








## Case Study - Hillier Nurseries Ltd

### Company Background

Hillier Nurseries was founded in 1864 by Edwin Hillier and has over 140 years experience of growing and selling hardy ornamental trees and plants, contributing to the greening of both garden and urban landscapes within the UK and mainland Europe. It has remained under the management of the Hillier's, with Robert Hillier, OBE as Managing Director, and John Hillier, VMH (Victoria Medal Holder) as President, both great grandchildren of Edwin Hillier. The nursery has changed considerably over the years, developing to keep pace with ever increasing changes in the market place, whilst maintaining its formidable reputation for producing trees and shrubs of the highest quality. The quality of its work is echoed (having entered every Chelsea flower Show since, 1913), by winning its 58th consecutive gold medal in 2003. Hillier's Nurseries' international reputation has also grown through the Sir Harold Hillier Gardens and Arboretum. The company is proud to have served the Royal Family for many years and has held warrants since 1936.

### Summary of Key Achievements

- All plastic pots used in the production process are recycled, a saving of 23 tonnes in 2003 
- 40% of the water requirements for the Brentry container unit (44,000m<sup>3</sup>) in 2003 were supplied from its own reservoir 
- Reduction of transport costs through improved efficiency of delivery routes by some 18%, a saving of £91,000 
- Further reduction of peat consumption by 1,000m<sup>3</sup> 
- Further reductions in the volume of chemicals used to control pests and disease 
- Undertake work experience placements with local school children each year, support work programmes for people with learning disabilities with both Eastleigh College and Enham Trust, and work with H.M. Prison Winchester, Rehabilitation of Offenders 
- Active education and promotion on horticultural subjects and sustainable gardening 

#### KEY



Container trees are now supported in a media of green waste and bark products reducing their peat use by 1,000 m<sup>3</sup> a year



Hillier staff working within one of the nursery greenhouses

### Sustainability Initiatives

Hillier Nurseries is committed to reducing the impacts of its operation and promoting sustainable business practices both within and to its suppliers and customers. Hillier is constantly looking at new ways to maximise resource efficiency by selectively sourcing sustainable materials, using recycled materials as an alternative to new materials, optimum utilisation and extended life of materials through recycling.

Current initiatives undertaken by Hillier Nurseries is:

- Pilot scheme to introduce on-line purchasing at all of the 13 garden centres
- Trialling of biological controls and processes as an alternative to less environmentally friendly options
- Trialling use of biodegradable pots at the nursery

### Contribution to a Sustainable Economy

Hillier's has a policy of sourcing local plant material, where possible. Hillier Nurseries spend approximately 90% of its young plant budget locally and 50% of its finished plant budget, the balance spent with those based mainly in Europe.

All deliveries from Hillier Nurseries are delivered by a local transport agent whom it has worked with over the past 20 years. Analysis of Hillier delivery routes and load efficiency has enabled the company to improve the efficiency of its delivery operation, cutting its delivery costs by approximately 18%, some £90,000 a year.

# Case Study - Hillier Nurseries Ltd

## Enhancing Environmental Quality

All of the plastic pots used during the production process are recycled, this equated to 23 tonnes in 2003. New pots are made of 98-100% recycled plastic. Air pots, which are used in the production of containerised trees, are removed prior to dispatch and reused on the nursery.

At Brentry Container Unit, Hillier is able to support the water needs from its own reservoir, which collects rainfall and excess irrigation water from most of its 50 acre site. In 2003, 40% of its water needs came from this reservoir, equating to some 44,000m<sup>3</sup>. Hillier has also expanded its drip and spray peg irrigation system and serviced a further 400m<sup>2</sup> area of capillary sand beds. These systems help deliver the optimum volume of water to each individual plant, avoiding run-off and leaching of nutrients.

Hillier has an ongoing commitment to source and trial peat alternatives and is involved with several industry initiatives. Replacement of peat based media used in the potting of containerised trees with a media of green waste and bark products, enabled them to further reduce their peat requirements by 1,000m<sup>3</sup> annually.

Hillier Nurseries is committed to reducing chemical usage to a minimum, with use of chemicals for the control of pests and disease reduced through its increased implementation of its Integrated Pest Management Programme (IPM). The IPM uses biological controls as well as chemicals made of natural ingredients to control pests and disease. This helps minimise the impact on the environment and improves the working environment. It provides a sustainable approach to pest control and improves the quality of its product.

## Improving the Social Wellbeing of Stakeholders

Hillier's is a strong believer in minimising the environmental impact of its operation and products and is very active in educating sustainable approaches at all levels of its operation.

In order to educate others, Hillier recognises the need for its employees to also be educated. Hillier was the first of its kind to be awarded the Investors in People status, which it has retained for an unbroken period of 11 years. The company actively educates its permanent and seasonal staff in specialist and general areas of operation. Staff and student training sessions are held throughout the summer and are open to all Hillier employees.

Staff are involved in open days, trade shows and events such as the Chelsea Flower Show, encouraging a team effort between departments and providing them with an opportunity to work together.

Due to Hillier's international reputation, it receives requests from students around the world to undertake a placement with them.

Sustainable business is promoted and shared with its customers, suppliers and others within the horticultural industry through open days and workshops organised independently or in conjunction with agencies such as ADAS, HDC and DEFRA.

The strong relationship of trust that Hillier has forged with its long-standing amenity customers gives them the ability to influence from the very early stages, its choices regarding a species' suitability for purpose. Appropriate choice influences the future resource requirements. With this in mind, many of its amenity customers and landscape architects use the Hillier open days as part of its own training.

Through its garden centre retail outlets, Hillier has the opportunity to educate and advise its customers as to sustainable gardening approaches. Direct influence on the customer through the choices made available to them in the garden centres helps to ensure that Hillier's commercial goals are consistent with its environmental policy. Hillier produces a gardening club magazine three times a year and is seen as a good forum to inform customers of its products whilst, educating them to sustainable gardening approaches.

Hillier offers work experience placements as follows:

- For school children through the annual Trident Scheme
- Supported work programmes for people with learning difficulties from Enham Trust
- Short-term work placements to people who have been unemployed for long periods of time (in conjunction with a local agency)
- Placements from HM Prison Winchester as part of their rehabilitation program

Hillier has developed a strong relationship with Enham Trust, providing people with learning difficulties with a work placement at Hillier's. This involves purchasing crops (which the Enham Trust grow on its own land) at commercial rates and selling a named clematis 'Enham Star'. A percentage of the sale price is donated to the Trust, which equated to £6,400 in 2003. This scheme for making a charitable contribution is also set up for two other charities, Thrive received £20,632 and Wellbeing received £8,171.50 through this programme. Hillier also supports a number of other charities in the local area.



Hillier staff working within one of the nursery greenhouses

## Company Contact

Kevin Hobbs, Assistant Production Manager, Hillier Nurseries Ltd.,  
Ampfield House, Ampfield, Romsey, Hampshire, SO51 9PA  
T: 01794 368733 F: 01794 367987 E: dave\_hooker@hillier.co.uk

Awards supported by:

