



Mission Green Growth:
A Strategic Plan from the
Environmental Horticulture Group

Autumn 2024

Environmental Horticulture: Mission Green Growth – Key Data

In 2018 and 2021, the Environmental Horticulture Group (EHG), formerly the Ornamental Horticulture Roundtable Group (OHRG) published independent research to evaluate the sector’s socio-economic and economic contribution to the UK economy.

In 2024, Oxford Economics updated this research, in a report, *The Economic Impact of the Environmental Horticulture and Landscaping in the UK*.

Headline Data

- £38 billion GDP contributed to the UK in 2023 by environmental horticulture and landscaping.
- £8.4 billion tax revenues linked to environmental horticulture and garden tourism.
- 722,000 total jobs supported by the environmental horticulture and landscaping industry in 2023.
- £1.9 billion total GDP contribution of garden goods manufacturing to UK GDP in 2023, supporting over 29,000 jobs across the UK.
- £2.0 billion GDP contribution of environmental plants production to UK GDP in 2023, supporting almost 32,000 jobs across the UK.
- £17.9 billion GDP contribution of landscaping services to UK GDP in 2023, supporting over 355,000 jobs across the UK.
- £2.6 billion GDP contribution of tree planting and management to UK GDP in 2023, supporting over 52,000 jobs across the UK.

(Source: *The Economic Impact of the Environmental Horticulture and Landscaping in the UK*, Oxford Economics, 2024)

Environmental Horticulture’s contributions to the UK’s GDP was assessed as having the potential to grow by 45% over the 2020s, to £51.2 billion (in 2023 prices), supporting 763,000 jobs across the UK economy.

This growth potential was underpinned, among other things, by the rise in demand for green spaces, and the potential returns on investment in R&D to deliver sustainable productivity gain.

The Value of Plants, Trees and Green Spaces is Environmental and Social

- It is estimated that the removal of harmful pollutants by urban vegetation generated **£800.5 million in avoided negative health impacts in Great Britain in 2021** (ONS, 2023).
- 98% of our oxygen comes from plants.** (Source: Defra/International Day of Plant Health, 12 May. Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) of the United Nations)
- ONS (2023) estimated that the **asset value of urban cooling provided by green and blue spaces in UK urban environments was £27.4 billion** in 2021.
- Oxford Economics estimate that **£4.2 billion** of international and domestic tourism spending was attributable to UK parks or gardens in 2023. (Above Oxford Economics Reference)

What Is Environmental Horticulture?

Environmental horticulture encompasses a wide range of activities – including companies that cultivate ornamental plants, manufacturers of garden equipment, wholesalers and retailers such as garden centres, arboriculture and specialists in landscaping who design, construct and maintain domestic, commercial and public gardens, green spaces and amenity trees. Beyond these activities, environmental horticulture also boosts tourism by drawing visitors to the UK’s renowned parks and gardens. There is the increasing recognition of the benefits delivered by the plants, trees and green spaces that the industry manages.

Oxford Economics has used the following scope to assess the total economic impact of the environmental horticulture and landscape industry, through measuring the individual contributions of the following segments: supply of garden goods, ornamental plant production, landscape services, retailing of garden products, plants, and cut flowers, tree planting and management, and garden tourism.

Foreword

Boyd Douglas-Davies

Chair, Environmental Horticulture Group

The priority of the EHG is to work collaboratively to grow our sector and grow the positive impact that we have on the nation’s finances, communities, climate, environment, health and wellbeing. Solutions to many of the nation’s challenges can be found by realising the full economic, social and environmental value of the cultivated plants, trees, green spaces and landscaping that are already enjoyed by the nation’s 30 million gardeners and indeed, the wider public too.

This growth report calls for action across five key areas relating to environmental horticulture – kickstarting green economic growth, green education and a sustainable workforce, planning and delivering green spaces, delivery on net zero, and improving mental, social and physical health and wellbeing. These are wide-ranging policy areas, and we are ambitious and committed to them. By working with different government departments across policy areas, we can together deliver the full potential and maximum benefit of our sector.



To back-up this growth report and these call to actions, the EHG commissioned new independent research by Oxford Economics to set out our sector’s significant value. We are delighted to outline this data and our call for action for how the environmental horticulture industry can work constructively and effectively with government and policymakers on a shared ambition to create a greener, happier, healthier, more resilient, environmentally sustainable society and economy. We are committed to keep doing what we are good at; growing the British green economy, and playing our full part in delivering growth for the UK.

Baroness Fookes

Co-Chair, All-Party Parliamentary Gardening and Horticulture Group

I am honoured to be invited to write this foreword to a major new report issued by the Environmental Horticulture Group with which I work closely in my role as Co-Chair of the All-Party Parliamentary Gardening and Horticulture Group.

We share a burning mission to ensure that the once under-rated and under-appreciated environmental horticultural sector is acknowledged by the Government for the vital role it plays in the economy of the country and its great capacity to grow in size if the Government is prepared to work in partnership with its various components. This is to say nothing of its vital role in promoting green growth and the health, both physical and mental, of the population as a whole.

The messages in this report have a great deal in common with the conclusions of the House of Lords Select Committee Report into Horticulture which I was instrumental in having set up and which reported in November 2023. The present Government would be wise to take on board the strong messages in both reports on a wide variety of issues, including a subject close to my



heart – the improvement of horticultural education which provides amazing career opportunities from straight forward gardening skills to research work in universities and similar institutions.

I am particularly taken with the latest independent research used by the Group to back up with hard evidence its contention that there is a great capacity for economic growth. Now it is up to the Government to please read, learn and collaborate!

Mission Green Growth:

A Plan for Delivery by the Environmental Horticulture Group

Mission	Call To Action	Impacts Of Taking Action	Measures To Unlock Growth (Immediate To 2030)*	Key UK Government Departments To Work With Environmental Horticulture To Deliver Measures**
<p>Environmental horticulture – kickstarting green economic growth</p> <p><i>Report page 7</i></p>	<p>Establish a policy framework that enables sector investment to boost productivity, innovation and supports UK environmental horticulture's global competitiveness</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✔ Economic growth ✔ Boost UK green jobs ✔ UK trade and exports growth ✔ Unlock investment ✔ Boost UK competitiveness ✔ Boost UK biosecurity and biodiversity ✔ Increase UK horticultural growing and productivity ✔ Increase UK global reputation for business and horticultural leadership ✔ Increase UK science knowledge base ✔ Boost tourism 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✔ Deliver a cross-government, industry-backed and growth-focused environmental horticulture strategy ✔ Reset UK policy on cross-border plant movements, deliver on an SPS or plant health agreement with the EU and boost the UK's approach on best-practice, proportionate and risk-based plant health ✔ Ensure inclusion of environmental horticulture in R&D, innovation, knowledge transfer and automation funding schemes ✔ Regulatory review that supports horticulture, including a Plant Varieties Rights Strategy taking actions to support UK leadership in plant breeding ✔ Lift planning and public procurement barriers to encourage a greater proportion of British produced plants, through a new approach to rules and guidelines, and forward contracting, developed in collaboration with industry ✔ An enabling crop and plant protection policy to support UK sector resilience ✔ Support global promotion of UK gardens, horticulture shows and an international horticultural expo 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✔ Cabinet Office ✔ Department for Business & Trade ✔ Department for Culture, Media & Sport ✔ Department for Environment, Food & Rural Affairs (including Animal and Plant Health Agency) ✔ Department for Science, Innovation and Technology ✔ HM Treasury ✔ Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government ✔ Northern Ireland Office
<p>From green education to a sustainable workforce – breaking down the barriers to opportunity</p> <p><i>Report page 8</i></p>	<p>Break down the barriers to opportunity, increasing the UK's skills and future green workforce</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✔ Economic growth ✔ Boost UK green jobs ✔ Skills growth ✔ Increase UK horticultural growing and productivity ✔ Grow UK green spaces ✔ Deliver physical, mental and social health and wellbeing for young people in education 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✔ Recognise environmental horticulture, landscaping and arboriculture jobs and roles in government green jobs and skills definitions, and national careers promotion ✔ Inspire and educate young people through ensuring plants are grown and studied throughout all stages of and across the curriculum – give every child in the UK the skills to grow plants ✔ Work with partners to expand the National Education Nature Park programme ✔ Boost environmental horticulture education and qualifications through smarter allocation of resources ✔ Support business certainty through a long-term seasonal worker scheme fit for UK horticulture needs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✔ Department for Education (including Skills England) ✔ Department for Environment, Food & Rural Affairs (including Animal and Plant Health Agency) ✔ Department for Work and Pensions ✔ Home Office ✔ Office for National Statistics

