



Re-open garden centres in Wales as soon as it is possible

The Welsh garden retail sector has a total impact on GDP of £177 million annually (directly & indirectly) and supports 3,700 jobs directly. The Welsh ornamental horticulture sector as a whole supports 18,000 jobs directly and contributes £503 million annually directly to GDP. Welsh consumer spending on ornamental horticultural goods totals £430 million per annum.

1. **The mental health and physical health benefits** of gardening and plants are well documented. Springtime is now here and the public needs to be allowed access to plants and garden goods to enable them to garden at home and maintain good mental health & physical wellbeing.
2. **First class social distancing.** Garden centres offer light, airy, open spaces and plant sales mainly take place in outdoor spaces. Our trade body, the HTA, has developed an enhanced Safe Trading Protocol for garden retailers to enable them to implement the most stringent protocols at their premises. Sales data shows that shopping trends in garden centres have become focussed on plants and garden products while consumers are planning their purchases and making less journeys for shopping meaning less browsing time while in store.
3. **Keeps people at home.** Giving people something to do at home keeps them at home and gardening is not just for those with gardens, but for those with balconies, allotments, or window boxes. 3 million new gardeners across the UK have taken up the hobby since lockdown. In allowing people to visit a garden centre they have something to do at home.
4. **Welsh growers are essential to our sector.** This is a key time of year. Growers already have the crops growing on their nurseries, so need confidence there will be an outlet for their plants, and they will not have to be disposed of and the confidence to plant follow on crops. Similarly, without a date for reopening Welsh garden centres are experiencing severe difficulties in purchasing stock from growers. Welsh growers traditionally supply Welsh outlets, 60% of which are retailers, with a Welsh plant production industry worth £23 million. Supply of bedding plants to garden centres and DIY stores account for 70% of the value of bedding plants supplied by growers – of which 70% happens between March–June and 58% of hardy nursery stock sales are in March-June.
5. **Garden centres are part of the ‘green economic growth’ agenda.** They underwrite a production sector that is essential in fulfilling the Welsh Government’s environmental plan and the wider ambitions around climate change.
6. **Click & collect & home deliveries,** while welcome is not sustainable, particularly during the main season (March to June). They will not be able to fulfil the public’s demand for plants. The investment required for home deliveries (IT, staffing & vans required) prohibits meaningful income. Online typically accounts for 10% to 15% of industry sales.
7. **Garden centres are local stores.** In many rural areas garden centres operate as local community stores. Many offer a range of products including food halls, pet and aquatic supplies, bird care – which fall into the essential category.