

The Core Gardening Customer

The HTA's Garden Consumer Segmentation model groups UK households at a postcode level into nine segments based on their demographics, life-stage, attitudes and hobbies; as well as the size of their gardens, garden spending and what they use the garden for.

The three segments that make up almost two-thirds of UK consumer spending on outdoor plants (59%) are: **Gardening Elders**, **Garden Prouds** and **Family Focus**. We describe them in a bit more detail on this page, but full pen portraits of each segment are also available to download (hta.org.uk/gardenconsumers) – you will hopefully recognise your customers in these!



Gardening Elders

 **12% of UK households**

 **18% outdoor plant spend**

Gardening Elders are mainly retired and aged over 65, and have lived in their houses for a long time. They're the keenest gardeners with lots of disposable leisure time who turn to 'expert' sources for information, and like to share their knowledge with family and friends.



Garden Prouds

 **22% of UK households**

 **29% outdoor plant spend**

Garden Prouds are wealthy mid-to-late life professionals in large houses with moderate interest in gardening and high spend. Their garden is a space to be proud of, where they like to host family and friends. Quality is really important to them as well as time-saving amid their busy lives.



Family Focus

 **10% of UK households**

 **12% outdoor plant spend**

Family Focus' gardens are a place for adults to socialise and children to play. They like to grow plants and edibles, but are not particularly expert gardeners. They spend highly on garden leisure and visit garden centres a lot, both for the garden and seasonal events.

Plant Features to Highlight in Your Merchandising

What Makes a Plant Valuable to Core Gardening Customers?



HTA research has shown that consumers are highly price sensitive when purchasing plants (see [Value of Plants: from Nursery to Nature report](#)); but drop offs in purchase volumes resulting from price increases (which may be inevitable for businesses facing pressure on margins from rising wage bills and energy costs) can be mitigated through the promotion of plant attributes and qualities that consumers place value on.

Amongst these core gardening segments, the features that resonated most were:



Plant guarantees (particularly lifetime and 5 year guarantees) on hardy plants/shrubs



Plant care information provided via QR code



Grown in peat-free compost (amongst the Garden Proud segment)



Pollinator-friendly (amongst the Family Focus segment)



Plants certified from a nursery with excellent plant pest and disease controls



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As keener, more regular gardeners who are more affluent than average, these consumer groups place greater value on plants that signify quality and reliability. Consider promoting any standards or quality assurance marks that you or your plant suppliers are working to give customers confidence. For example, GCA members offer a plant guarantee for a minimum of 12 months (many extend it for a longer period) providing free replacement or credit for any container-grown hardy plant which dies, providing it has received reasonable care, bears the member's garden centre label and is returned with proof of purchase. Our research found that the longer the guarantee offered, the more value consumers placed on the plant.



Example of a 5 year Hardy Plant Guarantee in operation at Barton Grange Garden Centre.



Example of a Lifetime Hardy Plant Guarantee at Notcutts.



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Garden Prouds and **Family Focus** tend to have busy lifestyles, and whilst Family Focus enjoy spending time in the garden with the children, they're not the most expert gardeners, often turning to older parents or family members (the **Gardening Elders!**) for gardening advice. Therefore, furnishing them with simple, easy to access care information is likely to appeal and can drive up perceived value of the plants themselves. QR codes on plant labels or point of sale can be an effective way to do this, and ensure the information goes home with the purchaser! So, consider talking with your growers and plant suppliers about ways to do this, or explore adding information to your signage in store.



Examples of plant care information provided with the plant via QR code.

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Peat-free credentials are a strong driver of perceived value amongst the **Garden Proud** segment, so if these are your core customers, make sure you promote the plants known to have been grown and supplied in peat-free growing media. Feeling proud of their gardens and feeling as though they're 'doing their bit' for the environment when they talk to or host family/friends in their gardens is likely a motivation for them.



Example of peat-free merchandising at Perrywood Garden Centre



Example of peat-reduced labelling on plants.



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Pollinator Friendly

Promote the Ecological, Environmental and Educational Benefits



For the **Family Focus** segment, much of their time in the garden is spent with the children and so family-friendly gardening and using plants to introduce and educate the children on wildlife appeals. Consider how you could merchandise wildlife-friendly gardening to provide inspiration in store and promote plants that are pollinator-friendly to drive up perceived value.



Example of a plant label highlighting that the plant will help to attract wildlife



Example of pollinator-friendly plant merchandising in store.



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Appendix 1: background to the research

For full background on the research underpinning the findings in this guide, see Section 5 of our report From Nursery to Nature: The Value of Plants which can be accessed here: hta.org.uk/value-of-plants

Appendix 2: data illustrating relative value of plant features by consumer segment

Using a 5% price increase level as the baseline, the tables below shows the relative uplift in plant purchase volumes amongst each segment when a particular plant attribute is present, compared to a no-label plant.

Table 1. Relative appeal of plant attributes amongst the Gardening Elders segment.

Plant attribute	% volume uplift vs no-label plant at a 5% price increase level
Certified from a nursery with excellent plant pest and disease controls	+4.8%
Plant Guarantee (Shrubs only) Lifetime	+3.5%
Plant care information via QR code	+3.1%
Plant Guarantee (Shrubs only) 5yr	+3.0%
Plant Guarantee (Shrubs only) 1yr	+2.6%
Eco rating E	+2.3%
Pollinator friendly	+2.1%
Eco rating A	+1.7%
Eco rating C	+1.4%
Grown in Peatfree	+1.1%
UK Grown	-0.8%

For more information, please contact marketinfo@hta.org.uk

Table 2. Relative appeal of plant attributes amongst the Garden Prouds segment.

Plant attribute	% volume uplift vs no-label plant at a 5% price increase level
Plant Guarantee (Shrubs only) Lifetime	10.6%
Plant Guarantee (Shrubs only) 1yr	9.3%
Plant Guarantee (Shrubs only) 5yr	7.9%
Grown in Peatfree	6.6%
Certified from a nursery with excellent plant pest and disease controls	6.2%
Plant care information via QR code	5.6%
Eco rating A	3.5%
Eco rating C	3.4%
Eco rating E	3.0%
Pollinator friendly	-0.9%
UK Grown	-2.3%

Table 3. Relative appeal of plant attributes amongst the Family Focus segment.

Plant attribute	% volume uplift vs no-label plant at a 5% price increase level
Plant Guarantee (Shrubs only) Lifetime	11.4%
Plant Guarantee (Shrubs only) 5yr	9.8%
Pollinator friendly	8.3%
Plant Guarantee (Shrubs only) 1yr	7.3%
Plant care information via QR code	5.7%
Eco rating C	4.8%
UK Grown	4.3%
Eco rating A	4.2%
Grown in Peatfree	3.9%
Certified from a nursery with excellent plant pest and disease controls	2.2%
Eco rating E	0.2%