*Greater detail on measures set out in report

**Devolved, regional and local partners are also required to deliver

Mission	Call To Action	Impacts Of Taking Action	Measures To Unlock Growth (Immediate To 2030)*	Key UK Government Departments To Work With Environmental Horticulture To Deliver Measures**
<p>Planning and delivering sustainable and accessible green spaces <i>Report pages 9-10</i></p>	<p>Maximise the value and effectiveness of urban and suburban green spaces for future generations to support healthy populations, greater green equity, vibrant ecosystems, climate adaptation, mitigation and resilience</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✔ Economic growth ✔ Boost UK green jobs ✔ Greener, healthier, more resilient and safer cities and communities ✔ Support the delivery of government net zero and environmental targets ✔ Increase UK horticultural growing and productivity ✔ Increase UK water resilience ✔ Grow equity of access to green spaces and benefits they deliver 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✔ Deliver minimum sized and high-quality gardens, balconies and community green spaces, including for the new 1.5 million homes ✔ Undertake a consultative review of the Biodiversity Net Gain policy framework to work with horticulture experts to include cultivated plant diversity and landscapes in its metrics, and exempts protected cropping structures ✔ Embed sustained high quality tree care and green space maintenance and management in all new developments ✔ Consistency in UK planning applications and a National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) support for environmental horticulture and landscape businesses who deliver green growth ✔ Include environmental horticulture in regional water demand model development, consumer campaigns and action to support water resilience for UK growers, gardeners, landscapers and green spaces ✔ Mandate sustainable urban drainage systems to boost UK flood resilience ✔ Promote the creation and regeneration of high-quality public parks 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✔ Department for Environment, Food & Rural Affairs (including the UK Water Regulator - OFWAT) ✔ Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (including Office for Place)
<p>Environmental horticulture: integral to achieving net zero and climate resilience <i>Report pages 11-12</i></p>	<p>Recognise environmental horticulture's vital role in green infrastructure for delivering net zero and collaborate with the sector on nature-based solutions to drive economic growth, create green jobs and skills, and enhance the UK's climate resilience</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✔ Economic growth ✔ Boost UK green industrial transition and support the delivery of government net zero and environmental targets ✔ Boost UK green jobs ✔ Greener, healthier, more climate resilient communities ✔ Boost UK biosecurity and biodiversity ✔ Increase UK science knowledge base 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✔ Recognise environmental horticulture in the net zero mission through acknowledging environmental horticulture as a critical sector for delivery ✔ Support the energy transition for environmental horticulture including elements in support schemes and incentivise their opportunity to adopt renewable energy ✔ Support the transition to peat-free horticulture and ensure collaboration between the government and environmental horticulture to establish a sustainable transition to peat-free growing media and plants 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✔ Department for Energy and net zero ✔ Department for Environment, Food & Rural Affairs ✔ Department for Science, Innovation and Technology ✔ Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (including Office for Place)
<p>Create a neighbourhood health service through environmental horticulture: enhancing the nation's wellbeing <i>Report page 13</i></p>	<p>Recognise environmental horticulture as an essential component of delivering the Neighbourhood Health Service and UK healthcare strategy through collaboration with the environmental horticulture sector to embed nature-based approaches and fostering preventative healthcare</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✔ Economic growth ✔ Improved health and wellbeing and ease NHS costs and pressure ✔ Greener, healthier, more resilient and safer cities and communities ✔ Increase UK science and research knowledge base 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✔ Ensure green spaces and gardens in the delivery of the new 1.5 million homes, that deliver as a powerful boost for physical, mental, and social health and wellbeing ✔ Embed green social prescribing in NHS pathways, recognising gardening and nature-based therapies as key to improving physical, social, and mental health ✔ Boost urban greening initiatives by promoting green roofs, green walls, community and school gardens and green spaces ✔ Embed green spaces in pandemic preparedness through including access to green spaces and gardening in the UK's pandemic plan 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✔ Department for Environment, Food & Rural Affairs ✔ Department for Health and Social Care ✔ Department for Science, Innovation and Technology ✔ Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government

