

# Local Gardener

## Furniture and barbecue sales sizzle in summer

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CUSTOMERS at garden centres across the country made good use of their gardens during the warmer weather with purchases of furniture and barbecues according to the Garden Centre Association's (GCA) Barometer of Trade results.

Furniture and barbecue sales were up 12.10% with hard landscaping sales close behind at 8.74%.



Iain Wylie, GCA Chief Executive, explained: "We did enjoy some good weather this summer and from the results of sales in furniture and barbecues it looked like the Great British public spent a lot of this time in their gardens, which is great to see."

“They also bought clothing as sales were up 13.96%. Seed and bulb sales were generally down -16.50% due to the time of the year and outdoor plants were up just 2.55%. Houseplant sales were up 1.48% and garden sundries 6.48%.”

Pets and aquatics sales were up 4.07%, food hall and farm shop sales up 1.92% and catering 4.55%. Gift sales were down -3.26%.

Sales showed a Year to Date increase of 4% and August’s overall increase was 5%.

Iain added: “The regions that saw the biggest increase in sales during the month compared to the same month last year was South Thames at 6.77% up and Wales and West at 6.37% up. The Midlands area saw the biggest YTD change of 18.84%.”

The GCA BoT reports are compiled using actual sales figures and provide an up-to-date trading position statement. They are made available mid-month following the end of the prior month after all member garden centres have submitted their results.

Steven Palmer, Finance Director at Squires Garden Centres, said: “August was a good trading month for our garden centres with strong sales in plants and lifestyle categories. Our Café Bars continue to trade strongly reflecting the increasing UK trend for eating out.”

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

Philip Gass, Director of Creative Gardens Ltd, said: “August was a decent month trading for us, weather was mixed but nonetheless sales across the board were up around 3% at each of our centres compared to the same month last year.

“Some of the noticeable improvements on August 2015 was the bird care department, which was up more than 200%, helped by a club customer promotion. Plants were up 8.7% and gardening general was up 15.7%. Coffee shops and gift shops struggled a bit in August, partly as a result of less customer club promotion in the café. Our transaction count was down slightly but average sales increased by 8.1%.”

The GCA represents nearly 200 garden centres nationwide.

Mike Burks, Managing Director of The Gardens Group, said: “It’s been a good summer with all parts of the business working well. Summer is a growth time at the moment albeit on a much smaller scale than the key seasons.”

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