

# GARDEN & HARDWARE YEARBOOK 2026

THE ESSENTIAL GUIDE FOR GARDEN CENTRE AND DIY STORE BUYERS



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## FROM THE EDITOR



Welcome to the Garden & Hardware Yearbook 2026.

The past year has underlined just how complex the trading environment has become for our industry. Unpredictable weather, spiralling costs and cautious consumers are reshaping how businesses plan, trade and invest. Growth remains possible, but it's

harder won – requiring sharper focus, better insight and a clearer understanding of where genuine opportunities can be created.

That state of play is examined head-on in these pages by leading voices from across the sector. Andrew Goodacre focuses on the evolving role of independent retailers, from the rise of self-sufficiency and the repair economy to the growing importance of community, service and local connection. Steve Richardson, meanwhile, sets out the wider outlook for 2026 – from margin pressure and regulatory change to the need to engineer demand, refine ranging and make better use of data and AI. In his annual foreword, Garden Centre Association CEO Peter Burks brings the discussion back to the shop floor, reflecting on the day-to-day realities of trading, the continued influence of weather, and the importance of collaboration across the sector.

Elsewhere in this issue, we explore how gardening and home improvement are becoming more accessible and resilient. Amber Tunney spotlights moments such as 'Tend It Like Beckham' that have helped bring grow-your-own firmly into the mainstream. Kersten Catella addresses the need for climate-resilient planting as weather extremes become the norm, while Dave Harker focuses on lowering barriers to entry through clearer ranges, simpler choices and better on-pack communication. Gemma Marchioni draws inspiration from live experiences such as Chelsea, showing how events can reconnect people with nature while creating impactful brand moments. Geoff Stonebanks, meanwhile, considers how retailers and customers alike can play a more active role in supporting garden wildlife.

As always, the Yearbook also serves as your definitive guide to the products, partners and expertise shaping the garden and hardware market today. My thanks to everyone who has contributed.

Eamonn Duff  
Editor

# Contributors



***Peter Burks***  
**CEO, Garden Centre Association**

Peter needs no introduction in the gardening industry. He helped set up and went on to run the multi award-winning Sanders Garden World in Somerset for more than 10 years. He has also held senior positions at Wyevale Garden Centres, Trelawney's in Cornwall and Fermoy's Garden Centre in Devon.  
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Steve is General Manager of the trade association BHETA, having been appointed in January 2026 from his previous role as Marketing Director. Earlier in his career, he spent almost a decade at Focus DIY, then the UK's fourth-largest DIY and gardening retailer.  
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***Andrew Goodacre***  
**CEO, British Independent Retailers Association (Bira)**

Andrew has devoted his career to strengthening Britain's high streets and the communities they support. Since taking over Bira's leadership in 2018, he has expanded membership by nearly a third, ensuring that independent retailers' needs are heard by government decision-makers.  
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Geoff is the owner of multi-award-winning garden, Driftwood, on the south coast that raises thousands of pounds for charity annually. His weekly and monthly gardening features can be found both online and in print, locally and nationally.  
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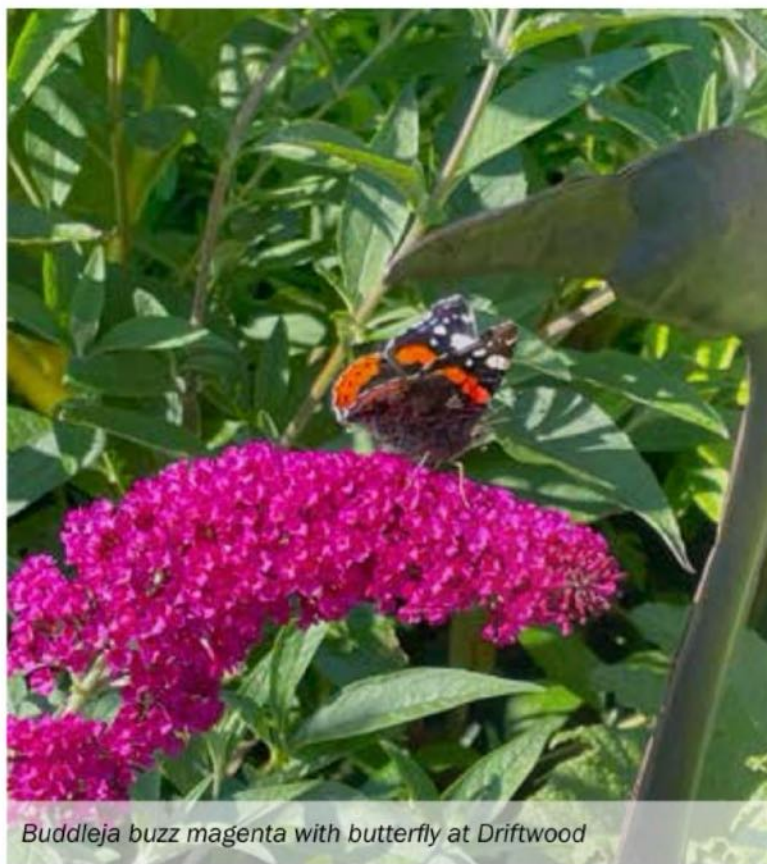
## NATURE'S PULL

