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Transcript for Session 4: 'Horticulture in 2020'

Brexit

Brexit. So that's a word we're very, very used to over the last four years and we're going to hear it increasingly in the next couple of months as we transition finally out of Europe. We hear from the Horticultural Trade Association and the editor of Hort Week to find out what this means for public and private gardens across the country.

Hello, my name is Sally Cullimore, and I'm the Policy Manager here at the horticultural trades association. I've been in the ornamental horticulture industry for well, that's a while and a major part of that time has been spent working for young plant producers, both in nurseries and also out on the road. The HTA is an integral part of our industry. We represent every sector involved in the trade in ornamental plants. So that's growers, retailers, landscapers and garden product manufacturers. A major part of our activities include representing the industry to government, making sure our voices heard, and issues are raised both with government officials, and also with parliamentarians where we need to see policy change. My job is to ensure we represent our members to government and look at what are the burning issues of the time and how best to affect change. So a little background to the ornamental sector. From 2017 report by Oxford economics. We discovered the industry is worth 24 billion pounds to the UK economy and this includes horticulture, tourism, and commercial landscaping, as well as the sectors that the HTA cover. sector directly added 12 point 6 billion pounds to the UK GDP and 5.4 billion pounds in tax revenues were linked to sector activities. We support over 550,000 jobs directly and indirectly, and that includes 15,000 plus in ornamental plant production, and 84,000 plus in garden retailing. So with 23 million people regularly gardening, UK is a nation of gardeners, it's the country's biggest hobby. We also added 3 million gardeners to the sector during lockdown, and many of those were under the age of 45. This means far from being the mature market, we always thought we were we now have huge opportunities for growth, and ensuring we keep people interested in nature based activities of which gardening is one is one of our aims. One of those ways is to grow our production capacity: buy British is something many consumers look for. However, the industry relies on a supply chain that includes imported plant material. Much of that reliance is for young plant material grown outside of the UK that is then finished by UK base growers. As a result of the lockdown, the government recognised that horticulture is essential in supporting half of the policies within the government's 25 year environment plan. And we underwrite many of the nation's wider ambitions for climate change. And although we didn't get a compensation scheme for plant stock that was disposed of after lockdown, the government has agreed to work with industry on a growth strategy. This is spearheaded by Defra, but government department we have most contact with the issue we have now is that following evidence collection, listening to members and evaluating the government's proposals for importing and exporting in their new border operating model. We see our industry is at a serious disadvantage. There are so many complicated processes anyone importing plants needs to adhere to. It is becoming a real barrier to trade. We also have little opportunity to grow our export market. Also due to those barriers. The industry growth strategy is only at discussion stage and the first of January is fast approaching. We estimate the proposed border controls will cost horticultural businesses up to 20% in their net profits. This is a huge hole when considering some growers had to take out loans just to stay afloat during Coronavirus. And of course, garden retail did go into a boom period when garden centres reopens in May. But growers simply cannot fill the hole in their 2020 income if the crops have been disposed of and if you're servicing a loan. HTA are working in very close collaboration with Defra. We're trying to mitigate some of the effects of the proposed border processes. But time is tight, the detail is scant, and there is much work yet to do to ensure we can get the plants we need come first of January.



