

BACKGROUND NOTES

BACKGROUND INFORMATION ON:
**THE QUINTUS PARTNERSHIP AND
QUINTUS GARDEN CENTRE SALES**

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As it celebrates 10 years of ‘togetherness’, The Quintus Partnership’s success through cooperation carries an inspiring message for the UK industry.

The launch of Quintus Garden Centre Sales will allow thousands of independent retailers to benefit from the groundwork it has laid.

Out of adversity come the seeds of equal or greater opportunity

Many small specialist nurseries are finding it increasingly difficult to survive in today’s economic climate. Sadly each year, more and more of these close with the loss of great knowledge and experience from our industry.

This is not only concerning for the nurserymen whose livelihoods are at stake, but also for the retail sector whose feed of unusual, diverse, expertly produced product lines diminishes. And as the options decrease, so do the opportunities to capture the plant-buying public’s imagination.

The retail sector needs the specialist nurseries to survive, and the way for them to do so is by working together. European growers have been doing this for years and the timing is right for this principle to be embraced in the UK.

Since its formation in 1997, The Quintus Partnership has successfully demonstrated how cooperative working between smaller nurseries can result in being able to offer multiple retailers a competitive alternative to the larger wholesalers, keeping diversity of choice in quality products alive while ensuring the survival of the specialist nurseries whose expertise is so vital for the future of the industry.

As it celebrates 10 years, The Quintus Partnership launches a new streamlined system, Quintus Garden Centre Sales, which finally makes it feasible to offer smaller retailers access to its comprehensive range of quality stock with flexibility and convenience of ordering that could re-shape the future of the UK industry.

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The Quintus Partnership

The Quintus Partnership was formed in 1997 by 5 specialist companies who wanted to combat the squeeze on smaller nurseries caused by the retail sector undertaking rationalisation of its supplier base. With the multiples requiring each supplier to provide a wide range of products, smaller, more specialised growers found it difficult to compete. By working in a cooperative manner to combine knowledge and resources they developed a system to consolidate stock and provide a controlled and cost-effective supply route into large-scale UK retailers.

Now celebrating 10 years, the group has membership of 11 growers with turnover of £3.16 million which has consistently grown at 15% per year over the last 4 years.

Cooperation

The Quintus Partnership has achieved success through the enthusiasm, flexibility and professionalism of its members who, although operating as individual businesses, work very closely together to achieve the Group's objectives.

This combined organization of growers, technicians, designers, buyers and merchandisers are able to pool resources and operate as a "think-tank" to bring exciting product lines to the market while overcoming new challenges that present themselves.

Logistics

The sharing of ideas and resources has enabled The Quintus Partnership to reduce the escalating costs of production in the UK to a level where its growers have been able to compete not only on quality but also on price with the rest of Europe.

The group's geographical location in Lincolnshire is advantageous, having superb logistics services that operate daily to most regional distribution centres. Transport companies work closely with the group to give very cost effective collection from each nursery, avoiding the need for a central warehousing operation and its related costs. This enables a full service throughout the year to be offered to customers.

With environmental issues so prevalent in the minds of growers and consumers, The Quintus Partnership's distribution system contributes well to a "green" solution. Full lorries and efficient routing cuts the amount of road miles travelled, especially as the availability of competitively priced UK-grown product lessens the need for imports.

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The benefits to growers

The set up at The Quintus Partnership facilitates excellence and economy of scale by utilising the particular strengths of each member. Specialist growers can get on with specialist growing and those who excel at sales and marketing do so for the whole group. Regular group meetings give all the opportunity to share thoughts and information.

Grower contributions are used to cover running costs, ensuring maximum benefit for all. This means growers pay a percentage on sales rather than the full salary of a dedicated sales person. Cost savings are also to be made on administration, fax transmissions, transport and a presence at shows.

The Quintus structure operates legally as a commercial service agent meaning that that unlike a wholesaler, Quintus does not take legal title to the product it handles. This method offers its group members a very cost effective service to the UK retailers.

The consolidation system results in a bigger overall product range which attracts a bigger customer base who can be supplied with smaller amounts of stock, more regularly. Surplus stock can be spun off into added value lines. Sales can also be obtained during quieter periods when customers can't make up minimum order values for individual suppliers.

Quintus Garden Centre Sales is open to bringing new growers into the fold, if they fit within with the ethos of the team as well as being able to reliably supply top quality product in a category not already supplied by existing members.

The people

The Quintus Partnership is chaired by Robert Bell of Bell Brothers Nurseries and other director members; these are David James of Wyeplants Limited, Peter Ruysen of D & R Simmons Limited, John Huibers of Tamar Nurseries, Martin Nickell-Lean of Pepperidge Ltd Phil Congreave of Gedney Bulb Company, Stephen and Lesley Pollington of VJC Nurseries

The associate members are; Tony Ball of Bridge Farm Nurseries, Rodger & Tim Ward of Golden Grove Nurseries, John Elibrook of Blofield Nurseries, Dominic Harrington of Harrington Nurseries, Peter Bingham of Kingfisher Nurseries.

New business has been developed by Stephen Pollington whose role has been to steer the company forward and act as a central point of contact for members. He has been instrumental in the growth of Quintus membership as well as the securing and nurturing of new customers, ensuring steady growth of the Partnership.

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Quintus Garden Centre Sales

The technology

Quintus Garden Centre Sales is made possible via a bespoke on-line ordering system which took 18 months to develop.

At its heart is Quintus Search, a powerful database that enables users to browse and search products and view detailed descriptions and pictures.

For retail buyers this extends into a password-protected on-line ordering system which replaces fax transmissions and provides handy print outs of product lists and associated information.

In store, Quintus Search can be placed in the information booths of the plant area for customers to use as a reference and search to help them select plants for their growing own condition and sites.

The convenience

Quintus Garden Centre Sales is the first One-Stop-Shop package to provide a huge, comprehensive range of top quality plants grown by dedicated growers.

It allows Garden Centre customers to buy quality products consolidated from specialist nurseries, which is processed as one order with one delivery and one invoice.

The minimum total order of two trolleys can be selected from the entire range, allowing buyers to purchase product by the shelf rather than full trolleys from each nursery.

The system automatically calculates the number of plants, trolley quantities and value of each order by product category as well as total order.

The launch

Quintus Garden Centre Sales is launched in February 2008.

www.quintuspartnership.com Quintus Garden Centre Sales is managed by Martin Nickell-Lean & Jane Reid, contactable by telephone at: 01775 725002 and email: martin-sales@quintuspartnership.com

Want to know more?

Quintus Partnership welcome further press enquiries.

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