*Greater detail on measures set out in report

**Devolved, regional and local partners are also required to deliver

Environmental Horticulture – Kickstarting Green Economic Growth

Environmental horticulture grows green, and as the new data shows, has scope to drive much needed UK economic growth.

Our industry is broad and diverse – it includes garden centres, public and private gardens, commercial growers, arboriculture, and domestic and commercial landscaping including public and shared spaces. It includes British-based multinationals, through to independent, multi-generational family run businesses.

By understanding the breadth and value of environmental horticulture and taking action on the barriers to investment, huge economic growth can be unlocked. ‘Despite its economic contribution, environmental horticulture is widely misunderstood’. This comes from the summary of the 2023 House of Lords Horticulture Inquiry report. The sector stands ready to ensure no opportunity is missed and for environmental horticulture to play its part in the UK’s mission for growth.

The UK has a global reputation and a national passion for gardening and green spaces, not least from our 30 million gardeners. The opportunity and ambition to grow more, trade more, and be more internationally competitive is shared by industry, with benefits delivering more choice, boosting biodiversity and backing British businesses’ horticulture expertise. Ambition, collaboration, pragmatism and risk-based approaches are key to removing barriers and placing the UK back at the forefront of international trade.

Establish a policy framework that enables sector investment to **boost productivity, innovation and supports UK environmental horticulture’s global competitiveness.**

Measures:

- A cross-government, industry-backed and growth-focused environmental horticulture strategy**, which boosts British production; acknowledges that our green spaces should be developed and implemented in partnership with industry; builds on recent evidence such as the House of Lords Inquiry Report to develop new understanding of the impact of policies outside of Defra; and ensures that future regulatory impacts are reviewed through a growth lens. We would welcome a cross-government Office for Green Spaces or group, or expansion of the Office for Place to facilitate this work.
- Reset UK policy on cross-border plant movements, through delivery of an SPS or plant health agreement with the EU and boost the UK’s approach on best-practice, proportionate and risk-based plant health developed in a partnership with the environmental horticulture industry.** Plant health is a top priority for UK growers. It is a common goal of growers and government to ensure we take biosecurity seriously at our borders, especially when importing young plants, plant material, seeds, bulbs and more. The industry calls for urgent action of the Border Target Operating Model, as well as a review of all aspects of trade and border policy, from Northern Ireland to CITES (endangered species convention), that cause friction, cost and are a barrier to growth.
- Boost the UK’s approach on plant health** by building on government and industry collaboration, and consumer awareness, of plant health best practice, for example the Plant Healthy Management Standard, develop intelligent, proportionate and risk led inspection regimes for plants, bulbs, trees and seeds.
- Drive productivity and growth by enabling the British environmental horticulture industry to **innovate and invest with access to longer-term government funding schemes and cycles**, R&D and knowledge transfer support, expanded tree production grants, farming investment, equipment funds, nursery production and business improvement funds.
- Undertake **regulatory review that supports horticulture**, including a Plant Varieties Rights Strategy that takes actions to support UK leadership in plant breeding.
- Public procurement of a greater proportion of British produced plants in public sector projects through a new approach to rules and guidelines, and forward contracting, developed in collaboration with industry from grower to landscaper.** Ensure public procurement practices support local ecosystems and community identity. Funds for greenery and green spaces should be ringfenced to protect against potential shortfalls or budget cuts in project delivery, ensuring that tenders and contracts are fully realised and commitments to local sourcing are met.
- An **enabling crop protection policy** which ensures the UK is not disadvantaged against its global competitors.
- Promote UK garden destinations, and horticultural shows, with a supported Visit Britain campaign**, recognising UK gardens and green spaces as high-value national assets for domestic and international tourism and an ambition for the UK to host a world-class global horticultural exposition (‘expo’).

