



CROCUS

Sustainability Report
— March 2024 —

Edition 3

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 traveled.

We don't pretend to be perfect. There is a lot more we would like to do. But every year we make progress. This is our third Sustainability Report and covers changes we made in 2023 and our goals for 2024. Last year was a particularly exciting time because we became the first online gardening brand to be awarded Plant Healthy, we moved to a peat free potting mix for plants we grow ourselves and we became self-sufficient for our water needs. We hope you enjoy reading this report and discover a bit more about life at our nursery and our targets for the future.

The CROCUS Team

Our nursery's impact

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Changes we made to our nursery last year



We're Plant Healthy certified

We're the first online nursery
in the UK to be Plant Healthy.



We've grown over 1 million plants

All from our on site Propagation
Unit on our nursery in Surrey.



We're peat free for plants we grow

From the summer of 2023 we've
been potting into a peat free mix.

Welcome to our nursery

Everything we do in our garden has an impact on the environment. With over 7,000 different plant varieties to care for at our nursery in Surrey, any small change that we make can have a really meaningful impact. We know we still have further to go, but we're excited to share with you the changes we've made in 2023 and the goals we have for 2024.

The first online gardening brand to achieve Plant Healthy

In 2023 we became the first online nursery to be awarded Plant Healthy certification. No mean feat, this DEFRA-backed accreditation is only given to growers who have been rigorously assessed over many months by an independent team, and shown to maintain the highest standards of plant health and biosecurity. Achieving Plant Healthy means that our customers can rest assured that we've done everything we can to



keep their plants pest and disease free.

Our Plant Healthy seal of approval will be reviewed every year, but we're committed to maintaining our top-level ranking. Therefore the practices they promote (like walking through the nursery every morning to check

for potential pests and diseases, and ensuring full traceability for every plant we sell), have now become part of our crews daily life.

Growing 1 million plants from our Propagation Unit

Over the last few years we've been investing in

our on site Propagation Unit, where our team work tirelessly throughout the year to take cuttings, sow seeds and pot on plugs. In 2023 we grew over 1 million plants and our goal for 2024 is to improve this even further. By growing more plants ourselves we can ensure better biosecurity and have greater control over how our plants are cared for and packaged. For instance, all of our own plants are now potted into recyclable taupe pots and grown in a peat free mix (more on that later).

1.1 million plants grown by our team

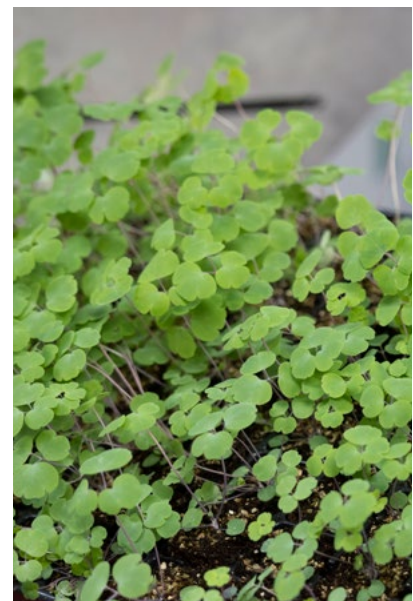
For our Chelsea Flower Show 2023 Garden designed by Sarah Price our Crocus apprentice Holly collected seed from annuals used in our 2022 Show Garden to sow and grow on our nursery. These included *Eschscholzia californica* 'Ivory Castle', *Linaria* and many more. By growing more plants ourselves we have a greater ability to explore different varieties and bring the best



trends of Chelsea to our customers.

Peat free mixes for plants we grow

We are committed to removing peat from our supply chain and have been working over the last few years to find a peat free mix. After extensive trials over different



seasons and plants we have found a solution which we know will help establish our plants to be strong and healthy.

Since the summer of 2023 all plants grown in our Propagation Unit have been potted into this peat free mix, a year ahead of our original target of 2024. From now on, all plants we grow ourselves will be potted into a 100% a peat free mix.

Unfortunately, whilst we have made this change, some plugs from our suppliers will contain a small amount of peat in their growing mix. We are trying to find alternative peat-free plug suppliers and hope to do so soon.

Peat in plants from our suppliers

Where we can't grow plants ourselves we work with a number of excellent suppliers. Our policy is to always favour a peat-free supplier where possible and reasonable to do so. We estimate that in 2022-2023 approximately 60% of our plants were peat free. Our goal for 2024 is that 80% of our plants will



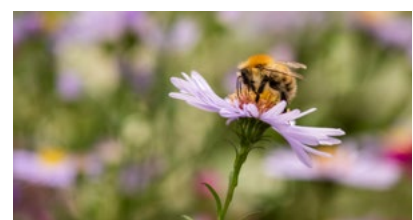
be peat free. Ultimately, our aim is to be peat free for 'garden ready' plants by 2026, as in line with the UK's government's agenda.

