

CROCUS

Sustainability Report

2021

www.crocus.co.uk



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Everything we do in our gardens has an impact on the environment. With a large nursery and over 5,000 plant varieties to care for, we at Crocus have to be particularly conscious of our actions.



Over the last few years we've been implementing changes to make our business as sustainable as possible. We know we still have further to go, but we're excited to share with you the improvements we've made so far.

The Crocus Team

A photograph of a greenhouse with a misting system. The misting system consists of a horizontal pipe with several nozzles spraying a fine mist of water over the plants. The greenhouse has a green mesh covering the sides and a curved, translucent roof. In the foreground, there are several potted plants with dark red and green foliage. In the background, there are more plants and a paved walkway. The sky is overcast and grey.

Reducing waste & water impact

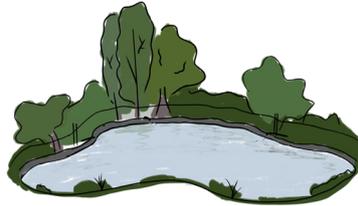
crocus

Our Policy

We want every Crocus order to have as little impact on the planet as possible. That's why we're readdressing the way we grow, package and deliver our plants. This section looks at the physical resources we use and how we're reducing waste across the supply chain with a particular focus on plastic.

Plastic is a significant problem within the industry. That's why all plants grown in our propagation unit are grown in recyclable taupe pots. We are working with suppliers to significantly reduce the use of non recyclable plastic pots from the supply chain by 2025. By being open with you, we hope you will keep us accountable to this target.

What we've done so far



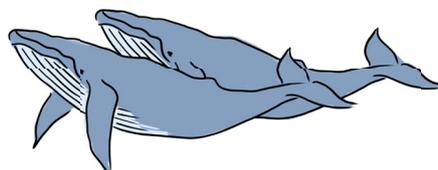
We use rain water to water our plants.

By building a reservoir and recycling water off our buildings we've saved 12,200 m³ of water in the last 12 months.



90% of waste generated by us is recycled.

That includes plastic pots, trays, crates, cardboards, plastic and foam. This has reduced the amount of waste material going to landfill by 500 tonnes annually.



We've stopped printing as much as possible.

By stopping our printed catalogues and turning our 'How To Plant' guides digital, we've saved 77.5 tonnes of paper in 2020. That's the weight of two humpback whales!

Your order, unwrapped

We're making significant changes to ensure as much of your order can be recycled as possible. We only use recyclable plastic sheets, blister packs and bags in our packaging of plants. All of which can be recycled.

