

PRESS RELEASE

March 2001

Interior Landscapers Fight Back

Stung by criticism of their industry in the ongoing Portcullis House debacle, leading UK Interior Landscapers have banded together to form eFIG, the countries first trade body 100% dedicated to representing their interests.

The **e**uropean **F**ederation of **I**nteriorscape **G**roups was inspired by Clarke and Spears International Managing Director, Tony Sawyer, who felt he could no longer stand by and watch.

"I had felt for some time that no one was out there promoting the fantastic benefits of interior plants to Facilities Managers and Architects," said Sawyer. "Then when stories started appearing almost daily in the National press slating the "huge waste of public money" spent on the Ficus trees installed in Portcullis House I felt we had to act. Our industry must have professional representation to counter such totally unjustified allegations and promote the use of plants to decision makers in businesses of every type."

Following a series of presentations, the idea received overwhelming support from interior landscapers of every size throughout the UK and eFIG was formed.

"Our aim is to recruit at least 200 members by the end of the first year," stated the Federations first Chairman, Steve Attrill. "eFIG must represent the interests of the whole industry, large or small, contractors and suppliers alike. This is about raising the profile of interior landscaping for the benefit of everyone lucky enough to make their living out of selling plants to businesses. It is potentially the most exciting initiative our industry has ever seen. I would urge anyone involved in the business to join up without delay - the more members, the more money available for promoting our members services."

Chris Rayner, another of the founding committee members concurs, " This is the industries chance to work together to reverse the damage done by criticism of high profile jobs like Portcullis House, "he enthused. "Each year I see less and less large scale schemes specifying the use of interior plants even though there is now a huge body of research proving the positive psychological and physical benefits of house plants. It is up to us to reverse this trend which otherwise must filter down to the





more normal office environment which is the bread and butter of every interior landscape company in the UK. As a relatively small company I can see the huge benefits that membership of eFIG can bring to my business."

eFIG's first real test will come between May 22nd - 25th when the group has booked a 15m sq. stand at The Facilities Show in Birmingham, a major show aimed at facilities managers and specifiers. In an unprecedented show of unity up to twenty of the groups members will collaborate, designing, decorating and manning the stand, providing everything free of charge for the benefit of the entire industry. On the evening of 22nd May, there will be the first of a series of 'Round Britain' open presentations aimed at recruiting new members with many existing members and the entire Steering Committee in attendance.

To co ordinate the effort, eFIG has appointed a full time administrator, Joanna Hargreaves who is responsible for actioning the plans of the Steering Committee. The group is already developing a comprehensive web site which in addition to promoting its members will act as a repository of research into the benefits of plants and provide vital information for specifiers and facilities managers alike. The value of the group has been recognised by The Flower Council of Holland who has joined eFIG and sit on the Marketing sub committee helping to direct the eFIG's promotional efforts.

eFIG is not alone in recognising the need for stepping up promotion of the interior plant industry. In America the established trade body ALCA has recently launched its Plants at Work initiative which also aims to promote plants to businesses by means of a series of poster campaigns. While eFIG may adopt part of this campaign, the high costs of advertising mean that it will concentrate its efforts on attending trade shows, PR and direct mailings - all aimed at bringing potential customers to the web site 'shop window'. Equally important to the promotional work done by eFIG will be the development of training courses covering all aspects of the industry. It is the Federations aim that these modules will in time be developed into a fully fledged professional qualification in Interior Landscaping, which will help to raise the professionalism of the industry further.

For more information about the group please contact Joanna Hargreaves on 01794 521744, fax 01794 521836



Notes for Editors

Tony Sawyer is MD of Clarke & Spears International Ltd, which has bases in the UK and Holland. CSI is one of Europe's largest specialist suppliers to the Interior Landscape industry, distributing plants and planters to eight European countries on a weekly basis. CSI is the official sponsor of eFIG having donated £5000 to its marketing campaign. Tony Sawyer is President of eFIG

Steve Attrill is Purchase and Dispatch manager for Rentokil Tropical Plants UK and has been elected by the membership as the Federations first Chairman. The Chairman's position is superior to that of President as the Chairman runs the Steering Committee and carries the casting vote.

Chris Rayner is MD of Evergreen Displays and sits on the Steering Committee. Evergreen Displays are a good example of one of the smaller landscape companies that eFIG hopes to attract as members.

Joanna Hargreaves is the secretary of eFIG and is employed on a full time basis to represent the interests of the membership and action the decisions of the steering committee. Joanna also maintains the membership list.

