HTA

Market Update

February 2025

Contents

Overview

- January 2025 presented a mixed picture for garden centres - overall sales fell by -2% compared to January 2024, but this headline figure masks significant variations between categories.
- Garden categories performed poorly in January 2025, with sales down 12% versus January 2024. While January typically sees the lowest garden sales of the year, challenging weather conditions including Storms Éowyn and Herminia dealt a particular blow to live plant sales.
- Conversely, non-garden categories provided a welcome boost, with sales up 3% from January 2024 and showing strong two-year growth at +7% versus January 2023
- Sales growth in garden centre cafes and restaurants was strong but showed signs of beginning to slow down, with sales up +6% on January 2024, having seen +11% growth between January 2024 and 2023.
- Consumer confidence fell 5 points from December 2024 following recent market uncertainty, with declines present in all five contributing measures. Meanwhile, the rise in the Savings Index suggests consumers are becoming more cautious with their spending, despite wages (5.7%) continuing to outpace inflation (3.5%) at a comfortable rate.
- The weather was a major factor in January's performance. Storms Éowyn and Herminia affected different parts of the UK towards the end of the month, and average UK temperatures were almost -1°C colder than January 2024 despite January 2025 being the World's warmest on record. However, there were slightly more hours of sunlight, and total rainfall was lower than in January 2024.
- While January's mixed performance highlights the challenges particularly in garden categories, its traditionally small contribution to annual sales means its impact is limited and there is plenty of time to recover lost plant sales through Spring should the weather improve.

- **Read on for the detail…**

Key Points:

January 2025

Overall Garden Centre Sales were down –2%
in January 2025 vs January 2024

January 2025 was almost **–1°C colder** than January 2024

Consumer confidence fell 5 points
in January 2025 vs December 2024

Non-gardening sales were up +3%
vs January 2024, providing important off-season revenue

Gardening sales were down by -12%
vs January 2024, driven by poor plant sales

Garden Centre Sales

January 2025

In January 2025, overall garden centre sales (including catering) were down -2% on January 2024. When excluding catering, sales were down -4% on January 2024, and -3% down on January 2023. January 2025's fall in sales appears to be largely driven by poor sales of gardening products, particularly plants (see page 11), which is reflected in garden/gardening category sales being down -12% by value versus 2024, and -9% down from January 2023.

January traditionally sees the lowest garden/gardening sales of the year, making this decline less significant for annual performance. Meanwhile, non-gardening categories showed strength with a +3% increase from January 2024, or +1% excluding catering. This growth in non-gardening sales provides important cash flow relief for retailers during off-peak gardening seasons.

	Overall *Incl. catering*	**Overall** *excl. catering*	**Garden/ gardening**	**Non-garden /gardening** *Incl. catering*	**Non-garden /gardening** *Excl. catering*
Jan 2025 vs Jan 2024	-2%	-4%	-12%	+3%	+1%
Jan 2025 vs Jan 2023	+2%	-3%	-9%	+7%	0% (=)

(Reported changes are in **sales value excluding VAT**)

How are these figures calculated?

The national sales figures we report each month come from our HTA Garden Retail Monitor (GRM) systems. We have an EPOS-based system where sales data from submitting garden centres are automatically uploaded to a secure server; and a manual-entry version to which we cross-reference the figures. Participating garden centres can login to a portal to benchmark their sales against regional and national averages for a variety of sales metrics. We're always looking to sign up more garden centres to the EPOS system, allowing us to include reliable and detailed breakdowns of trends in sales within these Market Update reports.

If you're interested or looking for more information, visit: **hta.org.uk/grm**

Source: HTA Garden Retail Monitor

Garden Centre Sales Volumes

January 2025

Overall sales volumes in January 2025 matched January 2024 and rose +3% from 2023, following strong December performance. However, excluding catering, sales volumes fell -5% compared to both January 2024 and January 2023.

Garden/gardening products struggled significantly, with sales value dropping -11% and volume falling -13% from January 2024. Although global temperatures hit record highs in January 2025, UK average temperatures were nearly 1°C lower than January 2024. This led to consumers reducing live plant purchases (see page 10).

On the other hand, non-gardening categories performed well, showing +3% growth in both sales volume and value compared to January 2024. Compared to January 2023, non-gardening category sales values were up +7%, and sales volumes up +6%.

When excluding catering, these categories remained stable, with sales value up +1% and volume level with January 2024. Catering continues to drive sales growth in garden centres.

