certified S184 wild white clover  
1.00 kg commercial SWEET CLOVER  
1.00 kg certified PUNA chicory  
1.25 kg BURNET  
0.25 kg YARROW  
0.50 kg SHEEPS PARSLEY  
0.20 kg RIBGRASS

17.40 kg per acre £97.07 (43.5 kg/ha £242.68)

#### Health Goes in at the Mouth

From a farmers perspective we can do no better than to quote from Newman Turner one of the great advocates of herbal leys. He said "the herbal ley is my fertiliser merchant, my food manufacturer and my vet all in one." This description sums up the advantages of this type of ley. Due to a wide range of species the seed mixtures over the next two pages are very different to the rest.

#### What is a Herbal Ley

A herbal ley contains a diverse range of grasses, herbs and clovers. It produces a well balanced forage and not just large volumes of grass. Many of the species used are deep rooting and have the ability to unlock resources deeper in the soil profile. The herbal mixture does not demand high fertiliser inputs and should provide increased levels of minerals and vitamins to livestock. Also, if herbal leys are grown for about four years they will substantially improve soil fertility and structure with their deep roots.

#### Why use a Herbal Ley

Herbal leys are an excellent source of forage providing very good animal performance in terms of liveweight gain and milk production as well as providing a nutritionally balanced natural feed. Of equal importance is the ability of the herbal ley to simultaneously build and restore soil fertility.

### **Herbal v. Conventional Leys**

Leys have long been regarded as the most economical and natural source of food for livestock production. The trend in recent decades for simplistic mixtures perhaps with just two or three grasses and often without clover is being challenged by the increasing use of more diverse mixtures. Herbal leys are deliberately complex and this increases the initial cost of the ley. However, this is offset by improved animal performance as well as a reduced fertiliser and supplementary feed input.

### **Sowing and Establishment**

Ideally these leys should be sown after an application of manure. This can be in the form of FYM or a green manure. Manures increase microbial activity in the soil leading to greater quantities of plant nutrients being made available to the new seedlings. These leys contain many small seeded species and are best shallow sown into a very well worked seedbed. Broadcasting is preferable to drilling as this leads to more even plant distribution. Sowings should be made from March until mid September. Later sowings should be postponed.

### **The True Cost of Production**

When all of the variable costs of intensively managed grassland are added up it becomes clear that chemical stimulus has a high price. For example, if the price of nitrogenous fertiliser is around £150/tonne and 200 kg of N is applied per hectare this will represent about one third of the cost of silage production. This in isolation, without regard to other artificially applied elements such as phosphate and potash should raise levels of concern amongst farmers who can at this time ill afford to be overspending.

The herbal ley is an attractive and alternative tool. It enables the livestock farmer to do away with the expense and often unnecessary items of his budget by changing his farming system. This makes use of the free processes of nature such as nitrogen fixation and the production of healthy forage by growing species rich leys. After all, before the intensification of agriculture, herbal leys were a popular and successful part of UK agriculture.

Whilst this catalogue is concerned mainly with grassland management in its many forms we feel strongly that it is time to reconsider the role of a more natural and economic method of production for a struggling British agriculture.

### **A Remedy for Modern Farming**

In addition to the low cost of production associated with herbal leys there are two further benefits.

Animal performance in terms of overall health and liveweight gain is superior to grass only leys. Scientifically speaking, this is due to the high protein content of the legumes and the significantly higher concentration of vitamins and minerals contained within the herbs. This is confirmed by many of your comments on this type of ley.

Improvement of the soil from these leys is often underestimated. The deep rooting, nitrogen fixing and mineral rich ley has the ability to restore the most impoverished soils. The massive and complex root structure of a herbal ley naturally unlocks the many essential plant growth elements in the soil making these available through forage to the grazing animal. They are then recycled through manure for the benefit of future cropping. They also add large amounts of organic matter which is essential for a healthy and productive soil.