



# HTA Sustainability Roadmap Charter

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SMARTER HORTICULTURE FOR A BETTER FUTURE:  
OUR GOALS AND PLEDGES 2021 TO 2025





**W**e are facing the great global challenge of climate change, the decline of biodiversity around the world and the problem of poor air quality in cities and urban landscapes. The network of gardens and greenspaces around the UK provides huge benefits to our society and it's a national treasure no-one should take for granted. This green network allows us to connect with nature, and for nature to connect with itself. The ornamental horticulture and landscaping industry should be proud of its role in designing, supplying and maintaining the plants and products that underpin these greenspaces and enhance our natural environment.

As a green industry, we've always been tuned in to the need for sustainable business practice. The climate emergency will mean that our customers, communities and government will look to us for the highest standards in the years to come. This is why we see a need for sustainable business practices, where businesses minimise harmful impacts on the planet, and in doing so drive improved commercial results. As a green industry, we are doing our bit in areas where we can make the greatest difference.

To strengthen our position as a leading industry for sustainability, the HTA has launched this Sustainability Roadmap for member businesses. The roadmap's core goal: To place UK horticulture and landscaping at the leading edge of sustainable business



**By working together we can accelerate smarter horticulture for a better future, and we're very much looking forward to taking the journey with you all.**

Boyd Douglas-Davies, President, HTA  
James Barnes, Chairman, HTA

practice. Our members will be able to join this movement and contribute however they can to help us affect real, positive growth in sustainability. We'll help and support members on the journey through services, information and case studies on how other businesses are working toward sustainability. And above all we'll connect members with each other to foster collaboration across the industry as we play our part in leaving a better world behind for our children.

This is an exciting time for the industry, with new challenges and innovations cropping up all the time. We are very proud and excited to be working with the industry, partners and allies. We encourage all of our members to take part and challenge themselves to become more sustainable. By working together we can accelerate smarter horticulture for a better future, and we're very much looking forward to taking the journey with you all.



**Boyd Douglas-Davies**  
President, HTA



**James Barnes**  
Chairman, HTA



# Smarter horticulture for a better future

Ornamental horticulture and landscaping is naturally a green industry. We grow, manufacture, retail, design and tend to everything people enjoy in their gardens and in the UK's green spaces. This makes a huge contribution to the government's 25 Year Environment Plan. So, it's essential that our industry be at the forefront of sustainable business practice. That's why the HTA is working to the goals in this roadmap, to which all HTA members can contribute. The roadmap's purpose: to place UK horticulture and landscaping at the leading edge of sustainable business practice.

## What sustainable business means

Sustainability can only be achieved by balancing impacts on People, Planet and Profit. When businesses work towards this they can boost customer good-will, employee engagement, and the financial bottom line. Only when all three aspects of sustainability are in place and mutually supportive can lasting benefits to the environment be delivered.

The sustainability roadmap has been developed with members for members. The roadmap focuses on five areas. Each is critical to the success of the ornamental horticulture and landscaping industry and is where we are uniquely well placed to make the biggest difference to the planet.



The triple bottom line of sustainability


## Areas of focus in the roadmap

We have identified five key areas which we think are critical, both in terms of their commercial importance to our industry and in terms of the potential we have to make a difference to the environment. We will work with our members and others to achieve and celebrate excellence and success as we work towards goals for 2025 in the following areas:

- 1.**




**Reducing HTA members' carbon footprint**
- 2.**




**Reducing stress on the UK's water supply**
- 3.**



**Increasing circularity in horticultural plastics**
- 4.**



**Increasing the sustainability of growing media**
- 5.**



**Fostering innovation in pest and disease management**



# Our roadmap goals and promises

Our goals and promises are ambitious - nothing great is easy. And just as we'll progress collectively, so are our goals collective - they do not prescribe what 'good looks like' for any individual business. Horticulture is a diverse industry made up of businesses large and small, and we're inviting members to join us and do whatever they can to contribute to these overall industry goals.

**Overall roadmap goal:**  
To place UK horticulture and landscaping at the leading edge of sustainable business practice.