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Some of the specific issues we've identified are around inspection frequencies and prioritisation of certain species for those inspections. There's also the fact that the IT systems we are being asked to use aren't even available for us to test and learn from yet. And the fact that every plant that comes into Great Britain must travel with a phytosanitary certificate issued at the place of export, and those plants must be pre notified before they reach their destination. These procedures will be in place from day one, there is no staged period of adjustment for plants. And inspections, although not now taking place at the border will take place at a place of destination. And that brings its own set of difficulties. Every business has to register and be inspected to be authorised as a place of destination. And that authorization only lasts six months. Because come first of July, every consignment of plants must pass through and be checked at a border control post, some of which haven't even been built yet. The issue with all of this is that it all costs money. So whether a business is a retailer importing finished plants from the Dutch, or you're a grower buying young plant material from an EU based producer, or even the UK based young plant company shipping in essential starter material, there are points along the supply chain that will all cost more after first of January. Those inspections, processes and documentation requirements must not stifle trade. And we must maintain the fine balance between biosecurity of the UK and maintaining trade flows. At the moment, the costs involved including either employing a full time member of staff to do the admin or commissioning a customs agent to do it for you are looking very stifling. We could be looking at reductions in the volumes of plants. contraction of the UK industry, increases in prices for plants at retail and for amenity purposes, and narrowing of choice of species available or combination of all of those, none of them which bring value to the UK. And don't get me started on the procedures you will be expected to follow to trade with Northern Ireland. We just don't have clarity on this yet at all. Negotiations are still ongoing in joint committee and everything we've been told on phytosanitary arrangements into and out of Northern Ireland and into and through the Republic of Ireland. They all might change. If you factor in the prospect of tariffs, some plants and plant products and the complexities of customs declarations, import VAT and accounting for it, duty deferment accounts and the difficulties in trying to find a customs agent. There's not enough to go around, especially with experienced perishable haulage. All I can say is that businesses feel very overwhelmed at the moment. So really, all we can do is act on the known knowns and keep on giving our members the best possible advice based on our ongoing discussion of government, which of course we will do. There are positive prospects for the industry. But we need to get this right. And we have very short time in which to do it. So thank you very much for listening. And I wish you all well and do stay safe. Thank you.

I've also been asked to say a few words about EU exit and plant importing. So very briefly, as it stands, the current EU regulations will be incorporated into UK law and amended for British requirements at the end of the year. So in effect, the requirements to get plants and plant products into the UK currently will apply to those same items coming from the EU into Britain after the first of January 2021 bar a few changes which will be published in due course. The changes will be phased in over three stages that have been published in the border operating model this October. And this will phase inspections in January, April and July when there'll be full inspections. So sourcing of plants won't change in the sense of finding plants. But the movement of plants will have more checks and controls in place. And costs will increase in doing those in doing those movements. Northern Ireland will remain in the single market. Currently, as it stands. So movement into the island of Ireland will require a phytosanitary certificate rather than just a plant passport. There will be no changes to plants, and plant products coming from current third countries outside the EU EU will continue as it is as regard to staffing that's down to the home office to decide what their requirements are going to be. Things are moving fast as the EU UK deal is trying to be formulated, the controls will come into place. And it will only be areas like tariff rates that could see big changes. So to sum up, there'll be more red tape, there's still uncertainty, be more cost for plant importers. And post transition, we still haven't got the full picture. Thank you.

So will Brexit mean higher plant costs? will it mean fewer visitors? will it mean issues for some of our gardeners who don't come from Britain? What will this mean, we still don't fully understand the implications.



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You don't need me to tell you just how challenging things have been in the last nine months and certainly for the gardeners gardens. And the wider horticultural world, it's been very tough. Indeed, for some of the consequences have been very severe and very immediate. And you know, we know that a lot of a lot of gardens and organisations have already lost quite a lot of staff. And we've all been finding our way through in our own way. And that really often depends on the kinds of organisations we are part of whether that's a public organisation or, or a private garden or a commercial business. So, for this part, I'm going to introduce a video which includes people from a number of a number of organisations from different points of view. So thanks to Pam Smith from the National Trust, Ed and Rose from The Newt, and also Doug Stewart, looking at things from a garden centre point of view.

I'm thinking about three things really with the National Trust gardens. Are we in a holding position for horticulture waiting for budgets and money and visitors to come back? Are we looking at more opportunities with creativity and innovation? I hope so. How do we look at prioritising our resource, not just within each garden, but across the region? Or across garden types? How can we be better at sharing skills and perhaps working beyond our garden gates? And how do we do all of this with less budgets, less resource, changing perceptions? What are our gardens about? People are starting to comment a lot more about presentation standards. And how do we communicate not just to visitors, but our non hortic colleagues about the long lead in horticultural calendar? How do we say that if we don't have the budgets now, our spring displays or summer displays aren't going to be the same. So it's sad times we've got staff working there notice. Will we have less people coming back. But hopefully the opportunities are there for showing how creative horticulturists can be. So interesting times ahead, and a lot of thought to put into this.