From Green Education to a Sustainable Workforce – Breaking Down the Barriers to Opportunity

People are at the heart of our sector. Part of the industry’s success has been how it has nurtured the technical skills of its workforce at all stages, including supporting apprenticeships, career changers, championing diversity and creating truly green jobs.

To make our economic growth ambitions a reality and compete in a global marketplace, our industry – and the future of the planet – relies on developing the next generation of horticulturists and landscape professionals. We want to work with the government to reform our education and training systems to create thousands more green jobs providing opportunities for our young people.

Without vital reforms, the environmental horticulture sector will continue to be understaffed, under-skilled, and misperceived by those looking to embark on careers in our industry.

Break down the barriers to opportunity **increasing the UK’s skills, and future green workforce.**

Measures:

- Recognise environmental horticulture, landscaping and arboriculture jobs and roles in the government’s green jobs and skills definitions, and recognise the value of sector careers** and opportunities from early curriculum to apprenticeships and degree-level, including an improved national careers service that promotes environmental horticulture opportunities.
- Work with partners to expand the National Education Nature Park programme** as a key existing and successful mechanism to increase value from green spaces.
- Inspire and educate young people through ensuring plants are grown and studied throughout all stages of and across the curriculum** – give every child in the UK the skills to grow plants.
- Boost environmental horticulture education and qualifications through smarter allocation of resources** to ensure that its careers programmes and schemes reach young people and new entrants from under-represented backgrounds.
- Support business certainty through a long-term seasonal worker scheme fit for UK horticulture needs.**

The environmental horticulture and landscaping industry (excluding garden tourism) directly employed **378,000 people** in the UK in **2023**, this increases to **722,000** when including indirect employment and tourism jobs.

Sector	Direct	Indirect	Induced	Total
				Employment (Jobs)
Garden Goods	12,800	8,900	7,600	29,300
Ornamental Plants	16,200	9,500	6,300	32,000
Landscape Services	235,400	57,200	62,900	355,500
Retail	77,100	12,900	22,300	112,300
Wholesale	14,400	4,200	5,400	24,000
Tree planting & management	21,600	18,700	11,200	51,600
Total (excl. tourism)	378,000	111,000	116,000	605,000
Garden Tourism	38,900	59,100	19,300	117,400
Total	417,000	171,000	135,000	722,000

(Source: The Economic Impact of the Environmental Horticulture and Landscaping in the UK, Oxford Economics, 2024)

UK ornamental plant producers grew and sold around **£1.7 billion worth** of products during **2023**.

£4.2 billion of international and domestic tourism spending was attributable to UK parks or gardens in **2023**.

In **2023**, the UK saw around **£960 million** worth of domestic tourism spending that was attributable to parks and gardens.



Planning and Delivering Sustainable and Accessible Green Spaces

Recognising, realising, and maximising the value of green spaces is a critical opportunity that should not be overlooked, especially with the plans to build 1.5 million homes. As the populations of cities, towns and rural areas grow in the UK, the need for sustainable, accessible, and well-maintained green spaces becomes critical. These spaces are not just aesthetic additions; they are essential to the wellbeing of communities, the longevity of public spaces, and the health of our environment.

Currently, access to green space is not a privilege everyone enjoys. Research shows that one in five people in urban areas have limited access to green spaces, with lower-income communities disproportionately affected.

Delivering these green spaces requires careful planning and a forward-thinking approach. Local Government, Urban Planners, Developers, Scientists and Environmental Organisations must not miss the opportunity to work collaboratively with the environmental horticulture industry to create spaces that are not only beautiful, but also resilient and help to adapt to and mitigate for the changing demands of the local environments. This includes considering the impacts of climate change, biodiversity, population growth, and on the economy and evolving recreational needs.

