

Media release for the Garden Centre Association

An inspector calls...

GARDEN centre owners and managers have been sent notifications to explain that the Garden Centre Association (GCA) annual inspections are now underway (March 17 until June 13, 2014).

Each member garden centre will be assessed by an inspector across all departments and awarded an overall score.

Will Armitage, Chairman of the GCA, said: “The annual inspections take place from March 17 until June 13 and will begin with an assessment from an independent inspector.

“Once this is complete, the inspector will discuss his/her findings with the garden centre’s owners, managers and staff in a constructive feedback session. This allows the management team to make any changes necessary, based on the findings, straightaway.

“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.”

This year’s inspectors are: Liz Hutson, Andy Campbell, Ian Boardman and Roger Crookes. The four have already met recently for a ‘consistency day’, where they each did a trial run inspection and then checked they were marking consistently with each other.

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

Iain Wylie, GCA Chief Executive, explained: “We have urged all garden centres to be prepared for the inspections. They do not know when the inspector is dropping in but they do know the potential date range.

“They are not able to turn away the inspector, as the unannounced visit is a vital part of the GCA inspection process. Inspections cannot be delayed or deferred because of any ongoing development work – customers see this when they visit and so will the inspectors! The garden centres will not lose marks because of such works, provided they are carried out safely and disruption is minimised with the customer in mind.

“The inspector will make him/herself known upon arrival at the centre and will proceed with the inspection alone, before delivering the feedback session of approximately 45 minutes.

“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. The top 10 centres will receive a Garden Centre of Excellence Award and all centres scoring 75% or above receive the Highly Commended certificate.

“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 information, please call 0118 930 8918. 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.