You're joining me in a cold, very bright, slightly damp field in Somerset. And behind me, you can see laid out various crops. Unfortunately, most of them are covered at the moment. But believe me, there's some really wonderful things going on behind us. I'm here to talk to you briefly about a project that we started during lockdown when many other gardens perhaps were thinking about contracting or reining in or at least limiting their activity. We took a different option and decided that it was a good time to grow. Sorry, no pun intended, but to increase our activity and actually do more from a growing or a vegetable side. The Newt in Somerset is located on a large varied estate here in Somerset. It's a diverse business. We do lots of different activities. We have a hotel, we have a very big public garden attraction. We have a museum which tells the story of gardening over the last thousand years and then we have a lot of growing activity, which supports the food culture the new which goes into our restaurants, into our food and beverage offer, into our farm shop and then onto our e commerce. Our big vision here, our intention here is to create an ecosystem. Every activity we are doing is supports another activity and supports the whole. And the field project that we've done here is a really good example of how we're trying to do that. We decided that there was an opportunity and possibly a demand within the local community and beyond that, for us to grow vegetables here and create an estate veggie box that we could then deliver to people, it's been a huge success. It's really going to inform what we do going forward next year and beyond, we really set on building this now into sustainable activity on this estate, we want to grow more, we want to share more of that with people. And we've recruited around that as well. And one of the people we've recruited is Rose, she's the head of our edible gardens. She came in just after we got this project started. And she's really driven it forward since she's been here. And I'm going to hand over to her now to tell you a little bit more about how we did it. And what we planted, and what we're harvesting right now, and how that will inform what we do in the future. It's a pleasure being with you today. Hope to see you all soon.

Hi, I'm Rose. And I'm here in the field project, as we call it, and at the end of a very busy harvest period. So from its inception and its idea in the beginning of the summer, we have pulled together local resources, and expertise and help where we can to create this nine acre field of vegetables to supply the estate and the veggie box with seasonal produce. It's been a lot of planning involved. And then on the whole, it's been very successful, we've worked really hard to supply very large volumes of



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fresh produce. And so much so that we had excess for for the rest of the estate. And we've been working closely with our kitchens and chefs to use the projects that we have and make sure that nothing gets wasted. So just to tell you a little bit more about the the seasonality and what we've decided to grow we had a huge harvest of courgettes earlier in the in the summer. We've had a delicious crop of of sweet corn which has come in abundance we have some fantastic squash we got four varieties of squash plants which we're harvesting before the frost hits to go into store for the winter months, we've also conducted an enormous carrot harvest which lots of people from the business have come in from different departments to help us take out of the ground. During lockdown we had chefs over here in the field planting squash, planting courgette seeds and peas and and for them to then take delivery of those those grown vegetables and and process them and use them in the kitchens into soups and preserves and dishes. It's it's really satisfying for everyone involved. using organic methods, we have had challenges to face. And we've had to use a lot of hand weeding techniques to keep on top of the weeds and which would have been have been a challenge. But at the end of this project, we've got an abundance of healthy crops that we can send free to the boxes in the kitchens. I think everything we've learned this year has has proven that this project is only going to go from strength to strength. We've seen fantastic sales in the box scheme, which I think is only going to grow. Everything we've learned on this project has really inspired us. So come and see us I'm sure we'll have a lot to shout about next year.

