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Conference VIVUS – Environmentalism, Agriculture, Horticulture, Food Production and Processing

»KNOWLEDGE AND EXPERIENCE FOR NEW ENTREPRENEURIAL OPPORTUNITIES«

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Developing entrepreneurial activities in horticulture and creating opportunity while studying for a degree at the University of Glasgow/ SRUC

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Abstract

Studies at SRUC have shown that extra-curricular opportunities lead to enhanced career development. This paper demonstrates several facets of this activity. Firstly, show gardens were constructed at the Chelsea Flower Show and at the Gardening Scotland Show. This led to awards of a Silver Gilt Medal at Chelsea and a Gold medal at Gardening Scotland. This student led activity resulted in the Best Garden in the Show award at Gardening Scotland beating all of the professional exhibits. Subsequently Matthew Lowe won the 'Star of the Future' award, a national UK award sponsored by Westland Horticulture for industry contributions. The paper also focuses on practical aspects of SRUC horticultural education leading to enhanced student opportunity.

Key words: ornamental plants, gardening, professional exhibits

Introduction

Scotland's Rural College has developed interactive learning within the Horticulture and Garden Design programmes to facilitate 'student ownership' of the learning experience. Where possible we encourage practical activity, debate / discussion and particularly interaction professional horticulture. We aim for our students to compete at a professional level because we believe that they will be the leaders of the future. The change in focus to food production and environment on a global scale ensures that our students will be at the vanguard of issues facing the world currently. This project is reported as a series of activities which led to enhanced student development. There were five types of activity.

1. Over the last five years students have been encouraged to build gardens at prestigious garden shows. This has enabled the development of confidence, professionalism and enhanced career prospects.
2. Entry of students for The Young Horticulturist of the Year Competition. This is a National UK competition.
3. Participation in an event 'Valuing horticulture in Scotland'.
4. Participation in the Scotland Horticultural Careers Event.
5. Work experience.

Materials and Methods

Activity 1 - Show Garden Construction

Each year a student competition was held where the students were asked to design a garden and include costings, constructional details, planting plans and financial procurement. The students each presented their plans to their student colleagues and to staff of the Horticulture and Garden Design group. Each attendee then voted and the gardens were ranked. First ranking was the garden built although in some years more than one garden was built. The group then formed teams for different elements of the work (e.g. fundraising, hard landscaping, soft landscaping, publicity) and the process (taking one year) included growing plants. The students were given control of greenhouse space, outdoor areas and workshops. Where appropriate, special training was given (e.g. dry stone walling and health and safety). The gardens were then judged by a professional judging panel at an appropriate show against professional standards. The gardens received awards including bronze, silver, silver gilt, gold and Best Garden in Show. Financial awards were also gained (The Royal Horticultural Society, 2012).

Activity 2 - Young Horticulturist of the Year Competition

This is a National UK competition sponsored by our professional institute –The Institute of Horticulture (SRUC News, 2013a). Regional competitions were held where students were asked to identify plants, name diseases and disorders, identify equipment and answer questions including history of gardens and in the science of horticulture. The events started with individual groups and classes around the UK having local competitions. The winners went forward to finals held with a live audience at a horticultural venue of importance and including food and education components.

Activity 3 - Valuing Horticulture in Scotland

Several students were invited to join a group of 40 professional horticulturists and garden designers to participate in a workshop to help determine the value of horticulture to the Scottish nation (SRUC News, 2013b).

Activity 4 - Scotland Horticultural Careers Event

A Scotland wide event was organized to promote horticulture with 150 attendees. The event focused on career opportunities with a series of lectures where practicing horticulturists described their careers to date. The event was centred on student participation and concluded with specialist workshops representing different sectors of horticulture (SRUC News, 2013c).

