



crocus

Sustainability Report
— January 2023 —

www.crocus.co.uk

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Introduction to Crocus

At Crocus, plants are our lifeblood, and, like all gardeners, we are enriched and invigorated every day we work with them. Our aim is that everything we grow on the nursery should be good enough to appear in one of our Gold Medal gardens at Chelsea. That way we can feel sure that when you open the box - you are greeting the star of your show!

But quality must not mean compromise. We want you to know that we have done everything we can to grow your plant in a sustainable way. That means we have worried about the packaging it comes in, the pot that contains it, the water that nourished it, the soil we have used and the distance it has travelled.

We don't pretend to be perfect. There is a lot more we would like to do. But every year we make progress. Here are a few examples of what we have achieved - and some of the targets we have signed up to.

The CROCUS Team

Our nursery's impact

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What we've done so far to improve our nursery



We've removed all neonicotinoids

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



Our peat free trials are going well

By 2024 all of the plants from
our propagation unit will be
grown in a peat free mix.



We're no.1 for pollinator plants

We offer the largest choice
on the market for pollinator
friendly plants.

Welcome to our nursery

Our Crocus nursery is based in Surrey where we look after over 6,500 different plant varieties. With so many plants to care for, any small change we make can have a really meaningful impact.

Our nursery manager, James, has been at the forefront of implementing some really exciting developments to make our nursery run as effectively and sustainably as possible.

By this year we will have grown 1 million plants from our on site propagation unit

One of the most important changes has been the improvement of our propagation unit. It's quite the operation now, and by this year we will have grown over 1 million plants from the unit.

By growing more of our own plants we can help reduce the carbon

footprint of every order, whilst also reducing the risk of importing any unwanted diseases.

Investing in our propagation unit will also give us new opportunities to grow a more diverse and interesting range of plants, continuing to give you the widest selection of plants on the market.

Where we can't grow our own plants, we are committed to finding UK growing partners. Currently 70% of our plants are grown in the UK. Over the next two years we hope to improve on this and we will share growing targets later this year.



Our policy on peat

We are committed to removing peat from the plants that we grow ourselves by 2024. Over the last few years we have been conducting trials across different seasons and plants to ensure we meet this target.

Last year we managed to conduct a successful trial that saw us reduce the amount of peat in our mixes by 50%. As a result, all the plants that we supply from our propagation unit in 2023 will be grown with 50% less peat in their mixes.

By 2024 all of the plants from our propagation unit will be grown in a 100% peat free mix

We are currently conducting trials of a 100% peat free mix, so that by 2024 we will be only potting plants in peat free mix. This is a year ahead of our original goal of 2025.

In the meantime, we will continue to work with our

suppliers to either reduce or remove peat within their mixes, and work with those who actively do so.

Peat free compost

We removed all peat-containing packaged compost in Spring 2022. We will continue to increase the range of bagged peat free compost in our portfolio.



Sustainable management

As a working nursery dealing with live plants we are often faced with pests and natural diseases. Where possible, our first tools used to deal with any issues are always cultural or biological solutions such as natural predators. Throughout the growing season we release thousands of microscopic predators to help tackle a range of pests which allows us to massively reduce our application of traditional synthetic pesticides. For example, we use a predatory mite, *Phytoseiulus persimilis* to tackle two spotted spider mites and release parasitic wasps (*Aphidius colemani*) in order to control populations of aphids.



This approach is based on an ethos termed Integrated Pest Management or IPM. By following these practices we have stopped the use of broad spectrum pesticides such as neonicotinoids that can be harmful to non-target species. We believe that by managing our production holistically we are actively ensuring the long term sustainability of future production and the wider environment we operate.

Alongside this we have removed all products from our website containing glyphosate, whilst also increasing our offering of organic and natural pest and weed control products.

Composting bays

Last year we built three composting bays on our nursery to collect any waste plant material. As a large nursery it was quite the operation to build something that would hold all our waste material - and the resulting bays cover the size of a small football pitch! Over time, and with the right care, we hope that this waste material will be turned into compost that we can re-use across projects. Making your own compost is one of the best things that you can do for your garden and health of your soil. Discover our composting range at crocus.co.uk/products

Reducing waste & water impact

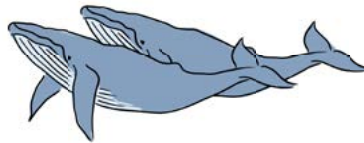
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What we've done so far to reduce water & waste



We've nearly doubled the size of our reservoir

We hope that during the 2023 growing season we will be self-sufficient for our water needs



We recycle 90% of waste generated by us

Where we can't reduce what we use, we have a recycling programme. Every year we recycle the weight of three humpback whales!



