

**Senedd Cymru**

**Pwyllgor yr Economi, Masnach a Materion Gwledig  
Economi Gwyrdd**

**Cyf:** Tystiolaeth ychwanegol

**Ymateb gan:** The Horticultural Trades Association (HTA)

**Welsh Parliament**

**Economy, Trade, and Rural Affairs Committee  
Green Economy**

**Ref:** Additional evidence

**Evidence from:** The Horticultural Trades Association (HTA)



The Horticultural Trades Association (HTA) represent around 90 business sites in Wales, and 1400 horticulture organisations across the entire supply chain of the UK's environmental horticulture and gardening industry. This includes; garden centres, tree and plant growers, landscapers, manufacturers and service providers. In 2019, the environmental horticulture and landscaping industry in Wales supported contributions of £1.125billion to UK GDP, £249million in taxes to the exchequer and supported the employment of 31,168 people.

This sector is responsible for generating employment opportunities, promoting health and well-being, improving the environment, creating urban green-spaces and delivering net-zero and sustainability targets. The majority of this sector, approximately 95%, is comprised of SMEs. A significant number of these are family-owned enterprises that have been passed down to the next generation. I attach our Value of Plants reports which highlight the social, economic, environmental and health benefits of the sector and our infographic for your reference (both UK-wide). Please also see the below HTA (YouGov for HTA) statistics from December 2023.

### **Access to Gardens**

- 87% of Welsh adults say they have access to their own private garden
- 74% of Welsh adults with private gardens say they tend to use them as a place to relax\*
- 62% use their private garden space to grow plants, trees or flowers; 58% use their garden space to feed/watch or encourage wildlife\*
- 24% of Welsh adults said they garden regularly as a hobby or in their spare time; 40% say they garden occasionally as a hobby or in their spare time

### **Garden Centre Visits**

- 25% of Welsh adults say they've visited garden centres once or twice in the last twelve months; 17% 3 to 4 times and 9% 5 to ten times
- 55% of Welsh adults have visited garden centres at least once in the last 12 months (net: once or more)

### **Gardening – health and wellbeing**

- 83% of Welsh adults agreed that gardens and public green spaces benefit their state of mind
- 81% of Welsh adults agreed that gardens and public green spaces benefit their physical health



**References:**

*YouGov for HTA (1 – 5<sup>th</sup> December 2023) Base: 193 adults (aged 16+) in Wales*

*\*YouGov for HTA (1 – 5<sup>th</sup> December 2023) Base: 178 adults (aged 16+) who own a private garden in Wales*

# Why unlocking green growth in the ornamental horticulture and gardening industry is so important in the UK:



Sources and references found at [hta.org.uk/policy/unlocking-green-growth](https://hta.org.uk/policy/unlocking-green-growth)



# Unlocking Green Growth

10 ways the Government can back our industry to let Britain grow:

- Reduce the cost of doing business and red tape
- Support investment in innovation to grow more UK trees and plants
- Limit the regulation burden
- Work in partnership with industry
- Ensure importing plant goods is a seamless trade flow process
- Help to promote UK horticulture exports globally
- Ensure investment in horticultural education and skills
- Allow our businesses to access the workforce needed to grow trees and plants
- Encourage a greener planning system
- Support research and development in peat-free growing media

The Horticulture and gardening industry:

- Supports jobs & the economy
- Mitigates climate change & improves environment
- Promotes health & wellbeing
- Key to biosecurity & biodiversity

The Horticultural Trades Association represents 1500 members across the UK including:

- Garden Retailers
- Tree and Plant Growers
- Landscapers
- Manufacturers and Suppliers
- Service Providers

On behalf of our members we promote, support and nurture our industry to ensure a robust and sustainable future.

[hta.org.uk/policy](https://hta.org.uk/policy)  
[policy@hta.org.uk](mailto:policy@hta.org.uk)







# **From Nursery to Nature:** The Value of Plants

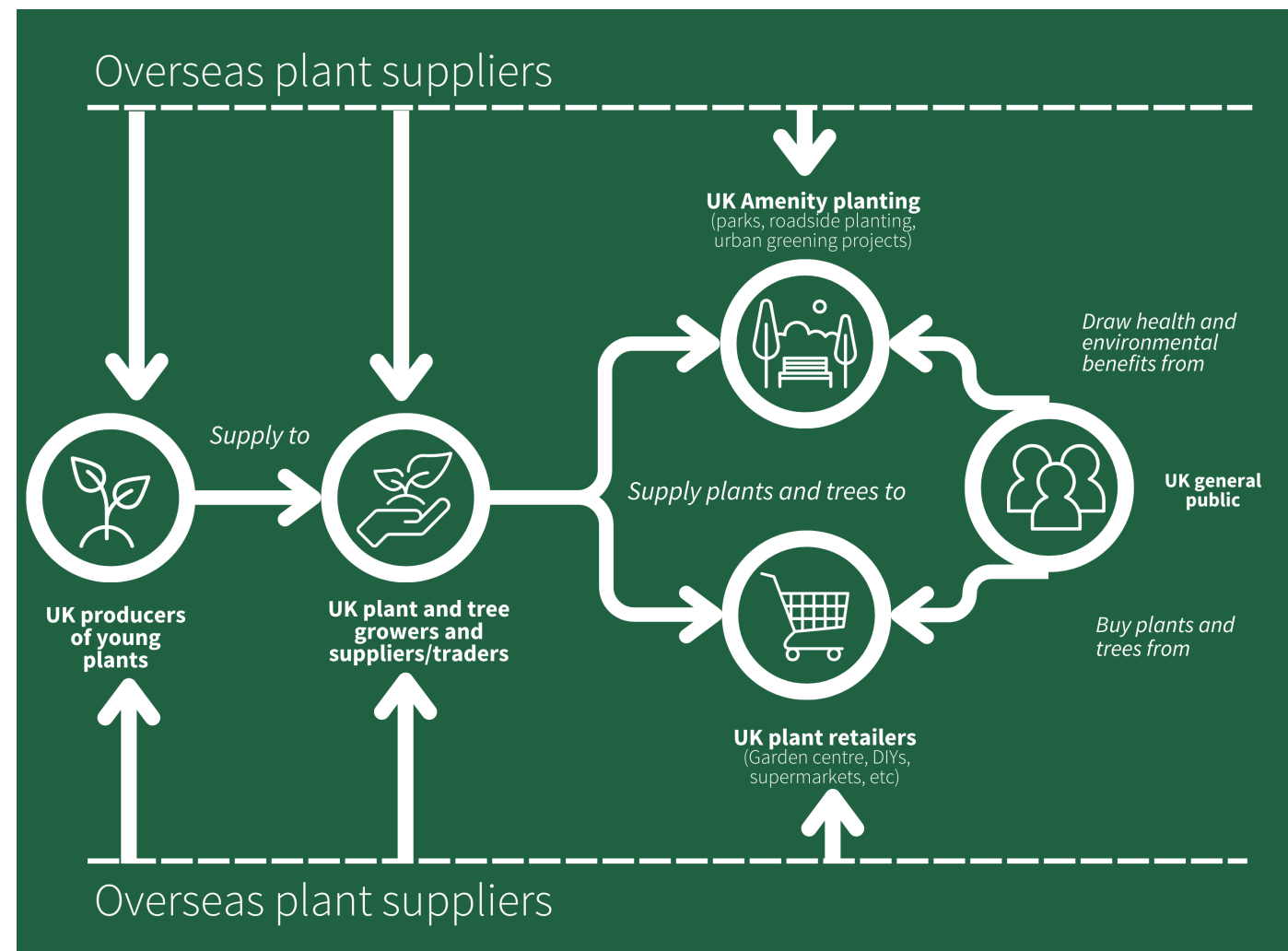
October 2023



# Executive Summary

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*Plants and trees are the quintessence of our nation – our green and pleasant land. The UK is blessed with a thriving industry that has developed the capability over centuries to supply the plants and trees that go into our domestic gardens, urban green spaces, and countryside.*



This industry spans the supply chain of the UK's plants from 'nursery to nature', from the nursery businesses which grow our plants through to the landscape into which these plants and trees are supplied where they provide environmental, economic, and social benefits for our nation.

This research report brings together a comprehensive review of the evidence demonstrating the extent of value plants provide.

It combines one of the most comprehensive literature reviews ever conducted into research into the value of plants with original research conducted by the HTA among 2,000 consumers into their plant purchasing behaviours.

In economic terms, UK growers produce plants and trees worth £1.54 billion per year at farm-gate prices<sup>1</sup>. Over 20,000 people are employed in these businesses, making them a

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vital part of the UK's rural economy<sup>2</sup>. Consumers spend nearly £3 billion per year on plants and trees for their homes and gardens, with around half of this being spent in the UK's garden centres which receive around 200 million visits per year<sup>3</sup>; by contrast the total attendance at the UK's Premier League football matches for the 2022-23 season was 15 million<sup>4</sup>. Once supplied into nature, the plants and trees produced by horticulture add significantly to value of the UK's assets. The estimated value added to the UK's housing stock by proximity to green spaces has been assessed by the Office of National Statistics at £2.8 billion<sup>5</sup>.

In environmental terms, the UK horticulture industry and the plants and trees it produces are vital contributors to the nation's wellbeing. For instance, the value from urban cooling provided by the UK's urban vegetation was estimated by the Office of National Statistics at £430 million in 2020<sup>6</sup>; in a city like London the cooling effect of vegetation was estimated at 0.24°C. In the context of global warming, our nation's capacity and capability to produce the plants and trees that provide these ecosystem services is vital to making our urban spaces liveable. In terms of mitigating and reducing air pollution, the planting of a hedging barrier around schools has been shown to reduce the concentration of particulate matter, nitrous oxide, ozone and other atmospheric toxins by up to 77%<sup>5</sup>. Indeed, the annual value of air pollution removal services by urban vegetation was around £800 million in 2021<sup>6</sup>. The UK's domestic gardens in urban areas cover an area greater than

*Consumers spend nearly £3 billion per year on plants and trees for their homes and gardens, with around half of this being spent in the UK's garden centres which receive around 200 million visits per year*

the environmental benefits of the plants and trees produced and maintained by the UK horticulture industry that they support seven of the ten goals of Defra's Environmental Improvement Plan. We set out these goals and our asks for government support in our accompanying document *Delivering the UK's Environmental Improvement Plan 2023 through the Value of Plants*.

The UK's capability and capacity to supply the plants and trees that support in the context of the climate emergency is strategically vital. However, as well as providing environmental and social benefits, the UK horticulture industry thrives (as does any industry) by satisfying its customers' needs profitably. To meet the expectations of the UK's 30 million gardeners for plant quality and health, environmental impact, beauty and affordability, there needs to be a continued supply of plants from the industry that also that provide these ecosystem and economic benefits. Should the UK's plant and tree production fall short in any of these respects, the volume of supply is likely to fall with a knock on impact on the economic and environmental benefits delivered.

*Our modelling shows that even a modest 5% increase in the price of plants retailed (relative to the rest of the economy) would be likely to lead to a fall in the volumes of plants supplied of just over 10%*

three times the Greater London area, and provide habitat for pollinators and wildlife that is vital for ecosystems. Indeed, so extensive and pervasive are

Our consumer research shows UK horticulture – and the nation – approaching a moment of truth. The cost of living crisis and squeezed consumer incomes has left gardeners highly sensitive to the price of their plants. Our modelling shows that even a modest 5% increase in the price of plants retailed (relative to the rest of the economy) would be likely to lead to a fall in the volumes of plants supplied of just over 10%, with the impact even more pronounced among lower income and socially disadvantaged



groups. This suggests that passing on the cost increases in the supply chain to consumers is likely to lead to reduced industry contributions to the UK economy, and fewer plants and trees supplied into the environment.

However, our research also shows that consumers' expectations from their plants, and the potential for the industry to add value goes well beyond price. Across all plant purchasers, our research suggests that the lost volumes that would result from a 5% increase in prices could largely be offset should those plants demonstrably be: sourced from growers with robust plant health controls; produced in peat-free growing media; certified as having a minimal environmental footprint; grown in Britain; and in the case of hardy stock come with a plant guarantee of one year or greater. Indeed, consumers particularly value 'value added' traits which pertain to plant health and quality, as well as environmental impact.

These findings are especially pertinent in the current economic and regulatory context the UK horticulture industry is facing. On the one hand we conclude that increased costs specific to horticulture such as managing the transition to peat-free production, rising input and seasonal labour costs, and the costs of new regulations such as those relating to cross-border trade in plants risks the environmental, social and economic value provided by our industry. On the other hand, our research suggests that inward investment from horticulture businesses - supported by government - in measures to improve and promote the biosecurity, quality and environmental impact of plants will add significant value to consumers and sustaining the volumes of plants and trees supplied into our natural environment.

## Foreword



*"As a country, and as a planet, climate change is presenting the biggest existential threat for centuries. Plants and trees offer vast benefits for mitigating these effects and play a critical role in improving the environment and wellbeing of our nation."*

Our association traces its roots to 1899, when a group of nurserymen grouped together to support and safeguard the future of horticultural production in the UK. Nearly 125 years later so much has changed, but a constant through this period has been the value of the UK's plants and trees.

This report is perhaps the most comprehensive review ever conducted of the evidence for just how much economic, environmental and social value plants provide to the UK. It also contains the findings of the first ever review of price-demand elasticity for garden plants. We find our industry at a point where new costs unique to plant production are putting extra pressure on plant prices compared with the wider economy. In this report we quantify how much this extra price inflation of plants could reduce demand for both plants and the flow of benefits they provide UK's citizens. We also show that the innovative work of the UK's growers in producing ever more sustainable, locally produced high quality plants is increasingly valued by gardeners.

For policy makers, the report provides a rich evidence base for how horticulture underwrites vital social, economic and environmental policy goals. Indeed, seven of the ten goals of Defra's Environmental Improvement Plan rely substantially

on a thriving horticulture industry and the plants and trees it grows.

For businesses in horticulture, there are insights into changing consumer expectations from the plants they purchase. We share detail on the value consumers attach to assurances around plants' environmental impact, their plant health, provenance, and quality assurance. These insights shed light on emerging promotional opportunities to satisfy gardeners' increasing expectations from the plants they purchase.

I hope that you find this report useful, insightful, and above all interesting. I'd also encourage you to read our call to action for policy makers – Delivering the UK's Environmental Plan through the Value of Plants - which we have produced in response to this report's findings. This call to action sets out our proposals for how the value of plants evidenced in this report can be safeguarded and enhanced for future generations through collaboration between government and the environmental horticulture industry.

**Fran Barnes**

**Chief Executive Officer  
Horticultural Trades Association**



# Introduction

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The UK's plants, trees and the richness they bring to life in the UK is easy to take for granted. And yet almost all of us on any given day will encounter plants, trees, and flowers, either at home, in the workplace or out in the natural environment.

Indeed, even in the UK's urban spaces, Ordnance Survey assesses that 29.5% of the UK's total urban area is accounted for by domestic gardens, not counting nearly 50,000 hectares of public parks and gardens<sup>6</sup> – an area almost equivalent to the whole of the Isle of Man. With such familiarity it is perhaps easy to take these green spaces, and the system that has developed over generations to supply the trees and plants in them, for granted. And yet in the context of the climate emergency there is a growing understanding and evidence base for the environmental, social, and economic value that plants, trees, and the industry that furnishes the UK with its green infrastructure provides.

This report firstly describes the system represented by the UK's horticulture industry that produces and supply the trees and plants for our green spaces, a journey from our plant nurseries out into the natural environment – from nursery to nature. This brief description outlines how the UK's plants and trees are produced, and the activity and challenges the industry is embracing to further 'add value' to our plants, for instance in reducing the environmental impact of production, ensuring robust biosecurity for the country, and creating jobs and contributing to the UK's green growth.

Once plants are established in nature, whether in a hanging basket, a park or garden, or a sustainable urban drainage system, they provide substantial economic, environmental and social benefits. This report provides a comprehensive review of the evidence for these benefits, and summarises how these benefits underwrite substantial parts of the UK's environmental policy goals; notably we assess that plants, trees

and the horticulture industry that produces them contribute to the delivery of seven of the ten goals of the Environmental Improvement Plan.

Finally, in the current context of a cost of living crisis and climate emergency, the wants, needs, and expectations of the UK's 30 million gardeners are constantly changing. Increasingly we anticipate that consumer expectations for the environment and plant health will increase in the coming years. The consumer research we present in this report provides insight into the very real impact that assurances for consumers in these and other respects is likely to have on the volume of plants and trees purchased. The research also shows the challenge facing the industry of inward investment in the supply chain to deliver this value-added for gardeners, whilst ensuring that the costs of this investment do not increase prices to the end consumer to the extent that socially and economically disadvantaged communities are 'priced out' from the environmental and social benefits of plants, trees and gardening.



# 1. Plant Production in the UK

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UK plant production supports the economy and employment

Most of the UK's home-grown plants and trees begin their journey with the UK's commercial growers. These businesses produce a range of 'crops' for the UK, from trees to houseplants.

There are a variety of specialisms among the UK's 300-400 growers and producers of plants and trees, who nurture and raise seed, cuttings, plug or young plants into the plants and trees that are

*In 2022, UK production of ornamental plants was valued at £1.54 billion<sup>1</sup> and a further £760 million of plants and bulbs were imported in the same year to meet growing demand for plants, trees and green infrastructure in the UK*

supplied to retailers such as garden centres, or to amenity customers such as housing associations, public parks, local authorities or other land-owners. In 2022, UK production of ornamental plants was valued at £1.54 billion<sup>1</sup> and a further £760 million of plants and bulbs were imported in the same year to meet growing demand for plants, trees and green infrastructure in the UK<sup>1</sup>.

UK production of plants provides livelihoods for many UK residents and overseas seasonal workers, many of whom operate family-owned businesses and SMEs, directly employing over 20,000 people and contributing £183 million in tax revenue to the exchequer<sup>2</sup>.

These growers are one of the fundamental pillars of the wider environmental horticulture and landscaping industry, which includes garden retail, wholesale, garden goods manufacturing, landscape services, arboriculture and

domestic and international tourism. This wider industry was valued by Oxford Economics in 2019 as supporting contributions to UK GDP of £28.8 billion, with the potential to grow to £41.8 billion to national GDP by 2030<sup>2</sup>. Without the plants and trees grown and supplied by the UK's plant and tree growers, this economic contribution to the UK's economy would be vastly reduced, and would rely substantially more on plant and tree imports from overseas. Such a shift away from UK-grown plants and trees to imports would carry adverse consequences and risks to the UK, for instance the loss of UK green economy jobs, reduced self-sufficiency to produce the green infrastructure our society needs, and an increased risk from the introduction of overseas plant pests and diseases which in the past have had a devastating effect on the UK's landscape and flora.

Whilst it is beyond the scope of this report to provide a detailed description of the varied and complex processes that are involved in producing the UK's plants and trees, it is pertinent to note some of the current challenges and initiatives being embraced by the UK's growers in order to

*UK production of plants employs over 20,000 people and contributes £183 million in tax revenue to the exchequer*

add value to the UK's plants. In section 5 we will show how the expectations of the UK's gardener for healthy, UK-grown plants with a minimal environmental footprint are playing a role in purchase decisions, and ultimately on the volume of plants and trees making their way into the UK's gardens to the benefit of the environment. It is therefore important to note the challenges and investment required in order to ensure this value added is provided.

The production of plants and trees at this scale involves complex business processes to ensure



and improve plant quality whilst reducing environmental impact. A current challenge being embraced by the sector is a transition away from the use of peat as a substrate in plant production with a view to reducing the environmental impact of plant and tree production. Ultimately the removal of peat from production will contribute to a reduction in the sector's environmental footprint, and there is some evidence for consumer preference (albeit very modest) for plants produced in peat-free growing media. The UK's growers halved the volume of peat used to produce the UK's plants and trees between 2011 and 2022<sup>6</sup>. However, extensive trialling and investment in new equipment is required to reliably produce high quality plants and trees in different growing media that carries a higher cost than peat-based alternatives. Similarly, growers are now making substantial investments in developing the knowledge and skills how to work with these new growing media in order to most sustainably produce quality plants and trees. Often different irrigation and nutrition regimes are required to produce plants and trees of equivalent quality for the end-consumer.

Similar challenges are involved in reducing the environmental impact of plant and tree production. For example, investment in water resilience across the sector in reservoir construction and rainwater capture technologies is reducing reliance on mains water, as is the adoption of more efficient irrigation technologies in nurseries. As of 2020 41% of the UK's growers had on-site reservoirs<sup>7</sup>, with a further 19% looking to invest in reservoirs to improve water resilience, reduce the environmental impact of plants produced, and reduce cost in the supply chain.

UK growers are a key link in the supply chain for plants and trees and their movement across the UK. Plants and plant material are bought in and sold on by growers, often across international borders. With such movement of plants comes the risk of introducing and/or spreading plant pests and diseases with the potential to inflict serious damage to the UK's landscape. To contextualise the risk of more serious pest and disease outbreaks

the cost of Ash Dieback, a disease which is set to devastate the UK's Ash trees, is estimated to be £14.8 billion to the UK's economy<sup>8</sup>.

In response, the industry and government have collaborated to develop a robust Plant Health Management Standard to set out 'what good looks like' in terms of good practice, and to underwrite bio-security in the supply chain for plants and trees. Increasingly certifications which require growers to demonstrate high standards of biosecurity are being specified by the UK's plant and tree retailers and public sector customers. For instance, the HTA's Ornamental Horticulture Assurance Scheme (OHAS) requires high standards of biosecurity to be maintained, and includes growers with a combined crop value of around £300 million, a significant proportion of UK output. The consumer research which we share in section 5 of this report suggests that consumers, and especially keener gardeners, value the assurance that a plant has been sourced from a grower with robust controls on plant pests and diseases, although not to the extent that a significant price premium could be commanded for such assurance; we assess that this expectation will increase over time as consumers become more aware of the importance of robust biosecurity in the supply chain, as they have around standards in the food supply chain.

This presents a challenge for growers in particular in making the inward investment needed to develop and sustain the good biosecurity practice and its certification, especially in the context of generally increasing business costs and the specific investment challenges faced by growers in ensuring that the UK's plants and trees continue to meet the value expectations of consumers and regulators. Indeed, the issue goes beyond one of simple productivity and competitiveness insofar as reduced output (or a higher cost output that reduces supply) carries with it reduced downstream environmental and social benefits from these plants.

Lastly, we should note that production at scale of plants and trees worth £1.5 billion requires a

substantial labour force with a range of technical, commercial, scientific and other skills. Just over a third of that labour input in UK growers consists of seasonal workers<sup>9</sup> – often but not always relatively low-skilled workers who are involved during seasonal peaks associated with key stages of the crop production cycle, for instance potting plants, lifting field-grown plants and trees, and so forth.

Attracting and retaining sufficient skills and people to be able to meet demand is a significant challenge for UK growers, with a reported unfilled people vacancy rate among UK growers of 7.7%<sup>11</sup>.

Keys to growers unlocking productivity gains include widening its appeal and accessibility as a career, and being able to invest in mechanisation and automation to mitigate shortfalls in labour supply and to increase productivity to remain competitive.





# 2. The Retail of Plants and Trees

Supporting a supply chain of garden goods, providing jobs and economic benefits

In 2019, garden retail directly contributed £2.2 billion in GVA to the UK's economy. Much of this contribution is highly reliant on plants, and has the potential to rise to £2.5 billion by 2030<sup>2</sup>. In addition, garden retail directly contributed £532 million in tax revenue for the exchequer and employed 87,000 people in 2019<sup>2</sup>.

HTA research estimates that UK consumers spent £2.2 billion on plants for outdoors in 2022, and a further £500 million on houseplants<sup>3</sup>. Garden centres are the leading sales channel for the

*Garden retail directly contributed £532 million in tax revenue for the exchequer and employed 87,000 people in 2019*

But as described earlier in the report, plants play a key part in supporting a wider supply chain of goods produced by UK manufacturers – for example, when a plant is purchased, the ‘basket’ often contains compost, a pot for the plant, plant foods to feed it, and so forth. To this effect, an HTA analysis of garden centre sales data found that in 2022 49% of transactions containing outdoor containers, 48% of transactions containing growing media and 41% of transactions containing chemicals and fertilisers also contained a plant<sup>10</sup>; suggesting that a fall in the volume of plants sold is highly likely to involve a substantial ‘knock-on’ economic impact for garden retailers and the manufacturers of these ‘link-sale’ items. In this sense the economic value of the UK’s plants and trees reaches far and wide into the economy.

*UK consumers made an estimated 200 million visits to garden centres in 2022*

purchase of plants (see Figures 1 and 2), many of which are small family-owned businesses, with UK consumers making an estimated 200 million visits to garden centres in 2022<sup>3</sup>. By contrast, the total attendance at all Premier League football matches in the 2022-23 season was around 15 million<sup>4</sup>.

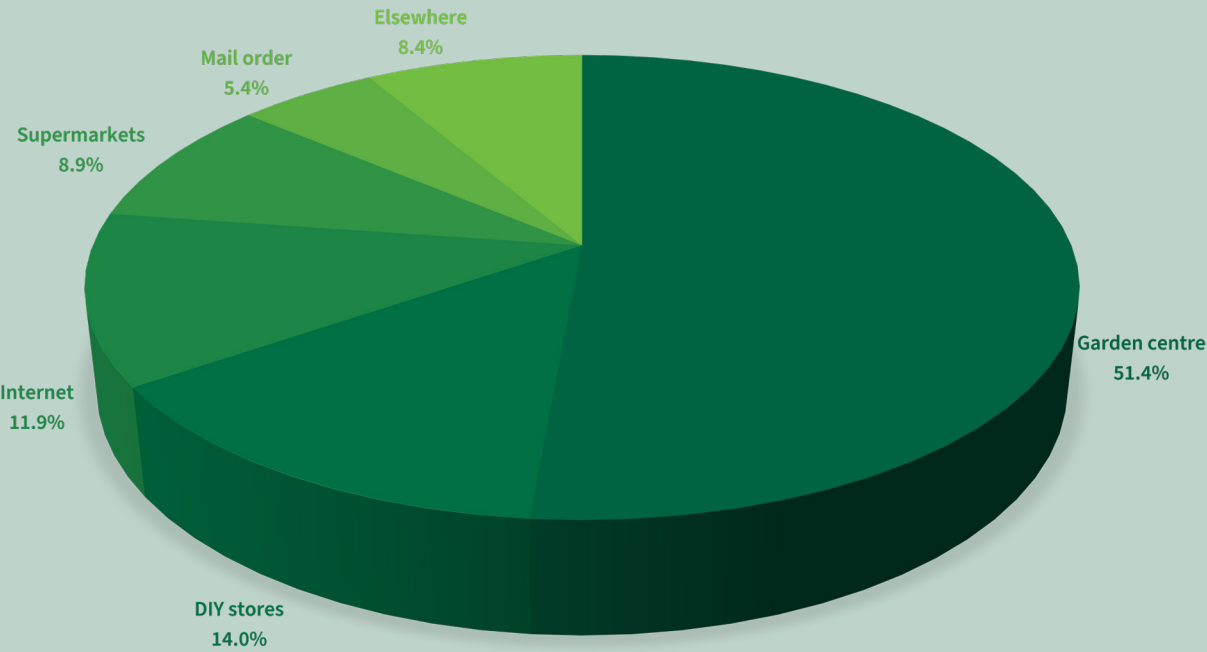


Figure 1. The proportion of total outdoor plant spend (£) made in each sales channel

