

Horticulture Group

Newsletter

Issue 3 / April 2009

Editorial Welcome

No you have not missed a March issue. We felt that with a publishing date so near the end of the month it was better to name the issue after the month ahead rather than the month already gone.

Editor

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The National Horticultural Forum

The National Horticultural Forum (NHF) arose in 2002 from a recommendation made in a Defra review of horticultural R&D, chaired by Sir Colin Spedding. Colin Spedding recommended that 'An independent National Horticultural Forum should be established to create and update an overview or vision of the horticultural industry. It should identify the major R&D needs and the important contributions that the industry could make to all its stakeholders and to society generally.'

The Forum takes the form of a Steering Group that meets three times a year and pulls together representatives from all the stakeholders in Horticultural R & D; the research providers, the funders and the users. SCI joined the Steering Group in 2008 and is currently represented by Professor

Geoffrey Dixon. In addition to the Steering Group, there is a Research Providers Group which meets once a year to review aspects of research programmes underway.

One of the key aspects of the NHF is its independence. This allows it to distil down the views of the various stakeholders into a coherent industry view. The aim is to focus on the strategic needs of the sector and the far market research it requires. It does not have a direct lobbying role as a number of the member organisations of the Steering Group already undertake this role. By virtue of its independence the NHF's industry wide view adds weight to any argument.

Costing 20K per annum per annum, the Forum is entirely self-funded by the members of both the Steering Group and the Research Providers Group. Opinions vary on how well this money has been spent and whether the NHF has fulfilled its remit to date.

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Group Development

Given the state of the world's economy, it is really pleasing to note that our membership continues to grow. Our network gets broader with new members from Canada, Greece, Kenya, Spain, Turkey and the USA. It is clear that many members are actively employed in horticulture. We now have members from at least 24 research centres, universities and colleges as well as a wide range of horticultural businesses. Furthermore, those still at college or university and so just starting their careers, are identifying with the Horticulture Group.

We remain committed to offering an inclusive network 'where science meets business' as typified by this monthly e-bulletin that is available to anyone upon request. We are committed to a range of activities from conferences such as the forthcoming 'Plants to the Rescue', site visits such as those to the Cranfield University Postharvest Laboratories and to Kew Gardens, guest speakers of the calibre of Sir Don Curry and news dissemination.

Mike Hall (Chairman)

Society of Chemical Industry

www.soci.org

SCI founded in London 1881 and in New York 1894
Incorporated by Royal Charter 1907, Registered as UK Charity 206883
Recognised as a not for profit organisation across the world

However, looking to the future the Steering Group recognises that its activities have not been publicised well enough and there is a need to improve communication.

Although seen by many as just a talking shop, in the six years since its foundation it has commissioned three key reports. The first of these was a Skills Audit of Horticultural R&D in 2003. This examined the scientific and research skills available to horticultural R & D and identified areas of strength and

weakness, as well as making recommendations on how the latter should be addressed. ([Read Report](#))

The second report on the Future of the UK Horticultural Industry 2005 was seen as a wake-up call to the industry as it found that the industry needed to evolve and become more professional if it was to survive in a competitive international marketplace. Several key areas of research were identified including improving packaging and reducing labour costs. ([Read Report](#))



Neil Bragg, Chairman of HDC signs the partnership agreement with its French counterpart Astredhor (see below)

Industry News

Compost spec. wrapped up

A review is being undertaken by WRAP (Waste & Resources Action Programme), BSI British Standards and the Association for Organics Recycling of the standard for high-grade compost, BSI PAS 100. Compost must meet minimum quality criteria to ensure its suitability for use as a soil improver, mulch, turf dressing or ingredient in other products. The final document should be published in late summer 2009. (*Hort Week*, 17 March 2009)

Ornamental breeding

The threat to chemical use in the UK has spurred a new focus on plant breeding for pest & disease resistance. Hillier Nurseries nursery director Hossein Arshadi says 'When we selected *Acer campestre* 'Streetwise' for launch, it had 20 years of R&D behind it. Growing it on and checking for habit and vigour but also for resistance to mildew, to which *Acer campestre* is very susceptible. (*Hort Week*, 20 February 2009).

