

A Review Of Horticulture-Related Mobile Phone Apps – Executive Summary

Horticulture Wales commissioned ADAS to undertake a review to evaluate the use of mobile applications (apps) in the horticulture sector. The aims of this review were to:

- Identify horticulture-related apps currently available to growers
- Determine the usefulness of these apps
- Find out what apps would be of interest to growers and the wider industry.

To meet these aims, a number of horticultural growers were surveyed to determine current usage of mobile technologies and associated apps, while a thorough search of the internet and various app stores was conducted to find apps relevant to the horticulture sector. These apps were downloaded and tested, while online reviews were collated to help evaluate their overall usefulness.

A total of 39 apps were sourced, all of which broadly fell under one of the following categories:

1. **Pest identification and monitoring** – guides to help identify weeds and insect pests in the field and provide information on their control, as well as a record-keeping tool sometimes linked to GPS technology to help crop scouting
2. **Product support** – information on the use of a company's products e.g. pesticides, as well as apps to support irrigation and climate management systems
3. **Financial and marketing support** – management tools to help horticultural growers keep on top of their businesses
4. **Amateur gardening support** – advice on plant selection, production, weeds and pest control for amateur growers.





While there are a number of functional horticulture apps on the market, the majority are aimed at amateur gardeners or enthusiasts, rather than professional growers. These could still prove useful to more commercially-focused growers though, for instance, people who are looking to get into growing or growers looking to diversify into new crop types, and as a way for ornamental growers to keep abreast of gardening trends.

Many of the growers surveyed as part of the review use smartphones or tablets in the day-to-day running of their business, but most are not utilising horticulture or business-related apps. This is probably due to a mixture of a lack of knowledge or awareness of the available apps, and the fairly 'hit-and-miss' nature of many of the apps themselves – from studying the online reviews of the 39 apps, it is evident many are not widely used, while most have a very specific relevance (i.e. location or crop type) and aren't suitable for general use. It was felt, however, that there were a number of agriculture-related apps which, if adapted to become more specific to horticulture, could prove useful tools for the industry.

Horticulture growers and agronomists approached during the review suggested the following ideas for apps that would be of most benefit to the horticulture industry:

- An app listing available EAMUs (Extension for Authorization of Minor Use)
- The Chemicals Regulation Directorate (CRD) database of approved pesticides on an app that is continually updated
- Weed, pest, and disease identification apps specifically for the horticulture sector
- Apps sending users warnings and alert notifications for specific damaging pests
- Crop walking reminders
- Apps to help people carry out their own conservation audits
- Finance-related apps
- Apps to assist with logistics/benchmarking
- Loan repayment calculators.



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