

# Tree and Hedging Group NEWSLETTER

## Chairman's Notes



Ed Holmes, J&A Growers

This year's AGM was very well attended, with several new members and many first timers, which was great to see and nice to put some faces to names. For the second year running, our guest speaker was chosen for his involvement in robotics for horticulture. Emilio Loo Monardez from Warwick Manufacturing Group

(WMG), University of Warwick, gave a fantastic insight into his work. Firstly, he explained the capabilities of the Warwick Agri-Tech Group which incorporates WMG and the School of Life Sciences, then gave information on how the university is pioneering research for the real world. Emilio is currently involved in two DEFRA funded projects, both financed through the [Tree Production Innovation Fund](#). One project is focusing on weed control using precision application of herbicides, which massively reduces chemical rates, and the other aims to offer a solution for mechanising the tree grading process of field-grown stock (see the section 'Are robots the future?'). There was also the usual industry updates and roundups from the other committees and events, which kept attendees up to speed with current topics and issues.

It is clear there is a real value to our members by attending, bringing similar businesses together to share knowledge and experiences. Spending a couple of days away from our normal duties also gives people time to reflect upon how they operate, see new things, generate new ideas and think about possible efficiencies to implement back home. This year's AGM was no exception.

The [UK planting statistics](#) for the past season show a rapid increase in woodland creation from just under 13,000 ha in 2022/23, to just over 20,000 ha in 2023/24. There was a sharp rise in Scotland, achieving 15,000 ha of this total, but this raises the question of how much work was brought forward. The Scottish Agencies were encouraging people already engaged in the grant system to pull projects forward and use up all the available woodland creation funds ahead of the 40% cuts to be imposed for tree planting this coming season (in Scotland). It is a bit uncertain by how much this is going to impact tree demand/supply, hopefully the other countries in the UK will be able to make up this shortfall. Another thing to note is the recent finding of *Ips typographus* in some weakened Sitka spruce trees in the south-east of the UK, this too could have a bearing on tree mixes to be planted.

I am looking forward to the [FutureGrow Expo](#) at Stoneleigh Park Showground, Kenilworth on the 8 October, to see some of the upcoming and new technologies suitable for the ornamentals industry.

This first-time event brings together commercial growers, science providers, leading engineers, and potential funders. Get your workforce involved as they need to be on side and willing to embrace the new technologies once they become readily available. I hope to see many of you there.

## HTA Tree and Hedging Group AGM, 11-12 June 2024, RJ Trees and Hedging

Wayne Brough, HTA



*Delegates stop off to inspect a Crataegus crop*

The AGM this year attracted one of the highest attendances, building on the good levels achieved the year before. The AGM element, which involved the usual formal meeting requirements, technical presentations, and plenty of debate and discussion, followed by the evening meal, were all staged at The Royal Hotel at Ross on Wye, deep in the wonderful Herefordshire countryside.

The following day, the group visited two businesses, EC Drummond and RJ Trees and Hedging, and thanks go to Ray Jenkins for organising both visits. EC Drummond is a mixed farm, primarily producing and packing soft fruit, independent of any marketing organisation, potatoes, and poultry rearing. To be able to offer such a diverse range of output in today's demanding, and generally specialist industry, is no mean feat, and Ben Drummond was able to articulate issues and topics common to all horticultural sectors, including tree and hedging production.

Due to the numbers involved, we were treated to a tractor and trailer tour of the production fields at RJ Trees and Hedging, stopping off at the furthest fields to look at the crops of *Crataegus* growing on the well-drained, reddish coarse loamy soils over sandstone, common to the immediate area. Discussion centred around the weather, the difficulties of soil preparation and seed sowing due to the wet, cold start to the year, and the efforts required to maintain good levels of disease and weed control within crops. The afternoon was wrapped up with a delicious hog roast and a selection of cakes.

*Next year's AGM will take place at W Crowder & Sons Ltd, Lincoln Road, Horncastle, Lincolnshire, LN9 5LZ, on 10-11 June 2025, please pop the dates in your diaries.*

## Maintaining the range of plant protection products (PPPs)

Wayne Brough, HTA

We are all aware of the gradual decline in the range of PPPs available to growers of ornamental crops, without the Extension of Authorisation for Minor Use (EAMU) programme the ability to create robust programmes which give control, while minimising the risk of resistance, would be much reduced.

