

## Crop Production Horticulture, The Next Generation

Mark Diggines

Trainer and Assessor in Plant Production

Pershore College of Horticulture, Warwickshire College Group

[madiggines@warwickshire.ac.uk](mailto:madiggines@warwickshire.ac.uk)

*Keywords:* Education, apprenticeship, internship

### INTRODUCTION

I will be looking at the perceived perception of horticulture from the younger generation despite the value that the industry has within our economy. This will then be followed by looking at the objectives horticultural groups such as the RHS and the All-Party Parliamentary Gardening and Horticulture Group have put in place as a result of this.

After this, a brief look into whether these objectives are working or are even realistic will be discussed and what you, as employers, can do to promote the industry we work in.

The paper will be finished with a look into what Pershore College is doing to help create the next generation of crop/plant production employees.

A report compiled by Oxford Economics, commissioned by Ornamentals Round Table, looking into the value of the ornamental horticulture industry.

<https://www.hortweek.com/>

The numbers in the report are quite staggering considering the perception of horticulture amongst the younger generation in our country.

These figures are from 2013/14, however, a survey, which is co-funded by AHDB Horticulture, Royal Horticultural Society, Arboriculture Association, British Association of Landscape Industries, Chartered Institute of Horticulture and Land Based Colleges Aspiring to Excellence following a need identified by the Ornamental Horticulture Roundtable Group, will see 1,000 ornamental businesses contacted in a bid to understand the skills gap in the ornamental industry.

A number of objectives were then set on the back of this looking at how the Government can promote the industry within education. In addition, the All-Party Parliamentary Gardening and Horticulture Group produced a report 12 months ago looking into the

big issues around the horticultural industry at this time, specifically looking at:

- Incentivizing UK production, biosecurity and trade.
- Nurturing innovation to support health and the environment.
- Training the future workforce and seasonal worker availability.
- Incentivizing UK production, biosecurity and trade.
- Nurturing innovation to support health and the environment.
- Training the future workforce and seasonal worker availability.

## Apprenticeships

One sentence from the Securing-the-future-of-the-gardening-and-horticulture-sector-report really frustrated me. Here we are complaining that we can't get the next generation into our industry and yet a Horticultural based group says that students will struggle to find opportunities for work placements and hands-on experience.

What is clear to see is that we can't simply wait until Government initiatives take hold. What are we/you as employers doing? If colleges are struggling to find willing employers to support work placements and an individual's education, then we are always going to have the same problems.

The IPPS motto is "To seek and to share" and has a tagline under the logo, "Sharing plant production knowledge". Seek out those that might be interested in horticulture but have little guidance from their school/college and then share your plant knowledge with them.

In my experience, those employers who have invested time in the local communities and schools are those that regularly have very few issues with recruiting apprentices and then seeing them progress through their business. However, we tend to see the same employers year after year. Therefore, I just want to show you a little bit about what we do at Pershore College alongside members of the Midland Regional Growers group with our apprenticeship programme.

Trailblazers apprenticeships were first available to us from 2017 with the old-style frameworks being fully withdrawn in July 2020, with the Crop Technician standard being launched in September 2018. These standards allow us to formulate more bespoke training programmes and work alongside employers to deliver exactly what they need.

Our first group of students have just finished the first year of their 2-year course and are progressing well. Current numbers for enrollment for this year look like doubling that of our first intake. In the last 12 months the students have been to:

- Frank Matthews trees to do some grafting
- Wyevale Nurseries
- Melcourt
- Ball Colegrave summer showcase
- HTA National Plant Show
- IPPS conference
- ICL Hort science live day next week
- Trips to Bordon Hill arranged
- IOH young hort of the year competition