

# CALU Nursery Stock Workshop

## Talgoed Nurseries, Conwy Valley

### 6<sup>th</sup> February 2008

#### Morning session

Talgoed Nursery is situated two miles east of Llandudno on the A470 in the Conwy Valley. The enterprise combines a garden centre, café, nursery and pick your own. The current owners bought the nursery 15 years ago, starting initially as a pick your own and ornamental business. The workshop was split in two sessions. The morning session covered the management issues of growing and planting; the afternoon session was concerned with the marketing side of the business.

Generally speaking, the approximately six hectares the nursery occupies are on deep fertile, clay soils up to 2 meter deep and will grow, provided the drainage is good, virtually everything. All of these soils are on somewhat sloping terrain.



Christmas tree field

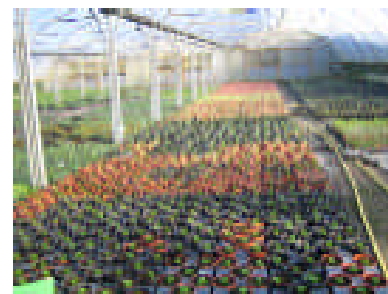
#### Christmas trees

Talgoed Nursery started growing Christmas trees about 6 years ago. Due to their keepability and appearance 4 year old (2+2) noble fir (*Abies procera*) plants were planted by hand. Pruning is essential to ensure the right shape. With 5 to 7 years they are ready to sell either in pots or as standard Christmas trees. Especially after planting

the tips of the trees and the bark are very susceptible to rabbits. Fencing this area would help prevent rabbit damage. Also *Phytophthora* spp. can, due to the soft ground, cause problems. Once infected with the disease, the trees turn brown and die. These trees, together with their roots, need to be removed and are burned to prevent the pathogen spreading through the ground water.

### Multi span tunnels

Talgoed Nursery has a 3 span tunnel with netting on the bottom. This design enhances air movement and hence does not get overly heated during hot days. These tunnels store a small amount of plants which did not get sold in the last season, but mainly host hardy crops which were planted last autumn and will be ready for sale this March. The potted plants are placed on Mypex sheets (woven polyethylene) in trays. John, the assistant manager of the nursery promoted this method as it makes it easy to calculate how many plants will fit on the space available.



Multi span tunnels

As is visible in the picture, water hoses are used for watering by hand. As there is a mixed species composition and species with different ages in the tunnels, the different water requirements can be easily met by the member of staff operating the hose pipes.

### Shuttle trays

Talgoed Nurseries use mainly trays with pots for their plants. These trays are available in different sizes and with different numbers of pots in. Using this system has some clear advantages but also some things to consider:

- Putting the pots in the trays has an extra drainage impact on the soils in the pots
- It is easy to work out the number per plants per available space
- Potting machines can be used for different module sizes

- It is less effort to move a tray of several pots than to handle the same number of pots individually
- Different species on one tray can make management more difficult as they have different management requirements



**Potting machine**

### **Poly tunnels**

One poly tunnel is used for over wintering of plants. On the day of the visit, it mainly contained tunnel grown rhubarb from the Netherlands. These rhubarbs are sold in pots with colourful labels comprising a picture of the ready product. This method of promotion enables the product to be sold without being ready. A strategy which is also often used for tomatoes or other vegetables in pots.

The poly tunnels also host ornamental pots with an attractively arranged flower composition. This is a way of adding value to plants which cannot be sold alone.



**Ornamental flower**



**Rhubarb in pots**

## Glasshouses



**Talgoed glasshouses**



**Primulas on movable benches**

With Mother's day approaching soon and Easter following not long after, the greenhouse was mainly occupied with primulas. The plants were bought in as plugs on module trays, propagated last July and will be ready for the events mentioned above. The plants sit on watered mats on movable benches. This system encourages air movement and requires less space for the isles hence more space for plants.

There is a liquid feeding system to apply the required feed via the overhead watering system. If a water tank is installed within the glasshouse, a cover is needed to avoid weed seeds being spread via the irrigation system.

A heating system (which can also act as a cooling system) is also in place. The climate regulation is vital for the successful growing of plants in a glasshouse but rising fuel prices also have consequences on plant prices.

Double cropping takes place in the glasshouse from time to time as hanging flower baskets are available at Talgoed and they are stored hanging down from the glasshouse roof whereas beds are used on the floor level.

## Plugs

At the morning of the event, plug trays from the propagator Florensis were delivered to the Talgoed production site. John used this opportunity to provide the attendees with some useful information:

The rosemary was delivered on trays with 180 plants each. These plants were grown from cuttings which explained the accurate even height of each individual. The trays have legs which ensure air movement underneath, encouraging the air pruning of roots. The cuttings are transplanted by hand, and watered after the process.

The prices for such trays vary according to the amount ordered and will be in the region of 4p to 10p per plug.

## Afternoon session – Marketing and Sales Strategy

The afternoon session took place in the indoor and outdoor area of the garden centre. When George Buckels bought the nurseries 15 years ago it was already established and he and his team had to work with the space and building arrangements as they were. Chris Creed, CALUs horticultural consultant pointed out the advantages and disadvantages of the layout of the centre and what to consider when the space available is limited. One area of concern, for example, is a display area behind the actual garden centre building. This area is currently used as a hardy plant display but is only accessible for costumers from one direction. As these “dead end” areas are not obvious for customers care must be taken what to display in them and how to make them as attractive as possible.

At the moment, the “impulse buy” section mainly consisting of a large variety of ornamental pots is located on one side of the main entry but as soon as planning permission is obtained, this area will be shifted to the “dead end” site.

The general entrance area is a display are for plants of the season, which included at the visit mainly bulb flowers and primulas.

Within the garden centre itself there is a wide range of plants; indoor and outdoor species are nicely displayed. As a special marketing feature, there is a variety of different seed potatoes next to the till available for growers.



### Outdoor display areas

Thanks to the staff from Talgoed Nurseries, especially the assistant manager John who gave a lot of advice and also encouragement for the attending growers, and Chris Creeds invaluable experience, the day was a real enrichment for the attendees.