

Life at Palmstead



Palmstead Nurseries Ltd.

Summer 2017

Special points of interest:

- Kent's largest nursery
- Palmstead win Supplier/Grower of the Year

Kent's largest nursery

Palmstead started nearly 50 years ago up on the Downs between Canterbury and Ashford. We moved to the 50 hectare site at Wye in the 1980's.

We now grow over 1.2 million hardy plants a year for the Landscape Market: trees in our fields and containers; shrubs to specimen sizes and lots of perennials. These plant go to:- Landscape construction contractors, garden designers and landowners such as Local Authorities. Most of these plants go to projects in the South East and are delivered by our own trucks and drivers direct to customers.

Over the years we have invested in the nursery with protected space (tunnels and glasshouses) these extend our growing season in pots and allow us to produce



Aerial view of the nursery

higher quality plants. Now we are growing over a million plants in pots and employ 50+ staff.

The success of Palmstead has been its ability to listen to customers and adapt to changes in the market place. So, from being a mainly shrub grower, now 35+% of our plants are perennials.

We also grow a very diverse range of plants across 2500 species and varieties and some in many different sizes. This means we always have a plant which will solve the customer's requirements. So we offer range, choice and great quality and service to customers. Also, 80% of what we sell is grown on the nursery and much has been propagated here too, this way we offer our customers traceability back to stock plants and can guarantee trueness to type and plant health.

Our customer base is full of regular repeat customers and is building with new customers from all directions. We have a successful track record in serving complex projects such as the Olympic Park and are securing more work for high profile sites.

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Palmstead win Supplier of the Year 2016—Grower South

Last year in March at the Association of Professional Landscapers Award ceremony we won an award as Grower of the year (south), in a competition judged by the industry.

We are delighted to be recognized by our customer base. The Grand Award went to Frogheath Landscapes who used our plants in their winning Kent garden.



Life at Palmstead

How many—how big and sustainable?



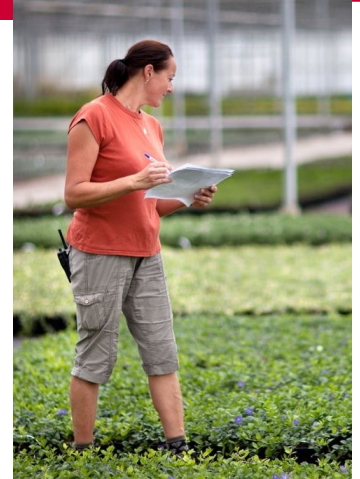
Our reservoirs protect us from drought periods and optimize growth of plants. (The tyres allow foxes etc to get out if trapped)

Palmstead are one of the most sustainable growers in the UK. All our irrigation water comes from rainfall harvesting and is stored in two large reservoirs holding 50 million litres. This saves using expensive mains drinking water for irrigating plants and gives us 4-5 months capacity at peak usage in the spring. So as long as we get some summer rainfall we have plenty of water to use in our forever updated computer controlled irrigation system.

On the roof of our dispatch shed

we have a 40 Kva solar farm generating electricity for us and the grid.

We grow with a soft footprint and are recycling/composting old plants and reusing the compost as a soil improver on our fields. The fields also are benefiting from our use of green mulches and fallow periods to replenish soil organic levels and nutrients. We also recycle old pots and plastics back to the manufacturer and they return to us as new pots. In fact our pots are 98% recycled content.



I've worked here 38 years and counting

"I have enjoyed all the jobs I've done and have done nearly every job on the nursery"

I joined Palmstead up at their old site on the downs as I left school at 16 and I've been here ever since.

But although I started as a nursery worker it was in a small team and I did all sorts of work, propagation, production and construction as the nursery grew.

I've now done most jobs here and have risen up through dispatch to sales and now as our main buyer plus some key accounts to look after. I get to visit

our specialist growers to look for plants we need and that includes travel to Spain, Holland, and Italy. There is always variety and the pressure of our seasonal trade.

I have some great customers to look after and I've known them for many years – they have become my friends and I know we help their businesses.

It's a great team here and I consider myself very lucky to have landed on my feet at 16 and not had to move, every day is differ-



ent and brings new challenges.
Peter Curtis
Procurement & Supply Chain Manager

I'm just starting and enjoying my Apprenticeship



Callum is getting a planned range of work on the nursery and off site training at the local Horticultural College.

"I got an interview here after finishing my GCSE's thanks to my teacher. My initial interest in plants was triggered by my grandparents garden watching and helping them. Now on the apprentice scheme a year, I'm getting to do a whole varied range of jobs in production and getting study days at Hadlow College as well. The Hadlow tutor visits here to assess me on different modules, I feel I am learning lots

and progressing here at Palmstead.

