

# The Environment

## HTA Briefing

### Introduction

The UK's 25-year Environment plan cannot be achieved without the horticulture sector which underpins 50% of the plan. That is why our industry is fast being recognised as 'Environmental Horticulture'.

It is key for delivering clean air, habitat for wildlife and mitigating the impacts of climate change. In order to be able to do this effectively we need to address workforce shortages and improve the sustainability of production processes - growing media, energy use and water use.

**Dependent on the rate of expansion or contraction in the UK's green spaces, there is a potential economic benefit to the UK of an extra £1.8 billion in total GDP contributions per year by 2030.**

### Climate Change Mitigation

Nature and 'green' solutions have a hugely important role to play in climate resilience, biodiversity, and human health. Plants and trees provide cooling and insulation (ONS found the shading of urban trees saved around £250 million in energy costs and productivity gains), flood control, and improving air quality.

With extreme heat across the UK this summer and drought conditions that are likely to continue, mitigation is key to protecting the most vulnerable. Greening urban environments, especially in areas of deprivation is key if we are to address unequal access to green spaces and the subsequent social, environmental, economic and health benefits they deliver.

### Key asks for Parliament & Policy Makers

- Recognise and champion environmental horticulture and its role in the UK economy, environmental ambitions and health.
- Targeted grants and incentives for tree and plant growers to create new reservoirs to mitigate drought and extreme weather.
- Support investment in innovation to grow more UK trees and plants
- Allow our businesses to access the workforce needed to grow trees and plants
- Ensure importing plant goods is a seamless trade flow process
- Help to promote UK horticulture exports globally
- Government, industry and training providers collaborate, identify, co-ordinate and share best practice in skills delivery for horticulture and landscaping
- Reduce the cost of doing business and red tape
- Government and industry work together on a realistic and sustainable peat-removal growing media strategy and alternatives support including R&D.
- Establish a greater proportion of British-produced plants in public sector projects through best-practice in public procurement and projects.
- Horticulture and water industries must work together with government support to develop water resilience.
- Encourage a greener planning system

### About us

The Horticultural Trades Association (HTA) represents 1500 members in the Environmental Horticulture Sector including; garden centre retailers, tree and plant growers, goods manufacturers, landscapers,

and service providers. Our industry supports nearly 700,000 jobs, has a national GDP of £28.8 billion, mitigates climate change and benefits health and wellbeing for 30 million gardeners in the UK.

### Further information

For further information contact the HTA Policy Team via email at [policy@hta.org.uk](mailto:policy@hta.org.uk) and visit [hta.org.uk/policy](https://hta.org.uk/policy)

## Wildlife and biodiversity

By supplying plants, trees and food for wildlife we help to maintain UK biodiversity. Our industry supports wildlife across the breadth of the terrestrial food web. All the living creatures on Earth rely on pollinators – the health of our ecosystem services is determined by the health of pollinator populations.

29.5% of the UK's urban areas are domestic gardens. This is equivalent to over 3 times the area of Greater London. These green spaces, and the plants found within them, form a network of habitats and wildlife corridors for biodiversity.

## Clean Air

Not only do plants convert CO<sub>2</sub> to O<sub>2</sub>, they also remove toxins from the air we breathe. The value of this is most widely associated with urban greening initiatives in towns and cities (around 27,000 years worth of life were saved in 2015 because of the effects of vegetation on pollution, according to ONS).

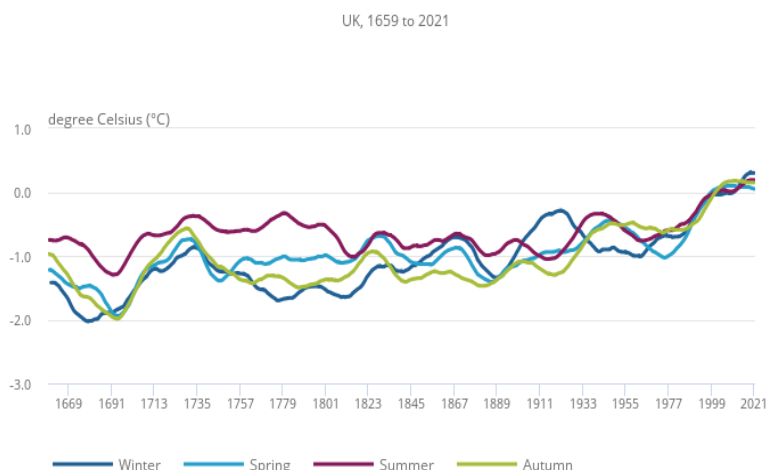
The industry also helps to create a secondary defence to air pollution which often enters the home. Houseplants bring these purifying properties into homes across the UK. The industry's supply of house plants allow those with limited or no access to gardens, or who live in shared housing to harness the aesthetic and air purification benefits of horticulture.

## Eco-Tourism

Recent research has found that greening our cities could also lead to a boost in eco-tourism. To increase the appeal of cities as tourist destinations, their green spaces are being emphasised due to the benefits that horticulture provides. These benefits range from a reduction in noise and air pollution, to enhanced biodiversity and the impact on mental and physical wellbeing that green spaces have.

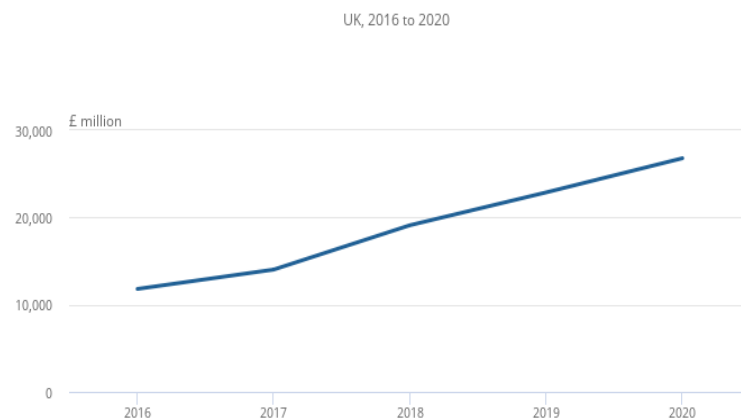
**To summarise: UK Environmental Horticulture means; greener growth, greener environment and greener well-being.**

Figure 1: Seasonal temperatures show clear long-term increases in all four seasons.



Source: Met Office

Figure 11: The value of UK urban blue and green spaces for cooling is increasing



Source: Office for National Statistics – Natural Capital Accounts

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