

Media release for the Garden Centre Association

Record turnout at GCA regional meetings

FIVE-hundred people turned out for the Garden Centre Association (GCA) regional meetings last month (July, 2014) a 25% increase in the amount of attendees at meetings held at the same time last year (2013).

In July the GCA held meetings in locations across the country to announce the results of its annual inspections.

Iain Wylie, Chief Executive of the GCA, explained: “It was a busy July for us with five area meetings taking place across the country.

“All of the meetings were exceptionally well attended with around 500 attendees in total, which is up on the figures from last year. One of our aims has been to increase regional activity so it is fantastic to see so many of our members turn out.

“During the meetings we announced the results of our annual inspections and presented awards to those that came top in the various categories.

“There were also presentations given by the inspectors where they presented the findings from the area, highlighted best practice and new ideas.”

The awards are decided by the results of the annual inspections, which take place at all GCA garden centres. Garden centres have no advance warning about when their inspection will take place and they do not have the option to turn away the inspector.

Ian Boardman, GCA Inspector, said: “Overall it was a good year for standards and some centres had really put huge effort in. I saw this in my areas of Scotland, Northern Ireland and North Thames where there was some amazing creativity and top notch retailing.

“Some ideas and innovations were so good they could have national significance, so watch this space.”

The top scoring centres overall, nationally, in both the Destination Garden Centre and Garden Centre categories will be re-inspected before the titles of Garden Centre of the Year and Destination Garden Centre of the Year are announced at the GCA annual conference taking place in January 2015.

Andy Campbell, who was the inspector presiding over the meetings for the Wales & West and Midlands regions, said: “The area award presentations were incredibly well supported by members, with many bringing along several of their team to learn new and different ways of doing things.

“As always the retail standards this year continued to improve and the levels of commercial creativity and innovation were exceptional.”

Meanwhile it was a similar story at the North West/North East meeting.

Liz Hutson, who was the inspector presiding over the meeting, said: “It was an excellent turnout for the North East/North West awards evening.

“There seems to be a real desire to continue to improve standards. I was particularly impressed with the standard of indoor lifestyle and the quality of many of the restaurants.”

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 or visit www.gca.org.uk.

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For further media details, please call Porcupine PR on 01278 446801 or email Capella@porcupinepr.co.uk. Alternatively, please contact Iain Wylie, GCA Chief Executive on 07843 633408 or email Iain@gca.org.uk.

Photograph caption one: (Front row, third on the right) Will Armitage, Chairman of the GCA and (back row, second on the left) Iain Wylie, GCA Chief Executive, with GCA members during the Wales and West area meeting.

Photograph caption two: Will Armitage, Chairman of the GCA, with members of staff at Perrywood Garden Centre and Nurseries during the North Thames area meeting.