We've switched to brown paper packaging

Cutting our use of recyclable plastic down by 3.77 tonnes every year for the packaging of our plants.

Improving our packaging

Over the last year we've been focusing on how we can improve any packaging that we use in our nursery to protect your plants, with a particular focus on removing plastic.

So far we have replaced all of our recyclable plastic packaging with brown paper and paper tape - cutting our use of recyclable plastic down by 3.77 tonnes per year. All of our cardboard and paper packaging is FSC certified, with 70% of our cardboard packaging being made from recycled materials.

We now only use plastic packaging where absolutely necessary and always for the protection of your plant. When we do use plastic, it is always made from recycled materials all of which can be recycled.

For plants and products from our suppliers, reducing the amount of plastic in the packaging is a challenge as we have little control over how they are originally packaged.



However, we are working with suppliers to find solutions, and prioritising those who actively choose to do so.

*We have replaced
recyclable plastic
sheets with brown
paper and tape*

Our next main focus is to find a plastic free solution for our recyclable blister packs which are used to protect our 9cm plants. As we have been unable to find an alternative

plastic free 'off-the-shelf' solution, we are in the process of creating and testing our own packaging solution. Our goal this year is to reduce the amount of plastic in these blister packs by 60%, and in the long term be plastic free.

Our Crocus Collection products are designed in-house by our designer, and passionate gardener, Julia. They are made with the best quality and to the highest standard, and we are constantly reviewing and reducing our plastic in how the products are packaged.

Recyclable plastic pots

For plants that we grow on site in our propagation unit, we only use recyclable taupe pots. All of which are made from recycled materials and can be recycled by you.

Whilst all pots from our suppliers are made

from recycled materials, unfortunately most cannot currently be recycled at your kerbside recycling bin.

Pots that you can't recycle at home will be black, whilst all other colours you can recycle at your kerbside. Although we recommend checking with your council first.

To help you reduce your waste, we've introduced our own Crocus Pot Back scheme at our Dorney Court cafe and garden. Here you can return any black plastic pots from our suppliers and we will recycle them for you. Find out more and plan your visit at www.crocus.co.uk/dorney-court

Which pots can be recycled?



Packaging free deliveries

During Covid we established our own Crocus van delivery service. For these orders we use no packaging at all! So far this has helped

us save 77 tonnes of paper and 17 tonnes of recyclable plastic.

We are looking to expand our delivery service so that a quarter of our deliveries by revenue is sent out with zero packaging.



Improving waste management

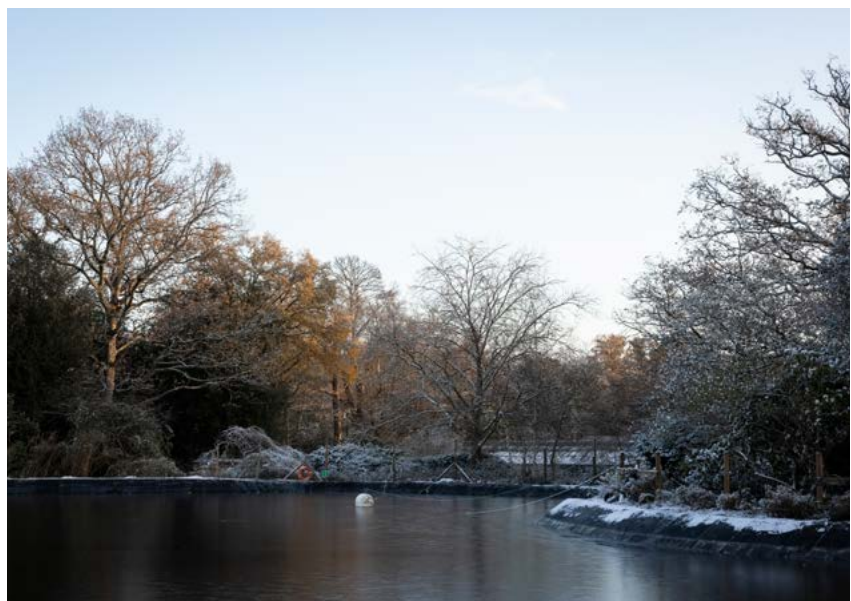
Where we can't reduce the amount of waste we create we are working with partners to ensure it is properly recycled. This includes plastic pots, trays, crates, cardboards and plastic. Last year we recycled 65 tonnes of waste from our nursery, which means 90% of waste generated by us is recycled.

