

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.



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 pastoral landscapes, 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 in the 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)