Just as planning policies have shaped the existing green spaces we have today, we need together to work harder to prioritise and champion the potential of both new green spaces and protecting, retrofitting and maintaining existing green spaces. Only by doing so can the UK Government ensure that future generations benefit from these vital areas, which are essential for overcoming the social, health, economic, and environmental challenges ahead.

Maximise the value and effectiveness of urban and suburban green spaces for future generations to **support healthy populations, greater green equity, vibrant ecosystems, climate adaptation, mitigation and resilience.**

Measures:

- Deliver minimum sized and high-quality gardens, balconies and community green spaces**, at least 29.5% density, alongside the delivery of the 1.5 million new homes target.
- Undertake a consultative review of the Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) policy framework to work with horticulture experts to include cultivated plant diversity and landscapes in its metrics, and exempt protected cropping structures** from BNG requirements based on the environmental benefits the sector inherently delivers.
- Ensuring sustained high quality tree choices, care and green space maintenance and management** is continually improved within the requirements of all new developments; ensure that the creation of green spaces resilient to climate change, pests and disease can be achieved by ensuring consideration at a local level for green spaces design that reflects the climatic challenges faced, particularly in relation to environmental changes, water availability and/or flood resilience.
- Consistency in UK planning applications and a National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) that presumes favour for environmental horticulture and landscape businesses who deliver green growth**, including glasshouses by allowing sites to be classed as either brownfield or Previously Developed Land (PDL) to allow existing sites to expand and modernise as necessary and simplify the application process for horticulture-based construction projects. A 'cool-off' period of between 10-20 years before former agricultural land could be classed as brownfield or PDL, would ensure that agricultural sites are not erected for the sole-purpose of non-agricultural development later. Planning policy guidance must ensure green spaces serve as multifunction spaces. Several roles can be served by considering local socio-economic needs and ensuring the provision of green spaces according to these. Together with provision for self-growing/allotments and recreation for all ages and abilities, large green spaces may offer income-generating streams.
- Work with environmental horticulture to include the sector in regional water demand model development is critical, with sector access to OFWAT funding programmes, a new supported consumer/gardener focused campaign with all actions to support water resilience for UK growers, gardeners, landscapers and green spaces.** Temporary Use Bans must exempt commercial landscape maintenance.
- Action to support and expedite planning for reservoirs is critical for growers to capture, store and treat water on nursery sites.** The regulation of abstraction must be improved so that it is more agile and responsive to local needs and to reduce abstraction from watercourses. Existing homes retrofitted and new homes must have mandated substantial water storage, and planting schemes should deliver core ecosystem services.
- The incorporation of sustainable drainage systems in green spaces of all sizes must be mandated to boost UK flood resilience** – from roadside verges to playing fields – in new developments. Flooding caused by hard surfaces and climate change can be mitigated using green space instead of traditional surface water drainage systems but requires consideration from the outset of a development project. The Flood and Water Management Act 2010, and particularly schedule 3, have the potential to ensure green spaces are used to mitigate an increase in urban areas, despite climate change.
- Promote the creation of high-quality public parks, co-designed with local groups, and the regeneration of green spaces**, which combine resources for visitors with measures that combat climate change such as swales, cooling with shade with climate resilient trees, wet areas and flood mitigation.





Environmental Horticulture – Integral to Achieving Net Zero and Climate Resilience

Collaboration between the Government and the environmental horticulture sector can significantly enhance natural and social capital, maximising the value of green spaces for UK communities, economy and jobs, climate resilience, and the net zero mission.

Environmental horticulture is pivotal in delivering climate-resilient solutions and advancing the net zero mission and aligns with ambitions for the urgent transition to clean energy and reducing emissions. Aligning environmental horticulture with this agenda enhances climate adaptation, mitigation, and resilience. This approach boosts quality green spaces, creates green jobs, drives economic growth, and helps achieve net zero targets.

