

# concession

## NEWS

### UPDATE



## An Industry Profile – Simon Edwards Operations Director – Golden Acres Garden Centres



In this week's edition of Concession News we meet Simon Edwards, the Operations Director for Golden Acres Garden Centres to get his views on the Garden Retail Sector and the role of Concessions within.

### How did you get started in the Horticulture sector?

Growing up within a horticultural family, I was always destined to develop my career within the sector! As a fruit grower I was introduced to working with a variety of horticultural challenges from an early age. My first role was working for ADAS where I made contact with a lot of garden centre owners and from there I worked at Quinton Edwards. I have been with The Golden Acres Group for 13 years.

### What have been the most important changes you have experienced within garden centre retail?

I have found that there has been an increasing professionalism within the sector, in particular in recent years. There has also been an improvement on the standard of 'Retail' within garden centres as site owners look to broaden their appeal. Garden Centres are expanding upon their technical, horticultural expertise as they look to provide a more varied service to their customers and promote a wider range.

### What changes do you see shaping the industry within the next 10 years?

The challenges I foresee within the sector are with regard to supply issues, as we need to restore the confidence from retailers and the supply chain in holding stock. There are also economic factors that we need to be aware of which could affect the costs of running the business.

We need to be aware of the unpredictable weather which we have seen already cause an effect on our 'Core' season.

We are also seeing a reduction in the size of gardens within new builds and the emergence of housing developments which is increasing the numbers of flats and apartments which could prove challenging unless we diversify as a business.

### **How are you combating the seasonality of the sector?**

We are trying to build more reasons for people to visit all year round. We have invested into our Coffee Shops and worked with our buyers to focus on ranges as we look to offer our customers a more interesting diverse retail offer.



Concessions have helped to enhance this year round appeal as they offer expertise on diversified aspects of the business which the garden centre personnel, would not usually be able to provide our customers.

### **What have been your experiences with Concession tenants within your sites?**

I have found that the stand out Concessions are those who want to work with the garden centre. Those that rely on garden centre footfall alone do not succeed where as the tenants that generate their own footfall tend to be the most successful.

Cotton Traders are an excellent example of a Concession tenant that wants to work in conjunction with the host and we find their staff have been excellent in promoting their business, managing their area and providing excellent retail standards.

I have found that as part of this “Partnership” approach it is important for the management of the site to “Manage” the Concession tenants as though it was part of their own operation. The standards they provide directly affect the perception of the site as a whole as customers do not usually distinguish the difference.

### **In your own words, what do you consider to be the main benefits of working with Concession partners?**

In addition to the expertise they can provide, Concessions definitely assist the bottom line with the rent they provide. The rent is not always the main factor for introducing Concessions however, as their income is only worth collecting if they are the right fit for the business. Some of our agreements incorporate turnover rents and so there is an added incentive for us to work with the tenants to ensure their success.

Concessions can also broaden the retail offer of a garden centre without the risk that a site owner would usually have if they were to introduce the offer themselves. The diversification Concessions provide helps us guard against the changes of an unpredictable seasonal operation, as well as supporting our core ranges and plans for the future.

## And finally, what has been the best Concession you have seen?

I have seen some interesting Concessions over the years! The most notable was a 'Brewery' tenant at a garden centre I saw recently. We have found that the hairdresser we work with at John Browns (Garden Centre) provides an exceptional footfall every day, all year round. Cotton Traders have added an excellent level of retail professionalism to the sites and our staff are more aware of our own standards as a result.

Golden Acres Garden Centres are a group of 5 garden centres based in the South of England and the Midlands. They work with a number of Concessions within their garden centres including Cotton Traders, Aquatics and a local hair dresser who won the Garden Retail Award for 'Concession of the Year' in 2009.

**For more information** on how concessions can improve the day out experience within garden centres feel free to contact us [info@firstfranchise.com](mailto:info@firstfranchise.com) – 01737 735041

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