

Establishment techniques

Establising Brassicas

Grow & utilise

Brassicas need good establishment because of their low sowing rate. Plant population has a big influence on brassica crop yield, so using *Agricote* Brassica seed treatment with both insecticide and fungicide protection is important for success.

Pre-sowing

Brassicas can benefit from following another crop (see Brassica crop rotations). This gives the opportunity to fix underlying problems with the paddock (poor drainage, fertility etc) and provides a better seed bed for brassicas. Longer term, new pasture sown post brassicas will benefit from fewer pests and weeds, especially grass weeds. It can also be a good idea to apply insecticide when spraying out old pasture.

Cultivation

A firm, even, weed-free seedbed is essential for cultivated paddocks. Bury previous crop or pasture residues to reduce the risk of pests and diseases. Sow seed shallow (no more than 10 mm) to ensure good, even establishment of the crop. A level seedbed with good consolidation helps achieve even sowing depth.

Direct-drilling

Direct drilling is an alternative where cultivation is not desired or appropriate. Pests can be a major issue, as the dead vegetation provides an ideal habitat, particularly for springtails and slugs. Use insecticides to reduce insect pressure, and sow treated seed. Slug bait is normally essential.

Remove as much turf as possible through hard grazing before sowing to reduce trash, and make drilling easier. N fertiliser requirements are likely to be higher as N is tied up in decaying vegetation.



Seed treatment

Insect and fungal damage can be catastrophic to seedling brassicas, and *Agricote Brassica* seed treatment is always advised. Treated seed reduces the risk of crop damage and failure.

Weed control

Weeds compete strongly with brassica seedlings and must be controlled at establishment. Pre-emergence herbicides can be incorporated into the seedbed before sowing.

Monitor weeds closely. Selective herbicides are most effective at certain weed sizes, and spraying works best before crop closure. If not controlled early, weeds can cause serious issues in the following season's crop or pasture, so it's important to prevent them seeding.

Monitoring insects & diseases

Pests can seriously damage brassicas throughout the life of the crop. Monitor crops daily for the first 14 days after emergence, then weekly (see Brassica pests). Leave 5-7 years between brassica crops to reduce the risk of soil-borne diseases.