Sustainable pest & disease management

As a working nursery dealing with live plants we are often faced with pests and natural diseases. We prefer to grow our plants as holistically as possible, so we've adopted an integrated pest management scheme (or IPM). In a nutshell, this means that when faced with a potential pest or disease, our first course of action will be

to look for a cultural or biological solution.

For example, in order to keep aphid numbers down, we regularly release parasitic wasps (*Aphidius colemani*) around our most susceptible plants throughout the growing season. This practice has allowed us to massively reduce the use of traditional synthetic pesticides, while completely putting a stop to the use of broad spectrum pesticides.



Reducing waste & water impact

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Changes we made to reduce water & waste last year



We collect 7 million litres of water

By expanding our reservoir we are now self-sufficient for our nursery's watering needs.



We recycle 90% of our recyclable waste

Including plastic pots, trays, crates, cardboards and plastic.



We recycled 80 tonnes of green waste

By collecting any plant waste material on our nursery we've created our own compost.

Recycling waste & water impact

Reducing our impact is not just about changing how we grow, but also thinking about what we can reuse and recycle. From switching to brown paper packaging to starting our own composting bays we're looking at every element of our nursery's workflow to reduce and improve our waste management.

Recycling rain-water for our plants

With thousands of plants on our nursery our team are faced with a very significant watering task, particularly during the summer months. To reduce the impact of our water needs we built our own reservoir in 2020 with the hope of becoming self-sufficient.

Every year we collect 7 million litres of rain-water, which we recycle, to water our plants with

Our reservoir collects run-off rainwater from our



nursery buildings which we then filter, store and re-use to water our plants. Once we've watered our plants, we then capture the run-off water again which goes back into the reservoir for us to recycle again.

Over the years we've had to expand our reservoir and it can now hold up to 7 million litres of water. For the first time in 2023 we were completely self-sufficient for our water needs on our nursery and hope to continue to be so.

Recycling green waste

Due to our nursery team cutting back our plants or potting them on we often have lots of green waste material in the form of plants and soil. In 2021 we built three industrial sized composting bays to collect our green waste and turn this into compost.

Every year this is rotated, sieved and eventually turned into compost. We have been recycling

this compost for various landscaping projects and topping up plants before we send them out for delivery.

2023 was the first year our compost was ready and we were so happy with the quality that we even used it in our two Gold Medal Gardens at RHS Chelsea Flower Show last summer for designers Sarah Price and Cleve West. We saved 80 tonnes of green waste material going to landfill last year by turning it into composting and re-using it; the equivalent weight of eight humpback whales!

Recycling all other waste

Where we can't reduce or reuse our waste on the

nursery we are working with recycling partners to ensure it is properly recycled. In 2022-23 we recycled 90% of waste generated by us on the nursery that could be recycled. This includes plastic pots, trays, crates, cardboards and plastic. For next year we aim to recycle 95% of waste generated by us on site by improving training for staff and managers on recycling.

