

# The Horticulturist



## Horticulture in the South Atlantic

**PLUS** Vegetable agroforestry systems | Medicinal trees | Peat-free horticulture | YHoY Travel Bursary | YHoY 2020

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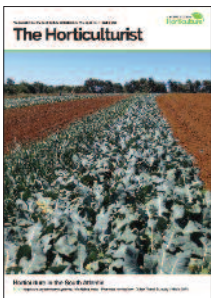
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**Cover** Brassica production on the farm of Colin Thomas at Longwood Fields on St Helena.  
(Photo: Leigh Morris)

## FROM THE PRESIDENT

### An unprecedented series of events

Never before have we experienced such a combination of events over winter and into spring. Incessant rainfall from October 2019, widespread flooding and now disease becoming a global pandemic in a two-month period. It reads like a dystopian movie but it's real and sometimes feels surreal. Health matters will be viewed through a completely different prism when we come out the other side of this pandemic.

This period of self-isolation will certainly become a reflective period for us and perhaps lead to changes in behaviour patterns, work aspirations and work/life/balance. Microsoft Teams, TeamViewer and Zoom are all taking the business strain of multi-platform work collaboration while at home and we will certainly all be experts in remote working soon. Three weeks of intensive family bonding will either improve the garden beyond recognition or lead to some serious cabin fever – I hope the garden is the winner.

For 2020 we will now embark on a 'Festival of Horticulture' in the glorious city of Edinburgh at the Royal Botanic Garden. From 24-26 September we will have our AGM, YHoY Finals, Conference and tours of horticultural sites and establishments to re-invigorate the senses and grow our knowledge.

We now go into a trying period for growers and garden managers and I hope that government support will see us all through this period and that we will be healthy and raring to march on with the rest of the year. The Chartered Institute of Horticulture has great structures and an excellent diversity of members ready to weather this storm.

In this edition of *The Horticulturist* our editor has compiled a varied list of papers highlighting the diversity of member activity around the world. Very few journals have quite the range of member activity, in differing geographical locations with so many diverse crops as the journal of the Chartered Institute of Horticulture.

I look forward to seeing you all later in the year.

### Gerald Bonner C Hort FCIHort, President

[president@horticulture.org.uk](mailto:president@horticulture.org.uk)

Facebook: CIHort | Twitter and Instagram: @CIHort



## The Horticulturist

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Editor Barbara Segall C Hort FCIHort

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## Editorial enquiries

Feature articles, and letters relating to them, are invited from readers. Features, letters and all contributions for the news pages should be sent to the Editor, Barbara Segall, Primrose Cottage, Edgworth Road, Sudbury, Suffolk CO10 2TG [barbara@bsegall.plus.com](mailto:barbara@bsegall.plus.com)

## Advertising enquiries

Hall-McCartney Limited, Heritage House, PO Box 21, Baldock, Hertfordshire SG7 5SH  
01462 896688  
[cih@hall-mccartney.co.uk](mailto:cih@hall-mccartney.co.uk)

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## Chartered Institute of Horticulture

BGA House, Nottingham Road, Louth, Lincolnshire LN11 0WB  
03330 050181  
[cih@horticulture.org.uk](mailto:cih@horticulture.org.uk)  
[www.horticulture.org.uk](http://www.horticulture.org.uk)

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# Vegetable agroforestry systems in the UK

## FOOD PRODUCTION

In her thesis **Pippa Green** assessed three field-scale vegetable production sites in the UK where alley-cropping, a form of agroforestry, has been established. Her findings suggest that this novel system of growing offers many opportunities for horticulture and that further research would be of benefit.

How we can use land sustainably and produce food are major challenges facing the UK horticultural industry today. In particular, rising up the political agenda are the concerns around climate change, biodiversity loss and soil degradation, and the need to increase resilience and adaptation to changing weather patterns. Agroforestry is an innovative land use system that has received little attention by the UK horticultural industry, but which could be a useful model for dealing with some of these pressing concerns. The approach is gaining attention due to its potential in combining the benefits of planting trees with large-scale food production. The recent Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) *Special Report on Climate Change and Land* (IPCC, 2019), for

example, describes agroforestry as offering important multifunctional benefits and mitigation potential in respect to climate change.

Wanting to explore how agroforestry and commercial horticulture could be combined, in 2019, for my RHS Master of Horticulture (RHS MHort) dissertation research, I sought to assess how one particular system of agroforestry could potentially be of benefit to field-scale vegetable producers.

### What is agroforestry?

Agroforestry can be simply defined as a practice of integrating trees/woody plants with crops and/or livestock. Agroforestry systems may be established for a range of reasons, a key aspect being the

multiple benefits that such a system can provide for the grower, the environment and wider society. For example, for the grower, agroforestry may yield various products (e.g. fruit, nuts, timber, fuel), provide microclimate benefits (e.g. shelter or shade for crops and animals) and business diversification. There are also local and wider environmental benefits that may be realised, for example, enhanced biodiversity, soil health, water management and carbon storage by trees. Social benefits may include enhanced rural and business opportunities provided by such diverse systems. A recent review of the research literature by Gordon *et al* (2018) outlines many of these benefits.

Today, a range of agroforestry practices are