

# All-Party Parliamentary Gardening and Horticulture Group



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# Securing the future of the garden and horticulture sector

October 2018

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# Contents

---

4 Introduction

---

6 Executive summary

---

8 List of recommendations

---

9 Chapter 1

---

12 Chapter 2

---

15 Chapter 3

---

19 Conclusions and acknowledgements



**APPGHG**  
visit to  
Victoria Park

# Foreword

## Co-Chairmen of the All-Party Parliamentary Gardening and Horticulture Group

We are very pleased to write this Foreword to commend the work of the All-Party Parliamentary Group in setting up an inquiry into important aspects of horticulture at a critical time in the country's history as we leave the European Union. Brexit offers an unrivalled opportunity to take advantage of the new situation. We want ornamental horticulture and landscaping to be given its rightful place as a vitally important part not only of our economic life but also in its impact upon health and wellbeing, and the quality of our environment. For too long horticulture was something of a Cinderella figure – it is time she put on the glass slipper!

That said we are very well aware that we are an informal All-Party Group with no status in the formal mechanisms of Parliament. We should dearly like a Select Committee from one House or the other to take up the issues that have been raised with the power and opportunity to ask Ministers and Civil Servants about them as well as drawing on the experiences of the many experts available. One fruitful avenue would be to explore how much or how little Departments liaise with one another bearing in mind that horticulture affects not only the Department for the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, but also the Departments for Education, International Trade, Health and others.



**Baroness Fookes**

**Ian Liddell-Grainger MP**

Co-Chairmen of the All-Party Parliamentary Gardening and Horticulture Group  
October 2018



**Baroness Fookes DBE**



**Ian Liddell-Grainger  
MP**

# Introduction

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The All-Party Parliamentary Gardening and Horticulture Group (APPGHG) was established almost two decades ago to promote and facilitate communication and understanding between representatives of the world of gardening and horticulture and Members of both Houses of Parliament. It succeeded the less formal All-Party Gardening Club.

The APPGHG is Co-Chaired by Baroness Fookes DBE and Ian Liddell-Grainger MP. The Group's Vice-Chairs are Dame Cheryl Gillan MP, Lord Kilclooney, Lord Kirkwood of Kirkhope, Lord Palmer, Mark Pritchard MP, Baroness Nye, John Spellar MP, Nic Dakin MP and Baroness Walmsley. Rebecca Pow MP acts as Secretary to the Group.

The APPGHG regularly hosts MPs at a number of horticulture events throughout the year and conducts meetings with senior ministers on the sector's behalf. The Group's many successes include securing the horticulture sector's contribution to the 2012 Olympic Park landscapes, and championing the needs of the sector during hosepipe bans, which saw Government advice to water companies amended. It has also promoted the media profile of the sector, hosting *Gardeners' Question Time* in Parliament on a number of occasions.

Over the past year the APPGHG has led an inquiry into the key issues facing the horticulture sector, examining what is needed from Government to secure the sector's future post-Brexit. The Group received evidence from a number of high-level industry experts on the issues of encouraging UK production and improving biosecurity, the need to nurture innovation in the sector, and training up the future workforce and securing access to seasonal labour.

For many years leaders from the UK horticulture sector – including those from trade associations, educational and skills organisations and research funders – have come together through the Ornamental Horticulture Roundtable Group. Their aim is to build a cross-sector action plan for how to deliver an even stronger sector that can make a substantial contribution to UK growth. However, this roadmap for growth cannot be achieved without greater Government support and recognition.

This inquiry intends to build on this existing evidence base and ongoing efforts within the sector, and set out what change is needed at Government level to secure the sector's future.

The horticultural sector represents the science, design, technology and business of cultivating ornamental plants, trees and flowers. This covers retail in garden centres, cut flowers, tree and plant growers, landscape and arboricultural practitioners, technical production and distribution, applied

scientific research, plant health and growing media. It also includes horticultural skills and creative designs on display at world renowned flower shows, and within the nation's treasured parks, gardens and green amenity spaces.

Horticulture is practiced at all levels, from individuals at home to the commercial activities of multi-national producers; from horticulturists, landscape and design businesses, to specialist growers and arboriculturists across the full retail supply chain. With almost half of the UK population identifying as active gardeners, the importance of supporting this sector is vital.

