



# METROPOLITAN PUBLIC GARDENS ASSOCIATION

Chairman: Rex Thornborough MStJ, RD

8 April 2020

## The UK Horticultural Industry

I write to you as Chairman of the Metropolitan Public Gardens Association (MPGA), one of the Country's oldest horticultural charities, founded in 1882, to ask that favourable consideration be given to reclassifying Garden Centres, nurserymen and plant sellers as essential services.

What is more essential than nature? If bicycle shops are considered essential, I respectfully suggest that horticulture is vital.

In the current situation the benefits of contact with gardening, nature, growing plants and green spaces are well documented in their positive effect on physical, mental and social health and we should all be encouraging anything that contributes to the general health of the population at this time.

With everyone on lockdown except journeys for essential items, what can be more essential than growing plants and maintaining a vital industry? The economic and social benefits to society and the Country are huge as The Oxford Economics paper of October 2018, "The Economic Impact of Ornamental Horticultural and Landscaping in the UK", demonstrates and this, of course, leaves out the impact of growing food and vegetables.

Children at home can be introduced to new life skills by the magic of growing plants and planting seeds and even if you don't have a garden, pots on a balcony or even a windowsill will brighten up life, can produce food and provide an extra and very worthwhile activity for the whole family.

Whilst social distancing is essential to beat this virus it can be far better achieved outdoors in a Garden Centre than it ever can inside in a supermarket.

It surely cannot be the aim of Government to put out of business a sizeable proportion of the nurserymen and growers that are the backbone of this Country's horticultural industry at their busiest time of the year and at a time when they are needed most.

I trust that your support for this initiative, taken together with the Worshipful Company of Gardeners, will ensure that current policy will be swiftly changed.

President: Hugh Johnson OBE  
Vice Presidents:  
The Marchioness of Salisbury  
Sir David Howard Bt  
Rosie Atkins FLS  
Joyce Bellamy MBE  
Alistair Gould  
Wesley Kerr OBE  
Christopher Woodward

BE

