

Media release for the Garden Centre Association

New GCA Chair plans to reinvigorate the regions

THE GARDEN Centre Association's (GCA) new Chairman pledged to rejuvenate the organisation's regional groups as he took on the chains of office at the body's annual conference last week (January 27, 2014).

Will Armitage, Managing Director of Armitage's Home and Garden in West Yorkshire, says he wants to get the GCA regions back to being fighting fit during his two-year tenure.

He said: "The GCA should be proud of what it has to offer. It's a pretty unique networking opportunity for like-minded people. Our conference has always been a great place to meet and this year was no exception.

"It's great to share information with other like-minded garden centre owners and operators. The GCA's strength lies in its membership and the opportunities members have to get together and discuss what they're doing well, and to share their experiences.

"I want to expand the membership and through stronger regional groups help members get more from the body. In the late 1990s and early 2000s regional activity was very strong so it would be good for that to be reinvigorated again. The other two pledges that I asked the membership to make me accountable for were building on GROW, our online learning resource, and increasing overall membership."

Will predicts 2014 will be a good year for garden centres too and he believes economic confidence is coming back.

"The consumer is definitely getting more confident about spending and I'd like to think that bigger-ticket items such as larger specimen plants, barbecues and garden furniture will start to do well again this year. More and more customers are going online to buy everyday products that they don't want to queue for at the garden centre.

"They're coming to our centres for different reasons and we all need to capitalise on our individuality. There's the leisure aspect we offer, the catering and the wonderful relaxed ambience – perfect for a potter.

"People still want to go to have social interactions, face-to-face with a human beings so I don't think the Internet will damage our sales but can only enhance them. All garden centres are seeing a growth in food sales and at my two garden centres we're selling more instant planted products than ever. Overall I feel the industry's future is bright."

For further information, please call 01993 871456. Alternatively, please visit www.gca.org.uk, log on to www.facebook.com/pages/Garden-Centre-Association or follow the organisation on Twitter at www.twitter.com/GC_Association.

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

Photograph caption: GCA Chairman, Will Armitage.

