

Media release for the Garden Centre Association

April showers dampen traditional garden centre sales

COLD and wet weather in April put a dampener on sales in traditional categories but boosted non-traditional ones at member garden centres according to the Garden Centre Association's (GCA) Barometer of Trade results.

Sales of houseplants were up just 1.92% while sales of outdoor plants were down -17.47%. Clothing sales were up 9.95% and catering was up 8.90%.

Iain Wylie, GCA Chief Executive, explained: "April was a very cold and wet month so it's no surprise that sales in traditional categories were down. The frost seemed to linger a lot longer this year, which would have put a lot of people off gardening.

"Another factor for poor sales was that Easter was very early this year, in March, compared to 2015, when it was in April.

"Despite sales in traditional categories being down, there was some positivity in clothing and catering. Food hall and farm shops sales were also up 3.70% compared to the same month last year."

Seed and bulb sales were down -9.28%, garden sundries were down -16.21% and furniture and barbecues sales were down -23.50%.

Steven Palmer, Financial Director at Squires Garden Centres, which has centres across Surrey, Berkshire and Sussex, said: "Direct comparisons are distorted due to Easter falling in April in 2015 but not in 2016. The unseasonably poor weather in the south meant reduced demand for traditional seasonal gardening products, including furniture.

"However, demand for gifts remains robust and bird care products benefitted from the poor weather."

Sales in pets and aquatics departments were up 1.45%. Gift sales were down -1.14% and hard landscaping down -12.68%.

Mark Winchester, Managing Director at Blackbrooks Garden Centre in East Sussex, said: "April was unseasonably cold and while our gifts, clothing and catering were up, our horticultural products were down. The only real winner was our houseplant department, but this could have been in part due to a redesign incorporating a walk through department on the way to the checkouts, resulting in a 100% uplift in sales."

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.

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

The GCA represents nearly 200 garden centres nationwide.

For further information, please call 0118 930 8918. Alternatively, please visit www.gca.org.uk, log on to www.facebook.com/pages/GardenCentreAssociation or follow the organisation on Twitter at www.twitter.com/GC_Association.

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Photograph caption one: Squires Garden Centres.

Photograph caption two: The new walkthrough houseplant department at Blackbrooks Garden Centre.