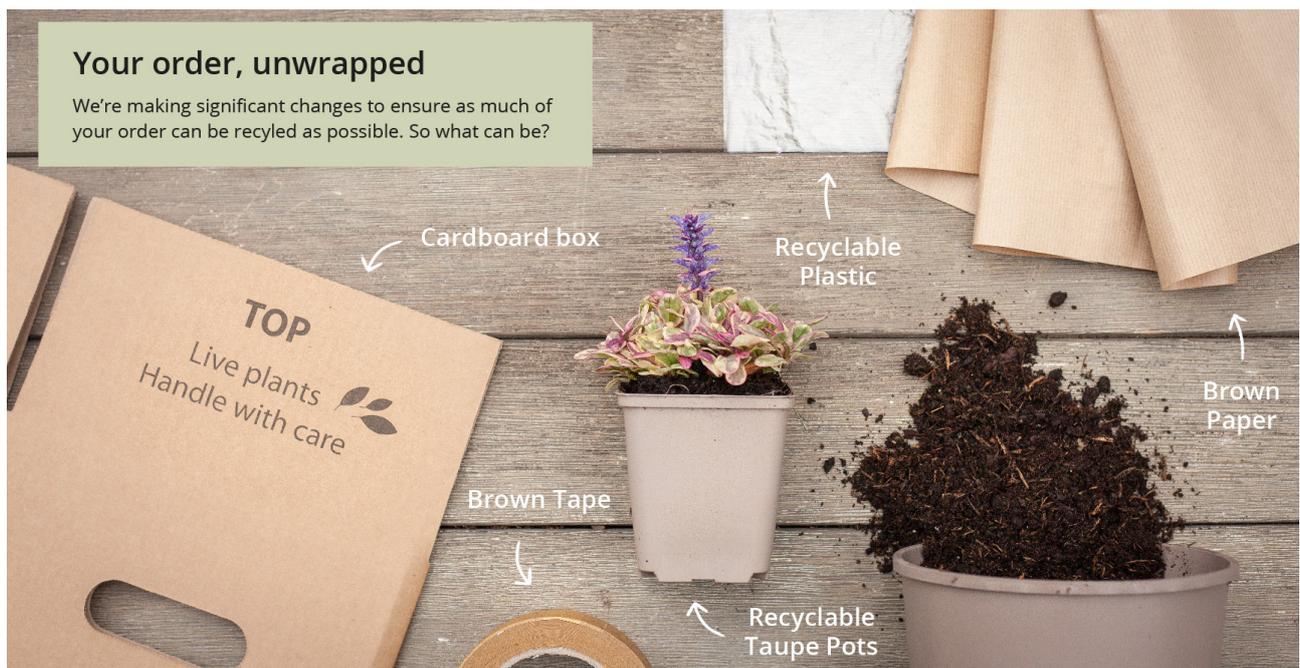
We have replaced all plastic tape with brown paper tape to secure our cardboard boxes. This has saved approximately 13 tonnes of plastic in 2021 and approximately 120 tonnes of plastic over the next 5 years.

In Summer 2021 we started using high performance recyclable material for the wrapping of pallets. This will reduce our use of plastic by 8 tonnes next year and by approximately 70 tonnes in the next 5 years.

Brown paper is replacing our recyclable plastic sheets



What can be recycled in your order?



Plastic Pots

All plants grown in our propagation unit are grown in recyclable taupe pots. We are working with our suppliers to reduce the use of non recyclable plastic pots in our supply chain by 2025.

Between now and then, we have introduced a plastic pot recycling scheme where all customers can return any non recyclable Crocus plastic pot to our Dorney Court location, where they will be recycled on our nursery.



Our Plastic Pot Recycling Scheme

Customers can return any non recyclable Crocus pots to our Dorney Court location, where they will be recycled from our Crocus nursery.



Reducing the use of paper

Printed copies of delivery notes and planting instructions are no longer sent out with orders but are sent by email.

Since 2020, we have stopped sending printed booklets of planting instructions with the orders. Instead, we send an online version to customers. This has already saved 77.5 tonnes of paper in 2020 and will save another 465 tonnes in the next 5 years.

90% of our cardboard and paper packaging is made from recycled material and is recyclable. Currently more than 95% of our cardboard and paper is FSC certified (Forest Stewardship Council). By January 2022 all of our cardboard boxes will be FSC certified.

A large, leafy tree in the foreground, with a white polytunnel and a reservoir in the background.

Reducing Water

In 2011 we started recycling the water off our buildings, polytunnels and standing out areas into our reservoir. This provided approximately 65% of our water needs. This year we enlarged our reservoir and are hoping to collect and store enough rainwater to be completely self sufficient. In the last year alone we've managed to save 12,200 m³ of water.

Improving Waste Management

In 2009 we introduced a wood burner to generate heat for our warehouse. This processes waste wood material and means we no longer use oil to heat our warehouses.

In 2021 we partnered with professional recycling experts to recycle over 90% of the waste generated by us, including plastic pots, trays, crates, cardboards, plastic and foam. This has reduced the amount of waste material going to landfill by 500 tonnes annually.

Nearly 7 tonnes of recycling leaves our nursery every week



As part of our plan to minimise our waste and to maximise what we recycle, we have introduced awareness workshops and seminars to all our staff to increase their knowledge and to motivate them to actively participate and be involved in the process.





