Ornamental Horticulture Roundtable

Action Plan 2015–2020

Helping the UK ornamental horticulture industry reach its full potential
Foreword

In the spring of 1942, at the age of nine years old, my Headmaster gave every new boy a square yard of mud and a packet of Virginia stock seeds. A few weeks later, I had a blaze of colour and a new found obsession – gardening.

It never occurred to me then or, indeed, at any intervening time, that I would write the Foreword to a plan that could ensure the future of the ornamental horticulture sector, so that other children could develop a passion for gardening.

This Action Plan is rightly broad ranging in its desire to promote and protect a wide spectrum of horticultural activity, from the frontiers of scientific endeavour, to the love so many of us develop in school for trees and flowers.

But as I read the words of the experts who came together to develop the plan, I found myself back in the politics of Britain’s inner cities, where my career has taken me.

I think horticulture could be an invaluable part of the answer to some of the daunting social and economic challenges we face.

For too long horticulture has been on the fringes, and I’m delighted that over the five-year life of this plan that situation has the opportunity to change.

In the 1980s, I pioneered Garden Festivals and I’m pleased that the sector has built on this idea with their desire to hold a garden EXPO to showcase the diverse work the sector does.

The benefits are obvious. Having ornamental horticulture embedded in the National Curriculum will lead to our young people understanding both where their food comes from, and the vital role fresh produce plays in creating a healthy diet.

More horticultural apprenticeships will provide skilled workers for a sector that boasts an annual turnover of £10.4 billion. It will provide the youth and energy needed to help propel the sector to the next level. The potential has been there, but with this plan in place the hope, and possibly expectation, is that it will now be realised.

The ornamental horticulture sector is about to enhance its formidable reputation with the launch of this Action Plan. It will be the more successful the wider it sets its sights.

By drawing these areas together and creating a coherent strategy we can harness the great potential of the ornamental horticulture sector.
Background

The ornamental horticulture industry is diverse and, in income, this industry is worth £10.4 billion. Our gardens and parks are among the finest in the world and the UK is at the cutting edge of developing horticultural solutions to environmental and health problems. These skills, techniques and products have export potential as well as growth in revenues and jobs for the UK.

What is the Ornamental Horticulture Roundtable?
The Roundtable is a group of leaders from the UK horticulture sector, which includes retail, businesses, educational and skills organisations and research funders, who have come together to focus on developing an action plan for economic growth. The industry has significant opportunities to grow, as well as challenges to overcome, and the Roundtable has developed this cross-sector action plan, the first of its kind, to work with Government to realise its potential. Regular meetings with Defra and seeking the support of a number of other relevant Government departments will be part of this process.

Meetings between industry and Government
The Roundtable meetings are designed to bring the horticulture industry and Government together to find solutions to increase economic growth and address the many challenges that this industry faces. These include the opportunities and barriers to commercial growth, improving the perception of careers in horticulture to address the skills shortage, the major role horticulture plays in green infrastructure and health and wellbeing, and a lack of clarity about the ways Government can support the industry.

The industry is frequently consulted by and helps Government, especially Defra, on developing and delivering many policies across different areas. The industry currently invests substantial amounts of time and support in doing this. The Roundtable brings the opportunity for Government to help the industry with key challenges and opportunities. For this diverse industry to unite and work together in order to have greater visibility and impact across Government departments, delivering greater productivity and growth.

Key actions

Ornamental Horticulture industry
• For the Ornamental Horticulture industry to engage and commit to take forward the published Ornamental Horticulture Roundtable Action Plan for at least five years. This is necessary to enable the British ornamental sector to realise its full potential, and become a thriving, productive and profitable sector of British industry by 2020.
• To provide clear, objective and accessible evidence and information for Government where possible.

Defra
• For Defra to actively champion the Ornamental Horticulture industry across all relevant Government departments, including the active support of achieving the ‘asks’ detailed in the Ornamental Horticulture Roundtable Action Plan.
• To alert the industry to potential or actual legislative change, avoiding the cumulative effect of too much regulation which could ultimately threaten business profitability.
• To advise the industry to potential funding streams, and to other information which could help improve its sustainability and growth.
• To ensure objective, evidence-based evaluation of the benefits, costs and impacts of any policy changes which could affect the industry.

• For Defra and the Ornamental Horticulture Roundtable to meet three times a year to track the plan’s progress and adjust its asks accordingly.
12 asks of industry and Government

In order to develop the ornamental horticulture sector, and to fill the existing horticultural skills gap, the industry will concentrate on 12 ‘asks’.

