

Nursery Tour



Rodney Shearer, Managing Director.

We would like you to visit our nursery in order that you can appreciate the extent of our operation – both in terms of the number of plants and the range of species we grow. However, we are all too aware that it can be difficult to find the time to visit the nursery. With this in mind we have put together a short on line tour of our nursery highlighting the main areas we try to cover on a personal visit.

So, good evening, welcome to Alba Trees.....

The Nursery

The nursery was founded in 1988 on a 10 hectare green-field site. 14 multi-span polytunnels are used for germination and to promote early even growth. The large shed houses the grading and packing operations and offices.



Seed Collection

Almost all of our plants are grown from seed. Our native seed is collected by our own trained staff or by a small team of experienced professional collectors. We will collect specifically for customers' requirements or contract grow seed sent to us. Accurate recording of seed collection details forms the basis of our unique traceability system.



Seed Storage

Seed is stratified and stored in our cold store until required for sowing. Each batch bears a unique Seed Receipt Number which identifies the location and date of the collection, the quantity received and the name of the collector.



Getting Started

Seed is sown by hand or machine into Roottrainer cells filled with growing media. Some species are sown into seed trays and then pricked-in to cells as shown here. Approximately 10 million cells are sown each year.



Traceability

Cells are laid down on steel growing frames, our basic production unit. Each frame is uniquely bar-coded and scanned using a portable data collector, or scanner. Against each frame entry the Seed Receipt Number is entered. Scanners are down-loaded daily onto our main computer system. The seed batch will remain on that frame throughout its life on the nursery.



Establishment

Polytunnels are used to promote germination and even early growth. Each tunnel holds up to 360,000 young plants. They are fitted with overhead computer-controlled irrigation. There is good ventilation and no artificial heating.



Stock Movement

As soon as crops are ready to be taken out they are moved by forklift to the growing fields. The forklift drivers record each frame movement on their hand held scanners. These movement records are down-loaded daily onto the main computer system



Monitoring

Crops are monitored regularly and various cultural tasks are carried out. This information is fed in to the crop management system on the computer so that a cultural history of each crop is

maintained.



Over Wintering

Crops are exposed to cold and windy conditions to ensure hardiness. Only semi-hardy and evergreen shrubs are kept inside during winter.



Contract Growing The increasingly complex demands of planting schemes such as local provenance, diverse species range, compost types etc can best be met by contract growing. A contract grow can begin with customers own seed or we can organise seed collection. A lead time of 12-18 months is normal and no special formalities are required. The customers stock is fully traceable, uniquely identifiable and can be inspected at any time.



Grading

Plants are removed from their cells and graded by hand to ensure even size, a well balanced root to shoot ratio, cohesive root-plug and good conformation. Each member of the grading team performs a hands-on quality control task.



Mychorrhizae

The picture shows natural mycorrhizae colonising the roots of *Pinus sylvestris*.



Planter Pack

Root-plugs are side-wrapped with clingfilm for optimum root protection and moisture retention.

Bundle sizes:
 400cc: 10 per bundle
 250cc: 10 per bundle
 175cc: 15 per bundle
 100cc: 30 per bundle



Planter Tray

The majority of our plants are despatched standing upright in Correx Plantertrays. (Details of how to look after your plants prior to despatch are to be found in our Handbook). Empty trays, packed flat, will be uplifted by ourselves on our next visit if customers so wish.

Contents:
 400cc 80 per tray
 250cc 80 per tray
 175cc 150 per tray
 100cc 240 per tray



Planter Crates

Ideal for customers who need to stack plants, for moving over rough terrain or by helicopter, or where there is risk of vermin. Crates give maximum plant protection combined with ease of handling. We will arrange collection of empty crates from your site .

Contents (depending on plant height):
 400cc 80-100 per crate
 250cc 120-160 per crate
 175cc 180-240 per crate
 100cc 360-480 per crate



Despatch

Only a small proportion of our output is uplifted by the customer. We organise transport best suited to our customers needs. Our standard method for orders over 1500 plants is on our own dedicated vehicle in Correx Plantertrays carried on steel "cages". Ideally these

will be unloaded by the customer's forklift. Unfortunately we are not able to leave cages with the customer.

Smaller orders are generally sent out via national carrier on a next day delivery service. Some of the more remote parts of the UK may take longer.



Delivery

Where deliveries are done using our own truck we are equipped with a Manitou forklift to assist with offloading. This means customers can ask us to place stock at some distance from the offloading point if required. In addition, only one person is generally needed to oversee the offloading operation. This means that staff are not on standby waiting for the truck to arrive and if necessary we can deliver after normal working hours with our driver effecting the offloading.



Information Pack

That concludes the tour of our nursery; you can download a printed copy of the tour on our **downloads** page, where you may also obtain a copy of our popular Technical Handbook along with Price Lists and Availability Lists. In addition, we have prepared a list of **Frequently Asked Questions** that are accessible here on our web site. If you have any remaining queries please **contact us**.

We hope you found your visit interesting; if you have any suggestions on how we could improve the tour do please let us know.



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