

Partnership starts green space drive

The Government has launched a scheme to generate more green space in England's towns and cities over the next two years.

The Green Infrastructure Partnership is designed to help communities make more innovative use of existing grey infrastructure such as creating rooftop gardens, small community gardens or living walls.

June's natural environment white paper contained a commitment to create the partnership. It will be made up of planners, landscape architects and environmental interest groups alongside bodies such as Natural England, the Landscape Institute and the Environment Agency. See p10 for more.

Green waste spurs peat-free warning

The risks of contamination from green waste could prevent the edibles industry from moving away from peat, a grower has warned.

The industry has to follow tight standards with products checked at all stages of production. Growing media need to be entirely traceable and free from potentially dangerous contaminants.

"There are questions about green waste and risks of contamination," said JB Shropshire & Sons technical director Liz Johnson.

Speaking at the International Peat Society and Stockbridge Technology Centre conference last week, she said: "Food safety is a priority. Any product must be safe for the user and consumer."

She added: "Growing media needs to be free from pests, weeds, diseases and pesticide residues, with no contaminants that make it dangerous for use. It also needs to be free of sharps and produced from approved inputs with complete traceability."

Ornamentals grower scores second success taking International Grower of the Year silver prize

Majestic Trees win goes global

By Matthew Appleby

Horticulture Week's Ornamentals Grower of the Year 2011, Majestic Trees, has taken silver at the International Grower of the Year competition in Xian, China.

The Hertfordshire company beat European rivals, coming second only to the largest tree and shrub nursery in Canada.

The international competition was organised by the International Association of Horticultural Producers.

Majestic Trees' entry into the competition followed its win in February in the ornamentals category of the Grower of the Year Awards 2011 and its nomination by the NFU.

Other finalists alongside Majestic Trees this year were



McCurdy: presentation in Xian

Belgium's Denis-Plants BVBA, Bylands Nursery of Canada, Netherlands firm Ammerlaan the Green Innovator, Taida Horticultural of Taiwan and the host country's Hongyue.

Entry extension Growers given more time

The deadline for entries to the Grower of the Year Awards has been extended to 27 October in response to requests by growers for more time to prepare.

Growers, breeders, packers and marketing companies now have just over two weeks to put themselves or colleagues forward in this celebration of excellence for the production horticulture sector.

Categories include grower of the year for nursery stock, bedding, cut flowers, vegetables,

salads, top fruit and soft fruit. New categories include best hardy nursery stock introduction, best new bedding variety and best herbaceous perennial introduction. Also up for grabs are awards for the best new edibles variety, best young grower and best organic operation.

For further details or entry forms, see www.groweroftheyear.co.uk. Winners will be revealed at the Lancaster London Hotel on 23 February 2012.

Majestic owner Steve McCurdy said while he was disappointed not to take gold, he was proud to have beaten all of the other European finalists.

The gold award went to

Bylands, which grows three-million plants per year of 2,000 varieties on 160ha.

The awards event was held in conjunction with the International Horticultural Exposition.

Feedback sought on plant inspection fee rise

The Food & Environment Research Agency (FERA) has opened a consultation into its proposals to recover the full costs of plant health inspection fees from businesses.

FERA is reviewing the fees for statutory checks in England and Wales, which have been the same for more than 10 years in some cases. The current income from businesses is around 40 per cent on average and there are fears

that the fee rise could deter exports to mainland Europe.

The eight-week consultation will gather feedback on the proposed changes and views on efficiencies to reduce costs in the future.

FERA director of policy and regulation Tony Harrington said: "We are currently reviewing all our regulatory activities, including what roles and responsibilities we and industry should have.

"We want to hear from as many stakeholders as possible about how we implement increases to the charging schemes. We also want ideas on what changes we could make over the next three years to regulatory work to minimise these increases."

Other consultations due to be announced over the next two months include export certification services, seed marketing regulations and

UK national listing and plant breeders' rights.

Plants for Europe owner Graham Spencer said: "The feeling in the industry is that inspection fees have been low for some years. We are seeing more inspectors at Heathrow and Gatwick Airports as a result of more investment, and that is a good thing."

To contribute, see www.fera.defra.gov.uk/planthealthconsultation.

Nursery submits housing application as part of site move

Leicestershire grower James Coles & Sons is considering moving from its site at Thurnby and is submitting a planning application for 175 houses.

The nursery has occupied the site for 80 years, where the administration, distribution and retail areas of the

business are based. It is looking for a new site closer to its main growing fields to the north and east of Leicester.

Coles has just completed a public consultation on the housing proposal and hopes to submit the application to Harborough District Council in the next three weeks.

"Nothing will happen if we don't find another site. We are not selling up or anything," explained managing director James Coles.

"The site we are on is at capacity and we are looking for somewhere better, closer to our main growing areas. This would mean greater

efficiencies, lower transport costs and easier movement of staff.

"Land is required for housing so this is a good time to look at this. We should get a decision on planning permission by Easter next year and will probably move in three to five years."