Warwick HRI top rank

Warwick HRI was ranked top in the Research Assessment Exercise - a UK university-wide inspection to assess research quality and activity. Sixty percent of Warwick HRI's research was judged to be world leading or internationally excellent (*Hort Week*, 24 Feb 2009)

Search for varieties that use less phosphorus

Scientists at Warwick HRI, Scottish Crop Research Institute and the University of Nottingham are investigating plant adaptations for efficient uptake and use of phosphorus. They found a positive correlation between the supply of phosphorus in the soil and the development of new root hair cells and the number of specialist proteins in root hair cell membranes involved in the uptake of phosphorus. Secondary roots also grow down into the soil where they can find more nutrients and more water instead of spreading near the surface. Brassica varieties will be screened prior to selection and breeding for lines that require less phosphorus fertiliser (*Hort Week*, 27 February 2009)

Antipodean merger

New Zealand-based HortResearch has merged with Crop & Food Research to form the New Zealand Institute for Plant & Food Research. The main aim is to achieve faster, better innovation including getting the breeding time frame down to five - ten years rather than twenty years, concentrating on sustainable production systems and creating the right decision tools for the industry (*FPJ*, 13 February, 2009).

HDC wins French partner

A partnership has been formed between HDC and its French equivalent Astredhor to share research and drive funding. HDC chairman Neil Bragg said the agreement would enable a more co-ordinated approach to research, and help prevent duplication (*Hort Week*, 27 February 2009)

Money for Phytophthora control

Defra has announced that it will invest £25 million to help eradicate the plant diseases *Phytophthora ramorum* and *Phytophthora kernoviae* that are currently threatening Britain's landscape with conditions such as sudden oak death. ([see details](#)) Also for interesting information and an outbreak map [see here](#).

Intense tomato

Nunhem's new tomato variety Intense is about to launch into one of the big four UK supermarkets. This variety that won the Fruit Logistica Innovation Award 2008, retains its juice when cut and is described as the 'sandwich tomato' (*FPJ*, 13 February 2009).

Crown gall help needed

The HDC is urging growers to help it develop effective controls for crown gall. To take part in the survey click on the link to the survey. ([link](#))

Industry News cont...

Farewell to Kirton

Warwick HRI's Kirton research centre closed on 28 February. The station, originally part of the ADAS network was renowned for its work on ornamental bulbs and other East Anglian vegetable crops (*FPJ*, 6 March 2009)

Vertical growing

Verticrop is an eco-technology system which is designed to maximise the potential of available growing space and sophisticated hydroponics to achieve ten to twenty times the yields of conventional field crops while using up to 95% less water. Daniel Caiger-Smith, of Valcent Products says 'We are just beginning to bring VertiCrop to the market with the first commercial installation underway in the UK, and considerable interest shown in the Middle East (*FloraCulture International*, March 2009).

New resin pathway

Addagrip's resin-bonded surface has been used to restore Grade II-registered parkland at Bedwellty House in Wales and local council representative Clare Woodward says 'we're impressed with the resilience of the path and pleased with the overall effect.' ([details](#))

Kenya feels the crunch

The currency situation could result in Kenyan fresh produce exports to the UK falling by half this year (*FPJ*, 27 February 2009).

MorePeople Award

The Sales & Marketing Professional of the Year 2009 Award went to Margie Ribton of Tendercare Nurseries - the first time the award has not gone to a man! As the Director of Retail and Design Sales at Tendercare, Margie has used the knowledge she gained from a career in photography and promotional branding, to bring new ideas to her

career in horticulture. (*Grower of the Year Awards 2009 Supplement*). See Picture >>>>

Save the genes

Birmingham University and Warwick University are calling on growers of traditional vegetable varieties to help with a new Defra-funded research to preserve them for the benefit of future generations. They plan to build a list of varieties and find ways of preserving them in both their local environment and the Vegetable Gene Bank at Warwick HRI. (*FPJ*, 20 Feb 2009)

New NFU Board Chairman

Lincolnshire-based grower of field vegetables, Sarah Pettit, has been elected the new chairman of the NFU's horticulture board. Sarah is a partner in the family farming business growing sprouts and purple-spouting broccoli near Boston, Lincolnshire. She takes over from retiring chairman, Richard Hirst.