	Jan 2025 vs Jan 2024		Jan 2025 vs Jan 2023	
	Sales Value *(£, Exc. VAT)*	**Sales Volume** *(n)*	**Sales Value** *(£, Exc. VAT)*	**Sales Volume** *(n)*
Overall *Incl. catering*	-2%	0% (=)	+2%	+3%
Overall *Excl. catering*	-4%	-5%	-3%	-5%
Garden/ gardening	-12%	-13%	-9%	-9%
Non-garden/ gardening *Incl. catering*	+3%	+3%	+7%	+6%
Non-garden/ gardening *Excl. catering*	+1%	0% (=)	0% (=)	-3%

Sources: HTA Garden Retail Monitor

Average Transaction Values (ATVs) and Transaction Numbers

In the garden store; January 2025

Transaction numbers in January 2025 matched January 2024 levels but were -1% below January 2023. Average transaction values fell to £18.44 (excl. VAT), down -6% from January 2024's £19.62 and marking a three-year low.

While footfall remained steady, customers spent notably less per trip to the garden centre. This could reflect both January discounting as retailers cleared excess Christmas stock, compounded by a decline in consumer confidence (see Page 17).

Transaction Numbers
(Garden Store):

0% (=)

JAN 2025 vs JAN 2024

-1%

JAN 2025 vs JAN 2023

Average Transaction Values (ATVs)
(Garden Store):

Excl. VAT
£ 18.44

Incl. VAT
£ 21.54

JAN 2025

Vs Jan 2024 *(Excl. VAT)*	Vs Jan 2023 *(Excl. VAT)*
-6% (£19.62)	**-4%** (£19.16)

Source: HTA Garden Retail Monitor

Average Transaction Values (ATVs) and Transaction Numbers

In the café/restaurant; January 2025

Café/restaurant transactions showed modest growth in January 2025, up +1% from January 2024. This marks a notable slowdown from the previous years' growth: January 2024 saw a +11% increase from 2023. With only a +1% increase observed between January 2025 and January 2024, the rapid growth previously seen in garden centre cafés appears to be slowing down.

While average café/restaurant spending per visit increased +5%, sales volumes only grew +1% in January 2025. This indicates that higher prices and inflation were significant in driving increased spending, but also that the makeup of 'baskets' could've shifted to higher priced items. Sales of hot food and sandwiches performed notably well, with volumes rising +7% and +15% respectively, providing an additional boost to overall spending levels during January 2025.

Transaction Numbers
(Café/Restaurant):

JAN 2025 vs JAN 2024

JAN 2025 vs JAN 2023

Average Transaction Values (ATVs)
(Café/Restaurant):

Excl. VAT
£ **11.43**

Incl. VAT
£ **13.65**

JAN 2025

Vs Jan 2024 *(Excl. VAT)*	**Vs Jan 2023** *(Excl. VAT)*
+5% (£10.93)	**+6%** (£10.78)

Source: HTA Garden Retail Monitor

Garden Centre Sales:

January garden/gardening breakdowns

In January 2025, garden/gardening sales fell -12% compared to January 2024. While this may seem significant, January typically sees the lowest sales across garden/gardening categories, alongside November and December, before picking up in February with the arrival of spring. Given January's typically small contribution to annual sales, this decline is unlikely to significantly impact full-year performance.

A closer look shows all garden/gardening categories declined this January, with outdoor containers (-12%), plant care products (-13%), bedding plants (-14%), and hardy plants (-12%) showing notable decreases from previous years.

With Storms Éowyn and Herminia affecting different areas of the UK towards the end of January, it appears as though consumers held back from buying live plants, wary of potential damage from frost and harsh winds. This caution was a result of January 2025's average UK temperature recording 0.9°C lower than January 2024.

However, products typically bought in preparation for spring showed more resilience, though still underperforming previous years: bulbs (-2%), garden features & structures (-4%), and seeds (-6%).

Category	Jan 2025 vs 2024	Jan 2025 vs 2023
Bedding plants	**-14%**	**-8%**
Hardy plants, shrubs & trees	**-12%**	**-9%**
Indoor plants	**-7%**	**-13%**
Bulbs	**-1%**	**+5%**
Seeds (excl. grass seed)	**-6%**	**+4%**
Plant care products	**-13%**	**-4%**
Garden tools & equipment	**-8%**	**-8%**
Garden features & structures	**-4%**	**+8%**
Outdoor containers	**-12%**	**-10%**

Source: HTA Garden Retail Monitor

Garden Centre Sales:

January non-garden/gardening breakdowns

Non-garden sales rose +3% compared to January 2024, driven primarily by food and dining. Food and farm shop sales increased +8% from 2024 and 17% from 2023, while café/restaurant sales grew +6% from 2024 and 18% from 2023. While café and restaurant spending increased, transactions only grew +1% between January 2024 and January 2025, with the strong sales largely driven by increased consumer spending.

Sales of gift items showed modest growth, up +2% from 2024 and +3% from 2023, while pet item sales matched 2024 levels and rose +2% from 2023. However, indoor living and homeware sales declined -5% from 2024 and -7% from 2023.

