

# THE SUCCESS OF CANADA'S ORNAMENTAL HORTICULTURE SECTOR IS DRIVEN BY ITS 130,000+ WORKERS

## ISSUE:

The availability of and access to sufficient human resources continues to be a critical challenge to the viability and growth of Canada's ornamental horticulture sector. The labour-intensive and seasonal nature of ornamental production and services means these business can only operate and grow if they can find enough of the right employees when then need them. Several unique factors make this a chronically difficult undertaking. While several Government of Canada employment programs do help the sector find these workers, there are opportunities to enhance the capacity of the sector to obtain and retain more of the people it needs.

## CHALLENGES:

- Ornamental horticulture suppliers, growers, service providers, and supply chain partners have a strong demand for multiple levels and categories of skills, covering the range from seasonal fieldwork and landscape services all the way to the management of large, advanced export-oriented corporations.
- Seasonal, labour-intensive work is of particular concern and these jobs are especially challenging to fill using local workforces. This means the ornamental industry must use seasonal and temporary foreign workers to meet this demand on an annual basis. They make up almost 50% of the total ornamental primary production workforce.
- Without Federal government programs, like the Seasonal Agriculture Workers Program (SAWP) and low-skilled stream of the Temporary Foreign Workers Program (TFWP), many firms in the ornamental industry would simply not have access to sufficient human resource capacity to remain viable. It is important that these programs are performing as well as possible.
- There are currently limited options for training programs that are directly applicable to the wide variety of skills required by ornamental horticulture operations.



## RECOMMENDATIONS:

Ensure that the Canadian ornamental horticulture industry has access to sufficient human resources when it needs them. Our recommendations include:

- Maintain all current elements of the SAWP and TFWP and explore potential improvements
- Launch new funding to support industry investments in automation, robotics, and Artificial Intelligence (AI) technology that increases innovation, productivity and competitiveness
- Enhance the EI program to better address issues connected to seasonality (e.g., banking of hours or access to a supplemental benefit program for seasonal workers)
- Increase the availability and access to robust cost-effective training programs that are directly applicable to the ornamental horticulture sector

