

Case Study

Evolving relationships: Horticultural Trades Association and School of Biological Sciences



Key Facts

- Gardening as an industry is worth over £5 billion a year in the UK.
- The Horticultural Trades Association (HTA) represents over 2,500 garden centres and other garden retail businesses.
- The HTA needs data to support its many ongoing campaigns.
- The University of Reading is one of very few UK universities to practice traditional horticulture and to have a quality science base underpinning it.
- A partnership between the HTA and the University of Reading was established with the aim of independently authenticating the science behind by HTA's claims. Over time this relationship has successfully supported many campaigns.
- The HTA fund a PhD studentship and discussions are currently underway into setting up a Knowledge Transfer Partnership programme.

The Partner

The Horticultural Trades Association (HTA) represents over 2,500 garden centres, garden retail businesses, landscapers, growers and suppliers to the garden trade.

The HTA provides members with a vital forum dealing with key garden issues. It provides a range of services dedicated to growing business for its members, including professional business, networking and communications, training and business development, marketing services, government lobbying and representation, as well as market information and research.

The Opportunity

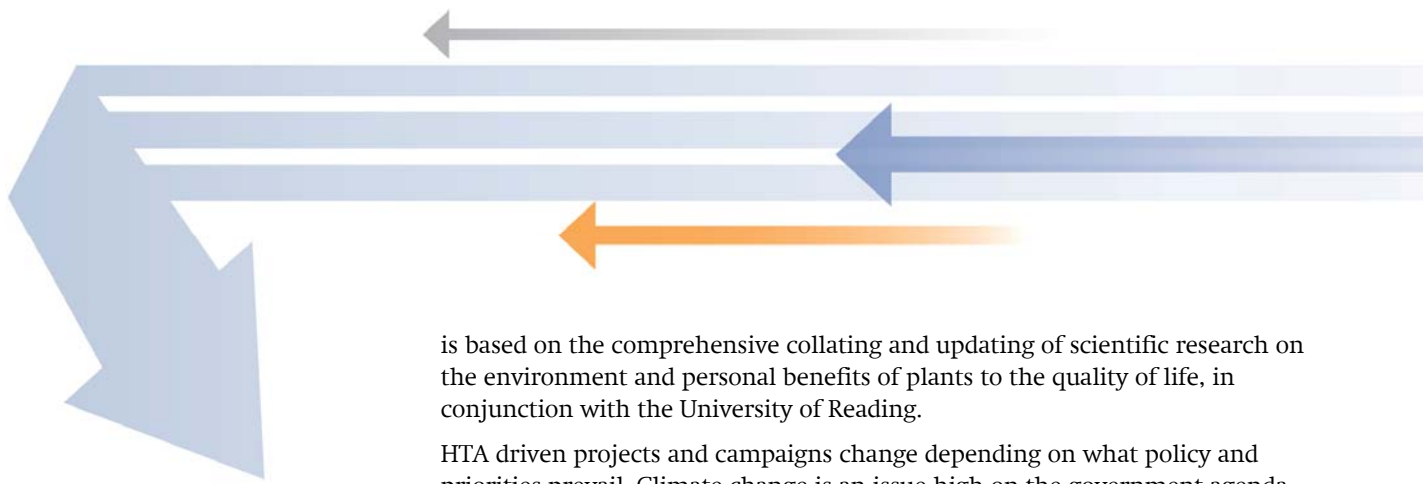
The University of Reading is one of very few UK universities to practice traditional horticulture and to have a quality science base underpinning it. The HTA has a continuous need to strengthen its lobbying ability and required assistance in quantifying some scientific claims. It also needs to be able to offer correct scientific data and information when seeking to influence changes in government policy towards horticulture.

The HTA originally contacted the University of Reading for assistance in establishing a database detailing the benefits derived from the relationships between plants and people. The University has a good track record in research into the wide range of benefits that plants and green landscapes provide to people and was therefore a natural partner for HTA.

Current Status

The HTA are continually running different campaigns which require comment by the University, and their relationship has grown. The campaign 'Greening the UK' is aimed at local authorities and research conducted by the University has revealed that "there has been a 50% drop in the planting requirement appearing in planning applications for new developments in urban and rural areas".

The PlantforLife campaign promotes the health and wellbeing benefits of trees and ornamental plants to the environment, wildlife and society through a media and information campaign with a total value of almost €1,000,000 / £700,000 funded jointly by the HTA and the European Commission. PlantforLife



is based on the comprehensive collating and updating of scientific research on the environment and personal benefits of plants to the quality of life, in conjunction with the University of Reading.

HTA driven projects and campaigns change depending on what policy and priorities prevail. Climate change is an issue high on the government agenda and much of the research the University is currently carrying out for the HTA (as of 2009) is from an environmental point of view. More recently HTA has funded a PhD student whose focus is to investigate the Environmental Impacts of Gardening in the UK.

Currently (Autumn 2009) discussions are underway into setting up a Knowledge Transfer Partnership programme between HTA and the University.

Dr Ross Cameron, Senior Lecturer in Environmental Horticulture, within the School of Biological Sciences at the University of Reading manages the partnership with the HTA.

Benefits to Partner

The HTA are able to use information which has been quantified by Dr Cameron to lend extra weight to their argument when lobbying government.

The University is able to offer the HTA a multi disciplinary service, providing expertise in relevant numerous fields including biology, meteorology and psychology.

Benefits to the University

Collaboration with the HTA has led to further relationships and interactions with other organisations and bodies that have generated further income.

In order to promote core issues, the HTA funds a small bursary scheme at the University of Reading whereby undergraduates investigate an area of research that is of relevance to them.

HTA members sit on influential boards and committees and are able to use their standing to influence the industry, opening doors for the University.



'We went to Reading because not only are they horticulturists and active research scientists, they also understand psychology and environmental conditioning..... and they talk our language.'

Jennifer Thwaites

Promotions Manager, HTA

University of Reading

The University of Reading is a world-class research-intensive university covering a broad spectrum of disciplines across the Life and Physical Sciences, Arts and Humanities, Social Sciences and Henley Business School. Areas of particular strength include: Climate Systems Science, Preventative and Therapeutic Health Sciences, Sustainable Construction and Environments and Computational Science and Informatics.

The University recognises the important role universities play in supporting the regional, national and international knowledge economy. We value existing relationships with companies and hope to evolve many of them into collaborative or strategic partnerships, as well as to seek to develop new mutually beneficial relationships.