The vision of Rubus is “To utilise to the full our unique depth of knowledge in the field of cultivated plants by creating a knowledge management system for all our horticultural data capable of delivering this to our audiences.”

The RHS has experience of engaging with a wide range of different audiences including children and families, educators, and the complete spectrum of gardeners from novices to experienced amateurs, professional horticulturists and plantmen. Through Project Rubus we aim to improve access to our information for all our audiences, while also increasing awareness of cultivated plants in the cultural and biodiversity domains.

The Royal Horticultural Society (RHS) is the UK’s leading gardening charity dedicated to advancing horticulture and promoting good gardening. Our goal is to help people share a passion for plants, to encourage excellence in horticulture and inspire all those with an interest in gardening.

The RHS manages several unique datasets including:

- RHS Plant Finder – this annual publication lists over 70,000 cultivated plants available in the horticultural trade
- in excess of 283,000 plant names including synonyms, cultivars and trade names
- more than 40,000 English common names
- more than 450 plant advice profiles
- more than 25,000 plant portraits
- 9 International Cultivar Registers containing more than 300,000 registered names

Our data is primarily managed in the popular BG-BASE system as well as in image management software and several in house developed Microsoft SQL server databases with bespoke front ends.

Rubus encompasses two interdependent streams of activity:

- Development of RHS Orchard: a tool kit capable of uniting & handling the diverse plant and horticultural data held by the RHS
- Development of online interfaces, driven by RHS Orchard, to deliver these data and make our knowledge accessible to members and the public

The RHS has long been aware of the value in information “locked into” our existing databases. Our goal is to make that information accessible, and add to its value through integration and interoperability. Fundamental to the realisation of this goal is Project Rubus: a key cross-cutting programme within the RHS led by the Science & Advice team in partnership with the Online and IT Development teams.

Products delivered so far include:

- RHS Orchard: a web based platform/tool kit for managing the centrally held data
- Plant Name Checker: a simple web tool designed to help any RHS employee who wants to know the correct name of a plant and/or how to style the name
- A suite of web services to deliver data to the online Plant Selector search

www.rhs.org.uk