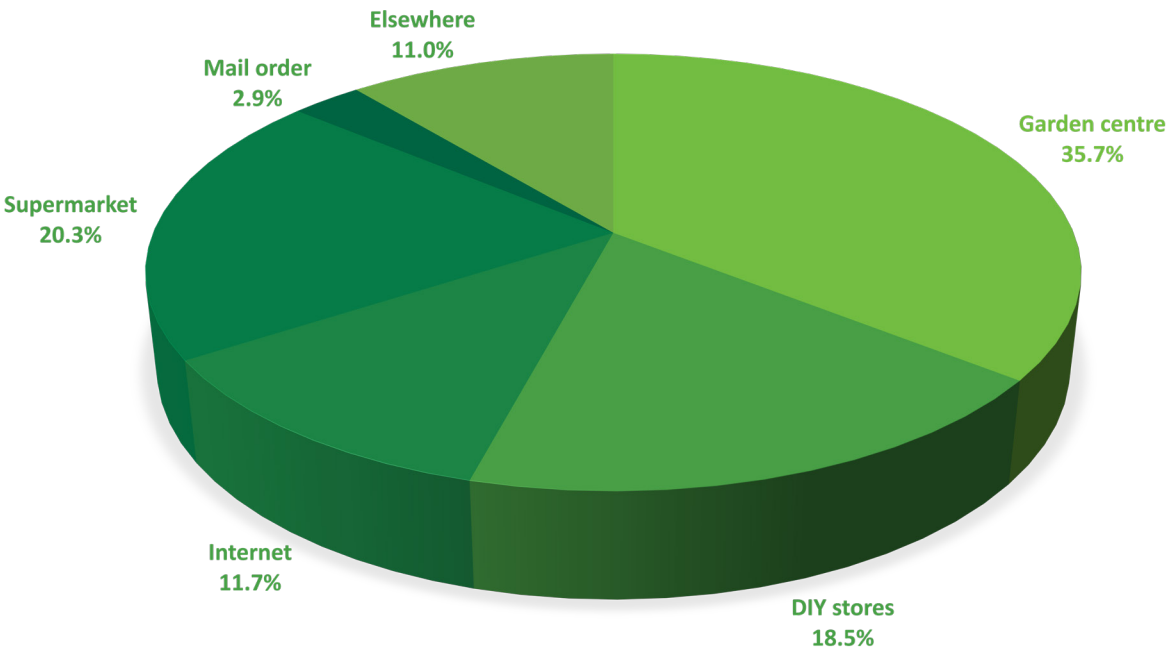


Figure 2. The proportion of total houseplant spend (£) made in each sales channel

Similarly, plants started out as the core offering for many garden centres who have since developed into larger destination centres with cafes and restaurants, children’s play areas and grottos at

*UK consumers spent £2.2 billion on plants for outdoors in 2022, and a further £500 million on houseplants*

pattern, with younger consumers accounting for a greater proportion of spending on houseplants than outdoor plants. In this sense houseplants play a critical role in ‘introducing’ gardening to younger consumers who are less likely than average to own their own homes and gardens. It’s likely that houseplants play a critical role in developing interest and engagement in plants which develops into further interest in, and higher spending on, gardens and plants in later life. Whilst HTA research shows that consumers aged over 55 account for 48% of total spending on outdoor plants, consumers aged between 25-34 are the highest spending age group for houseplants, accounting for 23% of total consumer houseplant spend<sup>3</sup> (see Figure 3). Under 55’s account for 66% of total houseplant spend, demonstrating that the desire to engage with plants and the health, psychological and environmental benefit they provide is not limited to any specific age group.

Christmas to name a few attractions. Catering typically makes up around 15% of annual turnover for garden centres that have a café/restaurant<sup>11</sup>; and these are hospitality outlets and economic activity that wouldn’t exist without the plants that drive the core part of the business.

## Plants play an important role in the accessibility of gardening and connecting with nature

60% of UK adults (around 32 million) bought one or more outdoor plants in 2022, whilst 46% (24 million) purchased one or more houseplants<sup>3</sup>. Whilst participation in gardening and outdoor plant purchasing is more pronounced among older consumers, houseplant purchasing patterns show a subtly different demographic

As well as appealing across the age ranges, houseplants also provide a means of connecting with nature and gardening as a hobby among socially-disadvantaged groups in the lowest household income brackets, and among consumers without access to a garden or outdoor space of their own. In fact, 29% of UK adults without access to a garden bought a houseplant in 2022<sup>3</sup>, providing access to the health and wellbeing

benefits of plants which we describe in Section 4. HTA consumer research data demonstrates high levels of indoor and outdoor plant purchasing across income groups, although there is a correlation between higher levels of purchasing and income. For instance, figure 4 shows that 48% of people with a household income less than £15,000 per year were active in the outdoor plant market, and 32% in the houseplant market<sup>3</sup>. We

might conclude that whilst at present plants and trees are relatively affordable across the income spectrum, this has the potential to change should the price of plants and trees increase, which would risk disconnecting more socially and economically marginalised groups from the health, environmental and social benefits provided by plants which we describe in section 4.

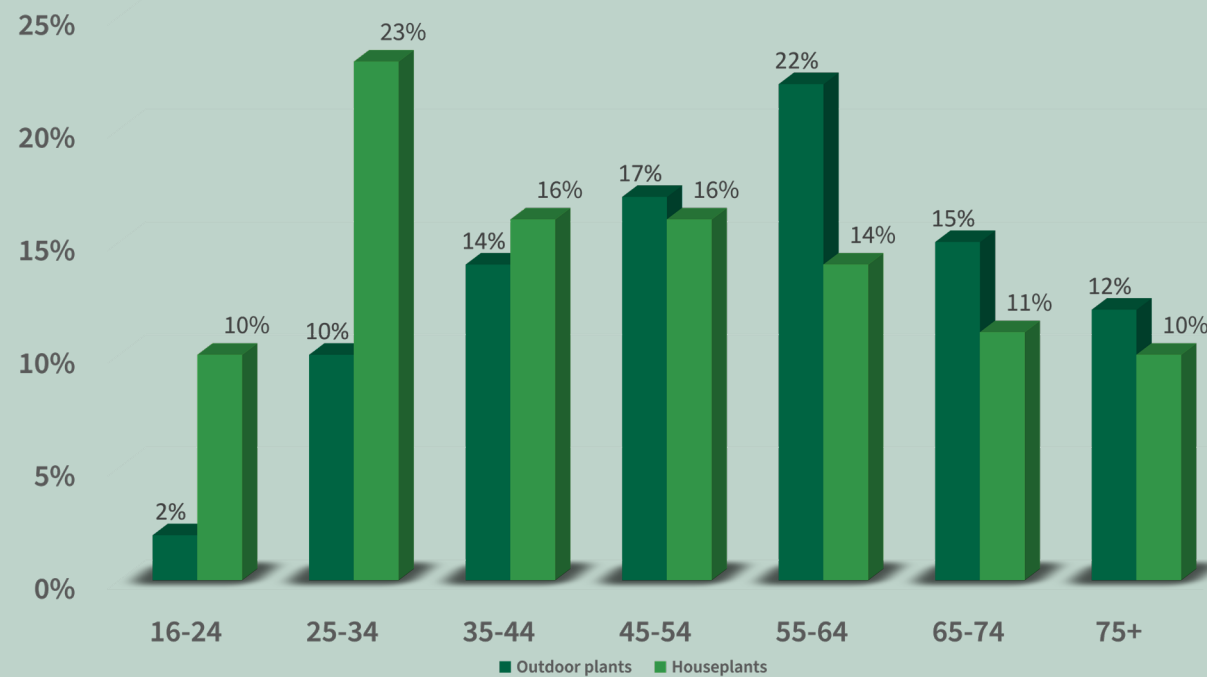


Figure 3. The proportion of total outdoor plant and houseplant spend by age group (2022)



Figure 4. The proportion of people who purchased outdoor plants and houseplants in the last year by household income groups (2022)

## 4. Into Nature

The environmental value plants and trees provide.

Once supplied into nature – that's to say our domestic gardens or the wider landscape, the plants and trees produced by the UK's horticulture industry deliver a substantial range of environmental, economic and social benefits to the nation. In environmental terms, the horticulture industry and the plants and trees it produces underwrites seven of the ten goals of the UK's Environmental Improvement plan.

### Goal 1 – Thriving Plants and Wildlife

Domestic gardens account for almost a third of the UK's urban areas, providing invaluable support for wildlife. As well as providing habitat in their own right, domestic gardens and the plants within them form vital wildlife corridors, helping species

*Domestic gardens account for almost a third of the UK's urban areas, providing invaluable support for wildlife*

to move between areas of public green space like parks and the wider countryside, and between areas of green and blue space. These habitat networks also provide important refuge and a food source for migratory birds and enable our native fauna to move safely between areas of their territory in an ever-expanding urban landscape. Research has shown that increasing the richness, cover or density of native plants in urban green spaces is linked to increases in animal biodiversity, with the biggest factor being the resources provided by the plant itself<sup>12</sup>.

Plants and gardens are also vital for the provision of pollen and nectar for our pollinators. Studies have found that more bee and hoverfly flower visits are recorded in allotments and domestic gardens than most other land uses<sup>13</sup>. Bumblebee nests have also been found more often in domestic gardens compared

to other habitats such as grassland and woodland, where bees can access many gardens with a higher diversity of plant species and flowering phases<sup>14</sup>.

Plants are also vital for the functioning of many ecosystems and provide many of the ecosystem benefits that we feel from nature. Plants offer provisioning services by way of physical materials and food, and regulating services such as carbon storage and maintaining the oxygen cycle. They provide supporting services like maintaining healthy soils and providing space for wildlife.

### Goal 2 – Clean Air

A key ecosystem benefit of plants and trees is their ability to remove particulate matter that is less than 2.5 microns in width (PM2.5) from the atmosphere; PM2.5 is one of the deadliest pollutants affecting people. For the UK as a whole woodlands are estimated to account for over 80% of all PM2.5 removed by vegetation, despite only accounting for 12% of the UK land area<sup>15</sup>. Drilling down into the effect of urban vegetation on removal





of PM2.5 from the air, the estimated value of this ecosystem service provided by plants in terms of avoided negative impacts to human health was worth £667 million in 2021 alone. Furthermore, the impact of this urban green infrastructure on air quality is substantial. According to the Office

*The estimated value of this ecosystem service provided by plants in terms of avoided negative impacts to human health was worth £667m in 2021 alone*

of National Statistics<sup>6</sup> Urban vegetation removed 26,913 tonnes of ground-level ozone in 2021, substantially improving air quality in our towns and cities and supporting the Environmental Improvement Plan's 2040 target of reducing the population's exposure to PM2.5 by 35% compared with 2018 levels.

In the context of the climate emergency, we can anticipate an increasing need for green infrastructure in the coming years to mitigate this consequence of global warming; pollution exacerbates, and is exacerbated by, climate change. Looking at the impact of urban vegetation on air pollution more widely than PM2.5, substantial evidence exists for the value of plants in cleaning the air. A recent research study showed that planting a physical barrier of hedging around schools can reduce the concentration of particulate matter, nitrous oxide, ozone and other atmospheric toxins by up to 77%<sup>16</sup>, and along with other interventions such as air purifiers and vehicle-free zones around schools this is a way of reducing school children's exposure to harmful pollutants. The air pollutant removal services provided by vegetation was valued at £2.4 billion in 2020<sup>17</sup>.

### Goal 3 – Clean and Plentiful Water

As noted in section 1, the UK's growers are investing substantially in reservoir construction and other water resilience measures such as rainwater capture to remove stress on the UK's water supply. However, the benefit that plants and trees provide in water management are substantial. For instance, trees and hedging around fields slow the runoff of water from irrigation or rainfall, and reduce the risk of flash flooding<sup>18</sup>.

### Goal 7 - Mitigating and Adapting to Climate Change

Trees are carbon sinks, and can sequester carbon from our atmosphere, locking it away in their trunks and leaves. One report estimates that all trees across Great Britain currently sequester around 16 million tonnes of carbon dioxide equivalent (tCO2e) per year<sup>19</sup>. They also estimated

*Total carbon storage by trees in Great Britain (both above and below ground) is just over 980 million tCO2e<sup>22</sup>, making trees a valuable weapon in the fight against climate change*

that total carbon storage by trees in Great Britain (both above and below ground) is just over 980 million tCO2e<sup>20</sup>, making trees a valuable weapon in the fight against climate change.

Focusing in on the plants and trees produced for horticulture specifically for amenity spaces such as parks, street-scapes and urban green spaces, the Office for National Statistics estimates that around 1.4 million tonnes of CO2 was sequestered by the UK's urban trees and woodland in 2017, with a monetised carbon saving value of £89 million<sup>6</sup>. Looking more widely than our urban areas, UK tree production nurseries play a vital part in underwriting the government's ambition to plant

30,000 hectares of woodland by 2025 as part of the nation's strategy to mitigate the effects of climate change.