Reducing water

In 2011 we started recycling the water off our buildings, polytunnels and standing out areas into our reservoir. We then collect this rainwater and use it to water our plants.

90% of waste generated on our nursery by us is recycled

Due to last year's drought we have decided to enlarge the reservoir further, so that it is nearly doubled in size. This will mean that we should be self-sufficient for our water needs.



Tackling climate change

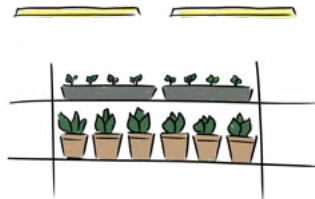
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What we've done so far to tackle climate change



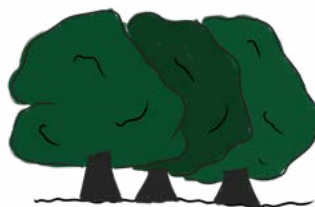
We're measuring our carbon footprint

To create a suitable offsetting strategy, with the overarching goal of becoming carbon neutral.



We always source first from the UK

70% of our plants are UK grown. We are working hard to improve on this dramatically over the next few years.



We planted 2,000 trees

Early last year we grew our own mini Crocus forest to protect an ecosystem threatened by ash dieback.



Planting our own Crocus forest

Ash dieback is a serious threat to both the look of our UK countryside, and the ecosystem. At the start of last year we worked with conservation experts to replace a woodland in Leicestershire that was likely to be lost due to the disease.

In order to build a resilient and sustainable ecosystem, we planted a mixture of species which included Oak, Hornbeam, Wild Service, Wild Cherry and Rowan. All of which were chosen to create a diverse structure and habitat which was also drought tolerant.

We will continue to work with our chosen conservation experts to ensure the health of our newly planted forest and the benefit it brings to the surrounding environment. Planting a tree is a brilliant way to create a rich ecosystem in your garden, discover more at [crocus.co.uk/plants/_/trees](https://www.crocus.co.uk/plants/_/trees)

Measuring our carbon footprint

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



Championing employees

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What we've done so far to champion employees



We raised £10,000 for Ukraine

To help with Ukraine's appeal our team drove a van of necessary and requested supplies to the Ukraine border.



We're from around

We have many different nationalities working at Crocus, from Poland to India to Australia.



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 faces a challenge of attracting young talent. As a twenty year old nursery we have a lot of knowledge and experience to share.

We have established our own Crocus Apprenticeship scheme to encourage younger professionals into the industry

To help combat this, we have set up our own Crocus Apprenticeship scheme. The goal of the scheme is to encourage young professionals into horticulture and formalise a thorough training process. The scheme is a two year programme, at the end of which the graduates will have a broad understanding of nursery management and plant knowledge.

So far we have taken on four apprentices who are being trained at our nursery in Sunningdale.



One of our apprentices, Donne, has won the 6-pack award with the IPPS. They will be sponsoring her presence at their annual conference which looks at the latest technology in sustainable horticultural production.

Improving diversity and inclusion

We welcome colleagues from around the world employing people from

no less than 18 countries. Our people strategy is to ensure our people practices are open and fair, and welcoming of people from all walks of life.

Last year we appointed two Mental Health First Aiders who will help champion wellbeing across all areas of the business. But particularly focused on recruitment, training and wellbeing activities.

Supporting Ukraine

Events in Ukraine have touched us all. Many of us working at Crocus have families living in Poland where millions of refugees have fled to avoid the conflict.