We will work with members to:	Between now and 2025 you can expect:	By 2025 there will be:
<b>Reduce HTA members' CO2e footprint</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Access to a CO2 and sustainability accreditation scheme and online CO2 benchmarking</li> <li>• Reference sites, content, workshops, and case studies to help you reduce CO2.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A <b>20%</b> net reduction in scope 1 and 2 CO2 emissions in aggregate across HTA membership*</li> </ul>
<b>Reduce stress on UK's public water supply and increase water resilience</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• HTA to argue for government to support investments in water efficiency and wider sustainability</li> <li>• Case studies and examples of how to build water resilience</li> <li>• Online benchmarking tools to help business planning</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• An aggregate <b>40%</b> increase in the proportion of water that comes from non-mains and re-used water sources such as rainwater or runoff capture among growers and retailers</li> <li>• An aggregate <b>25%</b> increase in the proportion of HTA members using water efficiency measures such as reservoirs and automated irrigation systems</li> </ul>
<b>Increase innovation and circularity of garden plastic packaging</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• HTA to convene a contact group from across the supply chain to measure recycling and reduction of plastics and foster industry-wide initiatives</li> <li>• Support, measurement, and promotion of industry-led schemes to recycle garden plastic packaging</li> <li>• Continued collaboration with others to encourage kerbside recycling of horticultural plastics</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>40%</b> or more of the combined weight of plant pots &amp; packaging, garden chemicals containers, and growing media bags will be sourced from recycled plastic</li> <li>• Industry-led recycling schemes that together capture at least <b>10%</b> of the weight of this packaging for recycling or reuse by 2025</li> </ul>
<b>Optimise the sustainability of growing media</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To actively shape a peat reduction strategy by Feb 2021, engaging with all stakeholders and members</li> <li>• Launch of the responsible sourcing scheme for growing media consumer labelling on POS by 2021 and on packaging by 2022</li> <li>• The introduction of carbon foot printing for UK growing media by 2023</li> <li>• Continued measurement of peat and other material use in professional and amateur growing media</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Accelerated peat reduction in growing media delivered through collaboration with government on peat alternatives</li> <li>• UK growing media suppliers accounting for <b>95%</b> of the volume of retail product showing the responsible sourcing scheme ratings and carbon footprint information on their products</li> </ul>
<b>Foster innovation in pest and disease management to minimise chemical use</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• HTA to collaborate with R&amp;D providers to share knowledge of best practice across the industry.</li> <li>• Development and promotion of standards such as the Ornamental Horticulture Assurance Standard (OHAS) to drive best practice.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Growers accounting for <b>75%</b> of production value in HTA membership measuring and managing their chemical use as part of a standard like OHAS</li> </ul>

\*Scope 1 emissions are direct emissions which come from activities under the company's control, such as the use of on site fleet vehicles. Scope 2 emissions are indirect, and are calculated from the generation of purchased energy. Scope 3 (not included here) is all the other indirect emissions such as business travel, procurement, waste and water.



## Our five focus areas

As we noted earlier, we selected the five areas on which to focus our efforts. The areas were chosen on the basis of being critical to our industry's commercial future and in which we can uniquely deliver environmental and social value. We're not by any means starting from zero, and we're pleased to highlight some of the issues and successes to date in each area. Between now and 2025 we will provide support, information, training and services to HTA members to enable even greater industry sustainability in each of these areas.

### Water efficiency and resilience

In 2019, the Chief Executive of the Environment Agency said that the country is facing the "jaws of death" and would soon be at the point where water demand from the country's rising population surpasses the falling supply resulting from climate change. Access to water is vital for plant production, which provides around 16,000 jobs in the UK. True, our industry accounts for just 0.2% of the UK's total water use. We use that water to grow and supply the plants and trees in our parks and gardens - which cover an area more than three times that of Greater London. Nonetheless we need to play our part, and it makes good business sense to do so. Many of our members have already invested in reservoirs, computerised irrigation, and rainwater recycling. This reduces reliance on mains water and provides a 'buffer' if mains water becomes unavailable. By supporting our members in achieving greater water resilience, we aim to reduce business risk and stress on the UK's water supply.

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**The climate emergency will mean that our customers, communities and government will look to us for the highest standards in the years to come.**

James Barnes, Chairman, HTA





## Responsibly sourced growing media

Across the UK over 4 million cubic metres of growing media are used each year. Much of what goes into growing media such as wood fibre and coir is by-product from other industries; in that sense growing media has strong sustainability 'credentials'. Some components though – like peat – are extracted specifically for growing media. Each component impacts on the environment in different ways both positively and negatively. For instance peat extraction produces CO2 emissions, and can impact habitats and biodiversity. In spite of being a by-product of coconut production, coir (left over coconut husk), has a carbon footprint associated with its shipment from Sri Lanka and India. Economically, growing media is hugely important. Without it few of the hundreds of millions of plants and trees we buy for our gardens every year could be produced. Indeed, without growing media far fewer of the plants and trees we need to plant in order to deliver environmental benefits could be produced. To continuously improve the responsible sourcing of growing media components, the industry has developed the Responsible Sourcing for Growing Media scheme. The scheme rates growing media products for sustainability based on the ingredients they use, and is set to help educate consumers on responsible use of growing media. We will continue to collaborate with government on peat replacement and securing access to peat alternatives so as to eliminate peat. We'll champion an evidence-based approach that further optimises the overall sustainability and carbon footprint of our growing media.