**BY GEOFF STONEBANKS**

GARDEN MEDIA WRITER

*After a senior management career spanning more than two decades, Geoff retired early at 51 and headed in a completely different direction. Today, he's a well-established garden media writer and owner of multi-award-winning garden, Driftwood, on the south coast, that raises thousands of pounds for charity annually. Driftwood has appeared on BBC Gardeners' World. His weekly and monthly gardening features, meanwhile, can be found both online and in print, local and national. He writes about his own sanctuary and provides easy-to-follow constructive advice and guidance for others. Geoff is also a long-time garden opener and volunteer for the National Garden Scheme in Sussex. Here, he discusses growing public awareness and interest in gardening for wildlife.*

When I began my gardening life, way back in 2007, awareness of gardening for wildlife was not on my radar screen. How times have changed. Nowadays, there's a greater public awareness and, I'd argue, reckon more interest in the subject. I am constantly amazed at the numbers of birds, mainly robins, sparrows and a few blue tits, that fly around my garden here on the south coast, perched on the assorted metal sculptures, drinking from the several bird baths or emerging from the vast elaeagnus hedge, which certainly doubles as their bed and breakfast. Likewise, I take note of the bees in the garden and revel in having created the right space to attract them. I'm not sure that the public need any more focus on feeding birds as the market is saturated with some great ideas which



*Buddleja buzz magenta with butterfly at Driftwood*



*Adding water to a garden layout is the single easiest way to add wildlife value to a plot*

gardeners seem to engage with. Looking back to the early 2000s, I'm not convinced those who were identifying trends and stocking garden centres were promoting wildlife either, as I really don't recall being inspired to cater for it in what I saw at the time. Fast forward 25 years and that is not the case now.

Whether customers have a lawn, a patio or even a compact balcony, they can do so many small things to make a big impact for wildlife. The key to helping British species, both in the garden and in the wider landscape, is to provide the food and shelter they all need. Do we need to educate customers on what plants provide good access to pollen? Almost 20 years ago, as a novice, I certainly was unaware that many popular bedding plants like pansies and petunias are of little value to pollinators, as their

nectar content is low or inaccessible. Should we be pushing customers to buy those plants that will truly benefit garden pollinators? We can create standout exhibits and focus on displays for those wanting to

attract bees or butterflies. One of the most eye-catching shrubs in my garden is a stunning buddleja called Buzz Magenta, its beautiful flowers are also real magnets for butterflies. Garden centres are a major source of ornamental flowering plants to





the general public, so increasing the availability and more importantly, signposting the pollinator-friendly varieties could have a direct and positive impact on resource availability for pollinators throughout the country. Reports I've read reveal that many flowering plants on sale in garden centres are not attractive to flower-visiting insects, in some instances even when labelled as pollinator-friendly.

Overall, awareness of biodiversity loss has generated a movement toward wildlife-friendly gardening, transforming residential spaces into vital habitats. Key actions to inspire garden centre visitors need to include planting native species, creating hedgehog highways, installing water features, and reducing chemical use to support birds, insects, and mammals, to name but a few, many of which we can currently see in some sales outlets. The growing awareness of wildlife in gardens seems to really be transforming residential outdoor spaces from purely ornamental areas into, dare I say it, vital ecological havens. This recent shift moves away from seeing gardens as possible biological deserts toward recognising them as a major national habitat. Estimates suggest we could be talking about an area covering 10 million acres in Britain alone. That's one pretty large expanse that we could help control and influence.

So, what more can retailers do to encourage customers to further support wildlife in their own spaces? If, like me when I originally started out, those buying from garden centres are inexperienced novices and have no real knowledge or concept of gardening, then they can be influenced by the way products



and ideas are presented to them during their visits. In many ways, I believe we are pushed towards creating neat and tidy gardens with the products on offer but a true wildlife-friendly garden would benefit from a bit of neglect, or even a faded elegance, like a pile of dead wood left in a shady spot, which in itself creates a wonderful habitat for wildlife. For the arty gardeners out there, they could create an architectural and rustic sculpture effect. Why not try and demonstrate this in garden centre displays? Could more be done to offer practical hands on demonstrations in larger venues to encourage customers to be a bit different and engage with them? In terms of selling, could more ideas be planted in customers' heads by perhaps grouping, say hedge shrubs and indicating whether

they are good for nesting of particular type of wildlife? My garden hedgerows are filled with birds, notably robins, and sparrows and wrens, oh and a few blue tits. In my own plot all those years ago, without actually realising it, establishing good, tall hedging on all sides of the garden created a number of guest houses, loved by birds. Should we rethink how water features are being sold? Are we purely in the market to sell them as aesthetic garden features or could there be a greater emphasis of the many benefits they bring to a garden in terms of introducing wildlife? It is said that adding water to a garden layout is the single easiest way to add wildlife value to a plot, no matter how small it is. Small ponds are fantastic for water boatmen, pond skaters and the like. Dragonfly

larvae usually prefer bigger ponds but don't always stick to the rules. Likewise, some amphibians, particularly common toads and great crested newts, prefer to breed in large ponds. Frogs and other newts will likely lay their spawn in small areas, ponds that are only one to two metres across. In my own garden I have eight small water features, including a corten steel pond, which certainly attracts frogs and other wildlife. Customers need to be assured that a pond of any size will help amphibians to stay cool and moist in summer, as well as benefiting other local wildlife. So, let's try and rethink our approach in 2026.

[www.driftwoodbysca.co.uk](http://www.driftwoodbysca.co.uk)