### Goal 8 – Reduced Risk of Harm from Environmental Hazards

Plants are a key element in mitigating and adapting to the effects of climate change as our future is set to see a changing climate and more extreme weather events.

According to a study by the European Commission, mean average city tree coverage across the EU was 11%, but increasing tree coverage to 30% lowered temperatures by an average of 0.4°C, with a maximum effect of 5.9°C in some areas. This decrease in temperature was estimated to have the potential to avoid 2,644 premature deaths and nearly 40% of all deaths attributable to Urban Heat Island effects<sup>21</sup>. Furthermore, the urban cooling services provided by vegetation in the UK was valued at £430 million in 2020<sup>6</sup>; and in London City region, gardens have an annual cooling effect of -0.24°C.

The roots of plants and trees also enable effective percolation of water into the soil which recharges underground aquifers<sup>22</sup>. Furthermore, the Local Government Association notes that "Sustainable drainage systems (SuDS) are designed to manage stormwater locally (as close to its source as possible), to mimic natural drainage and encourage its infiltration, attenuation and passive treatment. SuDS are designed to both manage the flood and pollution risks resulting from urban runoff and to contribute wherever possible to environmental enhancement and place making"<sup>23</sup>.

Susdrain ([www.susdrain.org](http://www.susdrain.org)) provides numerous case studies of SuDS schemes which incorporate rain gardens, public planting, and green roofs which mitigate and retain rain water in the soil, reducing strain on the UK's water courses and the risk of urban flash flooding. Among their case studies is one for the Aquifer Partnership (TAP)

partnering with Moulsecoomb Primary School to renovate the school's courtyard space to a water-friendly garden with emphasis on education and play opportunities. Downpipes draining a large area of the school's roof space were disconnected and directed into the SuDS features which include ponds with aquatic plants and permeable planted areas with wildlife attracting perennial plants. The total catchment of the rain garden is 637 m2 and total water attenuation capacity of the feature is 23

*The average city tree coverage across the EU was 11%, but increasing tree coverage to 30% lowered temperatures by an average of 0.4°C, with a maximum effect of 5.9°C in some areas*

cubic metres of water.

### Goal 9 – Enhancing Biosecurity

As noted in section 1, UK growers and the wider horticulture industry have been at the heart of developing the Plant Health Management Standard (PHMS) with Defra and other stakeholders. As of 2023 around one in seven UK commercial growers had adapted the Plant Healthy biosecurity certification as a route to certifying compliance with the PHMS, and growers with an aggregate crop output value of around £300 million had adopted the OHAS certification scheme which itself is closely aligned with almost all of criteria set out in the PHMS. This collaboration between industry and government provides a good foundation on which to build to further strengthen the UK's protection from plant pests and diseases.

A robust UK plant and tree production capacity is an essential part of protecting the UK's natural landscape from overseas plant pests and diseases. Of particular concern in the Environmental Improvement Plan is the potential for *Xylella Fastidiosa* to reach and become established in the UK. Indeed, the Environment Improvement Plan's plans to introduce stringent requirements for

inspection, testing and pre-quarantine of species such as lavender and rosemary prior to import underlines the value of UK domestic production in ensuring a continued presence of these plants in the UK landscape. In HTA's consumer survey (see section 5), lavender was the most frequently given response when asked about which garden shrubs had been last purchased by respondents. The more domestic production is able to supply demand, the greater the positive impact both on the UK's biosecurity and urban biodiversity.

### Goal 10 – Enhancing beauty, heritage, and engagement with the natural environment

The target set out by the plan that everyone should live within 15 minutes' walk of a green or blue space, which includes a provision for creating or significantly refurbishing over 100 green spaces through the Levelling Up Parks Fund, is recognition of the value that plants and trees provide towards this goal. First and foremost, this value manifests itself in the fact that around 30 million UK adults participate in gardening. However, garden tourism – the leisure visits to the UK's parks, gardens and green spaces by UK and overseas visitors, contributed £1.5 billion in direct GVA contributions to the UK economy in 2019<sup>24</sup>.

The UK has an international reputation and is regarded as the 'gardening capital of the world', this is demonstrated through the fact that one-third of all international tourist visits to the UK involve at least one trip to a park or garden<sup>25</sup>. The RHS Gardens at Wisley, Rosemoor, Hyde Hall, Harlow Carr and Bridgewater are home to 25 National Plant Collections<sup>26</sup> which draw in visitors from across the globe. In 2019, expenditure from visiting parks/gardens was valued at £1.2 billion from over 182 million trips<sup>27</sup>. Kew Gardens and RHS Garden Wisley held 2nd and 3rd place in the top ten most visited paid attractions in England in 2022<sup>28</sup>. Cities and tourist hotspots are also increasingly advertising their green initiatives and credentials to attract tourists, for example Cornwall's Eden Project continues to be a trailblazer, and its new Growing Point plant nursery is heated by geothermal energy, harvests rainwater and produces over one million plants per year<sup>29</sup>.

Indeed, the UK is leading the way in greening its urban environment and developing green cities which bring people closer to plants, trees and the range of benefits they bring. Appendix 1 provides three mini-case studies (two UK and one international) of urban greening initiatives which show how plants trees grown, and maintained through horticulture that are enhancing beauty and citizen's engagement with nature.

*The leisure visits to the UK's parks, gardens and green spaces by UK and overseas visitors, contributed £1.5 billion in direct GVA contributions to the UK economy in 2019*

## 4. Social and Health Benefits

The social and natural capital value that plants and trees provide

Aside from their contribution to the environment, plants and trees provide substantial value in terms of their contribution to the UK's physical and mental health, and the sheer enjoyment from gardening and exposure to plants. Plants and trees are also a vital part of the UK's 'balance sheet' of assets – its 'natural capital'. Natural capital can be defined as "the stock of renewable and non-renewable resources (e.g. plants, animals, air, water, soils, minerals) that combine to yield a flow of benefits to people."<sup>30</sup> Plants not only contribute significantly to natural capital in their own right – Defra has estimated that the total natural capital value of the UK's plants at £11.6 billion per year<sup>31</sup> (this doesn't factor in domestic gardens, and excludes agricultural crops) they also support the health of other forms of natural capital such as soil, water, air and animals. There is a rich and growing evidence base for the contribution plants make to the UK's natural capital, and the resultant flow of benefits to the UK's citizens.

### Plants are Loved by a Nation of Gardeners

The majority of UK adults have access to a garden or outdoor space for gardening (91%), and 76% have a private garden (see Figure 5), of which the average garden size (front, sides and back) is 16

*Defra has estimated that the total natural capital value of the UK's plants at £11.6 billion per year*

metres squared<sup>3</sup>. Gardening is a popular pastime in the UK, with one in four (25%) people claiming to regularly do gardening in their free time or as a hobby or interest, with a further 40% occasionally doing so (see Figure 6)<sup>3</sup>. Plants, trees and flowers are an important part of this, with 62% of UK adults with a garden/outdoor space claim to using their spaces to grow them<sup>3</sup> – this is equivalent to over 23 million people. Over half (60%) of UK adults bought outdoor plants in 2022, spending £66.95 on average<sup>3</sup>. Meanwhile a further 46% bought houseplants, spending an average of £30.71<sup>3</sup>.

### Exposure to Plants Provides Comfort in Tough Times

The COVID pandemic caused a retreat to nature and outdoor spaces, as a response to uncertain times and a means to keep busy and healthy whilst other leisure pursuits were unavailable. In 2019, 57% of UK adults with access to a garden or outdoor space said they used them to grow plants, trees or flowers. But in 2020, this figure increased to 64% - equivalent to an extra 3 million new plant gardeners!<sup>32</sup>

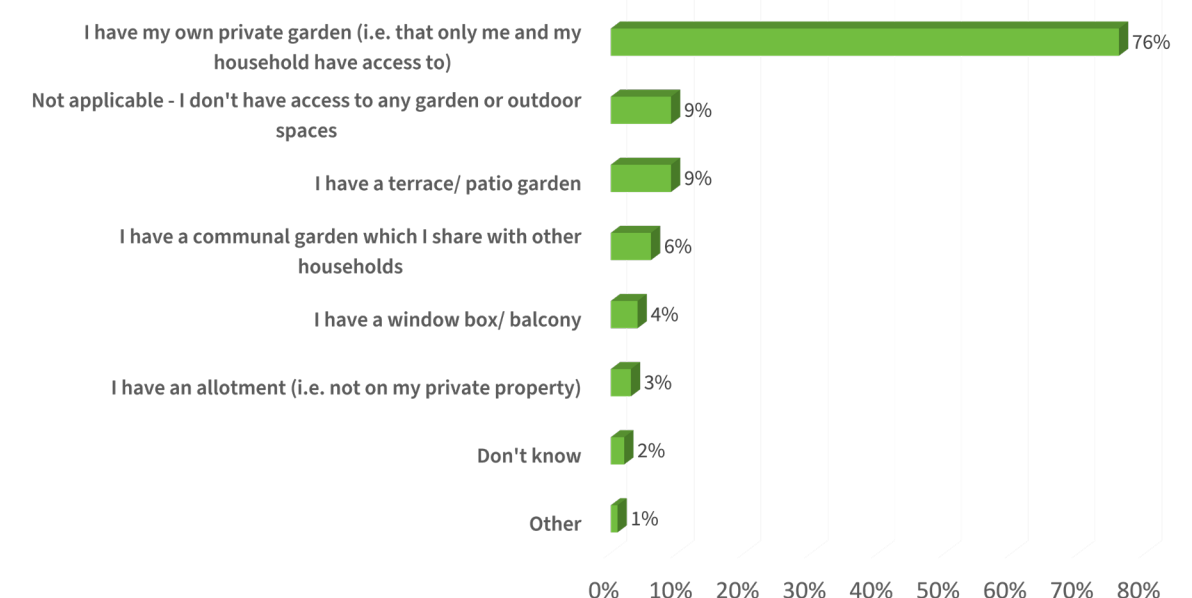


Figure 5. Access to gardens and/or outdoor space for gardening



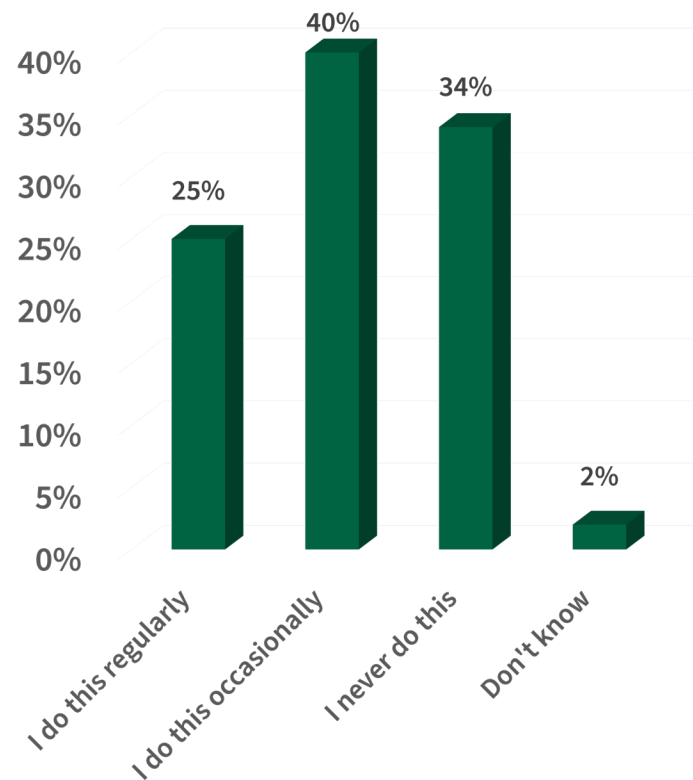


Figure 6. The proportion of UK adults who enjoy doing gardening in their free time or as a hobby/interest.

Similarly, during periods of economic uncertainty, like the previous 2007/8 financial crisis, we have seen a tendency for people to retreat to the garden and enjoy the sense of self-sufficiency that growing your own food can bring; not necessarily as a means of saving money, but to gain comfort from having a sense of control and autonomy. In 2022, 36% of UK adults said that they used their garden or outdoor space to grow their own food (e.g. fruits, herbs and vegetables), an increase from 31% claiming to do so in 2019<sup>34</sup>.

*Gardening and planting, removing, or tending to plants can also be viewed as an exercise in itself, burning up to 200 calories in a 30-minute long stint*

During the lockdowns, caring and nurturing for our plants gave a sense of purpose to newfound extra available leisure time, whilst as people were encouraged to stay home, houseplants provided a means for bringing the outdoors in for those that

didn't have outdoor spaces for relief too. As people spent time closer to nature, the benefits to our health, wellbeing and productivity at work became more widely appreciated.

### Supporting our Physical Health

In our October 2022 consumer survey, 77% of UK adults agreed that gardens and green spaces benefit their physical health<sup>3</sup>. Gardening and planting, removing, or tending to plants can also be viewed as an exercise in itself, burning up to 200 calories in a 30-minute long stint<sup>33</sup>, and in turn helping to improve overall health and lower risk of obesity, cancer and cardiovascular complications. One report stated that older people who regularly gardened tended to be fitter<sup>34</sup> due to the accessible physical exercise that gardening provides; an important consideration given the UK has an aging population. Nurturing plants within the garden is a low impact activity, making it a suitable form of exercise for many who are less physically mobile. Meanwhile, as well as exercise, growing fruits and vegetables can improve nutrition, diets and indirectly lower the risk of obesity<sup>35</sup>. Plants also play a key role in improving the quality of air that we breathe and remove harmful pollutants that are risk factors in many cancers and diseases. In 2020, air pollution removal services provided by plants and green spaces led to an estimated 2,001 deaths being avoided and prevented the loss of 49,126 years of life<sup>19</sup>.