By integrating environmental health, climate resilience, biodiversity, social equity, and economic vitality, we can create thriving and sustainable communities. The UK's 700,000 hectares of cultivated landscapes and gardens span over five times the area of all National and Local Nature Reserves combined, equivalent to twice the size of Somerset. These green spaces support clean air, reduce flooding and sewerage spills, sequester carbon, provide wildlife habitats, and offer nature-based solutions

for climate adaptation and mitigation within local communities. If the UK's 30 million gardeners each planted and nurtured a medium-sized tree, it would collectively store the carbon equivalent of driving around the planet 11 million times. Cultivated nature-based solutions are essential for achieving net zero targets.

Recognise environmental horticulture's vital role in green infrastructure for delivering net zero and collaborate with the sector on nature-based solutions to **drive economic growth, create green jobs and skills, and enhance the UK's climate resilience.**

Measures:

- Recognise environmental horticulture in the net zero mission through acknowledging environmental horticulture as a critical sector for delivery targets and ambitions. Collaborate with the sector to create and implement a cultivated landscape plan and leverage growth opportunities to support climate resilience and the net zero mission.
- Support the energy transition for environmental horticulture including elements of the environmental horticulture supply chain (i.e. protected crop growing) as energy-intensive and include them in energy support schemes. Provide incentives for renewable energy adoption, such as solar, geothermal, and power parks, within environmental economic growth, and help achieve net zero targets.
- Support the transition to peat-free horticulture and ensure collaboration between the Government and environmental horticulture to establish a sustainable transition to peat-free growing media and plants. Explore viable peat alternatives, exemptions where alternatives are not yet viable, and equal standards for domestic and imported products. To provide ongoing financial support for the collaborative industry and government RHS transition to peat-free Fellowship, and additional funds for knowledge transfer to industry. To include essential peat free equipment on the Farming Equipment and Technology Fund list and to continue investment that builds on the Paludiculture Exploration Fund to support the implementation of paludiculture trial sites on the ground with farmers and growers to bulk up alternative growing media.



It is estimated that the removal of harmful pollutants by urban vegetation generated

£800.5 million in avoided negative health impacts in Great Britain in 2021

(ONS, 2023).

The UK's **700,000 hectares** of cultivated landscapes and gardens span over **five times the area of all National and Local Nature Reserves combined.**

(RHS/ONS)

If the UK's **30 million gardeners** each planted and nurtured a medium-sized tree, it would collectively store the carbon equivalent of driving around the planet

11 million times.

(RHS Sustainability Strategy 2021. <https://search.app/uby8PdotTCvKff3P8>)

ONS (2023) estimated that the asset value of urban cooling provided by green and blue spaces in UK urban environments

was **£27.4 billion** in 2021.

Create a Neighbourhood Health Service Through Environmental Horticulture: Enhancing the Nation's Wellbeing

Green spaces, gardens, and gardening provide a powerful natural healthcare solution, as demonstrated during the COVID-19 pandemic. By embracing environmental horticulture, the UK can have a preventative health revolution, improving lives and reducing pressure on the NHS. Prevention, rather than cure, saves costs and lowers NHS demand, reducing waiting times and benefiting both individuals and communities.

Key to this is green social prescribing, which leverages nature-based activities to improve mental, social, and physical health. UK Biobank studies have also shown that access to high-quality green spaces and private gardens significantly reduces mortality risks from chronic conditions such as COPD, cardiovascular disease, respiratory illness, neurological disorders, and obesity. A 2022 YouGov survey commissioned by the RHS found that 73% of respondents reported mental health benefits from gardening, 74% experienced physical health improvements, and 42% noted enhanced social wellbeing. To ensure everyone can benefit, particularly in deprived areas, the environmental horticulture sector seeks to work together with the Government to create green spaces and gardens as part of the 1.5 million homes target, promoting gardening and community wellbeing to deliver a Neighbourhood Health Service.