The 12 areas of focus
For each of the 12 asks, the industry has made its own promise to work together to develop each area, and has also made a request of relevant Government departments to work with and support the industry in order to achieve the promises. As progress on these areas needs to be measurable, each area of focus also includes outputs.

Detailed measures will be produced by working groups. The industry’s Research & Development bodies HDC (Horticultural Development Company) and HIP (Horticulture Innovation Partnership) will assist in the development of several of the focus areas.

The 12 areas of focus are:

1. Horticulture careers (including apprenticeships, Ambassadors and the GrowCareers website)
2. Horticulture and the National Curriculum
3. Garden tourism
4. Sunday trading
5. Garden EXPO
6. Modernisation, efficiency, effectiveness and sustainability of the supply chain
7. Financial incentives
8. Research and development
9. Sustainable resourcing of the horticultural industry
10. Plant health and the National Pollinator Strategy
11. Human health and horticulture
12. Society and horticulture

Ornamental horticulture industry in facts and figures

- £10.4 billion
  Amount spent in the UK on garden products, tourism and services

- 1 in 3
  Proportion of travellers to the UK who visit a garden or park

- £2 billion
  Value of UK plant and flower production

- 300,000
  The number of people employed in horticulture and landscaping

- £1.4 billion
  Value of tourism in gardens

- £1 billion
  Value of plants and flowers imported into the UK. There is the potential to substitute these imports with home-grown plants and flowers
Education and employment

1 Horticulture careers: apprenticeships, GrowCareers and Ambassadors

Our promise:
To establish if a Level 3 ‘Trailblazer’ (promoting horticultural apprentice schemes) is required for production and/or ornamental horticulture through an online survey and employer feedback.

To lead development of a Level 3 Trailblazer if the need is proven, and actively promote the existence of apprenticeships in horticulture.

We will match-fund the support and development of GrowCareers, ensuring its sustainability and successful promotion of careers in horticulture. This will include the support of Horticulture Ambassadors by:
• reviewing the current industry organisations which offer Horticulture Ambassador schemes.
• supporting a close partnership with the STEM Ambassador programme (to encourage young people to enjoy Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics) and create an integrated approach, process and training for Ambassadors for horticulture.
• creating an information pack for Ambassadors.

Our ask of Government:
To support, based on evidence, further horticulture apprenticeship Trailblazer applications, ensuring they are adaptable and meet employer needs e.g. at Level 3 and beyond in order to promote higher level apprenticeships for increased skills in the industry.

Department responsible: Department for Business Innovation & Skills

To help the Careers Company and National Careers Service understand and highlight the wide range of roles, skills and expertise required for working in horticulture.

Department responsible: Department for Education

To match-fund from the Careers Company, Rural Development Fund, Innovate UK or other avenues of grants, to:
• update the GrowCareers website (www.growcareers.info), the industry-supported place for horticultural careers information.
• produce a series of films to engage, inspire and inform people about careers in horticulture.
• support the future business plan.
• produce an industry information pack for volunteers to become STEM Ambassadors.

Department responsible: Department for Education / Defra / Department for Business Innovation & Skills

Evidence: GrowCareers is the only industry-wide mechanism to promote horticulture jobs and careers as LANTRA, the sector skills council, no longer promotes careers. The industry has developed independent Ambassadors to promote careers and would now like to join the STEM network.

What this will mean
Provision of an increased number of horticulture apprenticeships at Level 3 and beyond by development of Trailblazer apprenticeships.

Promotion of horticulture apprenticeships and careers on Government careers websites, through case studies, up-to-date information from the industry and a stronger relationship with GrowCareers.

A greater awareness of the exciting and varied horticultural careers available and improved multi-channel promotion and information for teachers and those interested in a career in horticulture.

An increased number of people working in horticulture, therefore alleviating the green-skills gap crisis.

A Horticultural Ambassador programme, established through the STEM network, with Ambassadors across the UK.

2 Horticulture and the National Curriculum in England

Our promise:
We will engage with Government and the education sector to provide expertise and guidance to enable horticulture to be embedded across the National Curriculum at all key stages.

Our ask of Government:
Increase delivery of horticulture skills and knowledge (science, design and technology) within primary and secondary schools, Further and Higher Education curriculums, showcasing horticulture, plants, technology and science as well as other curriculum areas.

Department responsible: Department for Education / Ofsted

Evidence: Increasing need to educate children about healthy diet and the natural world. Reduce obesity and improve the health and wellbeing of the nation.
Commercial and promotion

3 Garden tourism

Our promise:
To collect, analyse and disseminate data on garden visiting habits and garden tourism in order to better develop the garden offer and improve the overall UK tourism offer. This will be co-ordinated by the Garden Industry Marketing Board.