Restoration of Ecosystems & Biodiversity

CROCUS

Our Policy

With over 5,000 plant varieties to look after on our nursery, you could say we are a bit plant obsessive at Crocus. This section looks at how we grow our plants, with a particular focus on pesticides and peat. Whilst we have made positive strides in reducing the amount of peat within our own grown plants, we have not found a solution to be 100% peat free. It is a goal that we are working hard towards and hope to be completely peat free in our own grown plants by 2025, if not before.

What we've done so far



We've removed all neonicotinoids

Instead we are using a combination of biopesticides and natural alternatives.



We're trialling peat free compost

As a result, we now use 30% less peat. Our goal is to remove peat from our own grown plants by 2025.



We're expanding our propagation unit

In the next two years we plan to grow over 1 million plants from our own on site propagation unit.

Peat

Peat is a serious problem within the horticultural industry, and one that we are afraid we have not yet found a solution to.

Over the last few years we have been trialling ways in which we can remove peat from our soil mixes. This has already helped us reduce the amount of peat we use by 30%. This winter we will continue to experiment with the goal to be 100% peat free in our own grown plants.

Removing peat from our supply chain will be difficult due to the many number of suppliers we work with. However, we will share the findings from our peat free trials with our suppliers in the hope that we can work together to remove peat completely from our plant network.

By 2025 we hope to have eliminated the use of peat in our own grown plants

Our 100% peat free project

We have grown 70,000 plants in peat free soil for a garden at Chatsworth designed by Tom Stuart-Smith. This experiment has given us valuable learnings in the best ways to turn our own propagation unit peat free.

Reducing Peat in Compost

We will continue to increase the range of bagged peat free compost in our portfolio with a commitment to phase out all peat-contained packaged compost by Spring 2022.





Peat Free Trial

Following our successful trial of growing peat free plants for Chatsworth House we have embarked on a similar project for Knepp Castle, which will be delivered in autumn 2022. We are also currently conducting a winter trial to understand how our peat free mix supports plants during low temperatures. The learnings we gather from these experiments will be an important step in our journey towards finding the best alternative to peat that allows us to grow at scale and quality.

Reducing the use of chemicals on the nursery

We have eliminated the use of all neonicotinoids on the nursery, which can be harmful to pollinators. Instead we are taking a sustainable approach to pest management. We have also significantly increased our use of biopesticides and treatments based on natural products to keep plants in top condition.

Did you know?

We use ladybirds and ladybird larvae (pictured) as a natural predator to help deter aphids.

Reducing chemicals in our range of products

We are continuing to offer a wide retail range of organic and natural pest and weed control products, and we have removed all products from our website containing glyphosate.

Boosting biodiversity

We have significantly increased the number of pollinator friendly plants on our website to give our customers easy ways to play their part in helping the environment. Both our founding directors of Crocus are keen bee-keepers at home. We also keep beehives in the nursery.

Ash Dieback is a serious threat to both the look of our UK countryside, and the ecosystem. In 2021 we have agreed to plant over 2,000 trees over the next two years to replace those that have been lost due to this disease.





Welcome to our propagation unit

Any plants we grow ourselves are grown by our propagation team. By growing more of our own plants we can reduce the carbon footprint of each order. It will also give us new opportunities to grow a more diverse and interesting range of plants, continuing to give Crocus customers the widest selection of plants, at the highest quality possible.

What next?

In two years we plan to have doubled the number of plants we grow.

Increasing UK sourced plants

In 2017 we stopped importing olive trees and other 'risk' plants in to the UK due to the growing risk of *Xylella fastidiosa*. We will continue to focus on growing more of our plants in the UK to reduce the risk of invasive species.





Tackling Climate Change

CROCUS

Our Policy

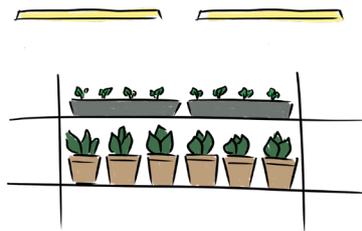
The changing climate will have a serious impact on our lives and on the way we garden. This section looks at our use of energy and the steps we have taken so far to reduce our impact. This section also outlines how we plan to reduce and measure our carbon footprint.

