
Garden Centre Retail

Non-traditional categories shine despite weather in June



Sales in non-traditional categories at garden centres across the country were up during June (2016) but due to wet weather traditional categories were down according to the Garden Centre Association's (GCA) Barometer of Trade (BoT) report.

Outdoor plant sales were down -4.70% and sales of houseplants were down -1.33% while clothing was up 18.01% and catering was up 10.65%.

Iain Wylie, GCA Chief Executive, explained: "June's BoT figures are a bit of a contrast to what we saw in May. Due to the May Bank Holidays we saw super sales in more traditional categories but June was a bit of a washout with lots of wet weather, leading to sales being down in the traditional categories.

"Garden Sundries were down -4.11% and furniture and barbecue sales were at -8.13% while seed and bulb sales were up slightly at 0.07%. Sales in pets and aquatics departments were down -1.37%.

"At times like this, when we can't rely on the Great British weather, we can rely on the fact that many garden centres are now destinations with restaurants, cafes and even farm shops and people don't visit them just for the plants anymore. This is proved in the rise in sales in

non-traditional categories. Food hall and farm shop sales were up 4.32% and gifts were up 0.31%.”

Sales showed a Year to Date increase of 3.85% and June’s overall monthly sales, compared to the same month last year were -1.47% down.

The BoT reports allow members to compare their trading positions with other centres.

Justin Williams, Managing Director at Fron Goch Garden Centre in Wales, which saw good sales in its restaurant in June, said: “June, in which many core gardening lines struggled against last year’s figures, saw the restaurant hold its monthly average increase on last year of 20%. Last summer, in the restaurant, we invested in a re-fit and increased the number of covers to 200, which has delivered 20% growth since September 1, 2015.”

The GCA represents nearly 200 garden centres nationwide.

Tammy Woodhouse, Managing Director at Millbrook Garden Centres in Kent and East Sussex, which had good plant sales during June, said: “I would put our good plant sales in June largely down to our Rose Festival, which we have been running for three years. We find it a really good way to shift the focus from bedding and give customers a good reason to visit.

“We work with the growers and they select the best looking roses in flower to send us and we create lovely displays. We hold a preview evening for our best customers, with rose specialists on hand, customers can shop with a glass of fizz and chocolate dipped strawberries and mini rose scones. Not only do we see an increase in our rose sales but it also grows our overall plant sales.”

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