

# The Green Gardener



**DAVID KEEGAN,**  
CONCEPT FOR LIVING'S  
GREEN GARDENER,  
INTERVIEWS THE  
OWNERS OF CRUG  
FARM, A UNIQUE  
WELSH NURSERY...

**Bleddyn and Sue Wynn-Jones were originally specialist beef farmers but in 1992 they decided to set up Crug Farm nursery, which is set in idyllic surroundings in North Wales.**

Their nursery is filled with both rare and exotic plants, the majority of which are grown from seed.

The couple spend about three months of every year in far flung corners of the globe collecting precious seeds from endangered and unknown plants. They are modern day plant-hunters who through their travels have a depth of knowledge and first-hand experience of the effects and the rapidity of climate change on fragile eco-systems both locally and internationally.

In the first of a series of interviews which I will be carrying out over the coming months, I asked the couple for their views on the effects of climate change.

**Can you tell me what prompted you to give up farming? Also, how did you make the leap to plant-hunting?**

Desperation. We didn't want to go bankrupt so we had to give up farming. We farmed 200 acres of land but it wasn't enough to make a living. We were producing top-quality beef and getting high prices for it, but beef prices haven't budged in the last 15 years and crops have actually gone down in price during that period.

Also, there are fewer small holdings as more and more farmers find themselves squeezed out through pricing dictated by the supermarkets, rather than demand.

Essentially supermarkets dictate what they are going to pay, resulting in the creation of more and more super farms, many of which are controlled by the supermarkets. The big chains don't see supporting British agriculture as part of their job and if they can't get it here for the price they want they just buy elsewhere.

**Are you in favour of GM?**

No.

**Can you tell me why?**

With plants cross-pollinating and escaping into the wild, there is the potential to corrupt natural gene pools, the effects of which we just don't know or fully understand. But I believe we will end up with GM produce regardless.

**Do you believe in climate change?**

Yes, I believe in climate change. Growing conditions have changed drastically over the last 20 years. For the last few years we've had to put net on top of plastic tunnels to prevent plants burning in sun – in the past we never had to do that.

*“They are modern day plant-hunters who through their travels have a depth of knowledge and first-hand experience of the effects and the rapidity of climate change.”*

**Have you visited the same places more than once? And if so have you noticed any dramatic changes in climate between visits?**

Yes. We usually leave a three-month window between visits with the intention of altering the time of year when we visit each place.

We have noticed climate change in the places we visit. For example, during a 2005 visit to Japan we were collecting wonderful seed for woody plants. We returned the following year and that seed was nowhere to be found as there had been too many typhoons. But there are also local problems of corruption and de-forestation which, of course, contribute to further climate change.

In South East Asia we witnessed huge amounts of deforestation in supposed conservation areas. This is something that also goes on in most Third World countries because they can't police conservation areas properly.

**Do you believe that there is the political will to tackle climate change?**

No, I am not positive about the steps being taken to counteract global warming. Until China and America are on board it's a waste of time due to the volume of pollution they're responsible for.

And lastly, do you see any benefits in global warming for your nursery or has it changed your business in any way?

Yes – we sell plants from warmer countries now. People are more confident that they can grow plants from warmer places so we can afford to be more adventurous.

David Keegan. Tel. 07905 671 948 or visit:  
[www.dkgardendesign.co.uk](http://www.dkgardendesign.co.uk)  
Crug Farm. Visit: [www.crug-farm.co.uk](http://www.crug-farm.co.uk)