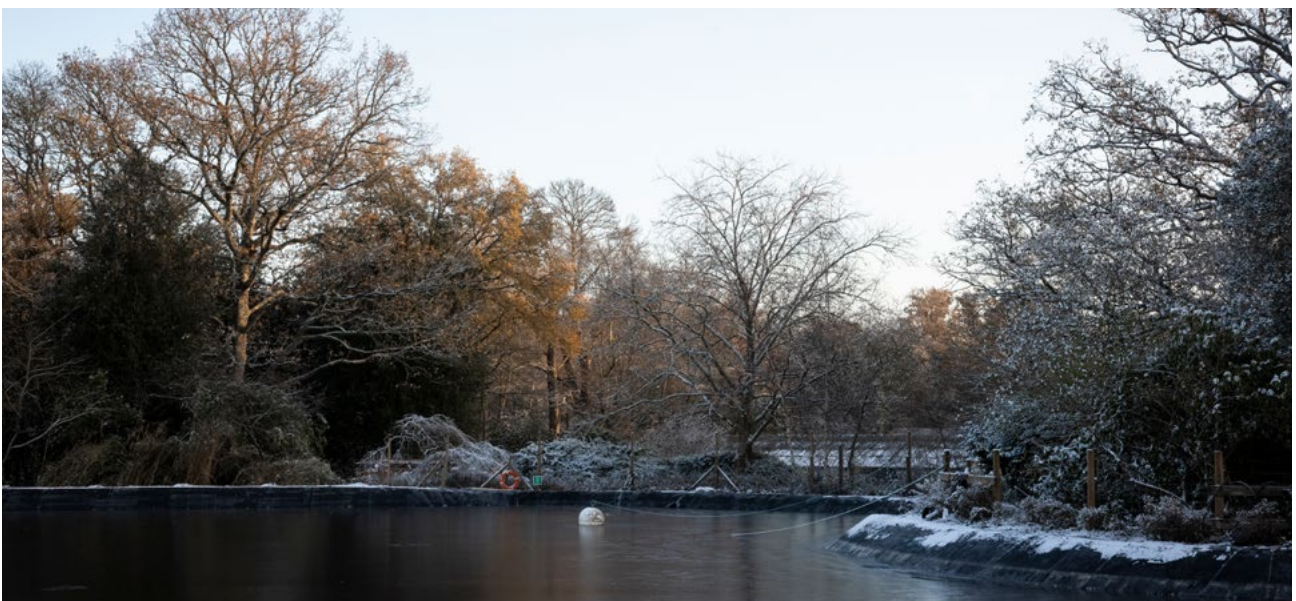
Reducing our packaging

At Crocus, all our plants are hand-picked, watered and double-checked before they leave us. Large orders, or those that are local to our nursery, are delivered

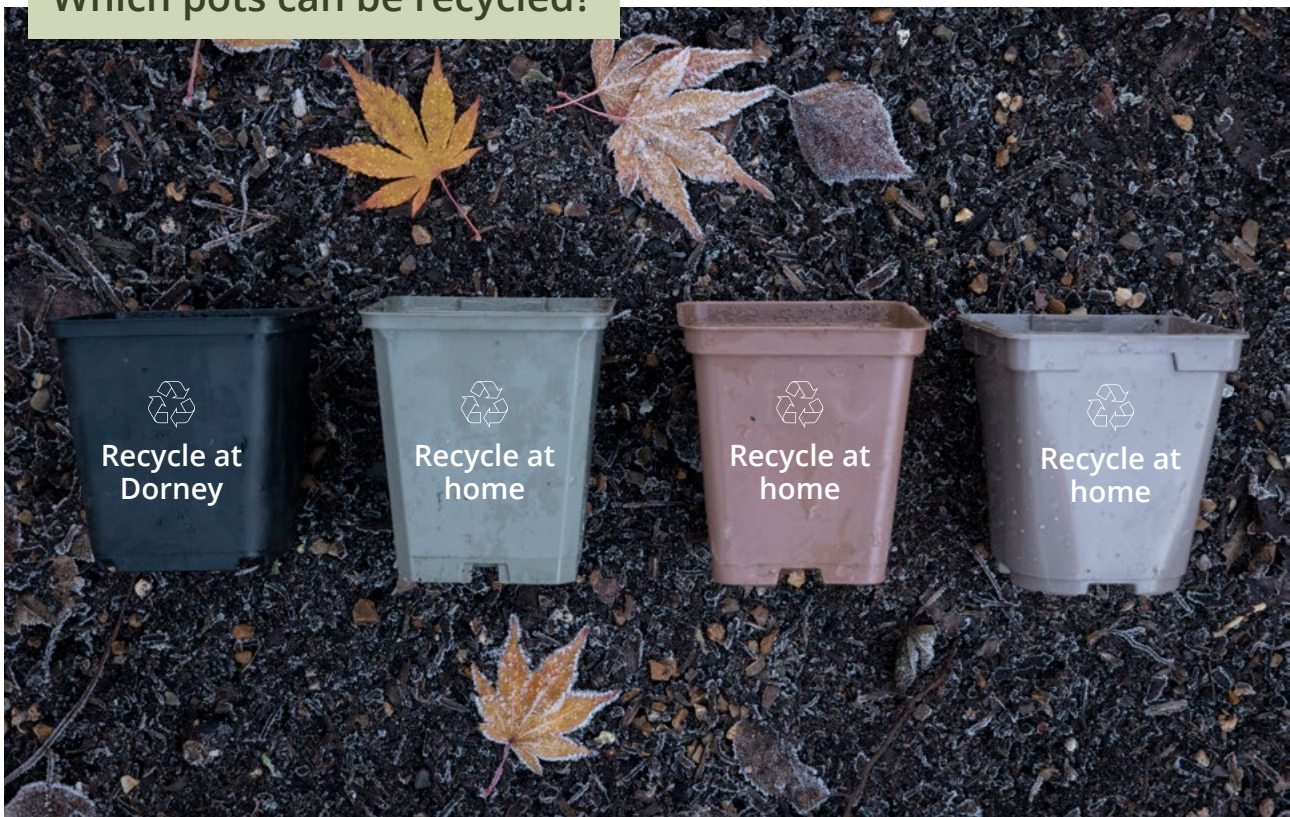
by our own team, and these are sent out with no packaging at all.

We recycled 80 tonnes of green waste material

For plant orders travelling further afield, we've designed our own cardboard boxes (made from FSC cardboard and 70% recycled materials) that keep plants snug and safe. We've also started shredding old cardboard boxes and re-using them for further protection for our plants. By replacing our recyclable plastic packaging with brown paper and paper tape we've cut our plastic down by 3.77 tonnes per year.