The Group is kindly sponsored by the Horticultural Trades Association (HTA), the Royal Horticultural Society (RHS), the British Association of Landscape Industries (BALI), the Arboricultural Association (AA) and the Landscape Show. Newington Communications acts as the Group's Secretariat.



**APPGHG visit to the Queen Elizabeth Olympic Park during the 2012 London Olympic Games**

# Executive summary

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The UK has a global reputation as the gardening capital of the world, known for its landscape designs, gardens and innovative green infrastructure, for which it should be proud. *The Economic Impact of Ornamental Horticulture and Landscaping in the UK* report<sup>1</sup> has revealed that the ornamental horticulture and landscape industries' total contribution to UK GDP in 2017 reached £24.2 billion – equivalent to 1.2 percent of the nation's total output. The employment footprint of the industry supported 568,700 jobs, amounting to 1.6 percent of total UK employment. Additionally, the total tax revenues attributable to this sector's activities reached £5.4 billion in 2017. Despite this vast scale, it is often undervalued and overshadowed and, as a result, undeveloped. The sector is vital to the country's environmental, health and social wellbeing, and plays a significant role in our culture and heritage.

<sup>1</sup> Ornamental Horticulture Roundtable (2018), [The Economic Impact of Ornamental Horticulture and Landscaping in the UK](#)

There is potential to drive economic growth upwards; however, the sector needs further support from Government to achieve this.

Chapter 1 will explore the unique opportunity post-Brexit to increase UK plant production and replace the £300 million worth of plant material we import every year. Import substitution would both offer economic growth and help mitigate the serious biosecurity risks associated with importing plants and trees from other countries. However, to invest in expansion, the sector needs incentives, investment and confidence in the market.

Horticulture also plays an important role in our society, supporting healthy lives and communities, sustainable landscapes, in protecting our environment, and mitigating against increasing pollution and climate change. Chapter 2 will consider how through further applied horticultural scientific research and development (R&D) the sector has the potential to examine and quantify the benefits of horticultural interventions, measure their value, and build an evidence-base of how to best exploit these opportunities.

Further investment in R&D would also enable the sector to accelerate the exploitation of innovative practices and new technologies to support import substitution, improve resilience to pests, tackle air pollution and create a more dynamic horticulture sector.

The importance of training up a highly skilled workforce for the future and retaining the sector's access to seasonal workers to achieve all this cannot be underestimated, and will be discussed in Chapter 3. It is critical if the sector is to reach its full potential economically, socially and environmentally.

Horticulture offers a wide range of opportunities for young people to gain qualifications, upskill and embark on successful careers. However, horticulture is often perceived to be a second-rate career route and the sector is facing a significant skills gap as it is struggling to recruit enough people into the workforce. Better promotion of potential roles in the sector is needed, as there is a lack of horticultural education in UK schools, and current careers advice available to students is not up to scratch. A lack of adequate further education training is also contributing to the struggles in meeting the skills needs of the sector.

The sector also relies heavily on access to seasonal labour, the availability of which is under increasing pressure and is at risk of being exacerbated by Brexit. As a result the sector is suffering from a severe skills shortage which has knock-on effects for both our economy and environment.

The APPGHG calls on the Government to consider and implement the policy solutions recommended in this report, to secure the horticulture sector's future and drive growth.



## List of recommendations

- 1 The Government should work with the horticulture sector and supply chain to develop a plant-health standard to mitigate against biosecurity risks** throughout the supply chain and to ensure frictionless, traceable biosecurity checks at UK borders.
- 2 The Government should review plant-health legislation for Brexit to ensure regulations meet UK demand and resources.** The Government should strengthen signage at the border to raise awareness among the public of bringing restricted plant material into the UK from abroad.
- 3 The Government should invest in and implement an Investment Incentive Scheme,** in order to boost the UK horticulture sector's production of live plants, plant materials and services.
- 4 The Government should adopt new data quantifying the size of the horticulture sector, and work in ongoing partnership with industry** to ensure the use of accurate and effective data to invest in and better understand the sector and support its requirements for growth.
- 5 The Government should consider providing matched funding to support applied horticultural science R&D projects that deliver across the whole supply chain from production to landscape.** The industry can contribute nurseries and landscapes, plants and staff for research and experimental trials carried out both in research institutes and real conditions.
- 6 The Government should consider ornamental horticulture in policy making and consult with the industry on all matters relating to health, horticulture and the environment.** The Government should consider the potential of a cross-departmental body to support this.
- 7 The Government should work with sector leaders to promote horticulture as a highly skilled and desirable industry** to enter, through encouraging the inclusion of horticulture within the national curriculum in areas such as science and technology, and providing more high-quality horticulture advice through the National Careers Service.
- 8 The Government should adequately fund FE training in horticulture** to ensure the consistent delivery of high-quality further education training that meets the needs of ornamental horticulture. In addition, the Government should ensure the Apprenticeship Levy is more flexible, and that employers can use it to fund the work experience requirement of the T Levels and short-term traineeships.
- 9 The Government should expand the Seasonal Workers Pilot to include ornamental horticulture to mitigate a continued fall in the number of EU nationals,** and meet the anticipated industry demand for 60,000 seasonal workers and prevent significant supply-chain disruption post-Brexit.

