



The GCA is set to reveal best area garden centres

THE GARDEN Centre Association (GCA) will next month (July, 2012) reveal the Best in Area garden centre winners at six awards presentation evenings taking place nationwide.

The annual inspection process at member garden centres is now complete and the GCA will be presenting the winners with their awards at events in each area in July and August.

Peter Burks, Chairman of the GCA, said: “The annual inspection process included an assessment from an independent inspector. All of our members have now had their inspection for 2012. Immediately after each garden centre assessment the inspector discussed their findings with the owners, managers and staff in a constructive feedback session.

“This allowed management to implement any necessary changes, based on the inspection findings immediately.

“Many GCA members have said that the unique annual inspections and constructive feedback sessions are one of the biggest benefits of membership. It is a fantastic motivational and management tool and really keeps staff on their toes, making sure they are always doing their absolute best.

“The industry has been faced with a tough year so far, with hosepipe bans and drought conditions, followed by unseasonably cold and very rainy weather. Trading has been tough but we truly believe that better standards lead to better business and this is something we have been helping our members to focus on.”

The results from the inspections form the basis for many GCA awards. At the presentation evenings the winners of the Best in Area awards will be announced. These will go to the garden centre in each area that scored the highest mark on the inspection.

Garden centres awarded Best in Area will be put forward for national awards including Destination Garden Centre and Garden Centre of the Year, which will be announced at the GCA annual conference taking place from January 27 until 29.

Peter added: “Our area chairmen and women are currently competing to organise the best area awards presentation evening. Mike Burks, Chair of the Wales and West area, is looking to create the most active event by organising a bike ride on Monday, July 9 between garden centres or a canoeing trip to a local winery. The theme is water, which is in-keeping with the trials we have all faced this year.

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“Midlands Chair, Philippa McKean has organised her region’s evening alongside Solex and will be staging the awards at Webbs of Wychbold on Tuesday, July 17. She wanted to give members a chance to meet representatives from Solex and visit one of the country’s best garden centres.

“The North West and North East areas have combined their presentation evenings and will be holding the event at Barton Grange Garden Centre, Brock, on Thursday, July 19. Ian Wylie, North West Chair and James Ducker, North East Chair, have also organised a fish and chip cruise.”

Members from North Thames will enjoy an informal buffet and a chance to share best practice through presentations at their award evening organised by area Chair, Caroline Owen, on Tuesday, July 10 and members from Scotland and Northern Ireland will celebrate by raising a wee dram on Wednesday, August 22.

Ross McEwan, Chairman of the GCA South Thames area, said: “We are all really looking forward to our area awards presentation evenings and I know all the area chairs have tried to set up interesting and informative events for members.

“I am really looking forward to the South Thames event, members will enjoy a day visit to Knights Garden Centre in Surrey and the awards will be held at Betchworth Village Hall on Wednesday, July 11. The events are open to staff at all levels and act as a great opportunity for people to see all the great displays and merchandising from around the region in a couple of hours.”

The GCA represents nearly 200 garden centres nationwide.

Through sharing information and its inspection programme the GCA helps members to achieve high standards in customer service, plant quality and reliability.

For further details about the GCA, please call 01993 871456, visit www.gca.org.uk, log on to www.facebook.com/pages/Garden-Centre-Association or follow the organisation on Twitter at www.twitter.com/GC_Association.