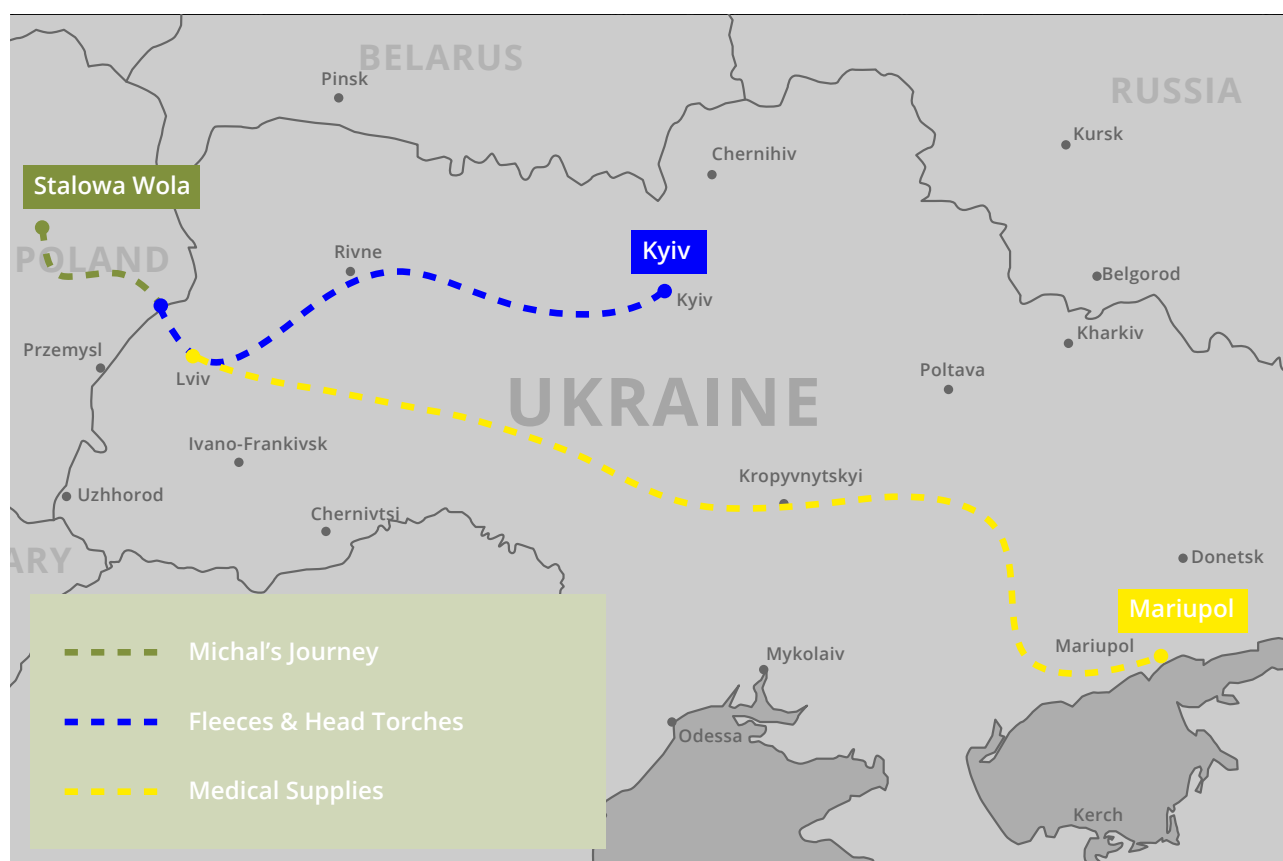
To help support Ukraine we raised £10,000 to purchase supplies. We were advised by agencies on the ground as to what

was needed most which included medical supplies, fleeces and torches. The challenge was how to get this support to where it was needed most quickly and efficiently.

Michal Sikora, who every day plans the routes for our van deliveries, lives in Stalowa Wola which is 30 minutes from the border near Lviv.

Michal purchased the much needed supplies for us, and drove to Hrebenne where he met the charity that would take them on to Kyiv and Mariupol.

We have received some heart-warming feedback and are still collecting more donations to continue our support. Every pound we are given we are matching as a company.



Supporting suppliers

CROCUS

Working with suppliers

We are proud of the relationships that we have built with our suppliers over the twenty years of our business. Through the use of audits we are working to better understand their business models and the impact our relationship with them has on the environment.

Through the use of annual audits we are working together with our suppliers to be better businesses

Over the past year we've been increasingly working with UK suppliers or those who take sustainability very seriously.

As a business we only want to work with other businesses who have the highest standards of social and environmental practices. We will phase out working with suppliers who do not show improvement over time through the use of annual audits that started 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 carry on 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.

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

Thank you for taking the time to read our report, if you have any further questions we're always happy to hear from you.

Please contact us via our website at crocus.co.uk/contact/ and our team will be in touch.

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