# Chapter 1

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## Incentivising UK production, biosecurity and trade

In 2012–13, the UK imported more than £300 million worth of live plants and just under £600 million worth of cut flowers.<sup>2</sup> UK growers have been unable to reach this level of domestic production due to barriers including a lack of investment, supply-chain efficiency, land and workforce capacity and planning and procurement; compounded by a lack of market confidence.

As highlighted by Geoff Caesar from Bordon Hill Nurseries during the first evidence session, “Brexit presents the opportunity to reduce biosecurity risks and bolster the UK’s [horticulture] sector”. Scaling back imports and incentivising UK growers to boost domestic production would both protect the UK from biosecurity risks and drive both local and national economic growth. Pests and plant diseases, such as *Xylella fastidiosa*, which has devastated olive trees in Spain and Italy, could be brought into the country through the importation of plant material and cause an outbreak in UK nurseries.

<sup>2</sup> AHDB (2014), [Quantifying the opportunities for ornamentals growers for import substitution and export](#)

**Case study:** The UK currently imports a large quantity of oak trees. Due to the associated plant-health threats, the UK Government introduced a Statutory Notification scheme for tree imports in January 2013. From 2013–15 the Animal and Plant Health Agency received notifications of 1.6 million trees, the vast majority of which were oak. The main suppliers were the Netherlands, Belgium, Hungary, France and Bulgaria. This is in part due to confidence in the ability of continental suppliers to deliver on time and at short notice, the range of stock and competitive pricing of continental suppliers, and a lack of supply-chain confidence in the UK market resulting in reluctance to invest in UK production. Without Government investment, the UK horticulture sector will continue to see oak tree imports filling gaps in the market, with ensuing biosecurity risks.

**Case study:** When a *Xylella* outbreak occurs, a destruction order on all *Xylella* host plants within 100 metres of the outbreak, and a five-year ban on the movement of *Xylella* host plants within five kilometres of the infected site, are enforced. Garden Centre Plants, a wholesale nursery based in Lancashire, estimates that these measures would cost the business up to £270,000 – 15 percent of its £1.8 million turnover. The business would not be able to make up the lost turnover by selling more domestically grown non-*Xylella* host plants, as most imported plants cannot be successfully or economically produced in the UK. Garden centres within five kilometres of Garden Centre Plants, such as Barton Grange Garden Centre and Brookhouse Nurseries, would also suffer a loss in sales due to the five-year *Xylella* host quarantine period.

## Improving plant health

To safeguard against future outbreaks of disease, the sector would benefit from the implementation of a Government-backed plant-health assurance scheme. A scheme is needed that outlines best practice standards on

management, plant-health controls, recognition and training, and site housekeeping, to mitigate and protect against plant-health risks. Given the significant threat that a serious plant-health outbreak poses to UK horticulture businesses, the Government should consult with industry on the merits of making such a scheme mandatory, and as part of this scheme consider making funds available to compensate horticulture businesses for stock destroyed by pest and disease outbreaks.

Brexit also provides an opportunity for the UK to revise and improve its approach to plant health and ensure that the right regulations and protections are in place. For example, while current passenger baggage requirements allow for the private importation of plants, the specifics of the requirements are complicated, not well understood, and hard to enforce.

After we leave the EU and current plant-health legislation is written into UK law, Government has the opportunity to review this legislation and ensure it is suitable, reliable and effective. Plant-health checks on imports must also remain frictionless and traceable post-Brexit to avoid major delays and supply-chain issues.