Recognise environmental horticulture as an essential component of delivering the Neighbourhood Health Service and UK healthcare strategy through collaboration with the environmental horticulture sector to **embed nature-based approaches and fostering preventative healthcare.**

Measures:

- Ensure green spaces and gardens are included in the delivery of the new 1.5 million homes. These deliver a powerful boost for physical, mental, and social health and wellbeing and fostering social and community cohesion.
- Embed green social prescribing in NHS pathways, recognising gardening and nature-based therapies as key to improving physical, social, and mental health. Support this with a national action plan to oversee the regulatory framework for social prescribing systems.
- Boost urban greening initiatives by promoting green roofs, green walls, community and school gardens and green spaces in urban and rural planning to boost health and resilience.
- Embed green spaces in pandemic preparedness through including access to green spaces and gardening in the UK's pandemic plan to support health during future crises.

42% of respondents noted enhanced social wellbeing from gardening.

Source: 2022 YouGov/RHS survey

84% of GB adults agree that gardens and green spaces benefit their state of mind. **80%** of GB adults agree that gardens and green spaces benefit their physical health.

YouGov survey for HTA, Dec 2023. Base: 4,023 GB adults



Environmental Horticulture Group (EHG)

Who We Are

The Environmental Horticulture Group (EHG) is a body of industry representative organisations that have come together to champion the value of the breadth of the UK's environmental horticulture, which includes the landscape and arboriculture industry.

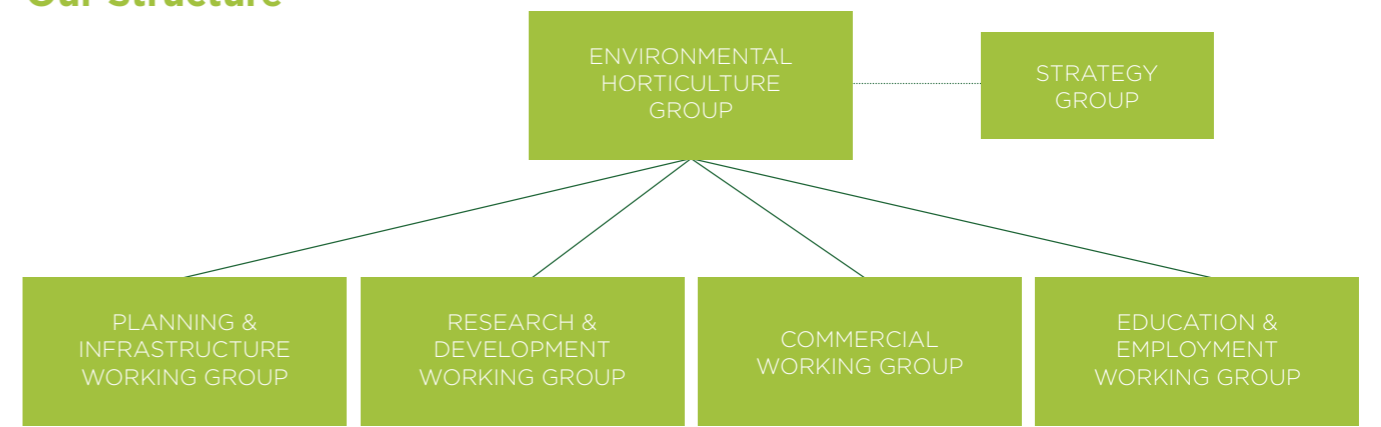
The environmental horticulture and landscaping industry encompasses a wide range of activities—including companies that cultivate ornamental plants, manufacturers of garden equipment, wholesalers and retailers such as garden centres, and specialists in landscaping and arboriculture. Arboriculture is specifically, the science and practice of the cultivation, establishment and management of amenity trees for the benefit of society. There is increasing recognition of the benefits delivered by the plants and green spaces that the industry manages and also the value of tourism and visitors attracted to visiting the UK's gardens and green spaces.



Our Objectives

Environmental horticulture, including landscaping and arboriculture is the original 'green economy' industry. The EHG aims to demonstrate how our industry can collaboratively deliver on many government objectives and key economic, environmental and social challenges.

Our Structure



The **NFU** have supported development of this report and other EHG members include **Landex** and the **Chartered Institute of Horticulture**.

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