Wild bird care sales dipped -1% from January 2024 but remained strong overall, showing +15% sales growth since January 2023. January is typically an important month for this category, with consumers keen to support their garden visitors throughout the winter.

January 2025 sales of Christmas items were notably down from 2024 (-4%) and 2023 (-19%). This is likely due to the strong December 2024 sales, either leaving little remaining stock for January clearance or heavier discounting of leftover stock.

Category	Jan 2025 vs 2024	Jan 2025 vs 2023
Indoor living & homewares	-5%	-7%
Gifting	+2%	+3%
Wild bird care	-1%	+15%
Pets	0% (=)	+2%
Food & farm shop	+8%	+17%
Catering	+6%	+18%
Christmas	-4%	-19%

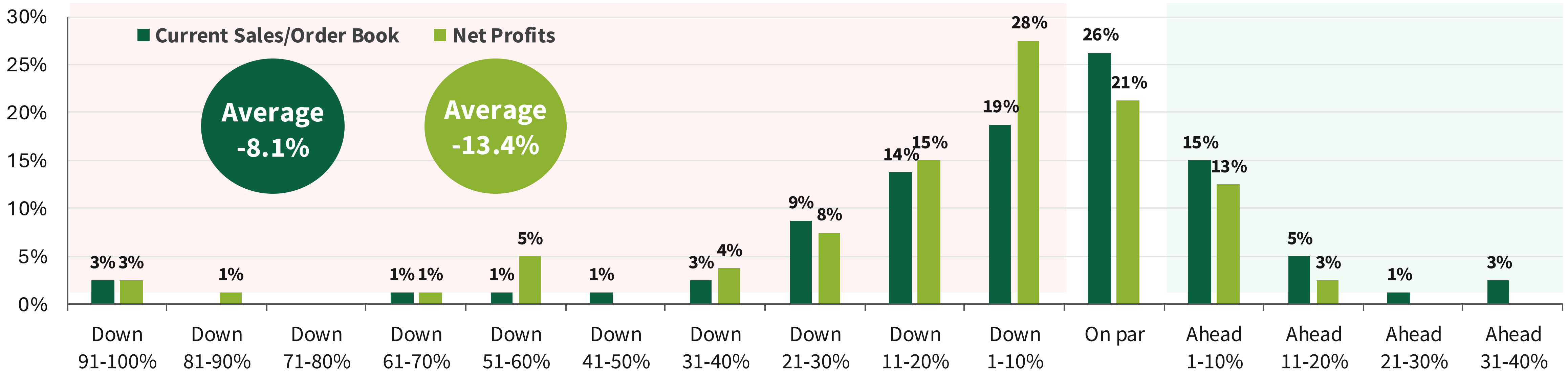
Source: HTA Garden Retail Monitor

Q4 Sales & Profit Positions

October - December 2024

Here, we look at both the sales performance and profit positions amongst HTA & APL members as reported in our **Q4 Business Barometer poll** (full results analysis to follow).

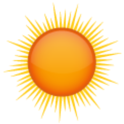
Members were most likely to say that they ended Q4 of 2024 between 1 and 10% down on their expected profit position (28%), but on-par with their expected sales position (26%). On average, members said they were down -8.1% in expected sales/order book value, and down -13.4% from their expected profits as at the end of Q4 2024. 49% of members said that their sales were as expected or better than expected, however, only 37% of members said that their profits were in-line with or exceeding expectations, highlighting the pressure felt on the sector throughout 2024.



Source: HTA & APL Q4 Business Barometer Survey (N=80)

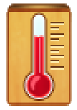
Weather

January brought all weather fronts to varying degrees across the UK, causing challenges for domestic gardeners as well as growers lifting field-grown crops. The first half of January saw extensive rain, sleet and snow; whilst the second half saw storms and destructive winds. Despite January 2025 being declared the World's warmest, the mean temperature in the UK was -0.9C cooler than the long-term average. However, January for the UK was also particularly sunny, with 130% of the average sunshine hours. Overall, January was drier than average, but there was significant variation in rainfall, with the north and Scotland welcoming a drier month, whilst England, and particularly the south of England, experienced above average rainfall.