We recognise that Defra and the sector have been working together to increase public awareness of plant health, however wider cultural change is still needed to ensure the general public recognise their biosecurity responsibilities. Penalties and fines don't always drive greater compliance; however better publicising public information on plant health, such as more visible information on private baggage allowances and restrictions at borders, would help drive improvements.

### **Investment Incentive Scheme**

A tax-incentive scheme for the horticulture sector would support UK growers in making the investment required to scale up production and replace imports from overseas, while at the same time reducing biosecurity risks. A 25 percent tax relief on all qualifying investment in horticulture infrastructure should be granted to UK growers, including nurseries. Similar tax-relief schemes, such as that found in the film industry, have proved successful in boosting domestic production and jobs, and should be considered as a model for the UK's horticulture sector.

**Case study:** The Government currently provides 25 percent Film Tax Relief on qualifying film production expenditure for companies producing films in the UK, regardless of budget. The tax relief is capped at 80 percent of core expenditure on production, and eligible film productions must have a minimum UK core spend requirement of 10 percent. It is estimated that £12.49 is generated in the UK economy for every £1 of tax relief granted. Over a seven-year period this has led to 260,000 full-time creative sector jobs in the UK, boosting employment and productivity. 2017 saw a record overall spend of £1.9 billion on UK film production following the launch of the scheme.

## Recommendations

- 1 The Government should work with the horticulture sector and supply chain to develop a plant-health standard to mitigate against biosecurity risks** throughout the supply chain and to ensure frictionless, traceable biosecurity checks at UK borders.
- 2 The Government should review plant-health legislation for Brexit to ensure regulations meet UK demand and resources.** The Government should strengthen signage at the border to raise awareness among the public of bringing restricted plant material into the UK from abroad.
- 3 The Government should invest in and implement an Investment Incentive Scheme,** in order to boost the UK horticulture sector's production of live plants, plant materials and services.

# Chapter 2

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## Nurturing innovation to support health and the environment

The horticulture sector plays an important role in contributing to healthy lives and communities, maintaining sustainable landscapes, protecting our environment and managing climate change. Horticulture therapies can help tackle big health and social care issues such as loneliness, mental health and other non-communicable diseases.

There are very few other public health interventions that can achieve all of this. A 2016 report by The King's Fund on the benefits of gardens and gardening on health highlighted its importance throughout the course of one's life.<sup>3</sup> It noted that horticulture had been "linked to long-term reductions in overall reported health problems... reduced levels of obesity... and higher self-rated mental health". It also found that living among green spaces seemed to reduce income inequalities on health.

Gardens and green infrastructure also have significant environmental benefits. The wide-ranging positive impacts include: alleviation of flooding, reduction of energy use in buildings, supporting biodiversity and crop pollination, improved water, air and soil quality, and counteracting air pollution and the impacts of climate change. As noted by The King's Fund, these all have knock-on benefits for human health and wellbeing. This was well articulated by Dr Rebecca Lovell from the University of Exeter Medical School, who said that "the environment is one of the most upstream influential factors of public health".

<sup>3</sup> The King's Fund (2016). [Gardens and health: Implications for policy and practice](#)

**Case study:** Britain in Bloom is the UK's longest running gardening competition having first been set up by the British Tourist Board in 1963. Now run by the RHS, it attracts more than 1,600 entries each year from communities involving more than 300,000 volunteers. Volunteers play an invaluable role in greening our communities and inspiring people to get involved with horticulture. Britain in Bloom provides a regional and nationwide platform for community groups to improve and beautify their local public gardens and green spaces. It is has gained national recognition as a symbol of excellence in community gardening, strong community spirit and pride of place.

However, ongoing systemic problems act as a barrier to the implementation of horticulture strategies in health at all levels. Within health and social care systems it is difficult to demonstrate the financial gain made through these programmes and subsequently to prove their worth, particularly in the short term. It is also difficult to quantify the significant, but indirect, benefits of horticulture more widely in our communities.

These problems are fuelled by the fact that the importance of green spaces and green infrastructure is often considered last in development plans. Even if consideration is made at the planning stage, in many cases adequate budget is not set aside to deliver the green infrastructure on site. Developers and local planners often prioritise high-density building when drawing up their plans. Growers and landscapers are sometimes not engaged in the planning and procurement process early enough, despite needing advance warning and forward procurement to plan their production schedules due to the long lead in time needed for growing.