Our ask of Government:
To work with the industry to promote garden tourism through VisitBritain, GREAT Britain campaign, Heritage Lottery Fund and other Government-backed organisations.

What this will mean
Significant promotion of gardens, parks and horticulture in national and international tourism campaigns, leading to increased visitor numbers, spend and wellbeing.

Evidence: Around one-third of international tourists visit a garden or park as part of their trip to the UK.

Defra to assist with the process of applying for EU Promotions grants.

Department responsible: Department for Culture, Media & Sport

4 Sunday trading

Our promise:
To continue to provide evidence for the need to give garden centres and garden retailers an exemption from the Sunday Trading Act.

Our ask of Government:
To explore and evaluate evidence from the industry that supports the extension of Sunday and Easter trading.

What this will mean
Increased sales and earning potential on offer for businesses, enabling trade at key times to meet customer demand.

Evidence: The Sunday Trading Act represents a disadvantage against some areas of retail. The industry is prevented from selling plants on key days of the year. Farm shops and online traders operate continuously and are exempt from the Sunday Trading Act, yet they are very similar in the consumer needs they are satisfying.

Defra to assist with the process of applying for EU funding an industry marketing campaigns and promotions.

Department responsible: Department for Business Innovation & Skills

5 Garden EXPO

Our promise:
To help the horticulture industry develop data collection mechanisms on garden visitor numbers with detailed and targeted quantitative and qualitative data collection on visitor habits, motivations and spending patterns for retail and catering.

Our ask of Government:
To explore and evaluate evidence from the industry that supports the extension of Sunday and Easter trading.

What this will mean
Potential large revenues, new jobs and a lasting world-beating legacy from an international garden EXPO. The fostering of new trade links and improved business and export opportunities. Local communities which feel enriched, healthier and more productive with superbly designed new parks and gardens, and an increased sense of pride in Britain and what our industries can do.

Evidence of relevant organisations using the improved industry data to develop their garden offers so they appeal to greater numbers of domestic and international visitors.

Department responsible: Department for Business Innovation & Skills / Department for Communities and Local Government

Evidence: EXPOs are unparalleled in their ability to promote innovation, industrial productivity and a country’s pride, identity and culture. Thousands of jobs will be created and a legacy of attracting new generations into a growing industry. The UK has held national-scale Garden Festivals before, such as Liverpool and Glasgow and this EXPO would go beyond that in leaving a lasting legacy. The annual RHS Chelsea Flower Show is one of the international highlights of the industry and the UK is world famous for its gardens, head gardeners, landscape designers and creative innovation in green infrastructure. The legacy of iconic new parks, green space and infrastructure projects in a new garden city will outlast the immediate multi-million pound revenues from visitors and the subsequent tourism and trade benefits.

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Department responsible: Department for Culture, Media & Sport

Department responsible: Department for Business Innovation & Skills
Our promise:
The industry will work together to:
• develop a best-practice hub (exemplars, information and resources).
• encourage fair and transparent behaviour and thereby promote sustainable and competitive trading relationships throughout the supply chain.
• improve supply chain effectiveness to enable competitiveness.
• facilitate a pilot of an online marketplace for surplus or unreserved plants, to increase domestic sales, reduce waste and substitute imports.

Our ask of Government:
Help us access existing funding streams and initiatives that will enable us to improve our supply chain by:
• helping us access existing grants and funding for training, consultancy, knowledge transfer (to set up the hub and marketplace), and enable businesses to take advantage of the resources we bring together.
• facilitating engagement with the recently established Centre for Agri-Informatics and Metrics of Sustainability as part of the Government’s Agri-Tech Strategy. This will enable the two-way transfer of knowledge and best practice, including big data that can help drive growth in ornamental horticulture.
• encouraging procurement of UK plants wherever possible by public bodies and in publicly funded works and projects.

Department responsible: Department for Business Innovation & Skills

Evidence: Market research commissioned by the HDC (Horticultural Development Corporation) and conducted by the HTA (Horticultural Trades Association) shows that specialist UK garden retailers rate the quality of plants supplied by British growers more highly than those of overseas growers. But these same respondents most often mention improved delivery speed and flexibility as factors that would most increase UK growers’ competitiveness against overseas plant suppliers. Improved effectiveness, efficiency and sustainability in the ornamentals supply chain will lead to substitution of tens of millions of pounds of imported ornamentals annually, with knock on employment and growth benefits for the UK economy.

What this will mean
Increased business growth, quality and standards, and efficiency across the whole retail supply chain.
Increase in sustainable practice and waste reduction.
Increased British-grown plants and produce to benefit UK plc.