I like developing my plant knowledge and get great exposure to different plants here. I've been made very welcome by all the staff here and feel one of the team. Now my career is more stable I'm saving up for driving lessons and a car."

Callum Philpott



Key plant producer

Jess started working on a local nursery at 16, working Saturdays and then for a full year before going to Hadlow College to study commercial horticulture. There she also taught practical horticulture for a year after graduating. After some time travelling she found Palmstead and spent her first year experiencing most jobs on the nursery. For the last year she has been the key number 2 in the Young Plant Unit responsible for propagating hundreds of thousands of plants, shrubs perennials and trees. Jess Gibbs BSc



Saturday boy to Production Manager

Steve Chapman – Production Manager – with Palmstead 15+ years.

“I started as a Saturday boy at 13+ and spent many school holidays working on the nursery. Part time I also ran my own small garden maintenance business before joining Palmstead full time in 2001. Here I was sponsored to study the Horticultural Academy course held at Pershore College.

On returning to the nursery I started as nursery worker doing all sorts of jobs and rose to production supervisor in charge of a specific part of the nursery. This involved inspecting my crop daily and adjusting irrigation levels, feeding requirements and pest and disease control. Plus, a bit of weeding and plant pruning, but thanks to the systems we have, there is not much weeding to do.

Then I progressed to run the field production – growing trees, specimen shrubs and hedge plants in our fields and was in charge of a team. In 2014 I became Production Manager and now oversee all production of 1.2 million plants in over 2500 different species and types. The nursery is so big now I use my bike to get around and manage my teams.”



Kirsty Baker-Heulin – Goods In Inspector – with Palmstead 17 years.

“I joined Palmstead in 2000, starting as a basic nursery worker and working in the propagation department and then progressing to the potting team and then on to leading the potting team. So I’ve handled millions of plants as we grow over 1.2 million each year. Now with the wide plant knowledge I’ve accumulated I’m responsible for checking the plants coming into the nursery,

as we can’t grow everything our customers ask for. In fact, about 20% of what we sell comes from other specialist growers. My role is to make sure the plants are what they are supposed to be, control quality and ensure they are clean and healthy. Biosecurity is a big issue and we don’t want to import a new pest into the UK.

I love working with plants and all the people here are friendly.

My job has lots of variety with parts of each day being different with plenty of fresh air, I’m not stuck behind a desk, so I do keep fit and have some good waterproofs plus a sun hat.”





Our business is our customer's profit

Our business is growing and supplying nursery stock. Through the development of our people, our team and the sharpness of our customer focus, our mission is also to grow our profits, becoming the automatic choice of many and the envy of our competitors.

Here at Palmstead Nurseries we are always on the look out for enthusiastic individuals with a passion for horticulture. We are also interested in growing staff and welcome applications from graduates interested in joining our Graduate Training Programme. If you feel you have what it takes to be part of the Palmstead team then send an email with your name, CV and a cover letter to opportunities@palmstead.co.uk

Horticulture in all its forms has given me a full career

Nick Coslett – Marketing Manager – with Palmstead 14+ years.

“I’ve had a varied and fulfilling career with over 35+ years in and around horticulture.

I initially trained to be a Landscape Architect but found design was not my thing. I pushed a drawing board greening up inner city Liverpool for a while in their Parks Department and spent my lunchtimes in the gardens picking up plant knowledge. After further training I moved into grounds maintenance supervision with a local authority and held a num-

ber of supervisory and technical roles there. After marriage I moved up the pay scale and location, to be Parks Superintendent at Canterbury managing 50 parks staff and a million-pound operation. Things changed and I joined a nursery putting plants and customers together and I’ve enjoyed that for the 20 years, with the last 14+ here at Palmstead. Which I consider to be one of the best growers in the country. Plus, I’m involved with our customers and making sure as a nursery we are growing the plants they want to use.



Why recommend horticulture – each day is different, I’ve enjoyed working inside and out, it includes scientific, technical and management challenges and you find the people they want to use.

Sales are expanding with year on year increases

Simon King – Head of Sales – with Palmstead 4 years.

“I got into horticulture via an apprentice scheme with Greater London Parks and received the support and guidance of mentors to pick up a wide skill set. In fact, I’ve never stopped learning. I’ve been fortunate as 35 years later those skills are still in use and have seen me in a great diversity of roles: Local Authority parks maintenance; garden centre sales; irrigation technical sales; commercial distribution; manufacture of horticulture products and now

back to a long held passion of working with plants. I’ve benefited from the experience of others and would be pleased to do the same for new starters at Palmstead.”