### Plants Support our Mental Wellbeing

Increasingly, mental health is recognised as of equivalent importance to physical health, with 1 in 4 people experiencing a mental health problem of some kind each year in England<sup>36</sup>. Mental health problems have been found to cost the UK at least £117.9

billion annually, which is equivalent to around 5% of the UK's GDP. But critically, eight in ten UK adults (81%) believe gardens and green spaces benefit their state of mind<sup>3</sup>. One survey revealed that over half (54%) of UK adults walk in nature and perform gardening to restore mental wellbeing as a form

*Eight in ten UK adults (81%) believe gardens and green spaces benefit their state of mind*

of self-care<sup>37</sup> and social prescribing is increasingly being used by healthcare professionals over medicating.

Plants and direct exposure to them have been shown to improve wellness in dementia patients<sup>38</sup>; the smell of plants, as well as the colours can help to pacify those displaying aggression, and the stimulation of olfactory and visual senses even aids with memory activation<sup>40</sup>.

Plants have been found to positively affect self-esteem, stress management and creativity, and help alleviate symptoms of mental health conditions like anxiety, depression, and Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder<sup>39</sup>. One study found that for patients in hospitals, exposure to real plants or even posters of plants, resulted in lower levels of experienced stress<sup>40</sup>.

The concept of harnessing the effects that plants and gardening have on mental health, is not a new concept at all. Gardening is often used as a way of 'social prescribing'<sup>41</sup>, an initiative that can help with mental wellbeing amongst addressing other needs. In addition, the concept of Social and Therapeutic Horticulture utilises the activity of gardening as treatment to help those with mental health conditions<sup>42</sup>.

### Improving Productivity at Work and in Study Environments

Just over half of respondents in the Flower Council's Survey in November 2021 (53%) felt that plants help their home office environment<sup>43</sup>. This is perhaps unsurprising given many studies have found that houseplants help to boost happiness, productivity, and concentration in the workplace<sup>44</sup>.

Indoor plants in the workspace and break areas can lead to healthy, productive workplaces through enhanced attention capacity, lower stress levels, and higher job satisfaction<sup>46</sup> – a benefit for employers and employees alike. One study carried

out in the UK found that office workers who worked in offices with natural greenery saw a 15% rise in productivity over a three-month period, in comparison to those working with no greenery or natural elements in their immediate

*Almost two thirds of primary school head and deputy headteachers agreed that school gardening benefitted pupils physical health and mental wellbeing; meanwhile 74% saw benefits to social skills, and 61% recognised benefit to behaviour*

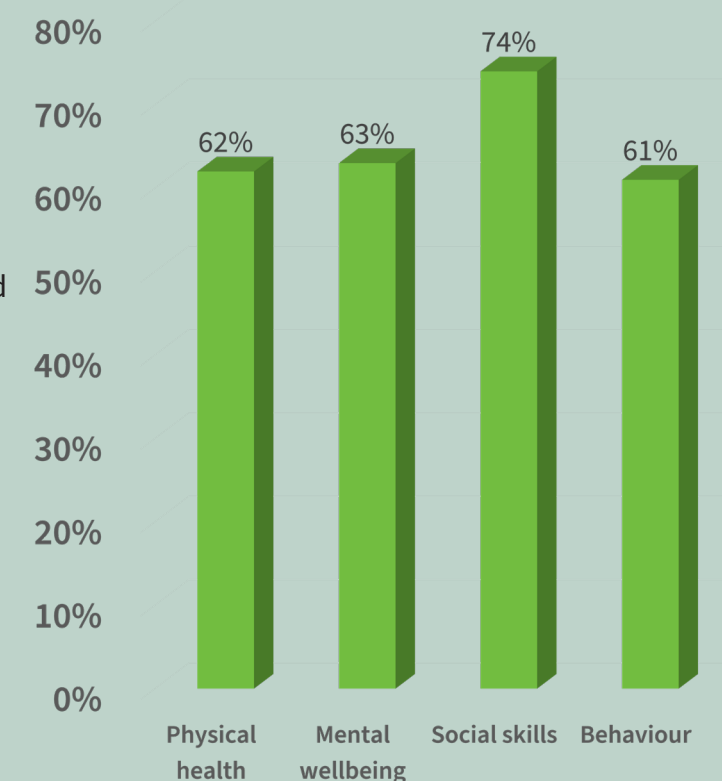


Figure 7. The proportion of UK primary school headteachers and deputy headteachers who agree school gardening delivers different benefits.



environment<sup>45</sup>. Workers who had access to natural elements such as greenery and sunlight in their offices were also 15% more creative<sup>47</sup>. These benefits remain true for younger people too, with foliage plants in view being shown improve the attention and concentration of 11-13 year old students<sup>46</sup>.

### Supporting Children's Development

Exposure to the benefits of gardening and green spaces in early development in children can have real influence on their physical and mental wellbeing. Almost two thirds of primary school head and deputy headteachers agreed that school gardening benefitted pupils physical health and mental wellbeing; meanwhile 74% saw benefits to social skills, and 61% recognised benefit to behaviour<sup>47</sup> (see figure 7). It can support learning on topics like food production and biology in an engaging way too<sup>49</sup>. In an educational setting, school gardening provides an alternative to the classroom, which can benefit children who struggle to learn in a formal setting. It also creates a 'level playing field' for those children. It teaches children to overcome fears about insects, how to act responsibly with tools, and teaches them a sense of patience whilst they wait for the fruits of their labour. Planting seeds, plugs and young plants can also help develop fine motor skills. It

provides learning in a way that is not standard, providing new experiences that can impact many aspects of growing as a person.

### Plants add Value to our Homes and Properties

With such pronounced social and environmental benefits, it's perhaps not surprising that plants and green spaces have been shown to increase the value of the nation's housing stock. A well-presented garden alone has been seen to add 20% to property value, with 70% of home buyers willing to pay more for a property with an outdoor green space<sup>48</sup>. Furthermore, in 2023 the Office of National Statistics reported that the annual value from house prices that can be attributed to living near to green or blue spaces in the UK was £2.8 billion in 2020, roughly £1,000 on average per household<sup>49</sup>. Yet alarmingly, HTA's October 2022 survey revealed that 19% of UK consumers with a private garden intended to pave over at least some of it in the next 5 years, putting an estimated 3-7% of total UK domestic garden area at risk when size of garden is taken into account<sup>3</sup>. This is concerning given the substantial environmental benefits urban greenery and vegetation that are documented in this report.

*A well-presented garden alone has been seen to add 20% to property value*

## 5. The Future Value of Plants

What value do consumers place on plants?

So far in this report we've described and outlined both the process through which the horticulture industry produces and adds value to the plants and trees it produces, and the economic value this contributes to the UK economy. We have also set out the benefits plants bring to our society once they are supplied into the natural landscape, whether in environmental, economic or social terms. But what of the future? In section 1 we have described some of the developments and investments in the supply chain that are being undertaken in order to continue to add value to plants, for instance in the form of reduced environmental impact, more bio-secure operations, and improved efficiency and quality outputs so as to be able to meet consumers' and regulators' expectations and needs in these respects.

Naturally such investments, especially in the current economic context of high inflation, put pressure on supply chain profitability (and the inward ability to invest) and/or prices for customers; this in turn potentially reduces the volumes of plants and trees supplied 'from nursery to nature'. Of course, the relationship between price and demand is not unique to the supply of plants and trees. What is noteworthy however is that any fall in supply and demand driven by rising prices of plants and trees is likely to reduce the environmental and social benefits of plants described in this report. And to complete the vicious circle, reduced output is likely to constrain the ability of growers to make the investments in the measures needed to continue to add the value to plants that consumers increasingly expect.

With this dilemma in mind, HTA commissioned new research to understand the value that consumers place on plants and potential 'value added' attributes relative to increased prices, and to understand the relationship between increased plant prices across the market and volumes of plants and trees retailed to consumers. It is important to note that in this study the analysis of the impact of price

increases for plants relates to sector-wide price inflation of plants compared with inflation across the wider economy; it does not and should not be seen as a guide to the impact on volumes of plants supplied by a single business increasing or decreasing its prices in isolation from the rest of the market and its competition.

### Research Approach and Methodology

The study uses a research technique called conjoint analysis. This methodology does not rely on consumers directly self-reporting their propensity to purchase at a given price as such methodologies are limited in their effectiveness, with a gap consistently appearing between what respondents report in a survey and real-life behaviours. Instead, conjoint analysis presents respondents with a series of trade-offs between two plants with different attributes and price points. Neither choice is 'optimal' – which requires respondents to subconsciously trade-off features against each other. Advanced statistical analysis is then used to unpick these 'trade offs' and attach relative value to different features of a plant in making a purchase decision. For instance, the





statistical analysis provides data on the relative impact that, say, a plant guarantee would have on consumer preference compared with an eco-label or the fact that the plant was grown in the UK. Further, we are able to assess the extent to which the value of these different features would be likely to offset ‘across-the-market’ the impact on falling volumes of sales of plants that might be driven by plant price increases relative to the wider economy. We are also able to explore the impact on this for different consumer demographics, for instance providing insights on what value-added features of plants add most value to different consumers, and on whether price inflation around plants is more or less likely to exclude different demographics from the benefits of plants described throughout this report.

The feature set we tested in the study were those that could be added to a plant’s label or point of sale to promote a potential additional selling point, some hypothetical, some already used in the marketplace; these were:

- Grown in peat free compost
- UK grown
- Pollinator-friendly
- Plant care information provided via QR code
- Certified from a nursery with excellent plant pest and disease controls
- Provision of a plant guarantee (for hardy plants only), where the levels tested were:
  - Lifetime
  - 5 year
  - 1 year

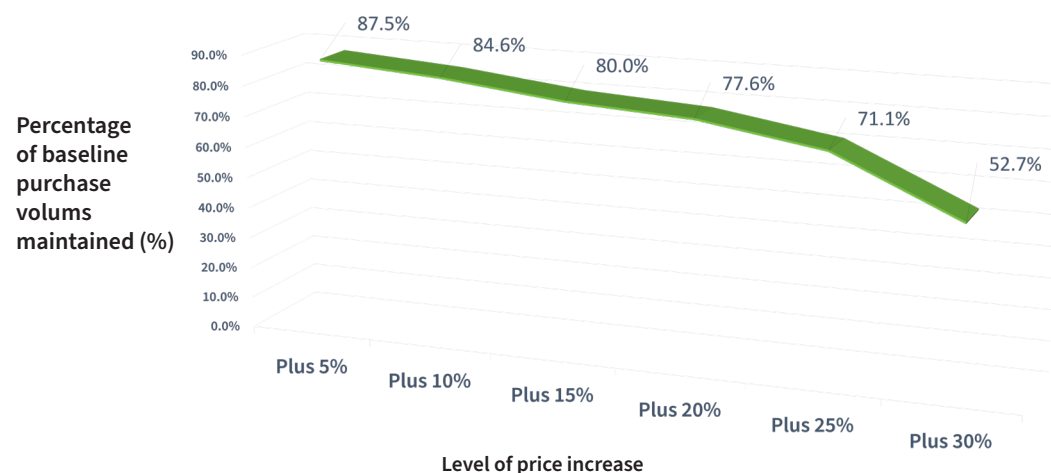


Figure 8. Hypothetical plant purchase volumes (bedding plants and shrubs) maintained at different levels of price increase.

- Environmental rating, where the levels tested were:
  - Eco rating ‘A’
  - Eco rating ‘C’
  - Eco rating ‘E’

In terms of pricing, the effect of price inflation of 5%, 10%, 15%, 20%, 25% and 30% on volumes purchased was tested. Respondents used their most recent plant purchase that included bedding or hardy nursery stock as the basis for the analysis – e.g. they were asked for purchase preferences for modified versions of the plant(s) they last purchased, with the modifications based on different combinations of the feature set and price thresholds for the study.

### The Relationship between Price Inflation and Volumes of Plants Supplied

Modelling from the results showed plant purchases to be highly price sensitive, with price being a bigger driver of purchase volume than any of the value-added features tested on their own. Figure 8 estimates the impact on volumes of plants supplied to the market in the event of an average across-the-board increase in plant prices relative to the rest of the economy. The chart shows the proportion of actual plant volumes retailed to respondents that would be maintained at different levels of across-the-board price increases, assuming that the plants purchased were ‘like-for-like’ in terms of the value added features the plant provided. The modelling shows that at a 5% price increase level, modelled volumes of plant purchase fell by 12.5%, and by 15.4% at the 10%

price increase level. This demonstrates that any increased costs in the supply chain for producing plants would be likely to materially reduce the volume of plants supplied into the market to consumers should these lead to price increases across the market relative to the rest of the UK economy, for instance were costs unique to the process of producing plants and trees passed on to consumers.

However, as noted this modelling is based on the plants supplied being equivalent in terms of feature sets to those the respondents had last purchased. On average, respondents claimed that the plants they last purchased had 1.4 of the seven

Value added feature	Extent of mitigating impact on plant sales volumes
<b>Plant guarantees (shrubs only)</b>	
Lifetime guarantee	6.4%
5 year guarantee	4.6%
1 year guarantee	3.2%
<b>Pollinator friendly</b>	5.9%
<b>Certified from a nursery with excellent plant pest and disease controls</b>	4.3%
<b>Eco-rating</b>	
Eco rating A	4.1%
Eco rating C	2.6%
Eco rating E	-0.4%
<b>Plant care information via QR code</b>	3.9%
<b>Grown in peat free</b>	3.3%
<b>UK grown</b>	1.9%

Table 1. The impact of ‘value added’ features on mitigating the 19.2% fall in plant sale volumes at a 5% price increase level, in comparison to where no ‘value add’ label was present

*The modelling shows at a 5% price inflation level, modelled volumes of plant purchase fell by 12.5%, and by 15.4% at the 10% price inflation level*

features tested in the study, leaving substantial potential to mitigate any falls in volume by ‘adding value’ to the plants through these features.