Therefore, the opportunities in health presented by horticulture interventions are not being fully realised, despite the role they can play in meeting key policy priorities. The Government's vision in the NHS 5 Year Forward View placed importance on preventative health, and community-centred, integrated-care approaches.<sup>4</sup> This was also referenced in Defra's 25 Year Plan for the Environment, which committed to consider "how environmental therapies could be delivered through mental health service [...] such as gardening".<sup>5</sup>

<sup>4</sup> NHS England (2014), [NHS Five Year Forward View](#)

<sup>5</sup> Defra (2018), [A Green Future: Our 25 Year Plan to Improve the Environment](#)

**Case study:** The Queen Elizabeth Olympic Park is an exemplar of how forward procurement contributes to the success of major infrastructure projects. Horticulture played a significant role in the London 2012 Olympic and Paralympic Games. After lobbying by the cross-horticulture initiative 'Greening the Games', British firms were involved in the planning, design, construction and maintenance of the landscapes around the Olympic Park. The 250-hectare site was filled with 4,000 trees, 300,000 wetland plants, 15,000 m<sup>2</sup> of lawns and more than 150,000 perennial plants. The horticultural displays were not only for the benefit of the visitors, but created a strong sense of place and pride in the local community and encouraged them to take ownership of the site beyond the Games. Many of the landscapes continue to provide vital pollination for urban and rural wildlife and help promote the 'best of British' in UK landscape, horticulture and agriculture.

As stressed by Dr Ross Cameron from Sheffield University during the inquiry, "we need to get more evidence to demonstrate the worth of the [horticulture] sector to public health". Research would provide policy makers with evidence on how, where and what interventions can provide benefits, and how these can be exploited most effectively.

Prof Alistair Griffiths from the RHS and others who gave evidence also noted that it is essential that the UK invests in research and development (R&D) throughout the whole supply chain, from production to landscape.

Accelerating the exploitation of innovative practices and new technologies in the sector, such as robotics, can increase productivity, drive import substitution, boost economic growth, and deliver wide-reaching environmental benefits to help manage increasing air pollution and the impacts of climate change. Further research into new practical bio-control and integrated pest management approaches also offers an opportunity for the UK to improve resilience to pests throughout the supply chain.

However, the Agriculture & Horticulture Development Board (AHDB) has anecdotally estimated that, over the last 20 years, investment in applied ornamental horticultural scientific R&D has decreased from £14.1 million in 1985 to £2.85 million in 2015. This lack of funding is a lost opportunity for both Government and the sector to deliver the above benefits, as well as grow one of the UK's strongest global brands.

## Recommendations

- 4 The Government should adopt new data quantifying the size of the horticulture sector, and work in ongoing partnership with industry** to ensure the use of accurate and effective data to invest in and better understand the sector and support its requirements for growth.
- 5 The Government should consider providing matched funding to support applied horticultural science R&D projects that deliver across the whole supply chain from production to landscape.** The industry can contribute nurseries and landscapes, plants and staff for research and experimental trials carried out in both research institutes and real conditions.
- 6 The Government should consider ornamental horticulture in policy making and consult with the industry on all matters relating to health, horticulture and the environment.** The Government should consider the potential of a cross-departmental body to support this.

# Chapter 3

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## Training the future workforce and seasonal worker availability

### Training the future workforce

There remains a false perception that the horticulture sector is a second-rate career option for those with low aspirations. Nothing could be further from the truth. Horticulture offers a wide range of career options, in garden design, in the landscape business, as a scientist or botanist, in project or contract management, or in plant health or climate change. The sector requires a breadth of highly practical, technical skills and professional knowledge.

However, the RHS 2013 *Horticulture Matters* report found that 72 percent of horticultural businesses were unable to fill skilled vacancies and that 70 percent of 18-year-olds believed horticultural careers were for those who have “failed academically”.<sup>6</sup> This has meant the horticulture sector suffers from a skills shortage that threatens our economy and the environment.

Currently there is a lack of horticultural education in UK schools and colleges, and students are not being exposed to potential roles in the sector. This has a knock-on effect on the sector’s ability to recruit trainees. Suzanne Moss, Head of Education and Learning at the RHS, raised her concerns saying, “horticulture is not embedded in the national curriculum [...] we need more short-term taster opportunities in primary and secondary schools [...] which would help people get into apprenticeships and long-term jobs”. There is an opportunity to better engage school and college students in horticulture within various curriculum areas, including science, technology and design.

