

The Horticulturist



Young Horticulturist of the Year 2021

PLUS Silent Space | Gardening in a pandemic | Social and therapeutic horticulture | Public parks | National Food Strategy

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Cover The Cordyline Walk at RBG Edinburgh's Logan Botanic Garden, near Stranraer. The Grand Final of the CIH Young Horticulturist of the Year Competition 2021 was held at Logan earlier this year. Full report on pages 18-19.
Photo: Chris Bird

FROM THE PRESIDENT

I am proud to be part of an industry that has a pivotal role in technological development for both glasshouse and field production of food crops and ornamentals. Tractors operated by GPS, the use of drones to monitor crop growth, state of the art fully automated glasshouses and robots are ensuring that we maximise the potential of home-grown produce. The uncertainty of the present labour market is cause for concern, but we are responding in innovative ways.

Climate change and sustainability are at the forefront of our thoughts. We have a large part to play, whether it is reducing our carbon footprint, the management of green spaces or the reduction in the use of chemicals. Growers are increasingly using alternative energy sources; harvesting grey water and sourcing recyclable materials for pots and trays. The 26th UN Climate Change Conference of Parties (COP 26) took place in Glasgow uniting the world to tackle climate change. To mark the event, the Chartered Institute of Horticulture put on two events showcasing 'Best Practise Across the Horticulture Industry in meeting the UN's Sustainability Goals.' The Government has recently published its Net Zero Strategy. This sets out the Government's policies and proposals for decarbonising all sectors of the UK economy, in light of the UK's 2050 net zero target. It outlines financial support for horticulture and agriculture, the protection of natural resources and a commitment to supporting Green Skills.

In order to be successful we require a workforce of talented people. We are witnessing a major change in education. Modern apprenticeships at all levels have seen a significant increase in recent years, and the Institute is working with other stakeholders to shape the future of qualifications. In addition to gaining qualifications Chartership status is an indication of expertise. We are hosting a series of interactive sessions to make the process more accessible for both existing and new members.

As we move into winter, I have time to reflect on the past few months. The highlight is the Young Horticulturist of the Year Grand Final held at RBGE Logan Botanic Garden. Despite the challenges of holding the final outdoors, it was a successful event. The contestants produced a close and exciting contest. The Final of the 2022 competition is only a short time away and it will be held at The University of Warwick, Coventry CV4 7AL on Saturday 7 May 2022.

We have now returned to attending live shows. The first of which was the Landscape Show. This has moved from London to NEC Birmingham, giving the opportunity for more people to attend. Whilst highlighting the work the Institute undertakes, it gives us the opportunity to meet with existing members and encourage others to join.

As we near the end of 2021 it is hard to believe that Covid-19 is still creating uncertainty. I hope that we will soon return to some sort of normality. I wish you all good health and prosperity in 2022.

Susan Nicholas FCIHort, President
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Write for The Horticulturist

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A silent space

BIOPHILIA Founder of Silent Space, **Liz Ware**, looks back at its beginnings and charts how it has developed into a registered charity with around 60 participating gardens.

Neuroscientists tell us that making time to reflect is crucial for our brains. Plenty of other research confirms that being peaceful in biodiverse, green places contributes to our wellbeing. In theory, those of us who work with plants, whether as an amateur or a professional have every opportunity to be in the best of health. But how often do we remember to stop, really stop and soak up the beauty around us? When I started the charity Silent Space to give garden visitors the chance to

reflect, I had no idea how many of us would benefit.

In common with anyone who researches, writes about, or photographs gardens open to the public, I've spent a lot of time alone in beautiful places outside normal opening hours. It's an enormous privilege and the peace is often profound. For years, I wondered how that experience could be shared more widely – without making extra work for busy garden teams.

Over time, I developed an idea. Why not reserve an area that is already visited and therefore maintained? Rather like the quiet carriage on a train, visitors could be silent in it while the sounds of the garden went on around them. As so often happens when we have a good idea, I did nothing about it until a family illness forced me to change the way I worked.

In 2015, encouraged by research on the benefits of connecting quietly to nature, I took my idea for