

Those 'in the know' choose Air-pots

Researchers and horticulturalists responsible for managing the UK's most important plant collections are choosing Air-Pots for their propagation and container-growing.

The Caledonian Tree Company is excited to be working with exceptional horticulturalists at a number of top level locations. These include the Forestry Commission's Bedgebury Pinetum, Westonbirt Arboretum and the Northern Research Station; the Royal Botanic Gardens at Kew and Wakehurst Place; the Royal Botanic Garden, Edinburgh; Birmingham Botanical Gardens and Glasshouses; Howick Hall Arboretum and Sir Harold Hillier Gardens and Arboretum. The National Memorial Arboretum, Staffordshire, is the latest illustrious name to join the ranks, and is about to start using Air-Pots for the first time.

The Forestry Commission's Bedgebury Pinetum direct sows 'difficult' species with vigorous tap roots into one litre Air-Pots. *Quercus*, *Araucaria*, *Juglans*, *Aesculus* and *Carya*, which normally develop all sorts of root problems very quickly in standard containers, by contrast, succeed very well in Air-Pots. Dan Luscombe, the Assistant Curator and Propagation Manager at Bedgebury, comments: "We want the healthiest plants we can possibly grow, which will establish well in the collections. The performance of stock grown in Air-Pots is excellent, whatever the growing habit of the plant, whatever the climatic conditions. We collect seed from every continent and want to give it every possible chance to thrive and, to this end, aim to use Air-Pots exclusively."

The versatility of the Air-Pot is proving very useful to these expert institutions, whose growing requirements are extremely diverse. RBG Kew (Wakehurst Place), for example is using a wide range of Air-Pot sizes, including very tall Air-Pots with a narrow diameter (500mm deep x 300mm diameter) to grow palms.

The Caledonian Tree Company is also currently working with Martin Gardner, Co-ordinator for the



Bedgebury Pinetum

International Conifer Conservation Programme at the Royal Botanic Garden Edinburgh.

IMPROVED DRAINAGE AND ROOT SYSTEM

Martin Gardner explains "We prefer these distinctive growing containers to conventional pots because they give better drainage and produce a far better root system. Most of the conifers being grown in these air pots are for the new iCONic project. This project, which is a collaboration between the International Conifer Conservation Programme, based at the Royal Botanic Garden Edinburgh and the Forestry Commission for Scotland, aims to establish ex-situ conservation collections of threatened conifers in Perthshire forests, estates and gardens"

The Air-Pot was developed in order to eliminate root circling and has recorded a high % success rate. However, equally exciting are the extra benefits of additional air being available within the growing media which increases the aerobic activity in the soil; the uptake of nutrient and moisture is increased; the superior drainage in an Air-Pot improves the winter performance of plants, particularly those which do not like 'wet feet'.

For further information and examples of Air-Pot growing projects, please contact: Suzie or Jamie Single on 01875 835360 or email: ctc@superoots.com