

LEADER

Lessons from the best in production



In a recent discussion of the impact of the summer floods on growers, one seasoned hand told *HW*'s correspondent: "Climate change is making growing an erratic practice – and growers who for thousands of years have adapted to all nature can throw at them, are now having to use more initiative than ever."

If the winners of last week's Grower of the Year Awards are anything to go by, the good news is that the industry has got the initiative it needs in bucket-loads, as the stories of each of the winning entrants – published today in our awards supplement – reveal.

More than ever, success today in production horticulture is about great business management, with winners in so many cases illustrating strong leadership, clarity of strategy, great customer focus, a willingness to invest and innovate, and a strong focus on maximising efficiency.

“More than ever, success today is about great business management”

Indeed, ticking a large number of those boxes helped relative newcomer Majestic Trees – winner of both the Hardy Nursery Stock Grower of the Year category and the overall Ornamental Grower of the Year category – to succeed in one of the toughest sectors of production horticulture. In just four years the business went from start up to a £2m-plus turnover company with profits outstripping the industry average. Key to this achievement has been an obsession with customer service, strong communication skills and an exceptionally high commitment to staff motivation and retention.

The Soft Fruit Grower of the Year and winner of the overall Grower of the Year for the edibles sector, berry grower AJ & CI Snell, exhibits the same strengths in business management. The firm's completion in 2007 of its 2,000-tonne capacity packhouse is a case in point, bringing with it huge cost savings through more efficient processes while driving forward standards of customer service.

Other outstanding examples of innovation unveiled at the awards include Hillier Nurseries' 'Streetwise' range of trees. Meanwhile, Worldwide Fruit's backing for the UK production of jazz apples is yet another example that is driving the sector forward.

Congratulations to all our winners. Be inspired. And let's look forward to the innovations of 2008 being celebrated next year.

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