



**Tuesday 2nd of July 2019 | Posted In: Use and Manage, Energy saving**

## **Soft Fruit growers benefit from GrowSave**

You may recall that GrowSave celebrated its 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary back in 2017. While we didn't have any big celebrations, we are proud to have been helping horticulture save energy for over a decade now, and we feel we have made a positive impact during that time. Although we aren't growers or plant physiologists, we do understand horticulture and energy, and it is this combination that has allowed us to use our expertise for the benefit of the industry. Traditionally focused around Protected Edibles (PE) and Protected Ornamentals (PO), as these were the sectors funding the programme through AHDB Horticulture, GrowSave now also incorporates Soft Fruit (SF).

This is not completely uncharted territory for GrowSave, however. We have worked with the Soft Fruit sector on a number of occasions, including a GrowSave study tour which took a group of UK growers to Belgium and the Netherlands in 2017. The group gained valuable insight to some of the latest SF research and growing practices, and the tour identified a few areas where the UK industry might take a lead from its European counterparts, particularly around investment in technology, notably lighting, water recycling and air movement. A report on the influences of energy was written and can be downloaded from the [AHDB website](#).

During the last 12 months, GrowSave has continued to inform growers and decision makers about the options open to them with respect to energy saving and efficiency practices through workshop-style events. These were:

1. Heating and Lighting for Soft Fruit; Birmingham, November 2018
2. Climate Control for Soft Fruit; New Forest, February 2019

For those who missed them, there are some important points to take away. Bearing in mind what was seen on the study tour, the economic viability of supplementary lighting for UK grown soft fruit remains questionable; those considering LED setups should certainly carefully calculate expected savings and payback time. Heating, on the other hand, has many benefits: its use in climate control and extending the growing season, while potential subsidy through the Renewable Heat Incentive scheme can help offset costs. Of course, there is more to climate control than just heating, with air

movement, humidity regulation and the evenness of conditions all playing a role. Full event write-ups can be found on the GrowSave website, and a summary of all of our recent workshops features in the latest edition of GrowSave News.

Anyone wanting to delve a bit deeper into some of the more technical aspects of growing should check out the full back catalogue of Technical Updates covering a wide array of subjects. These can be found online at <https://www.growsave.co.uk/technical-updates>. Although originally targeted at PE and PO, much of the content can also be applied to SF. Anyone adding heat to their crop, for example, may also be interested in supplementing carbon dioxide, and should read [conventional](#) and [alternative sources of CO<sub>2</sub>](#). Similarly, for those wanting to understand how best to control their climate, our information on [sensors](#) can help to ensure accurate measurements are obtained.

In addition to updating a number of resources for Soft Fruit, we will also be publishing new material targeted at the sector. A new, standalone technical update on the adaptation of greenhouses for soft fruit production is set to be published in the coming months. This will be available on our new website specifically for Soft Fruit (<https://softfruits.growsave.co.uk/>). There you will find tips on energy saving and climate control, energy price trends and a whole lot more. The original GrowSave website will continue to be updated with PE and PO content, and may still be a useful resource for SF growers, with its extensive archive of materials and information. Both sites will operate in parallel, containing the latest news, GrowSave publications and details of our upcoming events.

So as not to miss anything, you may also like to sign up to our mailing list!

To ensure we provide the most relevant content, the GrowSave team has regular contact with the Soft Fruit Steering Group, made up of four industry representatives. They are:

- Scott Raffle, AHDB Horticulture
- Richard Harnden, Berry Gardens
- Sandy Booth, New Forest Fruit
- Salih Hodzhov, WB Chambers

We will soon be planning next year's programme, so if you have any ideas or suggestions for content you would like to be included, please contact us at [info@fec-energy.co.uk](mailto:info@fec-energy.co.uk) or one of the Steering Group.