The creation of the Ornamentals Sub-Group as part of [Horticulture Crop Protection](#) ensures that those grower associations and groups which contribute, have a say in which EAMUs are commissioned. After the first meeting of the Sub-Group, ten new EAMU requests were put forward, covering the fungicide products Charm, Delan Pro, Phoenix, Talius, Topas and Vayo, the insecticide products Gazelle and Kanemite, and the herbicide products Blaster Pro and Emerger. This list is currently being adapted in response to feedback from the manufacturers and the Chemical Regulations Division. Working alongside HCP is not just about EAMU generation however, it's about being able to feed into an organisation which works closely with most of the PPP manufacturers, and with crop protection agencies and organisations across Europe, to identify new opportunities for access to active substances and products.



Autumn/winter 2024 will see the [HTA Ornamentals Technical Committee](#) revisit the sector risk registers, originally created by the AHDB Horticulture Crop Protection Team, to update them with any new pest and disease threats, and to assess the ongoing priority of the pests, diseases and weeds listed within them faced by the sector; the Tree and Hedging Group can also feed into this process too. The HTA also continues to provide more technical crop protection information, either via a range of workshops (see the section ‘News and events round up’) or via the [technical library](#).



*Singulation of plants by the robot arm*

*Autonomous Smart Spot-Precision Application of Herbicide (ASPA)* – this two-year project aims to identify specific weed species and apply a micro-dose of herbicide directly to the weed. Three weed species have been selected, annual meadow grass, cranesbill, and groundsel. The technology should work in any crop as it is only searching for whatever weed species it has been programmed to do, unlike other technologies, which are trained to identify the crop, and then control everything else.



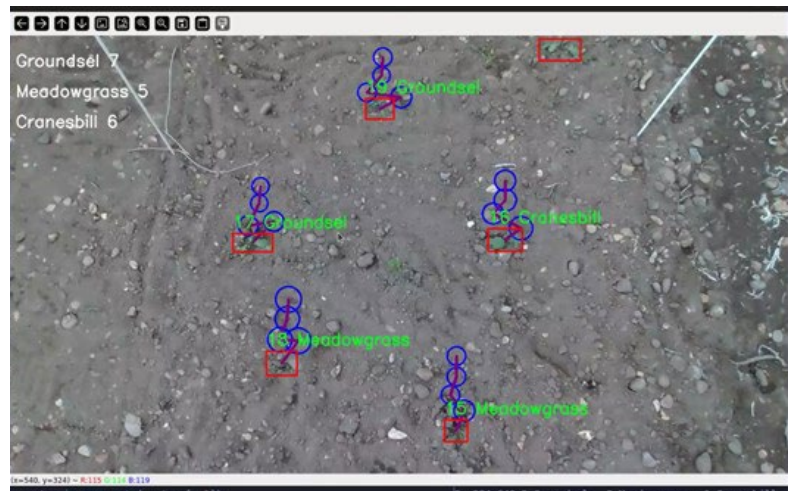
*Ensuring a range of PPPs is important to keep spray programmes robust*

## Are robots the future?

### Jamie Dewhurst, J&A Growers

J&A Growers Ltd have been involved with Warwick Manufacturing Group (WMG) over that last three years on a couple of projects. WMG were fortunate enough to win funding under the [Tree Production Innovation Fund](#) for both projects, which were summarised by Emilio at the AGM this year.

*Smart Tree Production System (STPS)* – this project is focused on the opportunities of using robots in the plant grading and handling process. It is now the final year of this three-year project, and progress is at the point where the final element, the most challenging part - the singulation of plants, is being resolved. One part that has not been explored, is the actual grading of the plants as this is technology that is already commercially available, and to that end, we were extremely pleased when Gejo Grading Services, from The Netherlands, agreed to join the project.



*Weed seedling identification*

Due to the project’s very tight timeframe, a range of work streams have been going on in parallel; Warwick School of Life Sciences have identified the minimum dose of glyphosate capable of killing a weed; WMG have been working on identifying and tracking the weeds in question at all growth stages from first true leaf onwards; the autonomous platform has been built, although it is still waiting for its wheels; and progress is being made with the micro-dose application process.