The modelling performed shows that the features tested do, to different extents, have a mitigating impact on any fall off in volume sales resulting from price increases. The more features that are added to the plant, the greater the value-added impact on volumes becomes. This suggests that there is an opportunity for retailers to stress these benefits in merchandising to assure shoppers of the value-added provided by plants.

Table 1 shows how the impact each value added feature would have on mitigating the fall off in volumes that would result from a 5% across-the-board increase in plant prices. Or, looked at another way, the relative impact of each value-added feature on consumer preference. The basis for the modelling is in comparison with a plant with none of the value-added features tested in the study.

The presence of a lifetime guarantee (applicable only to shrubs and not bedding plants) commanded the greatest uplift in indicated purchase volumes, increasing volumes by 6.4% compared to a ‘no label’ plant. This was followed by pollinator friendly (+5.9%), a 5 year guarantee (+4.6%) (shrubs only), certified from a nursery with excellent plant pest and disease controls (+4.3%), and the eco rating of A (+4.1%).

Interestingly, when the Eco rating E label was present, the volume fall off was greater than the presence of no feature label at all, suggesting that plant purchasers would be likely to penalise plants either shown or perceived to have a negative environmental impact, for instance in the way in which they are produced. This underlines the likely growing importance for plant production to

embrace sustainable methods of production. The presence of a UK grown label was positive, but held less value relative to the other features tested. Whilst we cannot tell from the data, this may be because of factors such as knowledge that certain types of hardy plants cannot be produced in the UK as effectively as overseas, or that consumers on the whole assume that the plants being retailed are sourced from the UK.

The modelling also showed that the addition and combination of feature sets worked in combination to deliver value; the more feature sets that were added to the plant the more value respondents attached to the plant. However, there is a satiation effect in the data. The more features that are added, the less cumulative impact there is on volumes.

Figure 9 shows that when three of the features tested are present, 92.5% of the intended purchase volume is maintained in the context of a 5% across-the-market increase in plant prices. Even at the 20% price increase level, the presence of three features mitigates volume drop-offs by more than half, from 32.2% to 15.7%. But when all seven of the features are present at their most optimum level (i.e. the eco rating is A and the plant guarantee is for a lifetime), we see a small (+2%) volume uplift in plant sales, even in the context of a 5% price increase. Even in the modelling performed on volumes in the context of a 30% across-the-board increase in plant prices, there

is a substantial mitigating effect on the fall off in volumes of plant sales, although there is still a 13.3% fall off in this scenario compared with a scenario in which prices remain constant.

The modelling performed is conclusive in two respects: that there is a high-degree of price sensitivity among gardeners and that price increases for plants relative to the rest of the economy – such as those that might be driven by cost increases in the supply chain specifically affecting plant and tree production - would adversely and substantially impact the volume of plants supplied to consumers and into the natural landscape. The study though is also conclusive that the value-added feature sets tested resonate with plant purchasers, and have potential to re-assure consumers as to the benefits of their plants and encourage further participation in gardening. However, a limit to this modelling is that it does not (and nor would it be practical to) factor in the word-of-mouth impact that across-the-board increases in plant prices might have on the market.

We have modelled the impact on purchased plant volumes of a 5% across-the-board increase in plant prices among different consumer groups should all seven 'value added' features be present at their optimal level. This helps to show the extent to which these value added features might be expected to mitigate or compensate for rising prices among different types of gardener

Price Inflation Level	Garden Proud	Bare and Basic	Convenience Gardeners	Family Focus	Gardening Elders	Backyard BBQs	Alfresco Aspirations	Aging Ambivalent	What Garden?
5%	93%	115%	115%	103%	90%	113%	126%	103%	113%
10%	92%	113%	112%	103%	87%	112%	125%	102%	111%
15%	91%	11%	111%	101%	86%	108%	118%	93%	109%
20%	90%	109%	111%	99%	85%	108%	118%	93%	106%
25%	89%	108%	108%	97%	83%	105%	115%	91%	104%
30%	84%	103%	101%	90%	74%	95%	110%	83%	91%

Table 2. The percentage of baseline plant purchase volume maintained when all 7 features are present at their most optimum level, at different price inflation levels, by HTA Garden Consumer segment.

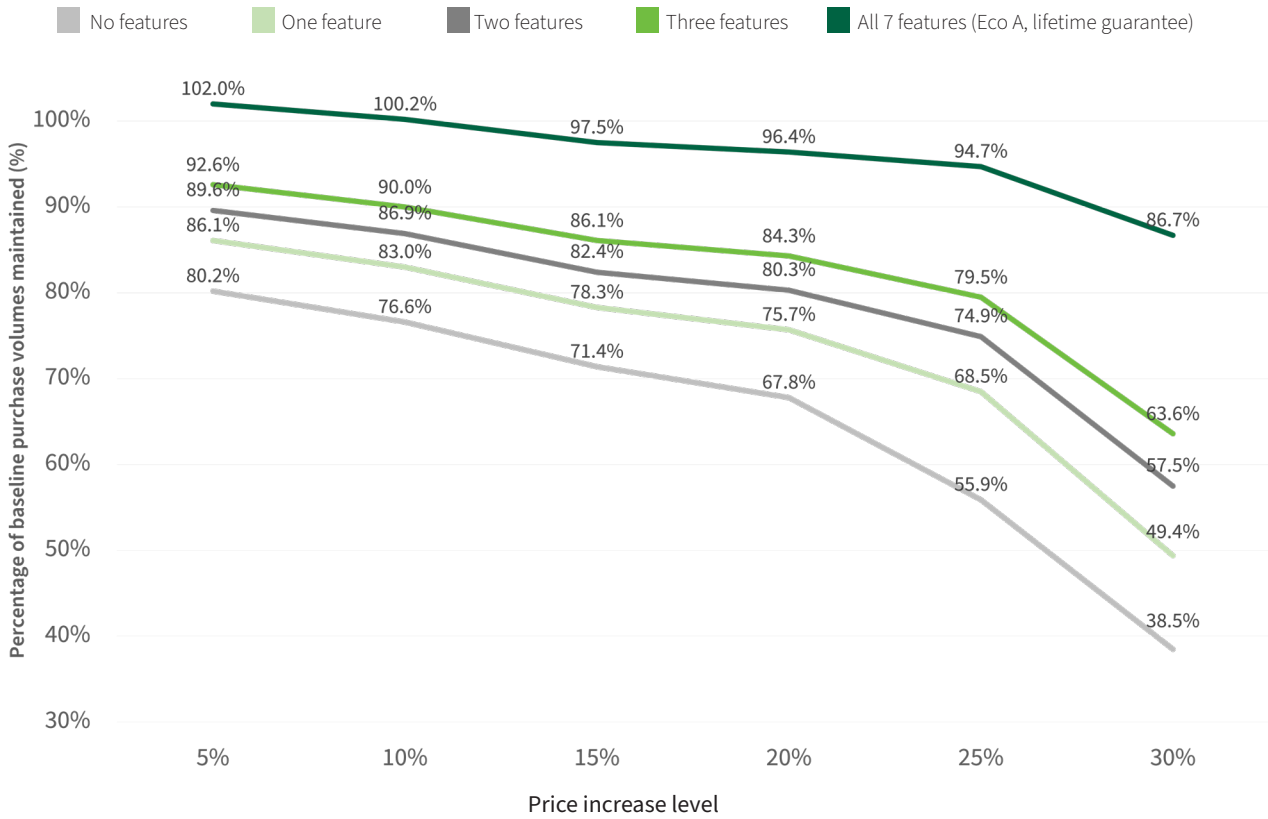


Figure 9. The cumulative impact of 'value added' features on mitigating the volume fall in plant purchases at different price levels.

(Table 2). The modelling is performed using the HTA's Garden Consumer Segmentation, which groups gardeners into nine typologies ([hta.org.uk/gardenconsumers](https://hta.org.uk/gardenconsumers)). Critically, the Gardening Elder and Gardening Proud segments account not only for most consumer spending on plants, but also provide significant 'word of mouth' influence among other types of gardeners, for instance advising grown-up children on gardening and plant choice.

The modelling shows that even at the 5% price increase level with all seven value-added features, purchase volumes among the Gardening Elders (-10%) and Garden Prouds (-7%) fall substantially. These two segments made up an estimated 47% of total outdoor plant and 37% of total houseplant spend in 2022<sup>4</sup>. Meanwhile, the less knowledgeable gardening segments whose plant purchases are less frequent and tend to be lower value seem to value the value added features more, at least in terms of the extent to which they mitigate the impact of price inflation.

This data holds two key insights. Firstly, that the highest spending opinion-leaders in the market are not only acutely sensitive to price increases, but that their expectations from the value-added features of plants that we tested are already high. In short, these features are increasingly 'hygiene factors' in plant purchasing – a base level of expectation rather than something that these more expert and high spending consumers see as differentiators that would justify price increases. Secondly, we could conclude given the opinion leadership role these two consumer groups have in the market, that these expectations are likely to 'percolate' into other consumer groups in the coming years, leading to rising consumer expectations around the quality, provenance, environmental impact of their plants. Thirdly, we would conclude that maintaining and increasing the supply of plants to consumers in future - along with the environmental and social benefits they deliver - will increasingly depend on the horticulture industry being able to keep pace with these consumer expectations.



# Conclusions

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This report has described the system of plant production and supply that is in place in the UK, and the network of growers and retailers that underpin the supply of plants and trees to our green spaces and domestic gardens.

It has shown the substantial economic benefit that businesses in this supply chain provide to the UK economy, and the specific challenges being faced in this supply chain that necessitate investment, for instance investments in transitioning to more sustainable methods of plant production and developing robust biosecurity practices to protect the UK's natural landscape.

We have also described the huge environmental and social contribution that this supply chain to the UK and its citizens. Indeed the industry and the plants and trees it produces have a key role to play in delivering seven of the ten goals of the government's Environmental Improvement Plan. However, we have also demonstrated that these benefits are at risk, and that plant production and supply is on the cusp of either a vicious or virtuous circle.

In terms of risk, many of the costs of doing business impacting specifically on plant and tree growers, such as the transition to peat-free production, shortages in labour supply, and the ability to invest in areas such as mechanisation and greater biosecurity are necessary to meeting consumer and regulatory expectations. However, this research has demonstrated that these costs

cannot be passed on to consumers without seriously jeopardising the volume of plants and trees supplied, along with the environmental and social value they add to the UK.

In terms of opportunity, there is much to be gained for the UK from a supply chain that is able to sustain the investment needed to deliver plants and trees that are more cost-effectively, sustainably and locally produced in the UK. Our consumer research has shown not only that gardeners are highly sensitive to price, but also that they are increasingly attaching value to the provenance, plant health and environmental impact of their plants. Much benefit has already been derived from policy initiatives which support such improvements in the supply chain, for instance in terms of fiscal incentives to support investment in water efficiency measures such as reservoir construction, and in mechanisation. Sympathetic policy development and collaboration between industry and government to build on this is likely to be key to sustaining and increasing the value that UK-produced plants and trees currently deliver to the country.

The 2023 Environmental Improvement Plan provides a common-ground on which such collaboration can be based. The specific opportunities for such collaboration are set out in more detail in our accompanying document, *Delivering the UK's Environmental Improvement Plan 2023 through the Value of Plants*.

# Appendix 1

## Case Studies on the Value Plants Deliver to Green Cities

27

### Inspiring future towns and cities

Urban areas are using the vast array of benefits plants provide to futureproof themselves and protect the people and wildlife living there. The use of living walls, roof gardens, sustainable drainage systems and increased tree coverage all feature and will likely become more prevalent in our future towns and cities.

#### Example 1: Sheffield – “Grey to Green”

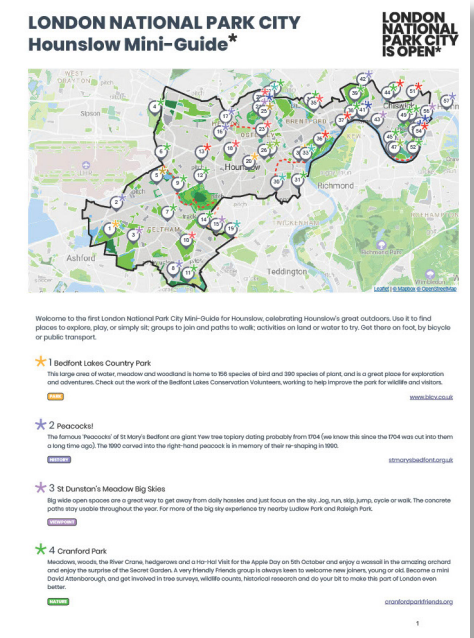
The Grey to Green project<sup>50</sup> has introduced greenery and colour to Sheffield city centre, boasting the UK's longest ‘green street’ corridor and largest sustainable urban drainage scheme. It has converted what was previously a concreted area into a green public space to encourage cycling and walking; and its multi-layer planting beds capture and hold on to debris and pollutants, preventing them from reaching Sheffield's watercourses and the pedestrians walking alongside the development.



