

PLANTS FOR EUROPE LIMITED

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PLANTS FOR EUROPE CELEBRATES TEN YEARS

On February 12, Plants For Europe Limited will celebrate ten years of trading.

Established by Graham Spencer in 2003, Plants For Europe has now grown to be the leading independent plant breeders' agent serving the European market. What started as an idea over a cup of coffee has now turned into a successful business, representing the finest new varieties from breeders around the world.

Before starting Plants For Europe, Graham had spent fifteen years working in his parents' perennial nursery, Croftway Nursery, in West Sussex. "I had the opportunity to take over the business, but decided that it wasn't for me and that I wanted a new challenge. I had just completed a post-graduate diploma in marketing and was looking for a way to tie up my horticultural knowledge and connections with my new marketing skills."

Plants For Europe got off the ground with help from some very influential people. "I was lucky that I had the support of some respected plant breeders from the outset. Mike Tristram of Binsted Nursery, his father David Tristram at Walberton Nursery and Martine Tellwright at Fleurie Nursery were all friends and neighbours from my time at Croftway. They offered me the chance to represent their varieties and this was a tremendous boost to my fledgling business – to be an agent with a solid portfolio of top-quality new varieties meant that I was on the first rung of the ladder straight away. It helped Plants For Europe to be taken seriously in those early days."

Plants For Europe now represents more than 180 varieties of plants from more than 40 breeders. The range of plants is huge, from Ajuga to Zantedeschia, and includes patio plants, perennials, shrubs, climbing plants, herbs and cut flower varieties. PFE's breeder clients are based worldwide, in the UK, Ireland, Germany, Belgium, US, Canada, Australia and the Far East – and plants are licensed to growers across the European Union, as well as to other major markets worldwide.

Plants For Europe continues to grow – in 2012, Graham was joined in the business by his wife, Helen. "Helen is already having a big positive impact on PFE – she is working to support and promote our existing portfolio of varieties and has already increased our licensee base. Her background in retail, buying and publishing means that she has a great set of skills."

Graham put the success of Plants For Europe down to being a strong supporter of breeders and growers. "Our industry is a friendly one that is built on relationships. I have been fortunate to make many new friends through PFE and with that comes a high level of understanding of my clients' businesses and a great feeling of trust. Without trust, trials and licensing of plants protected by plant variety rights cannot

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possibly succeed – and that’s why PFE has done well. At the same time, the interests of the breeder – the creator and owner of the new plant – are paramount, and we will do all that we can to protect and support those interests.”

In the future, Graham expects the business to continue to expand. “2012 was an excellent year for us, with significant growth in turnover. We anticipate that growth in the next two to five years will continue at a steady pace, driven both by increasing sales of existing varieties and also by new varieties coming into the market that our breeders and licensees have in development. We are also looking to do more in eastern Europe, particularly with cold hardy shrubs and perennials, to do more with cut flowers and to expand our work in North America.”

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