

# The Horticulturist



## What is horticulture?

**PLUS** To mow or not to mow? | One Garden Brighton | International Horticulture Congress | CIH Conference

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**Cover** Baby leaf crops grown in Hampshire (photo: Watercress Company/Mr Tom Amery).

## FROM THE PRESIDENT

As we move towards the end of a year that has seen economic pressure rise to unprecedented levels, coupled with turmoil in government, it is hoped that 2023 will bring a level of stability.

We have been working collaboratively across the industry to ensure that careers in horticulture are highlighted with government ministers, to raise the profile of the extensive and diverse careers that are available. A debate in the House of Lords led by Baroness Fookes 'Supporting the provision of careers in the horticultural sector and its role in protecting the environment', outlined the challenges. The shortage of qualified staff at all levels must be addressed. The prospective changes to FE funding could impact both on traditional courses and apprenticeships. The growth in apprenticeships highlights the need for industry placements, and it is imperative that this is tackled now given the lead-in time for approval of new qualifications.

In September we took part in the Four Oaks Trade Show 'Educate, Collaborate, and Innovate' Zone events. Members led by Helen Sessions took part in panel discussions advocating the benefits of Continual Professional Development and provided information on our stand. The LSA Fellowship Group worked with us to promote both organisations.

The 'Sourcing and Establishing Healthy Trees' event took place at the new Tree Health Centre at Yorkshire Arboretum as a joint venture with Plant Network. Dr Charles Lane from Fera Science spoke about tree health and discussed his role in helping to build biosecurity awareness and measures across the horticultural industry.

The CIH Conference held at Royal Botanic Gardens Edinburgh in October brought together several outstanding speakers who shared their wealth of knowledge with enthusiastic attendees. Lively debate followed many of the presentations. Coupled with external visits to Jupiter Artland, Saughton Park and a tour of the Botanic Gardens, it was satisfying to finally hold the event in real life after two attempts during lockdown. Thanks to George Gilchrist and David Knott for the effort they put in to ensure it was successful.

The Education Core Interest Group is in the process of being finalised. James Wagstaff will chair the group.

Sue Crosby has been appointed Chair of the Social and Therapeutic Horticulture (STH) Group and will soon join the Council of Trustees. The STH Group is well underway and is concentrating on three areas of work: Knowledge and Best Practice Sharing, Science and Practice, and Careers. They are shortly to announce their first event for members.

In preparation for the launch of our new membership category – 'Early Careers Horticulturists' – we now have a group of enthusiastic and talented young people to contribute to the programme. Claire Mitchell has been appointed to lead the group.

I wish you all health and prosperity for 2023.

**Susan Nicholas FCIHort, President**  
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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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**SEEKING A DEFINITION** Professor Geoff Dixon offers a lifetime's musing on how he has sought to develop and define just what horticulture actually is and why it has fascinated him as a discipline throughout his long career.

# What is horticulture?

This teasing question was asked of me when I was a young and very inexperienced undergraduate. The questioner was Professor Herbert Miles, Head of the Department of Horticulture, Wye College (University of London) and subsequently one of my much-revered mentors. The challenge of developing a definition of our discipline has followed and perplexed me ever since.

## Formative thinking

Examining briefly his background illustrates why

Miles posed such questions. He was a very well-regarded entomologist, deeply respected horticulturist and scholar. He published impressive studies of the biological balance between insect pests and their predators in the apple orchards of Somerset (Miles 1921). Today, such research would be regarded as fundamental insights into the basis of biological control and biodiversity. In the early 1960s Professor Miles took his nascent undergraduates into long-established Kent orchards and acquainted them with biological

control.

That was Miles' perceptive gift immediately before Rachel Carson (1962) published *Silent Spring*. He gave his students a basis for interpreting the forthcoming and cyclic changes in horticulture. He also provided his students with a context of the arts and humanities via lectures covering aspects of horticultural and garden history. As his tutee I studied the Victorian country literature of Hudson, Jefferies and Cobbett. Professor Miles and the Wye College