The sector welcomed the introduction of the National Careers Service to advise young people regarding their future careers. However, the service is limited in its knowledge of opportunities in horticulture. The sector is working to fill the gap in the skills pipeline through a series of ad hoc initiatives but this is not well coordinated at a local, regional nor national level; to be effective, this needs to be led by national Government.

<sup>6</sup> RHS (2014), [Horticulture Matters](#)

**Case study:** BALI’s GoLandscape careers initiative was developed to inspire and educate new recruits, promote the host of opportunities in the sector, encourage retention and combat the severe skills shortage. It provides a wealth of career advice and operates an active outreach programme using industry ambassadors to engage with young people and careers advisers in schools, bringing the industry to life through sharing their own experiences and individual career journeys. Following a successful pilot in November 2017 the scheme was officially launched in March of this year (2018). The scheme has already built relationships with 12 colleges, nine schools, four Armed Forces resettlement programme events, and two HM Prisons. During the pilot it also delivered two ‘Enrichment Programmes’ in colleges, resulting in 45 students achieving 1–4 additional specific industry qualifications.

The quality of further education in horticulture is also not meeting the sector's needs. This has been compounded by confusion about the Government's skills reforms and how employers, training providers and learners should navigate the new skills arena.

The sector welcomed the Horticulture Trailblazer Apprenticeship and Apprenticeship Levy, and the Government's intention to put employers "at the heart of a dynamic skills system to ensure the day-to-day training and education that individuals receive genuinely meet the needs of industry".<sup>7</sup> However, the speed and quality of this transition has been inconsistent across the country, risking the quality and availability of the new standards. There has been a marked drop in apprenticeship starts since the introduction of the Trailblazer and Levy. In the academic year 2016–17, there were 2,140 starts; however, from August 2017 to January 2018 there were only 960 starts, a marked drop of more than half.<sup>8</sup>

In the design of the Trailblazer Apprenticeship the arboriculture, forestry, horticulture and landscape employer group made the case for a range of practical training certificates for vocational skills – 'tickets' – to be included in the standard. However, the involvement of various Government Departments and changing policy meant that there was a reduced amount of practical training certificates included in the Trailblazer Apprenticeships. As a result, many learners are leaving college without the practical training certificates required by their profession of choice. As colleges are not funded to deliver the necessary practical assessments for apprentices, the onus falls on employers to fund the assessments for new employees.

The Apprenticeship Levy in its current form also presents challenges to the sector which is predominantly made up of SMEs. The Association of Employment and Learning Providers recognised that "the manner of its implementation is letting down thousands of SMEs and young people across the country",<sup>9</sup> and the APPG on Apprenticeships concluded in its recent Annual Report that the Levy needs to be flexible so that SMEs can access the resources they need to deliver apprenticeships.<sup>10</sup> The sector is also concerned about how it will meet the T Level requirement of a three-month work placement. FE colleges may struggle to find employers that are able to provide a relevant placement for the required length of time, in particular in rural areas.

Horticulture apprenticeships need to remain aligned with the needs of the sector and funding must meet these training demands in order to train up the future workforce, drive productivity, and grow the economy.

### **Seasonal worker availability**

Seasonal workers are a crucial resource to the horticulture sector; supplementing the existing workforce and helping the sector remain competitive by reducing the workforce in the late autumn and winter

<sup>7</sup> Department for Education, Department for Business, Innovation and Skills (2016), [Post-16 Skills Plan](#)

<sup>8</sup> Department for Education (2018), [Apprenticeship and levy statistics: January 2018](#)

<sup>9</sup> FE Week (17 May 2018), [Apprenticeship starts show biggest drop in six months](#)

<sup>10</sup> APPG on Apprenticeships (2018), [2017–2018 Annual Report](#)

months. Labour availability in horticulture has been under increasing pressure since the UK's Seasonal Agriculture Workers Scheme (SAWS) was abolished in 2013. The threat to labour supply has been exacerbated by Brexit as the majority of seasonal workers coming into the UK are from the EU.

According to NFU's horticulture and potatoes board, the UK's horticulture sector employs 60,000 seasonal workers every year.<sup>11</sup> However, 59 percent of growers did not secure the seasonal labour they needed in 2017; with 87 percent reporting that they expected the recruitment of seasonal workers would be more difficult in 2018.

