

Media release for the Garden Centre Association

# Christmas and catering come out on top in November

GARDEN centre shoppers were busy preparing for the festive season last month (November, 2014) according to the Garden Centre Association's (GCA) Barometer of Trade (BoT) results.

Compared to November 2013 the results showed Christmas sales up 23.53%, catering sales 9.71% up, outdoor plants up 10.9% and houseplants doing well at 11.88% up.

Will Armitage, Chairman of the GCA, explained: "It's great to see that Christmas and catering were the real winners last month and that's no surprise as people prepare for the biggest day of the year.

"Garden centres have become real destinations to do your Christmas shopping in and people often like to stop off at a café or restaurant for lunch or a spot of tea as they go.

"Other good performers during the month included furniture and barbecues up 5.54% and gifts at 7.15% up."

The GCA BoT reports are compiled using actual sales figures and provide an up-to-date trading position statement. They are made available mid-month following the end of the prior month after all member garden centres have submitted their results.

The reports allow members to compare their trading positions with other centres.

James Ducker, Director at Langlands Garden Centres, said: "Catering and Christmas were winners for Langlands in November. Catering was up 19% at our Leeds store and 5% up at our Shiptonthorpe store. Our Farm Shop in Leeds was 50% up.

"We also had an excellent month on Christmas with Shiptonthorpe up 22% and Leeds 41%."

Whitehall Garden Centres, which has stores in Bristol and Lacock, has seen its Christmas sales grow due to building a 'Christmas experience' for its customers and a leisure day out.

Peter Self, Managing Director, said: "Our sales growth is down to us focusing on building a 'Christmas experience' and a leisure day out. The areas we have focused on are more investment in stock, especially electrical and artificial trees, decorations and novelties.

"Our festive ice rink at Lacock has been enlarged to 125 skaters per session and for the first time, we are expecting more than 25,000 skaters.

"Our Santa's grottos are building in reputation and should see more than 40,000 visitors across our two centres.

“We have a fantastic team of colleagues who have pulled together and created a magical experience, which the customers seem to have enjoyed. Having just won the GCA Wales and West Destination Christmas award for the first time has been the icing on the cake.”

Squires Garden Centres has also seen an improvement in its Christmas sales.

Managing Director, Dennis Espley, said: “We have really focused our efforts on driving Christmas sales, with our improved displays, revised ranges and more stock of promotional lines. The result at the end of November in this category was 25% up on the previous year.”

The GCA represents nearly 200 garden centres nationwide.

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

For further information, please call 0118 930 8918. Alternatively, please visit [www.gca.org.uk](http://www.gca.org.uk), log on to [www.facebook.com/pages/GardenCentreAssociation](https://www.facebook.com/pages/GardenCentreAssociation) or follow the organisation on Twitter at [www.twitter.com/GC\\_Association](https://www.twitter.com/GC_Association).

**ENDS**

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**Photograph caption one:** Will Armitage, Chairman of the GCA.

**Photograph caption two:** Sales of catering were up 9.71%.

