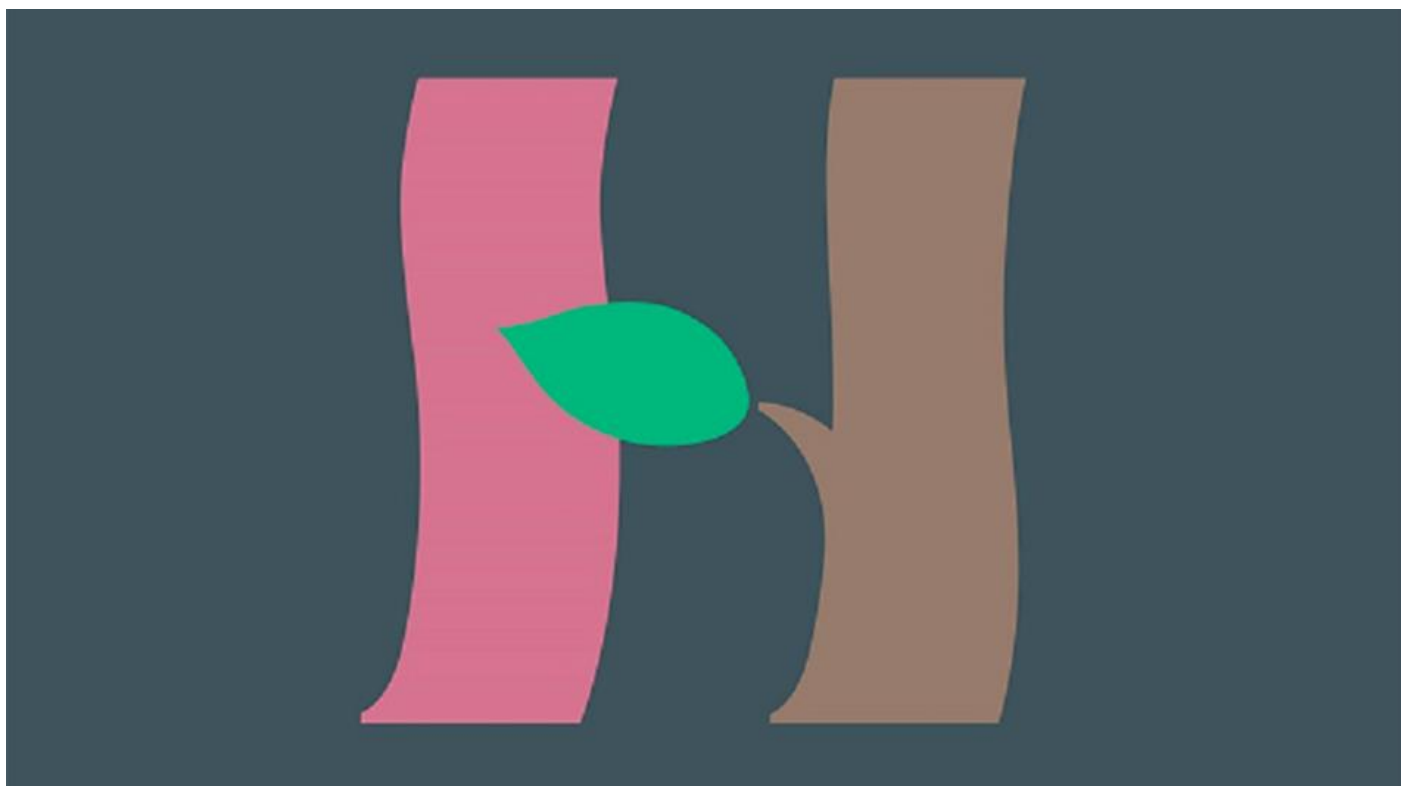


Women in Horticulture UK: what is it and what does it hope to achieve?

7 March 2023,



The group gathered for the first time last month to form the new Women in Horticulture UK group. The inaugural event included a workshop to agree the remit of the group amongst its founder members.

