Garden Centre Association

About the Garden Centre Association

The GCA has its origins in the very roots of the garden centre movement, which surprisingly has only been in existence for around half a century. The term 'garden centre' was not coined until the early 1960s - before that, gardeners bought their plants from nurseries or by mail order.

Garden centres as such began to take off after the idea that plants could be sold in containers all the year round - an American development - was pioneered in the UK by a handful of forward-thinking nurserymen. This had the effect not only of spreading demand beyond the traditional planting 'bottlenecks' of spring and, in particular, autumn (especially for roses) but also of making plants easy to transport and to handle as a retail commodity.

Stewarts, Russells, Wyevale and Notcutts (who coined the title Plant Area or Planteria for their first cash and carry retail unit), were among those early "container revolutionaries" who helped to shape the garden centre industry we know today.

By 1966, the movement was sufficiently well developed to need specialist representation so a Garden Centres Group was formed within the Horticultural Trades Association. One of its first decisions was to set up an inspection scheme for members, who were entitled to "Approved Centre" status.

The following year, the group joined the European alliance which eventually became the International Garden Centre Association (IGCA) but it was not until 1979 that it became independent of the HTA and appointed David Nichol as full-time administrator. In 1986, the group finally adopted the name of The Garden Centre Association and moved into its own premises in Reading and eventually to Chester, where the head office is now situated.

Today, the Garden Centre Association, headed by Peter Burks, the Chief Executive together with Laura Smith; Executive Assistant and Antony Snow (Instructional Designer for the e-learning initiative, GCA GROW), represents approximately 190 garden centres – widely regarded as being among the UK's most progressive garden centres – together with 170 suppliers, our Associate Members. As the market has grown and the expectations of customers have increased, many have developed to become full scale 'leisure destination centres' offering a rich and rewarding shopping experience based around plants and related products for the home and garden.

GCA Associate Membership

The Garden Centre Association was formed in 1966 as a forum for like-minded individuals to meet and exchange ideas. The principles differ little today. It is still a forum and catalyst for communication between members from the garden retail and supplier community.

The GCA asks its garden centre members, from the moment they join, to meet the highest retail standards and to participate in an annual inspection process, to ensure these standards are maintained and improved. GCA members, large and small, set the benchmark for high retailing standards within the industry which others can only aspire to. The Association can state, proudly, that it represents the leading garden centres within the UK and worldwide as part of its membership of the International Garden Centre Association (IGCA).

The Garden Centre Association
4 Marcher Court, Sealand Road,
Chester, Cheshire, CH1 6BS
Tel: 01244 952170
Email: info@gca.org.uk
Web: www.gca.org.uk

Registered in England No. 1458155 VAT No: 315 9247 54

Garden Centre Association

What does the Association offer to its Associate Members?

You can keep in touch with, and partake in activities with, 190+ of the UK's leading garden centres

- The chance as an Associate to attend as delegates, the annual GCA conference which attracts 300+ delegates. The conference is an opportunity to meet with the owners and senior management of member centres and related businesses, over a 2-3 day period. The delegates are decision makers for their respective businesses and the conference provides an excellent opportunity to make new contacts in an informal setting and to promote your business at a dedicated supplier event.
- A free entry in the Directory of Members, with an opportunity to advertise. The publication is produced annually and is a 'bible' for many members and extensively used throughout the year.
- A free listing in, together with a copy of, The Garden Centre Yearbook, the GCA annual handbook distributed to 1,000 companies within the industry.
- Regular news updates are sent to members, in the form of emails and an "e-newsletter" and you are able, free of charge, to send out advertising material or communicate with members when these are sent out.
- A free entry listing on the GCA website.
- Free access to the Monthly Barometer of Trade Summary Report via the GCA website.
- Various other benefits explained in more detail in the Benefits of Membership.

What does it Cost?

There is an annual membership fee, due each January. For your initial application, there is a small joining fee plus annual membership fee.