*The area is also home to ‘Pollen’ – a monthly outdoor flower market that features greenery, live music, art and local produce, showcasing independent businesses from across Sheffield.*

#### Example 2: London – a “National Park City”

London's National Park City campaign was launched in 2013 supported by the National Park City Foundation, and aimed to inspire people to make London greener, healthier, wilder and encourage people into the outdoors. The campaign produced a set of accessible maps and posters (The All London Green Grid), allowing people to easily see the network of London's green spaces, of which there are many.





Meanwhile the London National Park city website highlights these destinations and experiences to encourage people to visit them. A group of London National Park City Rangers were set up, largely volunteers, to become trusted people within their communities to facilitate projects, educational activities and youth programmes that help to tackle the climate crises, scale up urban greening initiatives and get people outside. An 'Urban Greening Factor' (UGF) policy planning tool was developed to encourage an increase in the quantity and functionality of green infrastructure in new built environment development projects. It evaluates and quantifies the amount and quality of urban greening to inform decisions about appropriate levels of greening in new developments. Landscaping professionals can use the tool in their plans to identify their UGF score, and make design changes to meet the target scores of 0.3-0.4.

*By 2030, 30 therapeutic gardens will be built across Singapore to offer restorative spaces for people with conditions such as Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) and dementia<sup>38</sup>.*

### Example 3: Singapore - "City in Nature"

Singapore has been greening for almost 60 years and has created a network of nature throughout the urban environment. By 2026, they expect to have more than 300 hectares of gardens and parks, which will be naturalised in various ways as part of their Nature Park Networks<sup>52</sup>.

The use of nature-based solutions such as converting concrete canals into naturalised rivers are used throughout alongside living walls and roofs with the aim to have 200 hectares of skyrise greenery island-wide by 2030<sup>38</sup>.

### Providing jobs and economic activity in the landscape services sector

These urban greening projects clearly require the services of landscaping professionals to bring them to fruition. The landscape services sector supported over 330,000 jobs in 2019 split across both domestic garden and public infrastructure projects, and supported contributions of £13.4million to national GVA and £2.6million in tax revenue to the exchequer<sup>2</sup>.

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**Delivering the UK's Environmental Improvement Plan  
through the Value of Plants**



# Introduction

The social, economic, environmental, health and wellbeing value of plants is explored extensively in the accompanying report *From Nursery to Nature: The Value of Plants*.

This complementary report, *Delivering the UK’s Environmental Improvement Plan through the Value of Plants*, sets out the vital role which plants play in delivering the UK Government’s aims of the Environmental Improvement Plan 2023 (EIP).

Plants, by their very nature, support clean air, thriving wildlife, mitigate the impacts of climate change and encourage people to engage with the natural world. The Environmental Horticulture sector works to maximise the value of UK plants and trees and supply them to gardens and communities. However, there are challenges to overcome to ensure the successful delivery of the legally binding goals in EIP.

**Only with the support of policy-makers in UK and devolved parliaments, can the Environmental Horticulture sector ensure that the true value of plants can be realised.**

## Defra’s Environmental Improvement Goals

Does Environmental Horticulture provide a Solution?

1. Thriving plants & wildlife	✓
2. Clean air	✓
3. Clean and plentiful water	✓
4. Managing exposure to chemicals & pesticides	
5. Maximise our resources, minimise our waste	
6. Using resources from nature sustainably	
7. Mitigating and adapting to climate change	✓
8. Reduced risk of harm from environmental hazards	✓
9. Enhancing biosecurity	✓
10. Enhancing beauty, heritage and engagement with the natural environment	✓

## Asks of Government to Enable a Thriving Horticulture Industry and the Success of the EIP

### Recognition and Improved Policy-Making *Through a Creation of Government Office for Green Spaces*

We ask the government to formally recognise the value of the Environmental Horticulture Sector by creating a Government Office for Green Spaces. A cross-government group tasked to maximise the value of Green Spaces in all aspects of policy-making and regulatory impact assessments. All regulation must be proportionate with a full environmental and economic impact assessment to accompany it.

### Champion Skills

Champion careers in horticulture as vital green growth jobs and the of value of plants in meeting environmental targets, delivered through the inclusion of horticulture in the Green Jobs Taskforce or similar.

effects of extreme heat and drought. This must be underpinned by the goal of increasing UK production capacity in the medium-term.

### Collaboration

Collaborate with industry to champion gardening in schools to reap the benefits of gardening at home as well as inspiring the next generation of horticulturalists.

### Action on Water

Urgently act on barriers to increase drought resilience, such as through a Horticulture Drought Resilience and Innovation programme to include a grant scheme for investment in reservoirs, infrastructure and water saving innovations, with a lower minimum grant value to make this more accessible to businesses without large funds behind them.

### Environmentally Supportive Peat Policy

To avoid a shortfall of around 100 million finished plants and trees in 2027, current and future governments must provide adequate time as well as immediate and sustained R&D support for the sector to transition to peat-free growing media.

### Procurement

Current and future governments must prioritise UK grown trees and plants to meet environmental targets, whilst ensuring that public procurement and new developments are designed to mitigate the impacts of climate change - flood risks,





Plants start with specialist growers...

who nurture young flora

Growers are facing a number of challenges - threats to water security, the transition to peat-free growing media and disruptions to trade and the labour market. To reduce the impact of the challenges facing growers, it is crucial that barriers to increasing drought resilience are removed and R&D grant funding is increased to deliver the transition to peat-free.



Then they go to retail...

that offer a broad range of species and specialist advice

Retailers face similar challenges in terms of peat-free growing and care, and water supply. In terms of trade, in the absence of a long-term Sanitary Phytosanitary (SPS) agreement with the EU, government must collaborate with industry to ensure all elements of the plant import process are integrated, streamlined and efficient, including but not limited to CITES and IPAFFS.



and into peoples' homes and gardens...

for the enjoyment and health of millions of people across the UK

With increasing demands on space, it's more important than ever that new and renovated buildings are constructed with greenery in mind (green roofs, gardens), delivering urgently needed access to green space as well as climate change mitigation benefits. Launching a public campaign to 'enjoy and maximise your domestic or local green space' will help to promote greater health and wellbeing across the UK.



Or they go into the wider environment

to mitigate climate change and for the benefit of society

Plants' ability to deliver these outcomes rests on increasing recognition across the government for horticulture's value. The World Health Organization considers green space projects to be a public health and social investment. The prompt creation of a Government Office for Green Spaces, as well as a formal recognition of careers in horticulture as green growth jobs will help to ensure that the value of plants can be maximised, the benefits of which will be felt in communities across the UK, now and in the future.



How the Horticulture Industry Supports the EIP Goals

Goal 1: Thriving Plants and Wildlife

Focus: To halt the decline of species abundance, creating and restoring habitats, increase tree canopy and woodland and ensure that there is a resilient network of land water and sea.

Consumers' gardens and the plants within them can offer a network of habitats for animals to access the wider landscape through connecting green spaces and the countryside. To deliver tree planting goals, sustainable land management practices, and biodiversity net gain on new developments, processes must be designed with horticulture in mind. 29.5% of the UK's urban areas are domestic gardens, and covering an area of around 0.54 million hectares.”<sup>1</sup>

For England, the garden area is more than four and a half times larger than that of our National Nature Reserves. This is a colossal resource of national significance for the thousands of generalist species that can live in gardens.<sup>2</sup>

Goal 2: Clean Air

Focus: To tackle and reduce the damage and pollution caused by our everyday activities.

Trees and plants are well documented for their abilities to remove pollutants from the atmosphere, including fine particulate matter and nitrogen oxide, both key pollutants being targeted in the EIP 23. According to the Plant Biosecurity Strategy for Great Britain, 1.3 billion kg of air pollutants are removed by plants in the UK each year.

The right trees in the right places at the right time can help improve urban air quality on a local scale by forming a barrier between people and pollutants. They also remove some particulate pollution from the air by catching the tiny particles on their leaf surfaces. Research has found significantly lower asthma rates among children aged 4-5 in areas with more street trees.<sup>3</sup>

Goal 3: Clean and Plentiful Water

Focus: To improve the health and abundance of water available in the UK.

This includes a specific goal on increasing water storage by agriculture and horticulture by 66%. Growers are already increasing their use of water storage such as via reservoirs and rainwater harvesting tanks. In 2020, the HTA ran a survey of its members and found that 50% of UK ornamental growers use rainwater capture systems, and 41% have reservoirs<sup>4</sup>, however there is appetite for this to increase but often space, cost and planning are all barriers to this aspiration.

According to the Plant Biosecurity Strategy for Great Britain 15,000 litres of water can be intercepted by a mature evergreen tree each year, mitigating flood risk.





## Goal 7: Mitigating and Adapting to Climate Change

*Focus: To take all possible action to mitigate climate change, while adapting to reduce its impact.*

This goal is critical for the government's Net Zero target, and involves improving the state of the country's peatlands, boosting woodland creation, and improving flood mitigation infrastructure. Horticultural growers are a vital cog for these actions to be carried out, including moving away from the use of peat in growing media, producing trees, and hedging for woodland and hedgerow

The UK Government estimates that total carbon storage by trees in Great Britain (both above and below ground) is just over 980 million tCO<sub>2</sub>e<sup>8</sup>

creation and flood mitigation. However, nature based solutions like these require the sector to deliver vast quantities of plants and trees for private and public procurement purposes.

The Climate Change Committee (CCC) recommends that climate resilience is fully integrated into, and enforced by, the planning system. The CCC also recommends that "Urban heat island risks are minimised. Urban heat island effects can be minimised through careful urban design. Policies which encourage more shading (trees) and water in street design can act to reduce urban outdoor temperatures, as can maximising green and blue spaces, and reducing surfaces that absorb heat (such as creating green or reflective roofs)."<sup>5</sup>

However, one of the main issues is that "Planning policy lacks standards and mechanisms for monitoring the inclusion and maintenance of climate resilience measures."<sup>5</sup> Therefore it is vital that government establish and publish how it will monitor and maintain plans for nature recovery and tree planting goals.

## Goal 8: Reduced Risk of Harm from Environmental Hazards

*Focus: To reduce the risk of harm to people, the environment and the economy that comes from flooding, drought, and coastal erosion.*

Commitments include increasing tree planting and sustainable urban drainage solutions, both of which depend on the horticulture and landscaping industry. Better design of urban developments including greater inclusion of green and blue infrastructure will be possible because of the horticulture industry, providing trees, hedging and soft landscaping.

The Forestry Commission also stated that "correctly situated urban trees will deliver more than carbon reduction, they will contribute to a wide range of other local agendas including improving air quality, reducing the risks of flooding and improving water quality, as well as other public health, wellbeing and biodiversity benefits"<sup>6</sup>.

## Goal 9: Enhancing Biosecurity

*Focus: To enhance biosecurity to protect our wildlife and livestock and boost the resilience of plants and trees.*

The changing climate means that the spread of pests and diseases is likely to change. To fully understand the changes in pest and diseases and non-native species spread, monitoring, surveillance and early detection mechanisms must be maintained. Policy makers must continue to collaboratively work with the industry to deliver both the Plant Biosecurity Strategy for Great Britain, and the Tree Health Resilience Strategy, to effectively enhance biosecurity without damaging trade or increasing biodiversity loss.

In the long-term, there is a need to explore compensation options for businesses who have

had their plants and trees destroyed due to changing pest and disease behaviour, through no fault of their own. This will encourage best practice and provide security for businesses who are so vital to the delivery of the EIP targets.

## Goal 10: Enhancing Beauty, Heritage and Engagement with the Natural Environment

*Focus: To conserve and enhance the beauty of our natural environment, and make sure it can be enjoyed, used by and cared for by everyone.*

Whether customers have access to a garden, or are looking for houseplants, garden retail plays a crucial role in enabling and inspiring consumers to engage with the natural environment, with UK consumers making an estimated 200 million visits

to garden centres in 2022<sup>6</sup>. Engaging with nature and gardens was a refuge for many people during the covid pandemic.

Many consumers value plants that are great for pollinators for example, showing a real connection with the need for pollinators in our landscapes.

There is also a growing body of evidence for houseplants providing health and wellbeing benefits and helping people to connect with nature.<sup>7</sup> This is also something that the industry is ready to support, through further provision of trees and plants which can be maximised through the Levelling Up Parks Fund.

A key factor to successful climate mitigation is ensuring trees reach maturity and are well established.