Alongside growing the group to include more women in horticulture who are at the top of their game, the group will hold webinars to learn and share new skills as well as collaborate with each other including hosting member and organisation spotlight Q&A sessions.

Sally Drury, technical editor at *HortWeek* joined the group because she believes more women need, and deserve, recognition that they're not currently receiving. She says: "There have been many remarkable women in horticulture throughout time – garden designers, nurserywomen, plant explorers, plant breeders, plant scientists... During World War II, the Land Army kept the nation fed.

“Women are found in all aspects of horticulture – up trees; in propagation units and nurseries; in laboratories; managing pitches and golf courses, cultivating the land; designing, planting and maintaining gardens and the wider landscape; picking fruit, packing vegetables and, of course, in education and dissemination of knowledge. The list goes on.

“Yet, out of 262 Victoria Medal of Honour award winners, only 34 have been women. The Chelsea Best in Show award has only gone to women three times in the last 43 years. Only seven out of 30 Garden Media Lifetime Achievement awards have been presented to women.

“Women have been underrepresented in horticulture in leadership roles, and under-recognised in achievements.

“It's time to unite and to support, promote and honour women in horticulture and to share knowledge, learning and advice for the betterment of horticulture and women's standing in the industry.

“It's time women's contributions were recognised and encouraged.

“The future of the planet relies on horticulture – whether that's through mighty oak trees or meadows – because without plants there will be no planet.”

Founder Melanie Wood says: “One of Fargro’s strategic objectives is to make horticulture thrive and we do this in a number of ways such as supporting education initiatives and sponsoring groups such as the extremely successful Young People in Horticulture Association (YPHA), it was this group that inspired the idea to start Women in Horticulture.

“Women have been an integral part of horticulture throughout history, yet they remain underrepresented in leadership roles and face unique challenges in the industry.

“By starting Women in Horticulture, we aim to provide a platform for women to connect, share knowledge, and support each other in their professional and personal growth. We believe that by empowering women in horticulture, we can foster innovation and creativity that will help horticulture thrive.”

Elizabeth Green, marketing communications manager at **Syngenta**, recognises the opportunities to network with women with vast and varied experience: “Being a marketer, I am constantly looking at new ways of working, connecting and communicating with people and this is the perfect way to do this. I believe the group will be a motivator for other women in the industry to join and share their own knowledge from across the horticulture sector.

“Syngenta will be hosting a networking event for the group at Four Oaks in September. The industry show seems like the perfect opportunity to bring the group together face to face once again and encourage other new members to join.

Member **Christina Taylor**, digital content manager at *HortWeek* says: “I hope it will give women a place to support each other and raise the profile of women in horticulture, particularly in areas of the industry where they are typically under-represented.”

Emily Rae, managing director at **Plants4Presents** says on why she joined the group: “I’m a firm believer in team work and collaboration and I hope this network will become a source of support and advice but also a vehicle to champion good work and celebrate each other’s successes.

“As a business owner and as a plants woman I’m always learning and I’m looking forward to learning from and working with such a strong network of women as well as building my own network of contacts and connections across the industry.

“I’d encourage anyone reading this who would like to get involved or learn more to get in touch and join us in championing the very best of women in horticulture.”

Rachael Forsyth, senior reporter at HortWeek recognises the amazing things women can achieve – especially when they come together. She says of why she joined the group: “It’s fair to say we all know how extraordinary women are. Their achievements in the world of horticulture are no different. Despite us all knowing this, women are still under-represented, under-recognised, and under-paid.

“The pay gap is just one example of this with males still earning a consistently higher wage than females in the same role. The LI’s research revealed this, and at the top, 63% males in

senior level roles earn above £45k, compared to 45% of females in the same senior roles. A gap is seen at every level, though.

“I hope that this group will help bring together a collection of voices celebrating women in horticulture so we can be that much louder.

“There are so many incredible women in the group that I’m also excited to share knowledge and advice, and learn a lot!”

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