

**Media release for the Garden Centre Association**

# **Garden centres give GCA inspection feedback online**

MEMBERS of the Garden Centre Association (GCA) can for the first time this year (2014) give feedback on their annual inspections online.

Four inspectors from the industry body are currently visiting its 200 members.

Will Armitage, Chairman of the GCA, said: “Garden centres are asked to give feedback at the end of their inspections and for the first time this year they will be able to do so via the web, making it both easier and quicker for them.”

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

Will added: “The round of annual inspections started on March 17 and run until June 13 and 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. 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. 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.

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.

“This year we have made it easier for members to give feedback to the GCA on their inspection experience and make suggestions. We are asking centres to complete their own feedback online rather than the paper based system we have used in the past. It is very simple to do and it takes less time – a matter of minutes. It is very important that we receive this information as it will ensure the right improvements are made in the future to continue to provide maximum benefit to our members

“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.

“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.”

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.

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/Garden-Centre-Association](https://www.facebook.com/pages/Garden-Centre-Association) or follow the organisation on Twitter at [www.twitter.com/GC\\_Association](https://www.twitter.com/GC_Association).

**ENDS**

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

