



Agriculture & Horticulture
DEVELOPMENT BOARD



New Project

CP 87

Working with the industry to develop the next generation of technical staff for the UK horticulture industry through a Summer Research Programme

EMT/HDC/HTA Fellowship

Project Number:	CP 87
Title:	Working with the industry to develop the next generation of technical staff for the UK horticulture industry through a Summer Research Programme.
Start and end dates:	1 st April 2011 to 31 st March 2016
Fellow:	Dr James Monaghan
Industry Representative:	Horticultural Fellowship Governance Committee
HDC Lead:	Jim Dimmock
Location:	Harper Adams University College
HDC Cost:	£138,155 (total cost £230,259)

Fellowship Background

The fellowships are funded by the East Malling Trust (EMT), the Horticultural Development Company (HDC), and the Horticultural Trades Association (HTA). The funds provide essential underpinning funding to UK-based applied horticultural researchers working in fields of study crucial to the future efficiency and competitiveness of horticultural crops grown in Britain. Each fellowship focuses on training the next generation of applied researcher whilst delivering outputs to industry through a flexible programme of work. The work is flexible so that it can respond to the skills of the individuals undergoing training and the needs of the industry. Each fellowship is managed by a Steering Group, on behalf of the Horticultural Fellowship Governance Committee.

Project Summary:

A recent Royal Society report and the Field and Vegetable Task Force report highlighted the shortage of applied technical expertise available to the UK horticulture industry. Reduction in government funding for applied horticulture research has led to a marked reduction in the pool of applied researchers available for employment in industry, research and advisory/agronomist roles. In addition the loss of many relevant crop-focussed courses and modules from Universities has led to a marked shortage of opportunities for undergraduates to be exposed to, and trained in, applied research in horticulture crop production compared to 10-15 years ago. This limits the number of suitable candidates for technical roles in industry, research studentships, technical roles in universities or institutes, or agronomy and extension businesses.

Through this Fellowship, we have launched a Summer Research Programme (SRP) based at Harper Adams University College (HAUC). The SRP will recruit at least three UK undergraduate students (and potentially seconded industry employees) each year. These students will then carry out small-scale applied agronomy/crop production research projects within the Fresh Produce Research Centre.

2011 SRP students and projects starting 13th July 2011

- Isabel Webb (Cambridge University): *'Can we inoculate salad leaves with antagonistic bacteria that prevent leaf colonisation by human pathogens?'*
- Christina Bosworth (Newcastle University): *'Optimising irrigation for a balance between yield and rooting depth in leafy vegetables'.*
- Amy Davies (Newcastle University): *'Can high EC irrigation water improve the shelf life of baby leaf crops?'*

Aims & Objectives:

Aims:

- To underpin the development of knowledge/skills essential to the horticultural industry.
- To raise the profile of applied research in horticulture for UK undergraduates.
- To improve the sustainability of the UK horticulture industry by developing a cohort of potential technical employees.
- To develop a sustainable model for delivering small-scale industry focussed research.

Objectives:

1. Recruit a minimum of 15 undergraduates from UK Higher Education Institutions to complete applied experiments in horticultural crop production and agronomy.
2. Deliver a minimum of 15 small-scale research projects for the industry.
3. Publicise the approach and outputs of the programme to the industry, Further Education and Higher Education Institutions.
4. Leverage additional funding for follow up projects.

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