Applications received before and approved at:-

- March Executive Committee meeting – full year's fee (current year)
- June Executive Committee meeting – half year's fee (current year)
- September Executive Committee meeting – half year's fee (current year)
- November Executive Committee meeting – full year's fee (following year)

How to Apply

Applications are welcome from any company that has at least 12 months trading history with at least 1 GCA member or company you currently work with. Applicants should provide the contact details for two GCA members or 1 GCA member and another company, who they would like to use as a reference. The completed application form, together with payment for the appropriate membership and joining fee, should be sent to the GCA office. Your application will be placed before the Executive Committee, for approval, at the next scheduled meeting.

The Garden Centre Association
4 Marcher Court, Sealand Road,
Chester, Cheshire, CH1 6BS
Tel: 01244 952170
Email: info@gca.org.uk
Web: www.gca.org.uk

Registered in England No. 1458155 VAT No: 315 9247 54

Garden Centre Association

Benefits of GCA Associate Membership

GCA CONFERENCE

- Opportunity to attend the annual conference and learn from inspirational speakers
- Meet and network with decision makers in both formal and informal settings
- Dedicated 'exhibition' event at the conference to meet high level decision makers and publicise your company
- Extended range of sponsorship opportunities available

PUBLICATIONS

- Free listing in the GCA Directory of Members and Best of British with the opportunity to advertise
- Free listing on GCA website
- Opportunity to advertise in the Best of British Garden Centres Magazine published every January to coincide with the Conference. Free advert for Associate members that attend the conference.

MAIL SHOTS / MEMBER CONTACT LIST

- Your promotional flyers can be emailed out to garden centre members free of charge, up to four times per year
- Complimentary copies of the GCA Directory of Members and Best of British magazine

ANNUAL AWARD

- Opportunity to be nominated by your GCA customers for the 'GCA Associate Member of the Year' Award

BAROMETER OF TRADE REPORT

- Sales volume trading statistics available to view on the GCA website:
  a) Sales for current month by category plus corresponding data for previous year and YTD
  b) Monthly sales turnover
  c) Turnover by size of garden centre

FORUM OF PRIVATE BUSINESS (FPB)

- Founded in 1977 and representing around 25,000 UK-based private businesses. The FPB fights for fair treatment of private businesses and provides support to enable its members to grow profitably.
  As a GCA member you receive a 25% discount on full FPB membership. FPB would be on hand to help you join, which would include how to work out holiday entitlement, signpost to a resource like business debt line or gov.uk and supply a template on how to manage your fire risk assessment etc.

The Garden Centre Association
4 Marcher Court, Sealand Road,
Chester, Cheshire, CH1 6BS
Tel: 01244 952170
Email: info@gca.org.uk
Web: www.gca.org.uk

Registered in England No. 1458155 VAT No: 315 9247 54

Garden Centre Association

Membership Fees 2026

	Full Year	***Half Year***
One off joining fee	£100.00	£100.00
Membership fee	£950.00	£475.00
Total	£1,050.00	£575.00

The membership fee applicable depends upon when you apply to join and the application will be presented to the next Executive Committee meeting for approval:

- March meeting - full year's fee (current year)
- June meeting - half year's fee (current year)
- September meeting - half year's fee (current year)
- November meeting - full year's fee (following year)

Once you have become a member, each subsequent year of membership runs from 1st January to 31st December.

The membership fee for each calendar year is determined, annually, at the Association's AGM in January.

The initial membership fee has to be paid at the time of application. Once approved, all invoices issued to members are due within 30 days of the date of invoice.

If at any time in the future you wish to resign your membership, this must be done in writing to the Chief Executive by 30th November in the year prior to renewal, otherwise the following year's subscription, at the rate set at the AGM, will become due and your membership will continue for a further year.

The £100.00 joining fee is waived, as an additional benefit, for GIMA members. All other terms and conditions apply.

The above fees do not include VAT, which will be applied at the current rate

The Garden Centre Association
4 Marcher Court, Sealand Road,
Chester, Cheshire, CH1 6BS
Tel: 01244 952170
Email: info@gca.org.uk
Web: www.gca.org.uk

Registered in England No. 1458155 VAT No: 315 9247 54