Storage technology

'New developments in the storage industry include green solutions to cooling using natural secondary refrigerants, energy-saving control systems and remote monitoring and control of plant equipment,' says John Dye of UK refrigeration and cooling specialist IMA Cooling systems. Many believe that low-energy, natural refrigeration

systems will become the norm for larger chilled storage units in the future (*FPJ Supplement*, Mar 2009).

Cold conditioning

Norman Pendred Ltd has developed technology that allows companies to turn their cold rooms into conditioning rooms. Tru-fog is lighter than air and is made of visible droplets of ultra-pure, demineralised water suspended in the air like a fog - going far beyond standard humidification.

Temperature reduction throughout the crop is faster, more even and requires less refrigeration power to remove field heat. Crops harvested during dry weather rehydrate to maintain maximum pick weight, quality and shelf life. Vitacress Salads Ltd in Hampshire already uses the system (*FPJ Supplement*, March 2009) ([see details](#))

Sustainable Bioenergy Centre launched

The biggest ever single UK public investment in bioenergy research has been launched by the BBSRC (Biotechnology and Biological Sciences Research Council). The £27M centre involves 15 universities and institutes and 15 industrial partners. The Centre's research activities will encompass many different stages of bioenergy production, from widening the range of materials that can be the starting point for bioenergy, to improving the crops used by making them grow more efficiently to changing plant cell walls. The Centre will also analyse the complete economic and environmental life cycle of potential sources of bioenergy. Click [here](#).

New view on trees

The Trees and Design Action Group aims to change our perception of the urban tree population. ([details](#))



eEvents Calendar

Event Name	Date	Venue	Contact
Innovation in Packaging (Science & Enterprise Group)	14 May 2009 Details	SCI Headquarters London	Erin Taylor email
Pesticide Application in Sport, Leisure & Amenity Areas	19 May 2009 Details	SCI Headquarters London	AAB email
Kew Gardens: A behind the scenes tour.	20 May 2009 Details	Royal Botanic Gardens Kew	Erin Taylor email
Evening tour of the Cambridge University Botanic Garden	11 June 2009 Details	Cambridge Botanic Garden	John O'Toole email
Plants to the Rescue	30 September 2009 Details	SCI Headquarters London	Erin Taylor email

Other events that may be of interest

International Conference, Advances in Plant Virology – 1-3 April 2009, Harrogate, Yorkshire - [details](#)

Plant Health Problems – 9 May 2009, Eden Project, Cornwall - [details](#)

Kildare Trade Show - 22-23 June 2009, Nass, Ireland - [details](#)

Fruit Focus - 22 July 2009, East Malling, Kent - [details](#)

Plantarium - 26-29 August, Boskoop, The Netherlands - [details](#)

Eastgro - 5 August 2009, Pettistree, Suffolk - [details](#)

Four Oaks Trade Show - 8-9 September 2009, Lower Withington, Cheshire - [details](#)

VII International Symposium on Soil and Substrate Disinfestation. - September 13-18, 2009, Leuven, Belgium - [details](#)

GLEE - 20-22 September 2009, NEC, Birmingham - [details](#)

International Trials Conference: Assessment of Ornamental Plants. – 6-8 July 2010 - [details](#)

28th ISHS Congress, Science & Horticulture for People, - 22-27 August 2010, Lisbon - [details](#)

If you would like to advertise a forthcoming event please contact. erin.taylor@soci.org

In the next issues;

- Exporting in the credit crunch
- Horticulture and the Olympics

Quote of the month

'The problem today is that economic growth is pursued wholly in monetary terms, not in terms of improving the quality of life,'
Alan Barber OBE, UK parks consultant (*Hort Week*, 20 February 2009)

If you have anything you would like to ask, then please email your query to Erin Taylor at erin.taylor@soci.org or write to Erin Taylor, Group Development Manager, SCI, 14-15 Belgrave Square, London SW1X 8PS.

For submitting ideas or to volunteer to be part of a committee or a group, please contact:

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