

ASHQUAL

Comparison of Irish ash seed sources

PROJECT TEAM

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BACKGROUND

Ash (*Fraxinus excelsior*) is an important native Irish broadleaf species that has received much attention under the current grant-aided Forest Service broadleaf planting scheme. The stem form quality of many resulting ash stands is quite variable, but whether this is due to genetic differences in seed source is not known. Currently most of the ash planted in this country originates from hedgerow and parkland trees because there are very few ash stands available as seed stands and ash plantations may not consist of local material. A seed orchard of phenotypically selected individuals has recently been established but is not yet in production.

OBJECTIVE

The objective is to establish a series of trials comparing the growth and stem form of a range of seed sources, including Irish roadside trees, Irish seed stands and several continental seed sources.

PROGRESS

Ash seed was obtained from 18 sources including eleven from Ireland, one from the Netherlands and two each from Denmark, Germany and the UK. Seed was stratified and sown in March 2008 in containers in a heated glasshouse. In July the plants were moved outside to continue their growth. Due to close spacing in the containers, some plants overtopped others resulting in a wide range of plant sizes at the end of the growing season. One trial was planted in Camolin forest in Co Wicklow in December 2008.

ACTIVITIES PLANNED

One additional trial will be planted in early 2009 and the remaining plants will be lined out in a nursery bed and grown during 2009 to produce material for planting the remaining trial in the autumn/winter of 2009/10.



Ash, beech and oak trial planted at Camolin forest at the end of 2008.