## Borders and trade update – September 2024

### Sally Cullimore, HTA

I am sure several of you attend our monthly member webinars on border controls and trade. These are free to join, held virtually, and often feature a speaker from Defra or APHA. At the meetings we give an update on the ever-changing situation at the border, and anything that might affect the import or export of plants and plant materials in or out of the country. Following the introduction of Border Control Posts (BCP) on 30 April 2024 for checks of imports from the EU, a complexity of controls, processes, and systems has emerged for those involved. Those changes to systems and checks have seen associated costs rise dramatically, directly or indirectly, and with the check levels being particularly low at some BCPs, we are yet to experience the full picture. HTA has estimated the costs to the horticultural sector to be in the region of £44 million per annum, but with new elements and issues continuously coming to light, and Government-based systems changing, we can expect that estimation to change.

The new border operations have proven to be a fundamental change to the way EU-based suppliers trade with UK growers and retailers. The HTA remains convinced that BCPs do little to enhance the biosecurity of the UK, being incorrectly designed, under-equipped to handle specialist loads, under-resourced, and with systems yet to be tested to their required capacity. Despite the port operators' best efforts to get BCPs to work, border systems are disjointed, costs are experienced differently at different locations, and access to information is limited for traders in real time as consignments travel across the border.

While we have attempted to assist our members to navigate these new complexities, we have also strongly advocated to Government that border systems, infrastructure, and government agencies are sufficiently resourced so that no business activity suffers as a consequence, and that prioritisation of the plant sector is paramount to encourage UK businesses to increase their competitiveness on the world stage, and also to recognise its importance to the UK's health, environment, and economy.

Our number one ask of the UK's new Government is to build on the UK-EU Trade and Cooperation Agreement and negotiate an Agreement on the Application of Sanitary and Phytosanitary Measures (SPS) with the EU that focuses not just on food, but also on plants and plant products, and to deliver a functioning cross-border trade regime for plants and all SPS products.

In the coming weeks and months, while we engage on your behalf with new Government teams, new Ministers and new MPs, we will be asking for your inputs and ideas on what that agreement might look like, and how it will impact your business and the sector.

If you have any comments, questions, want to attend our members meetings, or if you wish to host an MP visit, something the HTA Policy Team can facilitate or support with, please email [policy@hta.org.uk](mailto:policy@hta.org.uk).



*BCPs have led to a complexity of controls, processes, and systems*

## Post-Brexit seed trade

### Helen Richardson, Forestart Ltd

Forestart collects much of their seed within the UK, but a proportion of seed used in the UK is also imported. This enables businesses to offer preferred seed provenances, such as *Picea abies* from Germany, source seed that doesn't crop within the UK, and ensure sufficient seed is available if the UK crop is poor.

Overseas trade in seed is like overseas trade in plants, in that it is controlled by Plant Health legislation, and Forest Reproductive Material (FRM) legislation.



Fortunately, Plant Health Regulations for importing seed from the EU are less stringent than for importing plants, in fact, until this year, 'tree seed for planting' could be imported from the EU without any Plant Health restrictions (with exceptions, such as *Castanea*).

However, this year several plant species have been classified as 'high risk', and therefore require a phytosanitary certificate (PC) and pre-notification on the Import of products, animals, food and feed system (IPAFFS) before import. This applies to seeds of *Castanea*, *Pinus*, *Prunus*, *Pseudotsuga menziesii*, and *Rubus*. Other species need a PC, but do not need pre-notification which can cause confusion at the port of entry.

Forest Reproductive Material was governed by EU regulations, but we are now trading under Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) rules. This change hasn't had a big impact on UK collections because the rules are implemented via our own UK domestic FRM legislation which are based on the [EU Directive 1999/105](#), and also comply with the OECD Forest Seed and Plant Scheme and the essence of these hasn't changed. When seed is received with an OECD certificate, the details are sent to the Forestry Commission (FC) so that they can issue a UK OECD certificate, which is then used to market the seed. The major difference is that FRM can only be sourced from countries that are members of the OECD Forest Seed and Plant Scheme, so FRM can no longer be imported from the Czech Republic or Poland. *Picea abies* from the Czech Republic has been popular for many years so this is a big loss, and



*Sitka cones*

Poland offers a buffer when seed crops in the rest of Europe are poor. A licence can be sought from the FC to import from these countries, which may be granted, but the seed can't be used for forestry purposes which may put too much of a restriction on their sale either as seed or as plants from the nursery.