What we've done so far



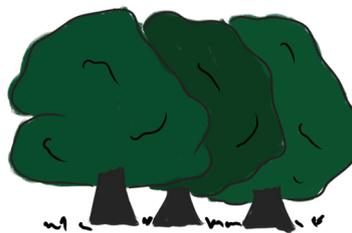
We drive electric

With a large nursery we need speed to pick your orders. 95% of the tractor buggies used in our nursery are powered by electricity.



We're switching to renewable

75% of our energy comes from renewable sources, by 2023 this will be 100%.



We're planting our own mini forest

As part of a tree restoration project we have committed to plant 2,000 trees of different species.

Managing our carbon footprint

76% of the energy we use comes from renewable resources, whilst 24% is nuclear. When our contract ends in 2023, we will switch to 100% renewable energy to power all operations on the nursery.

In the meantime, we will continue to investigate options to reduce our carbon footprint such as the roll-out of LED lighting. We are also looking in to installing solar power panels on our nursery roofs so our warehouses can become self-sufficient in the energy these buildings use.



Measuring our carbon footprint

Over the next year we plan to measure our carbon footprint and create a suitable offsetting strategy, with the overarching goal of becoming carbon neutral.

We have committed to planting 2,000 trees as part of a conservation push to restore ecosystems that have lost trees due to the problem of Ash Dieback



Championing Employees

CROCUS

Our Policy

From the nursery to the office to our delivery drivers, we have a huge amount of expertise and plant knowledge. We can all learn more however on how to give back to the planet. This section sets out how we are involving our whole team in our sustainability action plan and how we will continue to ensure that we are a business full of diverse thoughts and people with fair working standards and opportunities for all.

What we've done so far



Giving back to the community

We have regular internal product and plant sales of leftover stock, the proceeds of which all go to support local charities.



We're a growing team

We have 17 different nationalities working at Crocus from Europe, Asia and Africa.



We're investing in the future of horticulture

We have joined the Government's Kickstart scheme to help young local people develop a career in horticulture.

Helping young professionals

The horticultural industry has a growing problem of attracting the next generation of working professionals. To combat this we have joined the Government's Kickstart scheme to help young local people develop a career in horticulture. We will also be launching our own Horticulture Apprenticeship Scheme in Jan 2022. More information on what the scheme involves and how to apply will come soon.



Improving Health & Safety

We have a specialist Health & Safety consultant who visits the nursery twice a year. Their report is widely circulated and important recommendations are actioned. In 2021, we appointed two Mental Health Champions to assist any member of staff who would like mental health support.

Improving diversity and inclusion

We welcome colleagues from around the world-employing people from no less than 17 countries. Our people strategy is to ensure our people's practices are open and fair, and welcoming of people from all walks of life.

From this year we will also start reporting on the Gender Pay Gap that will be available to all staff.



The Charities we support

In 2021 Crocus introduced a policy of supporting two charities with money raised from sales to staff colleagues of non retail-grade plants. Each year we decide which two charities to support. This year the charities we have chosen are:

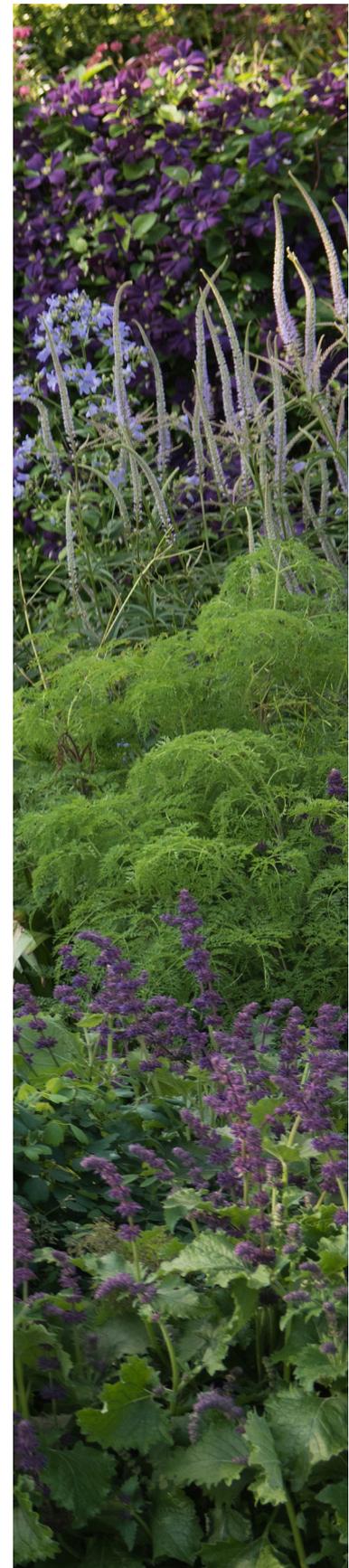
The National Garden Scheme

The National Garden Scheme enables people to open up their private gardens to raise money for charity. The NGS has already given away over £60 million to nursing and health charities. Aside from donating to this charity, our Director Peter Clay opened up his garden as part of the scheme earlier this year.



The Therapy Garden

The Therapy Garden is a horticulture and education charity that uses gardening to generate positive change. With a beautiful garden located near our nursery, this charity aims to use the healing power of horticulture to connect with vulnerable members of our community.





Supporting
Suppliers

CROCUS

Our Policy

The Covid pandemic has reminded us as a business how important our relationships with our suppliers are. As a twenty year old business, it's fair to say we've laid down our roots. The past year however has also created unprecedented hurdles, and as a result slowed down some of our goals to build more sustainable initiatives with our suppliers.

Looking forward, we're excited as to how we can work together to do more, and do better.

If you're interested in reaching out to us as a supplier in ways we can work together better, our door is always open.

How we work together

We are working with suppliers to help them improve their social and environmental practices. We will phase out working with suppliers who do not show improvement over time through the use of annual audits starting in October 2021.

We expect our domestic and overseas suppliers to ensure they understand and comply with our code of practice with respect to anti-slavery, anti-bribery and compliance with best industry practice and all applicable laws and legal standards.

We will and are working to increase the percentage of plant suppliers we work with that are based in the UK. We will also increase the number of local and independent suppliers we work with.

Through the use of annual audits we will work together with our suppliers to be better businesses





What's next?

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Our Timeline

Whilst we are proud of the changes we have made so far, we know we still have a long way to go. This timeline maps out our goals for the next few years. Some are big, whilst others are smaller, either way each one plays an important part. We hope that by being transparent, our Crocus customers will continue to have faith in us. You can be sure that we will keep you informed of our progress, and if there are any ways you can be involved.

2021

We will remove all products that contain glyphosate by the end of the year.

Complete ✓



We will eliminate all neonicotinoids in our nursery this year.

Complete ✓

We will store sufficient rainwater to supply 100% of our water needs by the end of 2021.



2022

By next Spring we will have removed all packaged compost from our product offering that is not peat free.

By January 2022, all of our cardboard boxes will be FSC certified. Currently, 95% are.



75% of our energy comes from renewable sources, by 2023 this will be 100%.

2023

We will reduce the use of non recyclable plastic pots within our supply chain by 2025.