6 Modernisation, efficiency, effectiveness and sustainability of the supply chain

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Our ask of Government:
To carry out feasibility and cost-benefit analysis of new fiscal incentives for tax averaging to include ornamental horticulture - and capital and infrastructure allowance regimes, to actively encourage businesses to bring forward investments. Investigate lower VAT regimes for ornamental products and services with reference to other EU member states.

Department responsible: HM Treasury / Department for Business Innovation & Skills

Evidence: A low Annual Investment Allowance discourages the replacement of equipment and investment in technology. Tax averaging across just two years’ profits limits businesses ability to manage the effects of severe weather or other factors that increase profit volatility. Reservoirs forming part of a rainwater harvesting, recycling or treatment process for drinking water qualify for annual investment and capital allowances; reservoirs doing the same for irrigation water for growing plants do not.

5 Financial incentives

Our promise:
Provide evidence and advice to Government to inform decision-making.

Our ask of Government:
To ensure that local Government policies and Government departments adhere to relevant policies promoting the economic and environmental benefit, and increased capacity, of horticultural businesses, therefore reducing our dependence on imported products.

Department responsible: Department for Communities and Local Government / Department for Business Innovation & Skills / local authorities

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Science, research and development

8 Research and development

Our promise:
For the industry to work together to identify the challenges that can be addressed through research and development, and work with funding agencies to deliver strategies.

Greater awareness of funding opportunities for research and development, shared across industry.

Our ask of Government:
To support, fund and facilitate the Horticultural Innovation Partnership (HIP) Research and Development Strategy (due to be published summer 2015) to enable the industry to move forwards and grow through innovation. Research and development requirements for the 12 asks to be achieved.

Government to support the research and documentation on the UK’s ornamental plant diversity.

Department responsible: Department for Business Innovation & Skills / Defra

Evidence: A key test of success will be a significant increase in industry engagement in collaborative research programmes that have addressed key research priorities identified by industry. The degree to which industry financial contributions are leveraged through schemes developed by other research funders (including European schemes such as Horizon 2020) is also a key measure of success. The outcomes of these should have a significant positive impact on the competitiveness (profitability) and resilience of the industry.

What this will mean
A secure, strategic R&D programme for the industry that will enable the UK to be a world leader in the horticultural industries.

Ultimately, the application of the outcomes of research should lead to increased market share, the opening of new markets, new product development and/or technical advances in the industry. There may also be additional environmental and public health benefits that arise from a range of research activities around the impact of green infrastructure.

Consistent naming and better knowledge of the environmental, economic, health and societal benefits of cultivated plants. This will support Government policies.

9 Sustainable resourcing of the horticultural industry

Our promise:
To continue to produce high-quality plants, products and services while minimising the social, economic and environmental impacts. These include watering, growing media, pesticides, energy and waste management.

Our ask of Government:
For Government to support, fund and facilitate the research funding to enable the industry to find solutions to produce high-quality plants, products and services whilst minimising the social, economic and environmental impacts.

Government to review relevant Government policies, to be evidence based.

Department responsible: Defra / EU Commission and European Parliament

Facilitate more effective two-way communication, representation and engagement on crop protection and plant-health issues:
• for Government to inform and work through policies or measures with industry to minimise impacts on growth of the UK ornamental horticulture industry.
• promote more informal discussions with groups of EU member states working on ornamental-plant protection issues to avoid overly precautionary EU measures which have a negative impact on the UK ornamentals industry.

Department responsible: Defra

To provide the ornamental plant industry with an equivalent financial compensation package for losses incurred through disease outbreaks as other sectors, such as livestock, without adding further bureaucracy and cost burden to the industry.

Department responsible: Defra

Evidence: For example, container-grown plants will not survive without water more than 48 hours when standing outdoors on a sunny day. Businesses cannot plan or increase production significantly without knowing there is a secure and adequate water supply. As a result there is a lack of long-term business investment and planning leading to economic growth, import substitution and job security.
**10 Plant health and the National Pollinator Strategy**

**Our promise:**
To engage with APHA (Animal & Plant Health Agency) and other relevant Government and agency staff to provide practical advice and expertise on plant health communications, policy development and implementation. This is to improve biosecurity, plant health and industry resilience in the UK. To provide a similar engagement at EU level due to the international nature of the plant trade and the significant impact these regulations can have on industry and the UK’s environment.

To support research and development in pollination, promote plants and best practices that encourage pollinators so as to strengthen industries support for the National Pollinator Strategy.

**Our ask of Government:**
Facilitate more effective two-way communication, wider representation and engagement to enable an easily accessible single-entry point to access and interpret clear plant-health information.

