

Media release for the Garden Centre Association

Outdoor categories stole the show in Oct at GCA centres

GARDEN centre customers were still getting out in their gardens last month (October, 2014) according to the Garden Centre Association's (GCA) Barometer of Trade (BoT) results.

The results showed hard landscaping sales were 25.84% up, furniture and barbeques 18.75% up and outdoor plants 14.5% up as compared to October, 2013.

Will Armitage, Chairman of the GCA, explained: "The cooler weather certainly hasn't put gardeners off from getting out into their gardens.

"We know that October is a great month to plant all sorts of things such as spring flowering bulbs, shrubs, evergreens and fruit trees. With many garden centres getting behind campaigns like the HTA's 'Plan it, Plant it this Autumn' it seems to have helped make people aware of the opportunities to be had. This has almost certainly helped contribute to the strong outdoor plant figures seen by many of our members.

"Hard landscaping was the best performing category for a second month running with people taking the opportunity to make changes to their outdoor spaces before it gets colder.

"Other good performers during October were garden sundries up 11.96%, houseplants 7.16% up, Christmas 6.07% up and catering 4.67% 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.

Justin Williams, Director at Fron Goch Garden Centre in Caernarfon, said: "We had an exceptional October, with good sales in all departments. Christmas was up 44% on last October and I think it's all down to getting the 'details' right. Fine tuning and learning from a mini Christmas study tour we did last year and opening our Christmas display at the right time, getting merchandising and displays right as well as the marketing.

"Catering was 11.6% up last month, which I think was down to us consistently delivering high standards of food and service, combined with developing three key areas: Breakfast, lunch and afternoon tea; filling those covers all day long if possible."

Meanwhile, The Gardens Group, which has centres in Sherborne and Poundbury in Dorset and in Yeovil, Somerset, has seen a strong month for core gardening products.

Mike Burks, Managing Director of The Gardens Group, said: “Despite the wet, October was a strong month for sales of core gardening especially winter bedding, bulbs, herbaceous, shrubs and trees. Fruit also did well. The half-term holiday saw a good boost to trade and this footfall really gave Christmas a good launch. Autumn as a whole has been very positive across the board including restaurant sales.”

In Northern Ireland Creative Gardens Limited, which has centres in Donaghadee, Bushmills has seen mild weather lead to a rise in sales.

Philip Gass, Finance & Marketing Director at Creative Gardens Limited, said: “In October our like for like sales comparing 2013 with 2014 were up 4.8% at our Donaghadee store and 6.6% at our Bushmills store. The main growth at both centres came from the same areas including strong, early Christmas sales, outdoor plants up by 13%, fruit and veg and houseplants sales up by 51% and 67% and some good late barbecue sales.

“The biggest financial increase came from good café and food sales, which were up by 10.8%. Generally the weather has been kind to us in Northern Ireland, reasonably mild and not too much rain, which always works in our favour.”

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, log on to www.facebook.com/pages/GardenCentreAssociation or follow the organisation on Twitter at www.twitter.com/GC_Association.

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Photograph caption: Will Armitage, Chairman of the GCA.

