



PHOTOS: New arrowleaf clover seedling on dry hill; Kiwi seed Multispecies groundcover, clover, herbs and beneficial plants; Kiwi seed co permanent dry hill multispecies pasture mix, Rubitas red clover, arrowleaf clover, plantain, cocksfoot and fescue; Kiwi seed co permanent interrow mix, clovers, herbs, wildflowers.

Mixed species pastures hold the key

Richard Loader

Bruce Clark, the founding managing director of Marlborough based grain and seed merchants Kiwi Seed Co, is serious about New Zealand's environment and providing support to the country's farmers and lifestyle block owners.

Offering pearls of wisdom in respect to the use of mixed pasture species, Bruce says that over the last 70 years we have planted monoculture crops and used the wrong fertilisers where they weren't needed – all to the detriment of the environment.

"We have polluted the waterways and damaged the soils and there's no quick fix by using one magic plant. The results are obvious and speak for themselves. Lincoln University researchers have recommended a 30% grass and 70% clover mix for years."

Kiwi Seed has gone further by identifying different grasses, annual and perennial clovers as well as adding a variety of beneficial herbs to their mixed species pastures, based on environment and management conditions.

The healing properties of herbs include: antelmintic, anti-inflammatory properties, aiding digestion, providing a range of minerals and vitamins.



Covercrop with sunflower Multispecies mix containing legumes, grasses, chenopods, brassicas, sunflowers and more.

"We have to accept the fact that mixed species pasture take time to establish."

The good news is that this type of pasture mix is no more expensive than a propriety ryegrass white clover blend.

"Winter active, summer dormant grasses, clovers and herbs with taproots, need time to grow this large amount of root system to be able to withstand the likely droughts in years to come," says Bruce.

Blends containing different species require a different grazing management.

Bruce recommends a lax grazing approach and locking up the paddock at least in the first year to

set up the clover seed bank for the future – treating it as an investment for the farm's long term benefit.

With broadcasting the preferred delivery method the benefits are aplenty says Bruce.

"Given that very shallow sowing depth is required, no drills are needed and seed can be spread even on high hill country with the use of planes or spread through animals."

The results are greater diversity above and in the ground, soil restoration, carbon building, soil microbes/ fungi/ beneficial insects are supported and will give back the input through improved fertility and greater drought tolerance.

"We teach our children to give to others before we expect to receive. We should be doing this as well when we work with Mother Nature. Using multi-species is simply copying what Mother Nature does naturally. Healthy soils and plant selection leads to well fed, healthy animals all year round. Feed seems always available and changes with the season just as the animal requires." Bruce says Kiwi Seed Co clients have commented that the approach provides greater flexibility in terms of grazing or haymaking and the addition of more herbs has led to small hospital paddocks, with the potential to reduce the need to use artificial medicine.

Founded in 1989 by Bruce Clark Kiwi Seed Co was initially established to offer independent advice and product options to the agricultural and horticultural communities throughout NZ.

Since that time, a processing plant and retail outlet has been added to the business and 14 staff are employed to service a large client base, both urban and rural.

"The diversified nature of our business has enabled Kiwi Seed to become a one-stop shop for lifestyle block owners and farm managers alike. Whether you live locally or further afield we are happy to help with options."

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