During the process of this inquiry Lee Abbey from the NFU noted the UK's "heavy reliance on EU labour" and that we are "one of the few countries that does not have a seasonal workers scheme for outside of the EU". He made the case that "we have to go beyond the EU's borders [...] and we need to be able to throw the net wider".

<sup>11</sup> NFU horticulture and potatoes board (August 2018), [UK Horticulture Labour Use](#)

**Case study:** Germany has a long history of seasonal agricultural work programmes and has been the largest EU employer of temporary migrant labour in agriculture. Over the past decade this has averaged at around 300,000 seasonal workers per year. Until recently the vast majority of these workers originated from Poland, with Romania now the main source country, supplying around 60 percent of workers. Beyond the EU, Germany has also opened up a permit scheme to bring in 10,000 farm workers from the Ukraine.

There is a need to mitigate a continued fall in the number of EU nationals taking up seasonal roles and prevent significant supply-chain disruption. We need a scheme to attract seasonal workers from beyond the EU – such as that used in Germany.



## Recommendations

- 7**     **The Government should work with sector leaders to promote horticulture as a highly skilled and desirable industry** to enter, through encouraging the inclusion of horticulture within the national curriculum in areas such as science and technology, and providing more high-quality horticulture advice through the National Careers Service.
  
- 8**     **The Government should adequately fund FE training in horticulture** to ensure the consistent delivery of high-quality further education training that meets the needs of ornamental horticulture. In addition, the Government should ensure the Apprenticeship Levy is more flexible, and that employers can use it to fund the work experience requirement of the T Levels and short-term traineeships.
  
- 9**     **The Government should expand the Seasonal Workers Pilot to include ornamental horticulture to mitigate a continued fall in the number of EU nationals**, and meet the anticipated industry demand for 60,000 seasonal workers and prevent significant supply-chain disruption post-Brexit.

# Conclusions

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The evidence submitted in this inquiry clearly demonstrates the importance of the horticulture sector to the UK. Horticulture has a major role to play in every aspect of our lives, in our gardens and living environments, in our health and social care systems, and in the protection of our environment and planet.

However, the evidence collected also highlights the barriers that are holding the UK horticulture sector back from achieving its full potential and delivering these benefits to their fullest.

The sector is doing all it can to invest in its nurseries, protect against pests, innovate and develop, as well as attract and retain a highly skilled workforce. However, it needs further Government support and coordination at national level to achieve all its outcomes.

The various aspects of horticulture cover a number of different Government Departments; however, it is not clear how, or if, their overlapping remits work in tandem. If ever there was a case for joined-up Government thinking, this is it. There is a clear need for Government to ensure that there is united policy on all matters relating to horticulture.

We call on Government to take action to implement the policy solutions recommended in this report as soon as possible.

## Acknowledgements

The Group would like to thank the Co-Chairs, the Group's sponsors, the officers and other Parliamentarians, industry figures and others who participated in the inquiry, in particular those who took the time to give oral and written evidence.

The first oral evidence session in the inquiry considered how to encourage UK production and improve biosecurity. Oral evidence was given by Raoul Curtis-Machin, HTA; Brian Fraser, Oakover Nurseries; Geoff Caesar, Ball Horticulture; and Richard McIntosh, Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs.

The second evidence session highlighted the role of horticulture in the sector in society and the need to nurture innovation to support it to grow. Oral evidence was given by Dr Rebecca Lovell, University of Exeter Medical School; Dr Ross Cameron, University of Sheffield; Dr Gerard Clover, RHS; Prof. Alistair Griffiths, RHS; Dr Matthew Howard, Kings College London; and Charles Carr, Hillier Nurseries.

The final evidence session focused on training up the future workforce and securing access to seasonal labour. Oral evidence was given by Ros Burnley, Adrow; Suzanne Moss, RHS; Martin

Emmett, ADHB; Matt O'Conner, John O'Conner Grounds Maintenance; Wayne Grills, BALI; Phil Jones, BALI National Contractors Forum; Jeremy Kerswell, Plumpton College; and Lee Abbey, NFU.

Written evidence was received from Dr Stephen Dowbiggin OBE; Margaret Holland Prior, Worshipful Company of Gardeners; and Mrs Clare Gammy.

We regret that in this case resource was not available to publish transcripts of the oral evidence given or the written submissions received.



All-Party  
Parliamentary  
Gardening and  
Horticulture Group