In 2019, expenditure from visiting parks and gardens was valued at £1.2 billion from over 182 million trips



# The Importance of Plants

98% of the oxygen we breathe is produced by plants



80% of the world's terrestrial species of animals, plants and insects live in forests



1.3 billion kg of air pollutants are removed by plants in the UK each year



over a third of the 454 native tree species in Europe are considered threatened



80% of the food we eat is provided by plants



Half of the world's population rely primarily on natural medicines for their health care



15,000 litres of water can be intercepted by a mature evergreen tree each year, mitigating flood risk

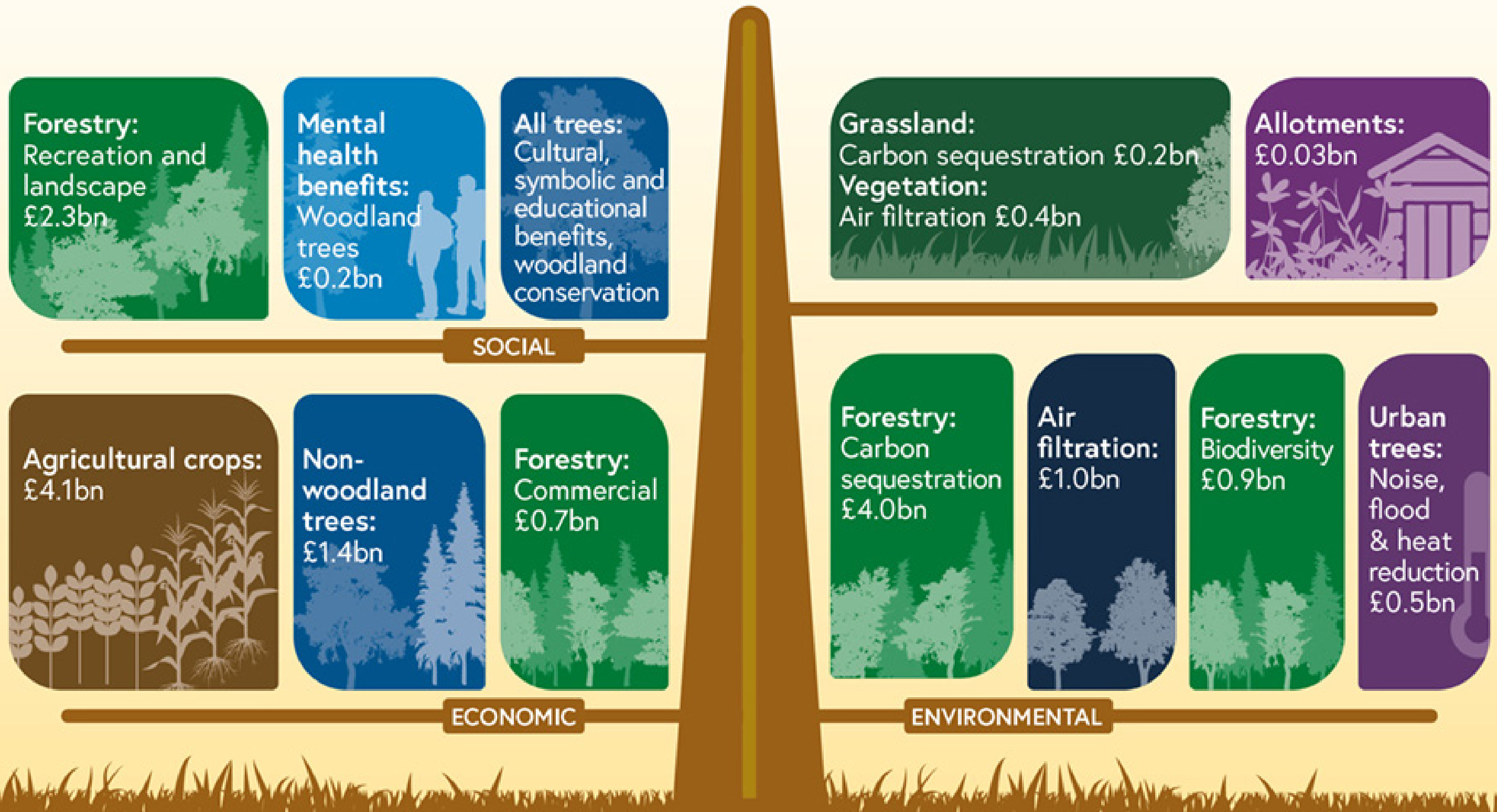


Up to 74% of the social costs of greenhouse gas emissions could be avoided by having a greater plant based diet





# UK Value of Plants



Summary of the £15.7billion annual value that our plants provide to the UK

Environmental Improvement Plan Branch Map Recommendations

<div>2043</div> <div>Legal end date for delivery</div>	<div>Goal 1</div> <div>Thriving Plants and Wildlife</div>	<div>Goal 2</div> <div>Clean Air</div>	<div>Goal 3</div> <div>Clean and Plentiful Water</div>	<div>Goal 7</div> <div>Mitigating and Adapting to Climate Change</div>	<div>Goal 8</div> <div>Reduced Risk of Harm from Environmental Hazards</div>	<div>Goal 9</div> <div>Enhancing Biosecurity</div>	<div>Goal 10</div> <div>Enhancing Beauty, Heritage and Engagement with the Natural Environment</div>
<div>2033</div> <div>Formal Review</div>	Reduce the regulation burden on tree and plant growers	Innovative UK skyscrapers creating – vertical forest	Water recycling and predictive technology adopted by majority of UK growers	Business loans to develop new peat-free supply chains	Holistic approach with industry and trading partners on pest prevention, identification and action	Secure an SPS/plant health agreement with the EU	Health and recovery prescribing using green spaces/flora
<div>2028</div> <div>Formal Review</div>	Increased UK plant production capacity to meet tree planting targets	Ensure future towns and cities benefit from innovative flora	Long-term water security strategy utilising Environmental Horticulture industry	R&D support to help the industry fully transition to peat-free	Utilise UK grown flora in public planning projects	Deliver a fully integrated, seamless, pro-active, real-time digital border solution for SPS processes	Champion gardening in schools to inspire the next generation of horticulturalists
<div>2023</div> <div>Environmental Improvement plan published by Defra</div>	Recognise careers in horticulture as vital green growth jobs	Invest in urban green spaces	Create an inclusive SME grant scheme for investing in water capture technology	Establish a Government Office for Green Spaces	Planning system utilises specialist planting to reduce urban flood risk	Plant import process are integrated, streamlined and efficient	Launch a public campaign to ‘enjoy and maximise your domestic and local greenspace’
							



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# Environmental **Horticulture** and Industry Insights 2024

#UKhort125



# The Horticultural Trades Association

## About Us

[hta.org.uk](http://hta.org.uk)

*The Horticultural Trades Association (HTA), founded in 1899, represents the entire environmental horticulture sector, counting 1,400 UK garden businesses among our membership — retailers, growers, manufacturers, and landscapers. As a member-centric organisation with no shareholders, our primary focus is to support our members. Operating within a group and committee structure, including the Association of Professional Landscapers and technical grower committees, we address critical industry issues and advocate for members. We also maintain international ties with our overseas counterparts.*

Our members benefit from tailored business support, encompassing training, eLearning, conferences, and market research, catering to businesses of all sizes.

Running the National Garden Gift Voucher programme, the UK's longest-standing garden consumer promotion, we drive around 2 million annual visits to garden centres. We also facilitate connections between garden centre and green space suppliers and customers through trade shows, advertising, and sponsorships.

Proud of our industry's contributions to the economy, environment, health, and wellbeing, we actively advocate for these interests with the government and policymakers across the four nations. As a core member of the Environmental Horticulture Group, we collaborate with partner associations and groups representing the diverse spectrum of environmental horticulture, from domestic gardeners to large landscaping and the tree and forestry sector.



# Environmental Horticulture

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**Environmental Horticulture** is the production and business of cultivating flora (plants, trees, seeds, bulbs, grass, etc.) for **commercial, environmental and health advancement**. This sector generally encompasses the following specific activities:

Supply of garden goods

Ornamental plant production

Landscape services

Retailing of garden products, plants and cut flowers

Wholesale of garden products and flowers

Arboriculture

Garden tourism

# Environmental Horticulture

## Economic Footprint

Environmental horticulture delivers **huge economic benefits** to the UK – from tax-take to GDP. It is the original green industry well-placed to **unlock green growth**.

**Worth**  
**£28.8 BILLION**  
**to UK GDP**  
**£6.3 BILLION**  
**tax revenue**

**2019**

If we unlock the potential of UK environmental horticulture the green growth potential is:

**£41.8 BILLION**  
**to UK GDP**  
**£8.7 BILLION**  
**tax revenue**

**2030**



2019 GDP footprint by UK nation - excludes GDP contributions from garden tourism

# Environmental Horticulture

## Economic Footprint

Subsectors within the industry support GDP contributions of:



GARDEN  
GOODS  
MANUFACTURING

**£1.3  
BILLION**



ORNAMENTAL  
PLANT  
PRODUCTION

**£1.6  
BILLION**



LANDSCAPE  
SERVICES

**£13.4  
BILLION**



ARBORICULTURE

**£2.1  
BILLION**



RETAIL

**£4.1  
BILLION**



WHOLESALE

**£1.4  
BILLION**



TOURISM

**£4.9  
BILLION\***

\*£1.2billion domestic, £3.7 billion international



# Environmental Horticulture Employment

In 2019, the environmental horticulture industry supported the employment of

**674,248**  
people in the UK

England – 456,198  
Wales – 31,168  
Scotland – 64,524  
Northern Ireland – 15,844

each of the subsectors directly employed:



GARDEN  
GOODS  
MANUFACTURING

**11,309**



ORNAMENTAL  
PLANT  
PRODUCTION

**17,798**



LANDSCAPE  
SERVICES

**238,114**



ARBORICULTURE

**18,529**



RETAIL

**86,850**



WHOLESALE

**9,556**



TOURISM

**37,883**

# Environmental Horticulture

Workforce Demographics within the Garden Retail and Growing Subsectors of the Industry

## Gender\*



<b>56%</b>	<b>43%</b>
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## Age



55+	35-54	Under 35
<b>25%</b>	<b>42%</b>	<b>30%</b>

## Role



Part-time	Full-time	Apprentices
<b>47%</b>	<b>52%</b>	<b>1%</b>

2023 saw the launch of the **Equality, Diversity & Inclusion Charter for the Horticulture, Arboriculture, Landscaping & Garden Media profession**. The HTA and other signatories are **building on this commitment in 2024** through capturing data, and initiatives to progress the breaking down of barriers in the industry and increasing access and progression for all, as well as to **work openly and respectfully** with other chartered members.

\*The sector recognises that people identify differently, and we are working on ensuring future data provides these options



# Environmental Horticulture Workforce Demographics



Alongside contracted employees, growers and plant producers also require access to seasonal labour

# 79%

growers require some seasonal labour, for an average of **25 weeks** of the calendar year



# Environmental Horticulture

## Market Size: Plant Production

In 2022,  
ornamental production  
was valued at

**£1.5  
BILLION**



Pot plants  
**£285 MILLION**



Flowers and bulbs  
**£165 MILLION**



Hardy ornamental  
nursery stock  
**£1.1 BILLION**



# Environmental Horticulture

## International Trade

**In 2022...**

Exports of plants and plant material were valued at

**£24.8 MILLION**

**63%** of these exports went to EU countries

**37%** of these exports went to non EU countries

Imports of plants and plant material were valued at

**£758.6 MILLION**

**99%** of these exports came from EU countries

**1%** of these exports came from non EU countries



# Environmental Horticulture

## Market Size: Garden Retail



UK consumers spend nearly **£3 billion per year** on plants and trees for their homes and gardens

There are an estimated **1,600** specialist garden centres and retail nurseries in the UK

Garden centres are the leading channel for plant purchases accounting for **51%** of outdoor plant sales by value in 2022, and **36%** of houseplant sales

In 2022, an estimated **£2.2 billion** was spent on plants for outdoors, and a further **£500 million** on houseplants



# Environmental Horticulture

## Garden Centre Visits

**214  
million**  
estimated visits to  
garden centres in 2023

**69%**

of UK adults said they  
visited a garden centre at  
least once in 2023

On average, each UK adult  
visited a garden centre

**3.9**

times throughout the year

UK adults that visited at least  
once visited on average

**5.7**

times throughout the year

# Environmental Horticulture

## UK Gardeners

**78%**

have access to a private garden, 9% a terrace or patio garden, 5% a window box/balcony, 2% an allotment and 6% have access to a communal garden

**62%**

use their private gardens to grow plants, trees or flowers and 34% use them to grow their own food

**26%**

of UK adults claim to do gardening regularly and a further 40% do so occasionally

**16M<sup>2</sup>**

The average size of private gardens

**7%**

of UK adults have no access to an outdoor space – this is equivalent to 4 million people



# Environmental Horticulture

## Ten Priorities for a future UK Government from the Horticultural Trades Association

- 1** Maximise the value of the UK's green spaces across key policy areas by delivering an Office for Green Spaces, a Horticulture Strategy and a health and wellbeing campaign.
- 2** A bold national programme of urban greening supported by reformed planning processes and guidelines setting out clear targets in relation to location, green space, garden size and biodiversity.
- 3** Build on the UK-EU Trade and Cooperation Agreement by negotiating an SPS agreement with the EU and delivering a functioning cross-border trade regime for plants.
- 4** Work with UK horticultural experts to deliver a world-class plant health regime in order to safeguard a thriving UK horticultural sector and the UK's natural landscape for future generations.
- 5** Commit to a sustainable transition and timeline to peat-free horticulture from 2030 with a support package that grows the industry, supporting SMEs and the UK's gardeners.

# Environmental Horticulture

## Ten Priorities for a future UK Government from the Horticultural Trades Association

- 6 Include environmental horticulture 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.
- 7 Complete a review of and publish a strategy for the UK water sector, covering water resilience from flooding to drought, which recognises the importance of environmental horticulture growers and landscapers delivering and maintaining green spaces.
- 8 Undertake a consultative review of current and future UK environmental and business regulation to ensure proportionality, allowing UK businesses to transition to Net Zero, deliver on environmental and growth targets, whilst being competitive and viable.
- 9 Ensure UK Public Procurement rules, guidelines and approaches at all-levels of government can be met and delivered by UK growers, landscapers and horticultural businesses, providing confidence to invest and grow.
- 10 Make the UK a global leader in environmental horticulture through smart use of accessible R&D and grant support schemes for SME horticulture businesses, providing an economic and environmental return on investment.



# Contact Us

## Media Requests

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## Linkedin

[horticultural-trades-association](https://www.linkedin.com/company/horticultural-trades-association)

## The Value of Plants Report

[hta.org.uk/value-of-plants](http://hta.org.uk/value-of-plants)

## Join the Conversation

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