

# Retail Theatre

Retail theatre and its impact on shoppers and purchasing



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It became clear that although the respondents were at the garden centre to purchase plants, they were often also there to enjoy the experience. Whether as a husband and wife, friends, mother and daughter, or other grouping. The layout of the plant area was a vital part of that. As more garden retail moves online, we believe shoppers will need better and better reasons for going to store to purchase plants rather than just buying them online. The experience that can be provided in store is not easily copied (certainly not online) and could therefore be part of a sustainable competitive advantage for store-based garden retailers.



### What the Shopper Research Showed



**Some main points that have come out of this and previous research are:**

1. The design and layout of the plant area has a strong influence on enjoyment of the shopping experience, and most likely with overall satisfaction with a garden centre
2. Centre pieces combining the theatrical and the quirky got strong positive emotional responses which tended to lead to linked sales of related items next to the centre piece
3. Among less experienced gardeners especially, there was an appetite for displays or centre pieces which show how the plants could look in a garden or outdoor space like their own



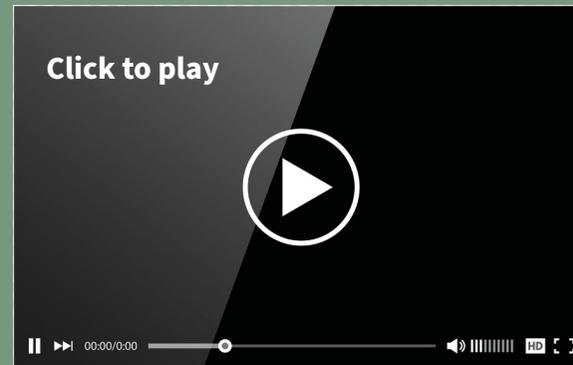
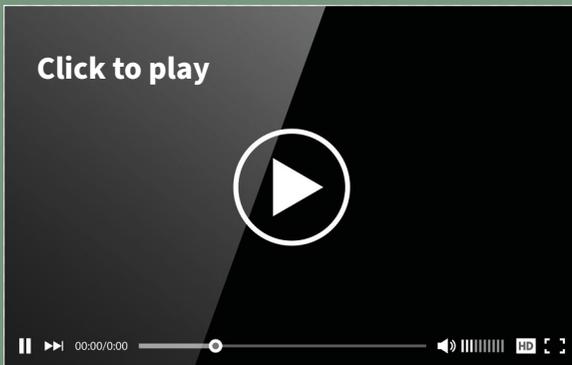
## 👁️ What the Shoppers Saw

### First Impressions Count

In this clip we see the impact a display has on entering the plant area. This display was highly effective at stopping shoppers and playing a part in relaxing them for the rest of their shop. We can note the eye fixing on the contrast of the flowers, and the texture of the curling grass which encourages touch early in the shopping trip. Creating a strong first impression through 'retail theatre' is likely to have a lasting impact on shopper recall of the shopping trip as a whole.

### Impact and Inspiration

This clip shows many of the things that made this arch-based centre piece one of the strongest fixtures in the store. We can see how it prompts a positive response and conversation. No purchase occurred here, but over the two days of filming several purchases of the climber used on the arch were made. This seems to be a consistent theme in garden centres, where a high impact, pleasing display can generate sales of related plants or products displayed next to the centre piece.



There was also some evidence from this research and previous research commissioned by the HTA that younger less experienced shoppers often want inspiration from centre pieces for what could be achieved in a garden like theirs (e.g. a compact space geared for entertaining and socialising).

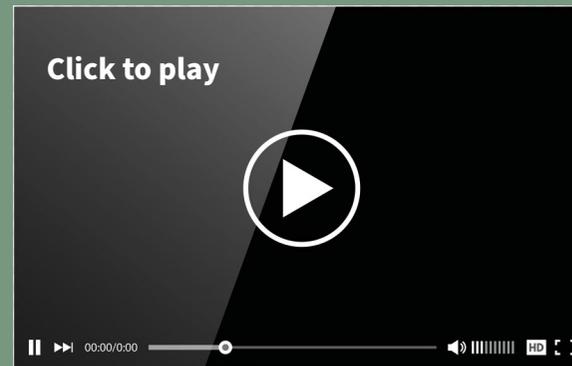
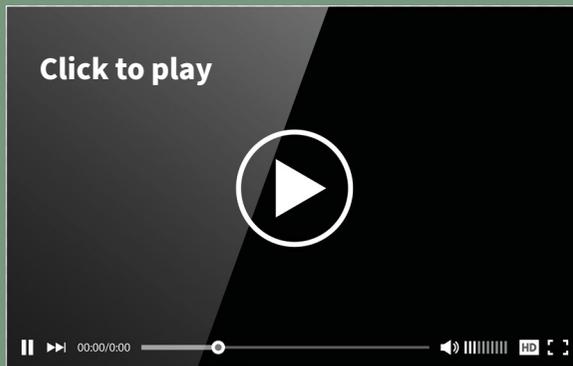
## 👁️ What the Shoppers Saw

### Added Enjoyment

In this clip we can see how plants and plant displays add interest and enjoyment to the shopping experience. We see the shopper engage with the tree in blossom and the rest of her party follow suit. In this case there were no adjacent related products, although later in the shopping trip the respondent expresses interest in getting some for their garden. In most cases display plants like this had tags showing the plant name so that orders could be placed, however in this instance they're missing, making a future sale more difficult.

### Show Plants

In this clip we see shoppers engaging with the show plants. Note the conversation about the plants and the demand being created for future projects. The comparison between the golden flame in the basket and in the show area is instructive, with the shoppers using it to assess what the plants in their trolleys will grow into and look like in their gardens. For experienced gardeners like these, the labels and plant information also satisfy the desire for developing their plant knowledge.



## Possible Opportunities

### Visual Appeal of Plant Area

The plant area is a competitive differentiator for store-based garden retailers over online retailers (who add value for consumers in different ways). It plays a huge part in shoppers' desire to visit, and contributes to a relaxed shopping environment. We conclude from this and other research<sup>1</sup> that this relaxed happy state of mind plays an important part in shopper spending levels, with shoppers generally more likely to make impulse purchases when relaxed and enjoying themselves.



### Centre Pieces and Adjacency

We need to bear in mind that selling space is at a premium, and there's ever more pressure to make every square foot of retail space count. We observed shoppers who were engaged with a piece of 'retail theatre' make an unplanned purchase of a related item next to the display several times in this research. This was also observed inside garden centres in previous research where Christmas displays led to impulse purchases of Christmas lights and toy penguins. Making items featured on the centre piece easily available to shoppers helps ensure such theatre 'pays its way'.



### Providing Context and Information

Theming displays around certain sized spaces or 'looks' can help less experienced shoppers imagine how plants will look in 'gardens like theirs'. Not being able to imagine plants in context is a barrier to purchase for younger shoppers. For keener gardeners, providing the names of plants used mainly for display can also help satisfy horticultural curiosity and sow the seeds of ideas for future projects.

