



FitzGerald Nurseries Ltd

# ***CONSERVATION OF PLANT GENETIC RESOURCES, INCLUDING ORNAMENTALS, IN IRELAND***

*A commercial horticultural perspective.*

# Irish Horticulture

- The horticultural industry in Ireland has an output valued at approximately €366 million at farm gate values.
- Food makes up 80% and amenity 20% of the value.
- Key crops in the food sector include mushrooms, potatoes, field vegetables, fruit & protected crops.
- Key crops in the Amenity Horticulture area include nursery stock production, protected flowers, ornamentals and Christmas trees.

# International Horticulture

- Currently the key market for the Irish horticultural Industry is the domestic market. The two main areas of export are Mushrooms to the UK and amenity horticultural products nursery stock, cut foliage & Christmas trees
- UK alone imports £750 million value in ornamental plants
- Horticulture industry today is more reliant on breeder raised varieties for various traits to suit market demand
- Irish horticultural businesses have opportunities in the home and international market for horticultural produce
- FitzGerald Nurseries in 2005 set out with an objective to harness Irish garden genetic resources to improve its international plant offer as part of the family business development.

# FitzGerald Nurseries Ltd

- FitzGerald Nurseries Ltd specialises in the production of ornamental young plants for growing-on and finishing to final sale specification by other nurseries. The final plants are particularly suited for use as potted plants on patios, balconies and indoor areas, a niche that continues to achieve increased market share as urbanisation reduces average garden size across Europe.
- The business commenced in the production of young plants for onward sale to wholesale growing-on nurseries. It is based on the family farm in Co Kilkenny, operating out of a three hectare production & propagation unit.
- FitzGerald Nurseries' associated business Gadera Ltd is a plant micro-propagation company located in Enniscorthy, Co Wexford. The company micro propagates plants and output and services is sold to FitzGerald Nurseries who wean the micro plants, selling them as young plants, or exporting directly as sterile cultures to 18 countries.
- Sub-contraction to other labs allows us to adapt readily to new opportunities and rapidly respond to market demand.
- FitzGerald Nurseries has been recognised as an innovator through various national and international awards and achievements

# Laboratory





# Nursery





# Trials Field



# Kennedy Irish Primroses.



Over one century of Irish garden Primroses

**The conservation and commercialization of old Irish garden plant genetics**





# Irish garden genetic resources

- A Heritage of Beauty by Charles E Nelson
- Kennedy Irish Primroses 35 years of conservation and amateur breeding by Joseph Kennedy
- Old Irish primroses collected from amateur breeding dating back to the late 1800's
- 2006 Joseph Kennedy places his life's work with FitzGerald Nurseries.
- 2006 – 2011 selections made based on shape, habit, leaf and flower colour



# Old and the New



**Primula K38**  
**Darkest foliage**  
**with most yellow**  
**flower**



**Primula Tipperary Purple**  
**“Jack in the Green type”**

**Primula Innisfree &**  
**Carex Everest**



# Commercialization

- 2009 first selections propagated for commercial evaluation
- 2010 first commercial production tests and market led production
- 2011 first plants sold in USA, Europe and Japan
- February 2011 Kennedy Irish Primroses presented at Philadelphia International Flower Show
- 17<sup>th</sup> March 2011 Kennedy Irish Primroses presented to Mrs Michelle Obama as gift of the state
- 2012 estimated 100,000 plants sold in 10 countries

# Future for Irish Garden Primroses

- 2013 six more selections of very hardy weather tolerant perennial Primroses brought to market
- Two phenotype groups one with the darkest foliage known to date the other ground hugging “fairy Primrose” type flowers.
- Third group in development
- American, Japanese, New Zealand and Australian market opportunity confirmed
- Irish Diaspora keen and interested to know more of their “Garden Heritage”



# Final Selections





# World Market Introduction



# Conservation of a wide range of other old Irish garden varieties

- Funding- Sponsorship, Govt grants, co-operation
- Staff- Students, interns, qualified plant scientists
- Facilities- Private public partnership
- Equipment- Grant and seed capital support
- Ambition- Vision and long term strategy
- Commercialization- Ethical utilization of our genetic resources for the commercial advancement of the economy and our people.

# Lessons ?

- Irish Horticulture can benefit positively from involvement in the conservation of and breeding from old Irish varieties
- Commercial and conservation objectives can develop a synergy
- One small Irish plant company in less than ten years has developed over €2 million euro per annum of production, 95% exported and 35 people employed using minimal financial assistance and no third level collaboration
- Considering the above what can be achieved with structured support in conservation and commercialization of our plant resources?



# Whats happening in other countries

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- New Zealand
- USA
- Germany
- Israel
- UK
- Netherlands
- Japan



**Carex oshimensis our biggest plant export and all from mutation selection in Ireland.**



# THE END

Thank you for listening.