

# The Horticulturist



## Conserving the world of tropical plants

**PLUS** The garden jungle | Automation in mushroom harvesting | Apples unearthed | Outdoor benefits | CIH webinar series

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## FROM THE PRESIDENT

### Horticulture playing a significant role

At the start of the second phase of lockdown in November it was clear that we had learned much from the first period. Food horticulture continues to feed the nation while government has seen sense to stimulate the nation through garden centres and our park professionals continue to exercise the nation. From this triumvirate of contribution it can be concluded that horticulture in its many forms is playing a significant role in the maintenance and recovery of the nation!

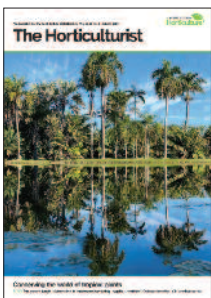
On September 24 we enjoyed our first AGM via video conference followed by the James Bruce Lecture by Dr Dave Goulson, Professor of Biology at the University of Sussex. The online AGM was attended by an amazing number of 132 visitors. At the AGM I was also delighted to make the 'President's Award' to our very own Editor of *The Horticulturist*, Barbara Segall. We also celebrated the Fellowship nominations of George Gilchrist and Ted Smith. In addition we also awarded Chartered status to Simon Jones, Mark Pollard, Alex Brotherton, Ian Li and Duncan Thomas. I was also delighted to welcome three new trustees to our Council in the shape of Phil Pearson, Group Development Director of APS Salads; James Simpson MD of Adrian Scripps and Angela Evans, former Chair of the South East Branch.

At HQ we continue to develop our member database, planning for the launch of Chartered Institute examinations and the imminent appointment of our new development officer. All committee meetings continue to be conducted through video conference and this is working very well with branch chairs, past presidents and the council of trustees.

You may also be enjoying the CIHort webinar series devised by our Hon Secretary Jason Daff. We anticipate continuing this into 2021 and hope that this is providing a regular dose of 'horticultural stimulus' to members. New ideas for events are always welcome!

Our 2021 AGM is planned to take place at Harrogate in April and by that time we hope that video conferencing will be a distant memory. The YHoY final will take place at RBG Logan in May and conference will hopefully be a celebration of a return to the 'in reality' horticulture conference scene, at RBG Edinburgh in September 2021.

I wish you all a very happy festive season and hope that we can see some light at the end of the tunnel in 2021.



**Cover** Part of the world-renowned palm collection, The Lowlands, Fairchild Tropical Botanical Garden. (Photo: Lawrence Wright)

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### Write for *The Horticulturist*

Much of the content of *The Horticulturist* arises from voluntary contributions from members in the shape of ideas, articles and photographs.

If you are interested in writing an article for the journal or have a newsworthy item please contact the Editor, Barbara Segall, at [barbara@bsegall.plus.com](mailto:barbara@bsegall.plus.com).

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# The garden jungle

**JAMES BRUCE LECTURE 2020** In his James Bruce Lecture to CIH members at the recent virtual AGM **Professor Dave Goulson** outlined the perilous state of the planet and in particular that of insects and wildlife. Here he suggests ways to save the planet including through gardening.

We are making a terrible mess of our beautiful planet. The human population has already overshot that which the planet can comfortably support, and will rise to at least 10 billion in the coming decades. As a result of man's many activities, our climate is changing, and may soon reach a point where the changes become irreversible. Our soils, rivers, air and seas are polluted variously with plastics, heavy metals, pesticides, fertilisers, and many thousands of other man-made chemicals. Globally, soil is eroding and degrading, rivers and aquifers are being depleted of water, fish stocks are being over-harvested, and coral reefs are bleaching and dying.

We are in the midst of the sixth mass extinction event, with species disappearing at a rate that the Earth has not experienced for 65 million years, since the dinosaurs were extirpated. Insects have

experienced massive declines in abundance; UK surveys show that butterflies, moths, bees and hoverflies have been in steady decline for at least five decades, and a recent study from Germany found that insect biomass has dropped by 76% over the last 26 years. This is particularly alarming, since insects are vital to the functioning of ecosystems. They make up about 60% of all known species, and are food for many of the rest. They pollinate the large majority of wild plants and  $\frac{3}{4}$  of the crops we grow. They recycle dung and corpses, keep the soil healthy, and control pests. In short, without insects, life as we know it would cease.

Why are insects and other wildlife disappearing? In short, it is due to us. We are destroying habitat around the globe, to make way for roads, factories, housing estates, open-cast mines, car parks and

much, much more. Intensive industrial farming eradicates almost all life from the land, focussing on growing vast monocultures of single crops that have to be drenched in fertilisers and pesticides. Some modern pesticides are terrifyingly toxic; for example it takes just one teaspoon of a neonicotinoid insecticide to kill one and a quarter billion honeybees. These particular pesticides are so widely used, and so persistent in the environment, that a recent study found them in 75% of honey samples collected from around the world. Three quarters of the world's honeybees (and presumably all other flower-visiting insects) are being routinely exposed to these highly potent insecticides. More broadly, 500 different pesticides are licensed for use in the EU, 900 in the USA. Farmers in the UK alone apply 16,900 tons of pesticide to the landscape each year.