Developing Healthy and Sustainable
UK Herb Cultivation
ORFC 2018
Session description

- In the UK there is considerable potential to grow the market for home-produced herbs, especially as a focus increases on becoming more sustainable and less dependent on imports.

- On the demand side there is genuine interest in natural products involving herbs, from animal health to body care, culinary and medicinal contexts, although little to educate consumers in distinguishing well-grown supplies.

- On the supply side, there are committed growers from organic farms to agroforestry projects who could produce many more herbs if there is advice and training, more reliable demand and supporting infrastructure.

- However, there are many issues to face in growing the herb market, from maintaining quality to effective marketing, and ensuring that plans are economically viable. The way forward likely includes development of links, education and co-operative ventures.

- This session is designed to bring together those with interests in herb cultivation to consider what is needed to further develop and underpin this market.
A large herb box contains:

• 5 x ready made seasonal herbal products, complete with full instruction of how to make each product yourself at home
• 1 x Herbal tea blend
• 2 x plant profiles - More in-depth info focusing on two plants that feature in the box
• Plant Index - Basic info about all of the plants that feature in that seasonal box including botany and ID features, foraging/growing tips, uses and cautions. Often consists of around 25 different herbs
• A packet of seeds to grow your own
• Cost is £70 excluding P&P
• A small herb box contains 3 products and one plant profile, costs £35
Herb box challenges

- Drying of herbs - Space, equipment, storage
- Workshop space
- Access to land
- Initial set up costs of garden
- Water & off-grid energies
- Waiting for plants to establish and increase yields
- Label design & packaging
- Quantity needed for consistent income
- Not enough hands or hours in day!
The small scale at which my plants currently produce means the going rate for some of the herbs does not cover the labour to harvest them.

I love the herbs and want them to be available for healing at a fair price.

Regular volunteer days in the garden.

Pick your own scheme for herbalists and locals.

A shared, portable industrial drying set up?

UK medicinal herb growers network, founded at the Radical herb gathering 2016.

medicinalherbgrowers@lists.riseup.net - Email list you can join....and...... Website coming soon :) The website plans to map herb growers across UK, so herb buyers can link up.
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Helen Kearney
Elder Farm/ Ecological Land Co-op
Elder Farm

We are an off-grid medicinal herb farm

www.elderfarm.co.uk
About Elder Farm

- A 5.5 acre off-grid smallholding in Devon
- Registered with the Soil Association
- Farmed by Helen & Stuart Kearney (Helen is a Medical Herbalist)
- Tenants of The Ecological Land Co-operative
- Grows medicinal herbs and makes products and medicine
Commonly growing UK herbs (that may be considered weeds!) are commonly imported from outside the UK.
Opportunities!

- A potential solution to increasing UK grown herbs is by wild harvesting from existing hedges and edges on organic farms in the UK
- Local food and local medicine
- Infrastructure would need to be in place to grow and then process herbs, Elder Farm is looking at how to dry 100s of kilos of herbs in an offgrid setting (using only solar power currently with plans for wind power soon)
- Elderflower cordial has become a very popular drink, elderberry cordial has many medicinal benefits (and tastes really good!)
Where are you?

What are you already growing?

What skills or training in herb growing and producing do you have?

Any offers or requests?

Helen will have paper, pens and a map to collect names of people interested in herb growing.

Herbalist gathering June 30th and July 1st at Elder Farm with speakers and workshops-all welcome.
Email: helen@elderfarm.co.uk
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REGENERATIVE SUSTAINABLE
We use over 400 natural ingredients

Flowers and herbs (fresh and dried), fruit, vegetables, oils, butters

Ethical cosmetic industry is growing

There is a demand within homemade cosmetics
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Jo Smith
Organic Research Centre
Jo Smith, Organic Research Centre
Integrating herb production into agroforestry systems

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Opportunities for herb production in agroforestry
Barriers for herb production in agroforestry
Anne Stobart
Holt Wood Herbs/Medicinal Forest Garden Trust
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Sitka Spruce, 2005, replanting in Devon for a medicinal forest garden
Harvesting at Holt Wood Herbs in Devon

- (a) Witch Hazel (*Hamamelis virginiana*) leafy twigs

- (b) Cramp bark (*Viburnum opulus*) young bark

- (c) White Willow (*Salix alba*) pollarded stems
Body care products sold online at www.holtwoodherbs.com and at occasional events.
Holt Wood Herbs – opportunities and challenges

• Conifer plantation transformed with mixed medicinal native trees and shrubs with introduced species

• Permaculture design with many edges allowing sustainable harvest e.g. bark of *Viburnum opulus*, leafy twigs of *Hamamelis virginiana*

• Added value in creating registered body care products and offering courses about the medicinal forest garden (www.holtwoodherbs.com)

• Issues for us – establishing steady demand, drying, storage, helping other growers to link up through the Medicinal Forest Garden Trust
Global market: Distribution of total retail sales value by country

Source: FiBL-IFOAM survey 2014
5 YEAR GROWTH: HERBS & SPICES

LATEST 52 WKS, WEEK ENDING 6/2/12 $237 MILION
5/28/16 $299 MILLION

23% GROWTH (2013-2016)

LATEST 52 WKS, WEEK ENDING 6/2/12 $765 MILLION
5/28/16 $927 MILLION

19% GROWTH (2013-2016)

HERBS
SPICES

Source: Nielsen Answers on Demand
Copyright © 2015 The Nielsen Company
Three key market opportunities:

• Fresh culinary herbs

• Specialist herbs for particular sectors

• Problem herbs
Blocks to market development in the UK
Thanks for listening! Time to discuss opportunities and challenges.
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