Department responsible: Defra

**What this will mean**
Government and industry working together to improve biosecurity, communications, policy development and implementation of plant health best practices in the UK.

Improved integrated pest management strategies that prevent and control pests in the UK, minimise the use of pesticides and maintain healthy plants and landscapes.

Increased awareness of the National Pollinator Strategy through initiatives like the Wales Natural Buzz campaign and the RHS Perfect for Pollinators.

Evidence: Ash dieback showed that industry has a vital role to play in alerting Government to new pest and disease threats and in providing mechanisms to prevent UK outbreaks. Imported plant material poses a high risk, but there are examples of unnecessary cost and bureaucracy burdens being placed unfairly on the industry. The National Pollinator Strategy highlights the evidence of the threat to our pollinators. The RHS Perfect for Pollinators plants are known to be a rich source of food for pollinators and are a proven, commercially viable method to promote plants for this purpose.

**11 Human health and horticulture**

**Our promise:**
To host and support a ‘Health and Horticulture Forum’ with Government representation leading to the development of a health and horticulture strategy. We will research the benefits (Natural Health Service / gardening on prescription / mental and physical) of horticulture, providing horticultural information and expertise to underpin plans and activities.

**Our ask of Government:**
To use the Health and Horticulture Forum to bring the horticultural industry and the medical profession together and to deliver a conference that leads to a multi-disciplinary research and development strategy for horticulture to improve health in the UK.

Department responsible: Department of Health

**What this will mean**
New garden and landscape designs created for specific health and wellbeing benefits.

Robust research and information on the benefits of ornamental plants, gardening and landscapes. As these are implemented they will help reduce demand on the NHS, leading to commercially available ornamental plant ranges for delivering specific health and wellbeing benefits.

**Our ask of Government:**
Facilitate more effective two-way communication, wider representation and engagement to enable an easily accessible single-entry point to access and interpret clear plant-health information.

Department responsible: Defra

**What this will mean**
To support the promotion of initiatives to encourage the use of pollinator-friendly plants and best practices to encourage more biodiversity, such as the Wales Natural Buzz campaign and RHS Perfect for Pollinators.

To support and carry out research into integrated pest management and viable alternatives to preventing and controlling major pests that impact on the horticultural industry.

Department responsible: Defra

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**Evidence:** The industry recognises that gardening represents a healthy activity which could save the NHS £billions per year by alleviating obesity, heart disease and mental health issues. The industry can provide the expertise and materials to help deliver these benefits and would like Government to acknowledge and support gardening as a viable therapy, working with industry to promote this through the health system.
Our promise:
The industry will provide match-funding, expertise, guidance and support to design better Green Infrastructure (GI) evaluation techniques which will help integrate GI into planning practice through local planning authorities. Industry has identified the Green Infrastructure Partnership as a potential partner and vehicle for delivering this. To undertake research and development on how much and what types of Green Infrastructure is required to obtain the maximum socio-economic benefits.

The industry will actively engage with community gardening groups and volunteers to improve local environments and build a healthier, socially inclusive and more-resilient community.

Our ask of Government:
For Government and local authorities procurement departments to be an exemplar client with respect to landscaping and GI, using findings from the London Olympics 2012 on future significant developments such as the HS2 rail link.

To provide match-funding to design and develop a GI balance sheet, to enable planning authorities to measure and ensure good GI implementation practice (robust tools and guidance, auditing process, case studies). Support for the industry and GI partnership in this work.

For Government to ensure all new garden cities are built to include best green infrastructure and horticultural practice.

For Government and local authorities to strategically value and promote the benefits of parks and gardens.

Department responsible: Department for Education / Department of Health / Department for Communities and Local Government

Evidence: Evidence shows that gardens within housing developments are getting smaller and parks’ budgets are being increasingly squeezed. This means the amount and quality of green space, GI and natural capital is diminishing, along with health and productivity benefits. Planning authorities currently do not have practical tools to measure and audit GI, nor do they have any powers to enforce or access GI guidance.

What this will mean:
More and better quality Green Infrastructure is created in our towns and cities, and GI is embedded in our planning system. Planning authorities have the tools, guidance, remit and authority to ensure GI is fully incorporated into new and existing developments.

Increased social, economic and environmental benefits through Research and Development providing new GI products and services.
The Ornamental Horticulture Roundtable is comprised of representatives from the horticultural sector and aims to increase growth and competitiveness for the UK ornamental horticulture industry.

www.horticulture.org.uk

www.hdc.org.uk*

www.the-hta.org.uk

www.hip.org.uk

www.nfuoonline.com

www.lantra.co.uk

www.younghort.com

*In June 2015 HDC will become known as AHDB Horticulture.