



September sees sales of clothing and food soar

GARDENCENTRE RETAILHOMEPAGE/GARDENFORUM 19th October 2015 The HG Team 0

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GARDEN centres saw good sales in clothing and food hall/farm shops during September according to the Garden Centre Association's Barometer of Trade (BoT) results.

Clothing sales were up 30% compared to the same month in 2014 while food hall/farm shop sales were up 14.5%.

Iain Wylie, GCA Chief Executive, explained: "The weather during September gave gardeners great conditions for beginning their autumn planning and planting. Sales in clothing were up during the month so it would seem customers were not only preparing their gardens for the changing season, but were preparing themselves too by stocking up on wellies and



waterproofs.

"It was only back in July that clothing and food hall/farm shops were on the rise and it is interesting to see this repeat for September. With the onset of autumn many food halls and farm shops changed their seasonal produce so had something new and tasty for customers to pick up and try."

For the month of September the overall garden centre performance was up by just 2% compared to the same month last year.

Paul Gingell, Managing Director at Burford Garden Company in Oxfordshire, said: "September on the whole saw very favourable weather conditions for the autumn gardener, with sunny days accompanied by chilly temperatures overnight. On the back of the boost to plant sales throughout the month, we have also seen excellent growth in both clothing sales and cafe and food hall sales.

“Aside from the boost a new season always gives us, clothing sales growth has come on the back of our focus on natural fibres in our ranges, creative merchandising in collections and dedicated staffing to maximise sales opportunities. Both our café and food hall have surged ahead of last year’s sales performance, with significant growth coming from luxury grab ‘n’ go meals to eat in or take home. Our insistence on cooking from scratch every day, using only local produce and ingredients, gives us a great advantage over many chain-based competitors.”

Catering sales were up 8.33% compared to 2014 while Christmas sales start to rise with a change of 8.5% compared to last year.

Gifts were up 4.5%, pets and aquatics up 5% and furniture and barbecues were up 9.8%

A rise of 9.5% was seen in sales of houseplants.

Katie Eckley, Manager at The Old Railway Line Garden Centre in Powys, which was recently named Best Garden Centre in the Wales & West at the GCA’s regional awards, said: “Overall September was quite a flat month for us even with the weather being pretty good. Plants and outdoor living suffered but catering, clothing, garden sundries and food hall pulled it back for us.

“We have just re-fitted our food hall ready for what will hopefully be a good Christmas season. For the month of September it was up 4.4%. Clothing showed very strong sales and was over 54% up. As a result of these sales we have added more lines for the autumn.

“The restaurant and coffee shop have had a great month with the restaurant 7% up and the coffee shop 78% up. We have just re-decorated our original coffee shop to give a new lease of life and this seems to have attracted more customers. We are hoping to extend the opening times and expand the menu available here over the coming weeks to try and ease the pressure on our restaurant and offer a different experience for our customers.

“Garden sundries performed well during September considering plants suffered, normally we see the two rise and fall together. Garden sundries bucked the trend and was up by over 12% which shows that with the weather being good our customers were still gardening but their summer bedding plants were still looking too good to replace.”

The BoT results are the only official GCA trading figures to be released.

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



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