Activity 5 – Work experience

SRUC students were encouraged to undertake work experience. All horticulture students were required to take a minimum of 1 day per week outside work experience as part of their qualification. The College has helped many of these students find good and varied employment while other students have sought their own employers. The Westland Star of the Future award results from an employer nomination of an outstanding candidate which then led to a UK National

ceremony for one UK award. As a measure of the status of this award it received a full page coverage in our national professional journal (Horticulture Week) highlighting the accomplishments of this year's winner (SRUC News, 2013d).

Results

Activity 1 - Show Garden Construction (2012, the Royal Horticultural Society)

The construction of show gardens has resulted in numerous awards (Table 1 and Table 2).

Table 1: Previous gardens constructed (15) in past 5 years

	Event	Number of Gardens	Medal awarded
	Chelsea Flower Show	2 gardens	Silver Medal, Silver Gilt Medal
	Gardening Scotland	12 gardens	Bronze, Silver, Silver Gilt and Gold Medals

Table 2: Show Gardens 2012 and 2013

Year	Event	Theme	Award
2012	Chelsea Flower Show	Plant Explorers Garden	Silver Gilt Medal
	Gardening Scotland	Cornucopia Garden	Silver Gilt Medal
	Gardening Scotland	Plant Explorers Garden	Gold Medal
	Gardening Scotland	Plant Explorers Garden	Best Garden in Show Award
2013	Hampton Court Flower Show	Witches of Macbeth	Under construction
	Gardening Scotland	Witches of Macbeth	Under construction
	Gardening Scotland	Plus 3 other gardens	Under construction



Plate 1: The team at Gardening Scotland with the Plant Collectors Garden



Plate 2: The Plant Explorers Garden at the Chelsea Flower Show 2012



Plate 3: Visitors to The Chelsea Flower Show viewing the Plant Explorers Garden

The construction of the Plant Explorers Garden received major acclaim and significant television and media coverage (Plates 1, 2 and 3).

Activity 2 - Young Horticulturist of the Year Competition (SRUC News, 2013a)

The Young Horticulturist of the Year Competition was so successful that the four Scottish finalists were all from Scotland's Rural College and therefore produced Scotland's national winner (Sara Perzley) (Table 3 and Plate 4).

Table 3: The Scottish finals of the Young Horticulturist of the Year Competition (all finalists from Scotland's Rural College)

Contestant	SRUC Programme	Position
Matthew Lowe	BSc (Hons) Horticulture	Second
Sara Perzley	BSc (Hons) Horticulture with Plantsmanship	First
Marc Roberts	Higher National Diploma Horticulture	Third
Alistair Scott	National Certificate Horticulture	Fourth



Plate 4: The finalists for Young Horticulturist of Year Competition at Glasgow Botanical Garden 2013 (Picture caption (L-R): Matthew Lowe, Alistair Scott, Sara Perzley, Marc Roberts ponder while Will Ritchie selects plants for identification.)

Activity 3 - Valuing horticulture in Scotland (SRUC News, 2013b)

Valuing Scotland's Horticulture was attended by 50 professional horticulturists and has formed stage 1 of the process to determine the significance of horticulture to the Scottish economy (Plate 5).



Plate 5: One of the small workshops during a break out session of 'Valuing Scotland's Horticulture'

Activity 4 - Scotland Horticultural Careers Event (SRUC News, 2013c)

Scotland's Horticultural Careers Event attracted 150 participants which resulted in greater cohesion for the horticultural industry in Scotland (Plate 6).



Plate 6: Horticultural Careers Event with 150 participants at Scotland's Rural College 2013

Activity 5 – Work Experience (Westland Star of the Future Award SRUC News, 2013d)
The ‘Star of The Future Award’ UK National competition was won by Scotland’s Rural College student Matthew Lowe (Plate 7.)



Plate 7: Westland Star of the Future Award winner Matthew Lowe

Discussion

A clear link has been established between added value and student ownership of the horticulture and garden design programmes at Scotland’s Rural College and career success. The vital requirement is that these added value activities are at a professional level and in conjunction with the industry and at the highest level. To date, students who have undertaken these value added programmes have enjoyed a 100% success rate in employment in horticulture and garden design after graduation.

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