It's been an amazing experience watching how the customer base changed from when garden centre started to do either mailorder or click and collect as we were coming out of lockdown. A new customer emerged now whether they were younger people who were shopping for elderly relatives who were shielding, or whether they were younger people who were taking stock of their home garden because lockdown meant they were spending an awful lot longer at home. But they came they came in their droves. They really wanted plants and core gardening products have had an amazing increase in sales, more or less through all the garden centres throughout Britain. And and that led to a huge shortage of plants and nurseries that were having to respond to social distancing and things like that often were running out of stock because staff were working maybe just in a slightly slower manner because of all of the restrictions. And so that was an issue. But our new issue is how do we keep that new gardener coming back to the garden centres and the discussions that I've been having with garden centres, we're looking at the language that we use. It's no point offering 10% off mulch. If you've no idea what mulch is And we've been looking on some of the platforms like Insta Instagram. And maybe we need to be talking more about plant parenting and things like that. You know, a lot of people refer to tomatoes as as my, you know, tomato babies and such like, and so maybe we need to respond to that. garden centres haven't responded to that generation well, if you look at the incredible growth around the globe, in house plants sales, garden centres have still really just put house plants out in blocks of colour on benches. And yet the house plant sales are driven by high street specialist retailers that are recreating what a front room feels like. So and also are doing workshops and are speaking the same language. So we've been having terrarium and Prosecco workshops in some of these specialist retailers that are very much what what the people are wanting who are visiting them. So I think the garden centre trade bowled over by the response of people to coming back to core gardening, bowled over by the demand for plants, compost, pots and core gardening. Having to learn how we communicate, how we become relevant to that new customer, that new often younger customer who is drawn to some of the new and emerging High Street retailers of plants, and how we actually get them to be raging fans of garden centres.

Equality, diversity & inclusion

Welcome to this session on equality, diversity and inclusion in horticulture. Now, I know when I look down the camera, I'm speaking to the people who are going to shape this sector for many years to come. The future of horticulture is you. It's important that we create a resilient, creative and inspiring sector that feels like home to anyone and everyone who enjoys working with plants, an environment which celebrates equality, diversity, and inclusion of all. During today's session, we are going to hear from inspiring people and trailblazers, walking across horticulture today. We've asked them to speak openly about their personal experiences, including the barriers, structural inequalities and challenges they have faced. And they do so



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for our benefit. To help us learn, understand, reflect, and start to develop ideas about how we can address these issues together. So enjoy.

Hello, and thank you for inviting me to this conversation. I am assistant curator at Cambridge University Botanic Garden. My name is Angela Cano, and I come from Colombia, Spain and Switzerland. And I am a woman. So I guess that I am in the right place to speak about inclusion in the UK. Well, since I started working at Cambridge University Botanic Garden, I felt really included. My colleagues, and my superiors, respect me and treat me very nicely. So I'm really happy about that. Maybe the highest barrier for me is the language. Because sometimes words don't come as fast as I wish to my mind. And also when I pronounce Latin names in English. They don't sound as you people here, so that sometimes can be tricky for me. But apart from that, I have never felt like in a wrong position nor because I am a foreigner or because I am a woman. The problems come more when I go to do fieldwork to foreign places. Because there are some times my colleagues or my field assistants tend to underestimate me physically or intellectually. And in those cases, I tend to be very diplomatic. And I don't like starting a debate because often my life depends on those people and I am in remote places. So what I try to do in those cases is basically to show by my behaviour in my example that I am as capable as anybody else to do the job that we're there to do. Yeah, so I hope that my case is not an exception and I hope that women and foreigners are as well treated as I am in the UK. Thank you.

Hello, I'm Stefan and I'm a Marketing Officer here at the National Botanic Garden of Wales. And I'm Abigail and I'm a PhD researcher here at the garden. As an organisation, we aim to be as inclusive as possible and welcome visitors from a range of backgrounds. But one thing that people might not necessarily think of when they think of accessibility is the provision of native language.

As fluent Welsh speakers we do come across some barriers in everyday life, including within within the horticulture industry. And today, we're going to talk to you about what the botanic garden does really well to tackle these issues, and also what other organisations can do to play a part here at the garden through our education department and the growing the future project, we do provide a whole range of educational and lifelong learning opportunities through the medium of Welsh. We also have a variety of school visits here throughout the year, where we do aim to inspire and educate children in their native language. Another thing that we do really well here at the garden is all of our signs are bilingual. That means that Welsh speakers are treated just the same as English speakers, and that provision is there for them if they need it. One thing that you do notice as a Welsh speakers, if you go to tourist attractions across Wales, including gardens, and there's not the signs available in your mother tongue, you don't tend to feel as welcome as you should, and why shouldn't your own language be provided for you?