**I fundamentally believe that we should be part of a full-circle solution that provides great benefits to society and does so with a feather-like touch in our use of resources and environmental impact - it makes great business sense.**

Andrew Henry, Allensmore Nurseries

## Circularity of plastics in horticulture

The harm that irresponsible use of plastics can do to the environment was brought into sharp relief in David Attenborough's *Blue Planet* series. Plastics are used in plant pots, trays and containers, as well as in packaging for chemicals and growing media. This means there are some uniquely horticultural uses of plastics for which we all need to take responsibility. However, responsibly used plastics do have a role to play, and can support environmental benefits. Plastics are light-weight, which is a factor in minimising CO2 in transport through the supply chain when compared with heavier packaging. Being impermeable, plastic containers also improve water efficiency in plant production. Previously, most plant containers have been made of non-recyclable plastic, however the industry has come together to change this. In 2019 our industry developed a non-black recyclable plant pot for use by commercial growers, an achievement of which we can be proud. Many garden centres provide plastic returns schemes for customers. The HTA also launched a plastics recycling scheme in 2018 for our member businesses. This scheme now reclaims hundreds of tonnes of plastic per year, and we're working to achieve even more by 2025.





## Decarbonisation in horticulture

We all recognise the part horticulture has to play in achieving the UK’s overall ambitions and obligations for carbon reduction. Carbon emissions in horticulture are tied to energy especially for heat, light, and transport. Heat is needed for plant growth in commercial greenhouses. Garden centres and manufacturers need electricity for heat, lighting, and for their IT and other business systems and machinery. Transport of plants and goods around the country produces CO<sub>2</sub>, in the form of vehicle emissions. Energy

efficiency will save costs and help the UK to reach its carbon net zero targets. Our member businesses are making strides in this area. Garden centres are increasingly using LED lighting, and growers are moving to renewables like biomass and solar for their energy. Many UK growers share haulage to reduce fuel costs and CO<sub>2</sub>. Between now and 2025 we will continue to support members with this work and deliver a 20% net reduction in scope one and two CO<sub>2</sub> emissions by 2025.

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**Sustainable business is fundamental to what we do at Rochfords. It’s great to see the HTA championing sustainability in this roadmap and we look forward to it bearing fruit for the industry and the planet.**

Rebecca Grant  
 Horticultural Development Manager,  
 Joseph Rochford Gardens Ltd

## Pest & disease management and chemicals

In commercial plant production chemical pesticides are used as a last resort. Best practice is based around Integrated Pest Management (IPM). Beyond the industry it’s not widely known that IPM involves ‘layers’ of measures to protect plants from pests and diseases. These layers start with removal of pests by hand. They progress to biological controls (for instance introducing insects to eat aphids). Chemicals are used last of all, but without them there would be a big impact on the £1.3b value of UK plant production and the jobs that rely on this. UK growers have led on responsible use of chemicals, for instance through the Ornamental Horticulture Assurance Standard (OHAS). This controls the use of chemicals as part of the quality standard. By developing best practice and standards like OHAS the sustainability of the UK’s plants will grow.





# Our pledges to our members

As your association, we'll be supporting our members every step of the way. We'll offer support and information, and help to celebrate successes. And where we need government help and support to make the strides we want to, we'll champion our industry. We'll work to these four pledges in delivering the roadmap with our members.

## Being transparent

We will report on progress towards the roadmap's goals at least annually. We'll review these goals with members, and keep the roadmap relevant.

## Championing our industry

We will use the roadmap to engage other organisations across and beyond the garden industry. There is huge goodwill and knowledge on sustainability in the UK; we aim to harness this for our members. This will include working with government to ensure that environmental policies enable our members to operate sustainably.

## Holding ourselves to account

We'll hold ourselves to account. We will report on our own sustainability at least every year, and we'll regularly review the environmental and social footprint of our own facilities and operations.

## Helping our members

We will produce and share case studies and examples of how businesses have made sustainability work. We'll also work to connect members with each other to share experiences. We will help our members to self-assess their sustainability through measurement and benchmarking services.



## Join the movement

We're excited and passionate about the benefits the journey to 2025 will bring. No matter the size or type of business you work in, we'd like you to join us and other businesses in the HTA in putting ornamental horticulture and landscaping at the forefront of sustainable business in the UK. All the latest information and resources on sustainability are available on our web site:

[hta.org.uk/sustainability](https://hta.org.uk/sustainability)





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