

## **Gardening and Horticulture Cross Party Group Minutes**

5.45pm start, Wednesday 6<sup>th</sup> November, in Committee Room 5 (The Smith Room).

- Apologies – Christine Grahame MSP, Sharon Dowey MSP  
James Barnes, Brian Cunningham, Anne Webster, Lewis Normand, Liz Stewart, Claire Dyce, Raoul Curtis-Machin, David Knott.
- Attendees:  
Rachael Hamilton MSP  
Tim Eagle MSP  
Annabelle Ewing MSP  
Jim Fairlie MSP  
David Lydiat  
Katie Hazelton  
Robert Boyd  
Liz Barron-Majerik  
Claire Ghee  
Ruth Vichos  
Helen McMeekin  
Helen McDonald  
Neil Cummings  
Fiona Thackery  
Will (RGE)  
Dougal Philip  
Juliette Camburn  
Ann Steele  
Jonny Casey  
Stan Green  
Simon Fraser

**Agenda Item 1:** Welcome/Apologies (Rachael Hamilton MSP, Convenor)

**Agenda Item 2:** School gardens presentation (Professor Donald Gray, Donald Gray, University of Aberdeen, Laura Colucci-Gray, University of Edinburgh, Jonathan Hancock, University of Edinburgh).

Recommendations to govt made over school garden provision and maintenance, supporting and encouraging teachers, outdoor learning on the curriculum across learning areas, health benefits, environmental learnings.

DP: Highlighted RHS campaign work which is supportive.

FT: Trellis Care Settings

LBM: Trellis, garden space not enough, flagged Day Dream Believers, gardens hidden or not maintained.

**Agenda Item 3: Minister Jim Fairlie MSP**

Thanked HTA for invitation and arranging previous visits to Scone Palace Garden Fair and McLaren's Nursery. The Scottish Government value all that the sector delivers and that gardening can be a pathway to recovery. After the group expressed concern over funding, he pledged to write to the Health Secretary on behalf of the group over therapeutic gardens support being allocated. The Minister was also questioned on the devolved issue of peat and he asked the group about what suitable support would look like and what the industry would do if given 4 years before a ban. DL, SF and SG explained current progress, trials and challenges. Also asked about support for education providers. Happy to be contacted by group on issues and will raise them on groups behalf.

AS – Asked if Urban cultivators being included in biodiversity calculations, Claire Ghee (Scot Govt) to look into.

RH thanks Minister on behalf of group for attending.

**Agenda Item 4: Industry review (HTA – David Lydiat)**

DL gave overview of the Scottish Horticulture industry including statistics, trends and a marketing update on sales performances and other factors impacting the industry.

**Agenda Item 5: Jim McColl (Stan Green)**

SG provided a fitting and moving account, alongside memories of Jim, the 'Grandfather of Scottish Horticulture' whose funeral he had attended earlier that day along with many other CPG Members who hold Jim McColl in the highest regard for contributions to gardening and their careers. The CPG puts on record this tribute.

Recognising the immense contribution to horticulture of the late Jim McColl MBE

Born in Kilmarnock in 1936, he trained at the West of Scotland College, near Ayr. As a horticultural advisor, a job in broadcasting was far from his mind. Jim's maiden television appearance was on Tomorrow's World while he was involved on a project for Glen Garioch Distillery in Aberdeenshire where he talked about heating greenhouses for tomatoes... and of course whisky.

Jim was somebody who became a TV personality after presenting in front of the BBC's cameras in the garden with his Beechgrove colleagues. Over the course of more than 40 years, Jim McColl, who died at the age of 89 last month, dispensed pearls of wisdom alongside his dry sense of humour. "Every day's a school day, and

everybody can become a gardener.” Were his battle cries. It was a message which millions took to heart, and it not only transformed Jim’s life but the life of thousands throughout Scotland. Beechgrove was first screened in April 1978 and was hugely successful, down to the chemistry and mutual respect between Jim and George Barron. Two couthy characters.

Jim was a consummate professional. During the 1980’s, alongside his TV career, he was instrumental in setting up the annual “Scotgrow” exhibition for the trade. Later, he was also a great supporter of the National Garden show, the charity “Tellis Scotland” and a very active member of The Calyx project. The Calyx was an unsuccessful attempt to have a national focus for gardening in Scotland, marrying both of Jim’s passions namely Scotland and horticulture. He was made an MBE in 1996 and was recognised by the Royal Horticultural Society who awarded him the prestigious Victoria Medal of Honour in 2020. In 2016, the Royal Television Society Scotland Award was presented to Jim and Tern TV to celebrate 1,000 episodes of Beechgrove.

Oft mentioned as the “Grandfather of Scottish Gardening” ... he was a one off, such a wealth of knowledge, and so generous with his time and enthusiasm spreading the joy of gardening. Jim was a gardener, but his other passion was music and Jim along with his accordion could often be heard leading a good old-fashioned sing along after a long day’s recording.

Those wellies will be impossible to fill.

Our thoughts go to Jim’s wife Billie and the family.

#### **Agenda Item 6:** Future CPG events/visits/Meetings

Save the date: evening Parliamentary Reception, 4th February 2025 sponsored by Christine Grahame MSP

#### **Agenda Item 7:** AOB

A conference to bring difference groups together on education and horticulture was suggested and an online follow up meeting was confirmed.

Adaptation in Horticulture sector (Sniffer) event to be held 21<sup>st</sup> January. Location tbc.