Marketing and public engagement is obviously very important to an organisation and attraction such as the Botanic Garden. All of our social media messages and newsletters are sent out in both Welsh and English. We also appear on a variety of Welsh and English language television or radio programmes where we're able to share the gardens developments projects, news and events to both languages. And it's not just important for Welsh organisations to provide Welsh language services. It's also really, really important that national organisations that provide the horticultural training, online resources and learning opportunities to provide these in all of the native languages that we see in the UK. If we can open doors for more young people that might not necessarily have viewed horticulture as for them and because it wasn't accessible in their own language, then surely we are accessing talent that we've not been able to previously.

The Welsh language is very much alive and isn't going anywhere anytime soon, with the Welsh government targeted reaching a million speakers by the year 2050. Therefore, the more organisations contributing educational resources and learning opportunities, through the medium of Welsh will surely have reached this target.



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Hi, I'm Matthew Appleby, Editor at Horticulture Week and I've been asked to talk about Black Lives Matters movement for the conference. So in 2016 Juliett Sargent became the first black designer to win a medal at Chelsea Flower Show. She said, 'I don't think it's occurred to anybody to think about diversity.' She said, 'I do think that the RHS could do more to promote diversity. I don't come across any of the black designers when I'm out and about, but that doesn't mean black people aren't interested in gardening and design. I think they do not culturally feel part of the horticulture scene.' Now the issue was downplayed and minimised by some horticulture bodies, and although it featured on TV and in the mainstream media, was largely ignored by the gardening media back then. And it took until 2020 and the Black Lives Matter movement, for horticulture to take diversity and inclusion seriously in many cases. The RHS are pointed to the diversity and inclusion officer in August 2020. Kew has been engaged for longer, and science director Alex Antonelli is passionate on the issue and has called for an end to the imperialist perspective on plant discovery, which use plants as finds by explorers when they are already known to people in the region that they are found. Slave Trade figures such as Edward Colston in Bristol have had statues torn down. Sir Hans Sloane statue at Chelsea physic garden remains; Sloane owned slaves and partly funded his botanical collection from their labour on Jamaican sugar plantations. Commemorating black horticulturalists is a way forward here. John Ystumlynn was an 18th century black Welsh gardener and the campaigner Zehra Zaidi, has campaigned to name a rose after him to celebrate diversity in horticulture. As part of the We Built Britain to campaign. She said 'memorialization matters Because it shows who we are as a community and a nation have decided to value and honour.' I would like to pick up on the tradition of the RHS Chelsea Flower Show of seeing new rose breed announced, why not name a new rose, after the memory of John and Margaret Ystumlynn . This might be the first rose named after someone of an ethnic minority heritage. The use of gardening as a tool to build empathy between communities and might not only inspire a new generation of gardeners, but it might also provide cheer for us we slowly exit lockdown.

The horrific death of George Floyd propelled the Black Lives Matter movement across the world. There is now a high level of motivation to act against racism, and promote integration. For everyone, there is a challenge to recognise the continuing legacy of colonial history, exclusion, discrimination, and exploitation on the basis of race for the horticultural sector. The challenge also points to themes, such as the exploitation of indigenous knowledge, and resources or the lack of recognition of the history embodied within the very plants from all over the world in our private and public gardens, allotments or the grounds of our historic properties. Here are three key areas for action. Firstly, leadership to increase diversity among both staff and visitors through the use of inclusive images, the multicultural interpretation of plants, training and the promotion of job opportunities, especially in the context of the present movement towards an increase in green jobs. Secondly, increasing diverse representation within the decision making structures of boards, committees or working groups. Thirdly, the building of ongoing relationships with diverse local groups and target groups within the nearest catchments, so that through trust and deep listening over time, relevant and effective policy, strategies and actions may be formulated. The Black Environment Network can assist with training and guidance. A good starting point are the examples and resources in the publication section of our website. I wish you all a good journey of revelation and of joy in taking up the very positive work of diversity and inclusion.

