



The names of the six finalists of the Garden Centre Association (GCA) & Westland Rising Stars Programme have been announced.

[GARDEN CENTRE NEWS/GARDENFORUMHOMEPAGE/GARDENFORUM](#) 22nd October 2015 The HG Team 0

The names of the six finalists of the Garden Centre Association (GCA) & Westland Rising Stars Programme have been announced.¹

The names of the six finalists of the **Garden Centre Association (GCA) & Westland Rising Stars Programme** have been announced.

Will Clark (Barton Grange), Kathryn Bailey (Barton Grange), Sophie Liebthal (Coolings), Sam Clark (Cowells), Matt Turner (Squires, Badshot Lea) and Jack Fillingham (Sunshine) have all made it through to the final challenge where they will present at the GCA Conference in Brighton in January. The overall winner will then be chosen by conference delegates.

The results are the culmination of an eight month programme in which candidates attended three merchandising Masterclasses run by IBBIS Director and training facilitator Ian Boardman., Under the guidance of Ian, all the Rising Stars have made a real and positive impact in their centres, with each presenting the initiatives they have driven to both grow sales and income in their departments. All presented the importance of keeping hotspots fresh, creating clear signage, organising themed displays and demonstrated the benefits of teamwork.

Ian Boardman said: "Each year I am blown away by the quality and professionalism of all the Rising Stars taking part and this year was no exception. We may have picked a final six, but their achievements in the workplace prove they are all stars in their own right. They have grown as people over the course of the programme, with more confidence and selfbelief. This year we stretched them with a project which

took them out of their comfort zones – and to work across departments. They all achieved excellent results”

Keith Nicholson, Marketing Director for Westland Horticulture said: “On behalf of Westland I’d like to congratulate the Rising Stars finalists for getting this far. The talent we have in this industry is exceptional and every year the standard just keeps getting higher. We now face a very exciting GCA conference final where delegates will get the chance to vote for the winner – Rising Star of the Year 2015. Also at the conference will be announcing an expanded Rising Stars programme for 2016, which will allow a wider participation across the UK.”

Iain Wylie, Chief Executive of the Garden Centre Association (GCA) said: “We now have to wait just a little longer to find out who’s won. This year it’s the 50th anniversary of the GCA. The Rising Stars presentations are always the highlight of the GCA conference and this year will definitely not disappoint!”