## Stepping into horticulture

### Eleanor Radley-Moore, RJ Trees and Hedging

This year I attended my first HTA Tree and Hedging Group AGM. The opportunity to attend conveniently



*Eleanor inspecting crops on the nursery*

fell into my lap, as I work at RJ Trees and Hedging, the nursery hosting it. Being marked on the calendar since I joined RJ Trees and Hedging in October 2023, I was eager to get involved and meet people. As this is my first venture into horticulture, I spent the winter absorbing knowledge from the owner, Ray Jenkins, and forming connections from within the office. Between the rush of the winter season and contending with the weather to finish seed sowing and planting, the event swiftly came around. The meeting was an excellent opportunity to put names to faces, to get to know more about other businesses, and to discover the huge resource that being an HTA member is to all its members. I was warmly welcomed by everyone I was introduced to. I found that virtually everyone knows each other well, and almost everyone has been in the business a long time in one aspect or another, providing a huge pool of knowledge to tap into.

No question I had was left unanswered. Information and knowledge were free flowing as there appeared to be no trade secrets, just everyone working together for a common goal of producing high quality plants in the most achievable way, whilst maintaining exceptional plant health standards.

Since joining RJ Trees and Hedging I have learnt so much already and look forward to carrying on this journey. I particularly enjoy the seasonality of the job and the ever-changing workload. I have been involved in all aspects of nursery production and find it fascinating. Each day I find my knowledge and confidence growing.

This year I will be making sales on my first crop, a crop I am familiar with because I helped to produce and care for it, and I feel proud of that achievement. My advice to other young growers is to read everything, talk to everyone, and never say no to an opportunity to learn.

## News and events round-up

### New *Hylobius* chemical control option

Coragen (chlorantraniliprole) has gained an [EAMU \(2024/1633\)](#) for [large pine weevil](#) (*Hylobius abietis*) control in ornamental plant production under permanent protection with full enclosure, via an enclosed spray cabinet system within an industrial building.

### Health and Safety Executive (HSE) site inspections

As part of [The Official Controls Plant Protection Products \(PPPs\) Regulations 2020](#) businesses using professional plant protection products (PPPs) were asked to register with the HSE a little while ago. HSE Enforcement Teams are now visiting PPP suppliers and businesses using them across agriculture, horticulture, and amenity/landscape to inspect stores, the PPPs stored within them, the protective clothing used and method of storage, and related procedures and records for compliance. HTA have created a self-assessment audit checklist to help ensure best practice.

### Tree health pilot scheme

The [tree health pilot scheme](#) is testing different ways of slowing the spread of pests and diseases affecting trees in England.

Grants are available for larch trees with *Phytophthora ramorum*, spruce trees with or at risk of *Ips typographus*, sweet chestnut trees with *Phytophthora ramorum* or sweet chestnut blight (*Cryphonectria parasitica*), oak trees with oak processionary moth and ash trees with ash dieback (*Hymenoscyphus fraxineus*).

### HTA FutureGrow Expo

The FutureGrow Expo will be staged at Stoneleigh Park Showground, near Warwick on 8 October 2024, to book a place [click here](#). The Expo will feature a range of new technologies, automation and robotics suitable for the ornamentals industry, which will be displayed in the exhibition hall, along with static and mobile demonstrations in the area immediately outside. The Expo will also feature an R&D hub showcasing research from leading academic organisations including Warwick Manufacturing Group, Lincoln University, and Harper Adams University. Morning presentations will focus on available funding streams, integrating robots into a business, commercialising research output and the skill set requirements for future employees. As well as a useful networking opportunity, there will be an opportunity to meet funding bodies and policy makers at the event followed by end of event drinks and refreshments.

### HTA Masterclasses and Workshops for 2024

There are two remaining events in the planned programme for 2024 – ‘[Herbicides for container-grown hardy nursery stock](#)’ a masterclass being staged at James Coles Nurseries and Sons on 29 October 2024, and ‘[Root disease management](#)’ a workshop on 26 November 2024 at Wyevale Nurseries.

The first will cover weed identification and biology, herbicides and their use in container-grown situations, and how to build and get the best from an herbicide programme. The latter will feature irrigation water sampling techniques and monitoring of pathogens in plant tissue, prevention of root diseases through good crop husbandry and cultural techniques, and crop protection programmes for the control of root pathogens.



# Advice Line

Just a regular reminder that HTA members have **free access to the Nursery Production Advice Line** managed by Zest - Sustainable ICM.

To access the service with technical queries:

 0333 005 0167

 [nurseryproduction@hta.org.uk](mailto:nurseryproduction@hta.org.uk)