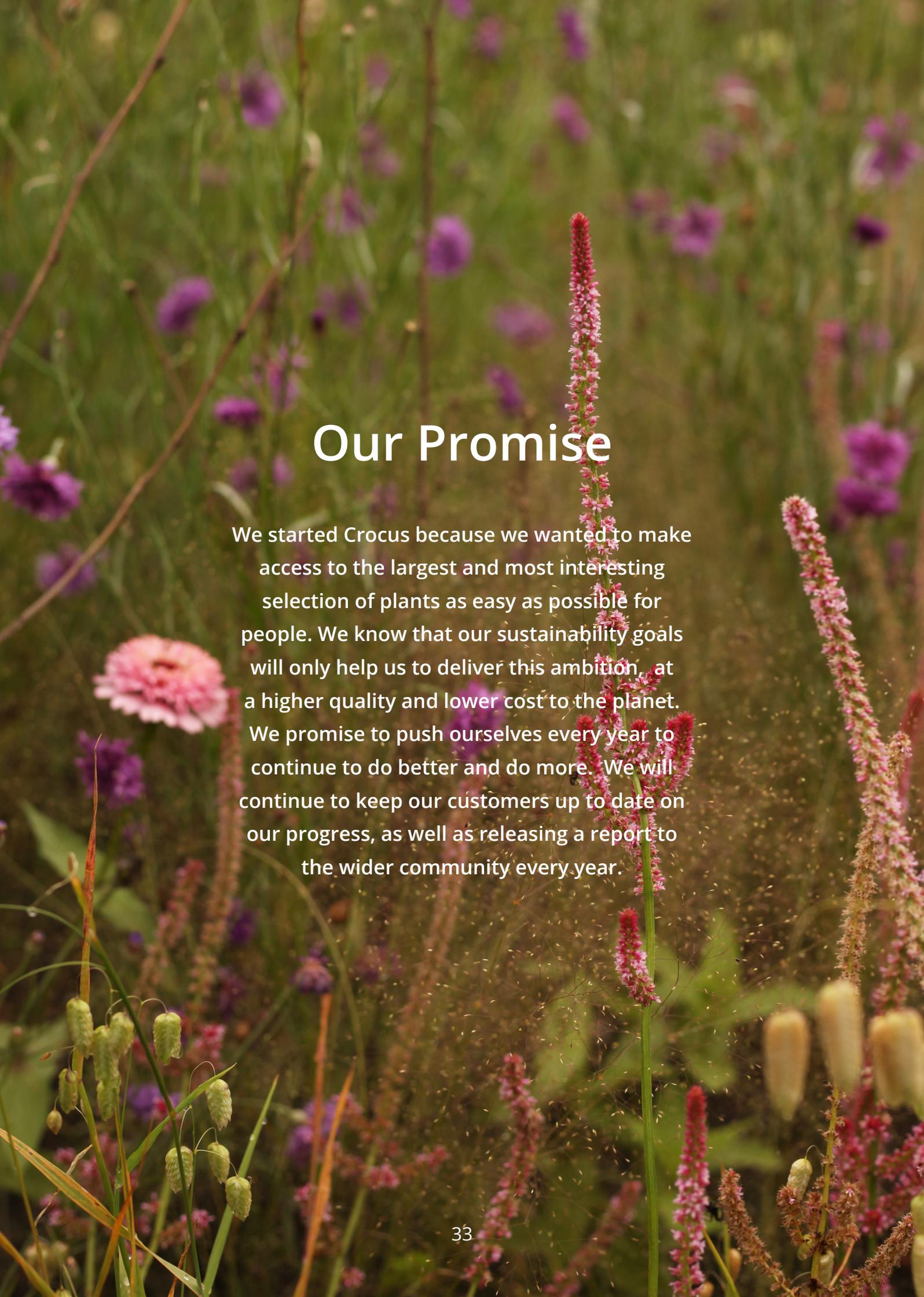


2024



By 2025 we aim to eliminate the use of peat in our own grown plants.

2025



Our Promise

We started Crocus because we wanted to make access to the largest and most interesting selection of plants as easy as possible for people. We know that our sustainability goals will only help us to deliver this ambition, at a higher quality and lower cost to the planet. We promise to push ourselves every year to continue to do better and do more. We will continue to keep our customers up to date on our progress, as well as releasing a report to the wider community every year.

Thank you

***C*ROCUS**