Which pots can be recycled?



We now only use plastic packaging where absolutely necessary and always for the protection of your plant. This is mainly in the form of blister packs to protect our 9cm plants which are all made from recycled plastic materials and can be recycled at home.

Over the last few years we have been trying to find a plastic-free solution, even conducting trials to invent our own cardboard alternative. We haven't found a solution yet, but are continuing to explore

options. However, in 2023 we have reduced the size of these blister packs by 50% and will continue to search the market for a viable alternative.

Recyclable plastic pots

For plants that we grow on site in our Propagation Unit we only use recyclable taupe pots - easily identified because they are not black. Our pots are made from recycled materials and can be recycled by you. Whilst all pots from our suppliers

are made from recycled materials, unfortunately black pots cannot currently be recycled at your kerbside recycling bin.

To help you with these black pots, 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

Reducing plastic packaging for products

We are working hard to apply the same process of improving our packaging that we have applied to plants to products in 2024. For our own Crocus

Collection product range we are trialling more ecological packaging solutions and we hope to update all plastic packaging over the next two years by the end of 2025.

Through the use of annual

Supplier Surveys we aim to understand our product suppliers' approach to packaging and sustainability in general, and work only with those who show willingness to reduce the amount of unnecessary plastic in their packaging.



Reducing plastic in our products

When adding new lines to our range, if any product contains plastic we will ensure that the use of this item is not single use, and the item is of a

quality that the item can be used for many years to come without the need for replacement. We will always select items made from recycled plastic over those which are not.

With the exception

of some small parts, we do not use plastic in our Crocus Collection range. Solutions to replace the small plastic parts that we do use, such as rubber feet, are planned to be implemented by the end of 2024.

Tackling climate change

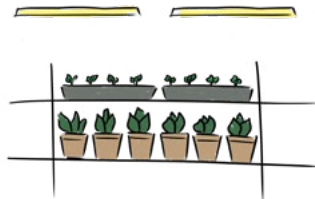
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Changes we made to tackle climate change last year



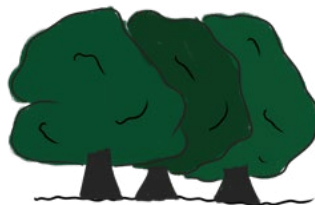
All our buggies are electric

Meaning our plant picking is powered with green energy.



73% of plants were UK grown

Our goal is to increase this to 80% next year.



2,000 trees planted

We planted our own Crocus forest in 2022 and continue to invest in its care.



Investing in UK grown plants

Where we can't grow plants ourselves in our Propagation Unit we have an excellent number of nurseries we work with who start the plants off and which we then grow on at our nursery. To help reduce the number of miles travelled for each plant we will always choose a UK plant supplier where possible.

In 2022 73% of our plants were UK grown.

In 2022-2023 we estimate that 73% of our plants

were UK grown, with 27% coming from European suppliers. Our goal for 2024 is that 80% of plants will be UK grown, a target reflective of all plants including houseplants, bulbs and seeds.

Our Carbon Footprint

Last year we measured our carbon footprint and are implementing a suitable offsetting strategy, with the overarching goal of becoming carbon neutral. In the meantime we have been investing in our own Crocus forest in Leicestershire, planting and protecting a mixture of species which included

Oak, Hornbeam, Wild Service, and Wild Cherry.

We aim to only sell products which are FSC rated in order to protect our environment. By July 2024 all products containing wood will be FSC rated.





Championing employees

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What we've done so far to champion employees



We've raised £16,746.91 for charity since 2021

Which has gone to support local charities and Ukraine.



We're from around the world

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



Our first 2 Crocus graduates

We've created a two year Crocus Apprentice Scheme to help young people into horticulture.

Our own apprentice graduates

Two years ago we set up our own Crocus Apprenticeship Scheme where every year we take on apprentices to participate in a two year programme. The goal of the scheme is to encourage young professionals into horticulture and formalise a thorough training process.

We have established a Crocus Apprenticeship scheme to encourage younger professionals into horticulture



In September 2023 we are delighted to congratulate our first graduates, Donne and Callum. Callum is now a permanent member of the prop team and is playing a great role in the maintenance of our crops and expanding his spraying responsibilities. Whilst Donne has recently been promoted to the role of Production Assistant, overseeing the prop team and managing the processes of producing our plants.

Improving Diversity & 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.

In 2021 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 charities

Since 2021 we have raised £16,746.91 for charity through our staff product and plant sales. The majority of this fundraising went to support Ukraine, but we have also raised money for a more local charity.



Supporting suppliers

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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/](https://www.crocus.co.uk/contact/) and our team will be in touch.

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