

Growing for growth

The Horticulture E-bulletin from Farming Connect – Spring 2026.

Welcome to our dedicated E-bulletin for Growers and Horticulture Businesses.

What's happening in horticulture?

Special report: Lantra Cymru Awards 2025

The 31st Lantra Cymru Awards ceremony took place on Thursday 15 January. The Metropole Hotel in Llandrindod Wells once again played host to the evening celebrating achievements of people across the land-based sector. To celebrate the sector, Lantra Wales, with the support of Farming Connect, host this exclusive annual awards ceremony. The Deputy First Minister and Cabinet Secretary for Climate Change and Rural Affairs, **Huw Irranca-Davies MS**, opened the evening congratulating all those nominated for a Lantra Cymru Award, saying that they demonstrated the exceptional talent, dedication and ambition that exists across Wales' land-based sectors. "The calibre of this year's nominees shows clearly that the future of Welsh farming is in safe hands, and I am particularly delighted that not only farming, but forestry and horticulture are such growth areas where support from Farming Connect and Lantra Wales is clearly showing dividends and will contribute so much to mitigating climate change."



The Farming Connect Horticulture Award recognises the commitment made to ongoing horticulture training and continuing professional development in the horticulture industry in Wales. The winner of this year's award was **Naomi Hope of Nevern Valley Veg** (Llysiâu Cwm Nyfer). Naomi and her partner Richard own a ten-acre market garden and conservation site in north Pembrokeshire. Specialising in growing vegetables, herbs and flowers, the couple use a minimal till method, avoiding use of herbicides or pesticides.

Over the last three years they have planted over 1,000 trees and new hedgerows, created a wildflower meadow, wildlife ponds and barn owl habitat while also maintaining three acres of wet alder woodland. By

commercially growing vegetables and herbs interspersed with flower beds, compost heaps, ponds and beetle banks, they have created a home for pollinators within a sustainable ecological environment.

The judging panel for this year's award had this to say about our winners: "Naomi and Richard have enhanced biodiversity, improved soil health and developed a wildlife haven in the heart of the Nevern Valley.

"Their focus on continuing professional development, commitment to sustainable land management and active engagement with their local community, make them worthy winners of this award."

For a full list of the other winners from the evening, please follow the link [here](#).

Organic Markets Reaching All-Time High

Statistics from the UK and Europe are highlighting the strengthening of the organic produce sector. Organic veg box seller Riverford has recorded their largest boom in two decades, with sales up 6% in the year to May 2025. The Soil Association has recently recorded that the UK organic food and drink market grew by almost 9%.

While the UK organic market represents 2% of UK food sales, the trend shows that the demand for produce is rising, and this trend is reflected in Europe and around the world, where in 2024 global retail sales of organic food and drink rose to 145 billion euros, underlining resilient consumer demand across major markets. At the same time, the global organic farming area remained close to 99 million hectares, providing continuity in the production base. Read more about the demand for organic produce globally from The Research Institute of Organic Agriculture FiBL and IFOAM [here](#).

Thinking about converting to organic production? Get support by emailing the Farming Connect Horticulture Team at horticulture@lantra.co.uk.

Update your knowledge



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Lywodraeth Cymru
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Launch of a new grower network

The Farming Connect Horticulture Team have recently launched a new grower network focussed on growing media. As the horticulture industry transitions to peat free, a wide range of alternative growing media is now available. Managing growing media has become increasingly complex as products vary in nutrient profiles, water-holding capacities, air spaces, and pH levels—all of which affect root development, nutrient uptake, and overall plant health. The aim of the **Growing Media Network** is to gain insight into growing media's properties, helping growers to fine-tune irrigation, feeding, and environmental controls, helping crops thrive and reducing costly losses or setbacks.

Growers who sign up to the network will gain access to:

- 2 growing media samples to be analysed by a laboratory and provide results on pH, EC, Nutrients and physical properties of the growing media
- Resources on sampling techniques
- Training on the effective use of an EC meter

If you would like to express interest in joining the network, please email horticulture@lantra.co.uk

Horticulture Project

Farming Connect Horticulture Achievements

Horticulture support from Farming Connect is evolving with the next phase of the programme. The Farming Connect Team will continue to assist horticulture enterprises, but before the new round starts, we want to outline our achievements for Wales's horticulture sector over the past three years:

- Training Events – we have held **132 horticulture training events**, with over **1200 people** receiving specialised training at these events
- **607 1:1 horticulture business support sessions**, delivering tailored advice to over 241 businesses in Wales.
- **20 Grower Networks established**, enabling peer-to-peer knowledge exchange for 635 members
- The work of the Farming Connect Horticulture programme has contributed to a **20% increase in land use for horticulture** since 2022
- Some highlights from the programme:
 - Small Growers' Supplier Standard - Food safety standard developed for small-scale market gardeners in collaboration with ML3 Technical Services to supply produce into projects such as Welsh Veg in Schools.
 - Growing Media Network – 12 ornamental businesses provided with training, lab analysis and new technology to help with transition to peat free.
 - 4 day Scale Up Vegetable Production Course - Programme has provided 35 Growers in 2 Cohorts practical guidance on expanding production, improving business efficiency, and accessing new markets, helping growers turn emerging opportunities into sustainable growth.



We are hugely proud of the impact that the Farming Connect Horticulture support has had on the industry so far, and we look forward to continuing to build on this success in the coming year!

For more information on support that we can provide to your business through Farming Connect, contact the Service Centre on 03456 000 813. -

What's on?

New programme, New events! Keep an eye on our events list [here](#), as we prepare for an exciting new programme of activities.

- **23/3/26** - Plant Propagation for Market Gardens – workshop at Bremenda Isaf with Iain Tolhurst
- **24/3/26** - Hungry Gap and Tunnel Rotations – workshop at Bremenda Isaf with Iain Tolhurst

Disclaimer

Every effort is made to ensure the accuracy of information and recommendations given in these notes. All applications of crop protection chemicals should be made in accordance with label recommendations, which should be consulted before spraying. The use of the pesticide or beneficials is at the risk of the user and Farming Connect does not accept liability for any loss or damage caused by such use. The references to on-label approvals and EAMUs for use of pesticides are subject to change and approval may be withdrawn at any point. It is the grower's responsibility to check approvals before use of pesticides or beneficials. If in doubt a grower should seek advice from a qualified specialist. Please contact us to arrange an appointment – e-mail/telephone advice is also available. We do not warrant, endorse, guarantee, or assume responsibility for the accuracy or reliability of any information offered by third-party websites linked through the document or any website or feature linked in any banner or other advertising.