Thank you to all of our speakers and contributors for sharing their stories and experiences. Each video was a valuable lesson for me and full of insights. Horticulture excels due to the wonderful and talented people that we're able to attract to our sector. And I know this to be true because I have met or worked with many of you. But there are also people who don't see horticulture as a viable career choice for them, somewhere where they belong, somewhere where the talents will be recognised. And we need to collectively redress this. The challenges our society face in the coming years and decades are considerable, counteracting biodiversity loss, food insecurity. improving human health and well being requires a new generation of horticulturists. And we cannot afford to exclude anyone's talents, ideas or passion. Equality, diversity and inclusion will foster excellence in horticulture. Providing actual pathways to careers opportunities is how we develop how we



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move forward and enable the potential of future generations. We can all do more. Because in the words of civil rights activist, John Lewis, 'if not us, then who? And if not, now, then when?'

Plant Health

Hello, my name is Sarah Redstone and I'm the plant health and quarantine officer at the Royal Botanic Gardens Kew. Whatever our roles and however we interact with plants, gardens and the environment, hopefully the one take home plant health message from this conference is the need to follow the precautionary principle and to make decisions based on the best possible data and advice. Recent changes to legislation in the UK are intended to strengthen border controls and to emphasise the biosecurity risks of all sorts of biological materials whatever their intended use. The law is a vital tool in biosecurity best practice, but it cannot and will never be the sole answer. We personally need to be gathering information assessing and mitigating risks in our own homes, businesses and organisations. The following video features an excellent overview by Defra chief plant health officer Nicola bent on plant health and biosecurity. The recording rounds off with a discussion between two members of the RHS plant health team, Jassy Drakulic and Fryni Drizou, who talks about the implications of emerging pests and disease threats, and the RHS' approach to biosecurity. Enjoy.

Hello, I'm Nicola Spence, the chief plant health officer at Defra, and in this International Year of plant health, we're raising awareness about the far reaching benefits of protecting our plants and trees. Despite this year's challenges, many countries around the world including the UK, have been taking part in the International Year of plant health. We're a nation of keen gardeners and horticulturalists. And I'm certainly one of them. I'm sure I don't need to tell you about the amazing benefits of plants and trees, but they're facing unprecedented threats from pests and diseases. One of the main aims for the International Year of plant health is to raise awareness about these threats, and to talk about what actions people can take to keep their plants healthy. The UK has robust controls in place to prevent new diseases from being imported. But good biosecurity requires all of us to act responsibly. As part of International Year of plant health, we launched the first national Plant Health Week on the 21st of September. This was a partnership between government and industry that focused on raising awareness of plant health issues. During the week, each day was themed around the benefits of our plants and trees, and provided advice to people on how to keep plants healthy and protect our biosecurity. We had over 30 organisations involved, including the RHS, the Forestry Commission, the Animal and Plant Health Agency, Horticultural Trades Association, the British Society for Plant Pathology, and the Tree Council. At the start of the week, we launched a new activity book for children called help protect our plants with issy the inspector. This booklet was created by Defra and APHA colleagues, and is free to download and print. It's aimed at children between six and 10. But there are activities for everyone to enjoy. You can find this downloadable book on our public website, which is www.yearofplanthealth.co.uk. During the week, we teamed up with the Horticultural Trades Association, and their Million Moments campaign. This gave hints and tips on how to source plants carefully. And in addition, the RHS provided tips on how to look after your plants. The benefits of gardening, whether that's a large garden, tending house plants or an allotment have been well reported. And over the past few months, we've encouraged people to continue to enjoy the boost of well being that plants and gardens give you. Our colleagues in the GB non native species Secretariat also launched the Be Plant Wise campaign. This highlighted the simple ways you can avoid introducing invasive species. The week has been a huge success with an enormous amount of support and collaboration. And we plan to hold national Plant Health Week in future years. We've had some incredibly interesting, diverse and valuable plants and trees here in the UK. And now's the time to get involved and take action to protect them. We need organisations and individuals in the horticulture sector to spread the word about the threats our plants are facing, and to highlight the importance of biosecurity and the actions people can take to protect our plants and trees. Some of the top threats threatening as at the moment include *Xylella fastidiosa*. This is a bacterial disease now established in mainland Europe, and ravaging olive trees in Italy. Also the emerald ash borer, which is a pest of ash found in Russia and spreading to the Ukraine. And thirdly, Plane Wilt a serious threat to plane trees and that is spreading throughout Northern France. So these are three major threats that we must



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keep out of the UK. You can find out more about how you can protect our plants and trees by visiting the International Year of Plant Health website. Thank you.

Hello, my name is Jassy Drakulic. I'm a pathologist at the RHS. And my name is Fryni Drizou and I'm a plant health scientist. Today we're going to have conversation about plant health. So Fryni why is plant health and biosecurity so important to the RHS. So, movement of plants with global trade enables the introduction of new diseases into a country where before they were not present. Same time climate change provides favourable conditions for those pests to be established and further spread to the natural environment. And this can have detrimental effects to the natural ecosystem, to the plant and other living organisms. Eventually that will lead and we have seen that leads to major impact to the industry, the economy. Examples include the Xylella introduction into Europe and ash dieback in the UK. The RHS as a leading horticultural charity feels responsible not only to raise awareness, but also to promote and safeguard plant health. What do you like to explain which pest and diseases are emerging in the UK?

So an emerging pest/disease is one we already have in this country, and it's becoming increasingly problematic. So over the last few decades, there's been a whole range of pests and diseases that are causing damage on the host plants we haven't seen before. And a really big one is box tree caterpillar. Now this is a pest connected to Asia and defoliates box plants. We've had it in the UK since 2007. By 2014, it was quite spread and established in London. But today, it's spread all over the UK, and Ireland, Wales, Scotland as well. Some other emerging pests include the fuchsia gall mite and the agapanthus gall midge which attack the flowers of plants. The agapanthus gall midge is a really interesting one, because when we found that at the RHS in 2014, that was new to science and it hadn't be reported to be causing a problem before. Then looking at diseases Aquilegia downy mildew was identified by FERA in 2011. So Kerria twig and leaf blight we found at the RHS in 2014. And pear rust is weird one because we've had that a long time but it's mostly been rare in the UK, but it's becoming increasingly common. I don't really know why. And yeah, this year at advice service, we had more than double the reports we did last year.

So thinking about the RHS, what does the RHS do to raise awareness about plant health? So obviously, apart from the training provided to our staff first of all. We provide training and biosecurity training and policies, to RHS members, and wider public, to exhibitors and designers at the RHS shows. At the same time, we are part of different citizen science projects, collaboration, universities, and other Institute's. Together with the RHS education department, we are engaged with schools because we believe it's really important for children to start, be aware of plant health, and biosecurity. And of course, we take advantage of social media like everyone else, we have a security hub. We of course, provides interviews, we write articles on mainstream media. And I think what was particularly interesting, we found that was particularly helpful, basically, for the public was the fact that we have in our website, different profiles for a wide range of pests and diseases, that there are a lot of resources on the RHS website.

What about the RHS? What does the RHS do to protect plant health? So obviously, the UK has plant regulations in place which we follow, but it's really important to have our own internal matters policies to cover pretty much gardens and shows to mitigate the risk that comes from our activities for better plant health. So for example, currently we are sitting opposite to the plant health reception unit at Wisley. For each of our gardens, we have a reception unit, which means every plant that comes to the RHS gardens must go through these facilities in order to ensure that it's not carrying any pests and disease. At the same time, we provide plant health training to garden staff, and we visit in the gardens to do inspections, create plant health monitoring programmes and pest control programmes for all of our gardens. Of course, as a plant health team, we carry out research because we think it's really important to gain the knowledge in order to find how you're going to control pests and diseases. And of course we collaborate with different organisations and Institute's both in the UK but also internationally in order to see how collaboratively to mitigate plant health issues.

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