



## GCA inspections get underway

GARDEN centre owners and staff are being advised that the Garden Centre Association (GCA) annual inspections are now underway.

Each member garden centre will be assessed by an inspector across all departments and awarded an overall score. Centres must achieve 60% or above to remain as members.

Peter Burks, Chairman of the GCA, said: “The annual inspections, which take place from March 26 until June 15, begin with an assessment from an independent inspector.

“Once the inspection is complete, the inspector will discuss their findings with the garden centre owners, managers and staff in a constructive feedback session. This allows management to implement any necessary changes, based on the inspection findings, immediately.

“Many GCA members have said that the unique annual inspections and constructive feedback sessions are one of the biggest benefits of membership. It is a fantastic motivational and management tool and really keeps staff on their toes, making sure they are always doing their absolute best.

“Garden centres receive no advance warning about when their inspection will take place and they do not have the option to turn away the inspector. It is all about making sure they are offering a consistently excellent service and improving their customer service standards, which is what all GCA garden centres must do to remain members.”

The GCA has revised the scoring system for the 2012 inspections.

Peter added: “This year we have split up merchandising and display on the score sheet. We are hoping that this will encourage members to try and create more inspirational displays. I would advise members that displays do not have to be huge to have an impact.

“We have also increased the weighting of the environmental section, in order to promote best practice in environmental care.

“We believe all members should be doing everything they can to be green and hopefully this will act as an incentive for them to go the extra mile and put some careful consideration into their current environmental policies.”

The GCA represents nearly 200 garden centres nationwide.

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Through sharing information and its inspection programme the GCA helps members to achieve high standards in customer service, plant quality and reliability.

Phil Slinger, GCA Chief Executive, explained: "We have urged all garden centres to be prepared for the inspections. Last year (2011) several garden centres were not ready and lost marks, which of course means they will have also lost sales, because increased standards and motivated staff results in increased sales and profits.

"The results of the inspections form the basis for many GCA awards, including Destination Garden Centre of the Year, Garden Centre of the Year, Area Winners, Highly Commended and Most Improved Garden Centre. Any centres scoring 86% or above will also receive a Garden Centre of Excellence Award.

"We'd like to wish everyone the best of luck. GCA garden centres have such high standards and we are looking forward to seeing the ideas people have come up with this year to further improve these."

For further details about the GCA annual inspections, please call 01993 871456, visit [www.gca.org.uk](http://www.gca.org.uk), log on to [www.facebook.com/pages/Garden-Centre-Association](https://www.facebook.com/pages/Garden-Centre-Association) or follow the organisation on Twitter at [www.twitter.com/GC\\_Association](https://www.twitter.com/GC_Association).

**ENDS**

**For further media details, please call Porcupine PR on 01278 446801 or email [Ellie@porcupinepr.co.uk](mailto:Ellie@porcupinepr.co.uk). Alternatively, please contact Phil Slinger, GCA Chief Executive, on 01993 871456 or email [phil.slinger@gca.org.uk](mailto:phil.slinger@gca.org.uk).**