

The Horticulturist



Are microgreens the way forward in food production?

PLUS Vertical farming | Carnivorous plants | Project Giving Back | T Levels | YHoY 2022 | CIH President's Award

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FROM THE PRESIDENT

Reflecting on the advances made by the Council of Trustees, Branches and Management Board I can see that we are making progress in implementing our strategic goals. The Specialist Interest Group (SIG) on Social and Therapeutic Horticulture held an open meeting in June attended by many members from the sector. Although they came from different organisations, the challenges they face were common to many of them. We are now in the process of electing the committee to lead the group in making decisions on the direction they take. We offer an independent platform with the support to ensure they are successful. The Chair of the SIG will be elected on to the CIH Council of Trustees ensuring that they have true representation.

In response to the student group findings, the first newsletter specifically for students will be published in September. This will address some of the challenges highlighted in recent discussions. As you are aware we offer free membership to students. When they finish their course, they do not normally have the required experience, or in some cases the available finance, for membership. We are introducing a new level of membership, that of Early-Years Horticulturist, targeted at the recently qualified and those changing career, enabling them to become members of the CIH.

The AGM was held at the Harrogate Flower Show and visiting the show was an added advantage providing a change from the restrictions of the previous years. In May I attended the Chelsea Young Persons breakfast with a small number of young people associated with CIH. It was generously hosted by The Newt, Somerset. Some 200 young people had the opportunity to meet with the designers and builders of some of the show gardens to gain an insight into the process. They also had the chance to network with many other professionals whilst enjoying the delicious produce from The Newt.

In May the Grand Final of the Young Horticulturist of the Year competition was held at the University of Warwick. It is delightful to see young people from our industry compete with enthusiasm and show the extensive depth of knowledge they have in many subjects. Charles Shi from Royal Botanic Gardens Kew was a worthy winner.

In education the introduction of T Level Apprenticeships, and changes to other levels are progressing. Helen Sessions (CIH Development Officer) is working closely with partner organisations and trail-blazer groups to ensure we have input into future qualifications (see page 23).

Industry-wise we are still facing many challenges. The recently published Food Strategy for England advised that we produce 75% of what we consume. Edible producers in Britain are working hard to increase yields. The increase in robotics and automation will help to do this. The current economic climate with associated rising costs gives rise to concern. It is hoped that we have the resilience to overcome the challenges.

Susan Nicholas FCIHort, President
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Cover McCormack Family Farms Ireland supply cut and living microgreens (photo: McCormack Family Farms Ireland).

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Write for *The Horticulturist*

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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.

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FOOD PRODUCTION Sally Drury looks at the innovative firms showing how vertical farming can help to meet a range of important challenges.

Vertical farming: who are the pioneers?

A report delivered by the independent Climate Change Committee this summer predicts global warming will hit the UK harder than originally thought, with intense heatwaves and rainfall damaging homes, infrastructure and services. Farming and food production will also be hit.

But how can we mitigate climate change and reduce reliance on imported food while feeding a rising urban population, tackling soil depletion and the loss of agricultural land, reducing food miles, minimising agriculture's greenhouse gas emission, saving water, eliminating the use of peat, providing nutrient-rich food and creating

jobs in the 'green' sector'? It sounds quite a challenge – but it is one that has been taken up by tech-bods. Vertical farming is taking off.

Restaurant suppliers

Harvest London was founded by Chris Davies and Matt Chlebek in 2017 to supply restaurants in London with locally-grown herbs and greens. It started with a hi-tech vertical farm in Leyton, growing more than 100 edible plants, including basil and lettuce, and has since established a second farm. Davies wants to develop more data-driven farms in London but is also exploring

opportunities in Birmingham, Manchester and Edinburgh.

To feed its guests with fresh, locally grown, nutrient-rich produce, Therme Group – a global provider of nature, health and culture – plans to roll out the development of large-scale vertical farms at all its resorts worldwide. The venture involves a partnership with technology from UK-based Intelligent Growth Solutions (IGS). The produce grown will be used in skin products as well as Therme's restaurants and bars.

In the summer, Bristol-based indoor farming technology provider LettUs Grow established its