	Jan 2025	Jan 2024
 Hours of sunshine	61.8	61.0

	Jan 2025	Jan 2024
 Rainfall (mm)	95.8	117.5

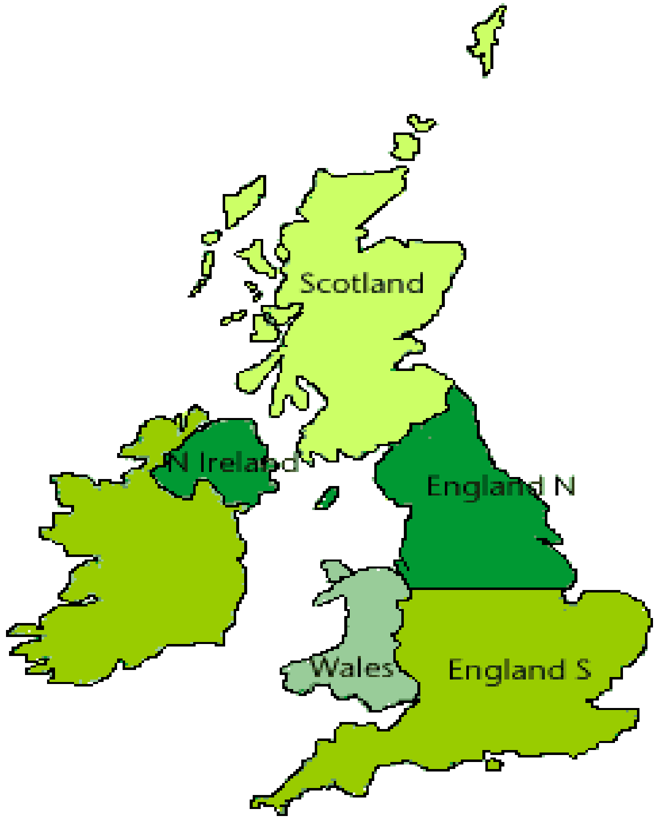
	Jan 2025	Jan 2024
 No. of rain days	11.8	12.5

	Jan 2025	Jan 2024
 Mean temperature (Celsius)	3.0	3.8

The figures reported are national averages for the UK. To view the figures on a regional basis: **click or tap here** to visit the MET Office website and view the year ordered stats by month.

Source: MET Office

Weather by region



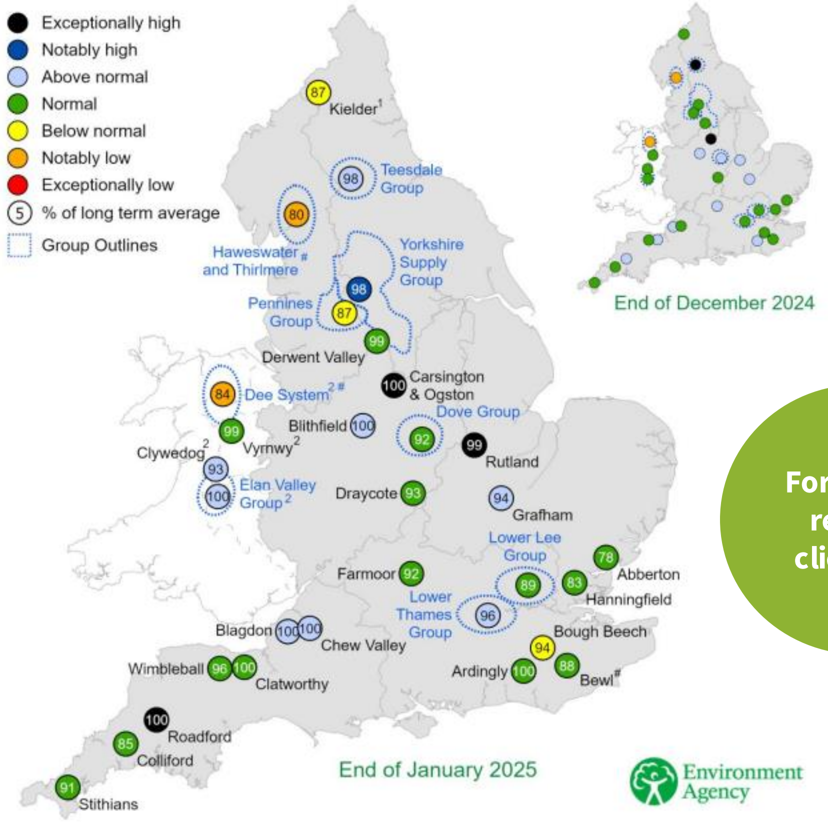
Region	Mean Temp (Degrees Celsius)	Sunshine Hours	Rainfall (mm)
Overall	3.0	61.8	95.8
South England	3.6	67.3	98.2
North England	2.5	72.3	83.1
Wales	3.5	61.6	146.8
Scotland	2.3	49.4	90.3
Northern Ireland	4.0	63.3	75.5

At the beginning of January, Northern England and the South of Scotland were hit with heavy snowfall, whilst further south the precipitation became predominantly rain. Towards the end of the month, storm Eowyn brought destructive winds, particularly to North England, Scotland and Wales. Meanwhile, whilst rainfall across the UK was 79% of the average, the south of England was considerably wetter than average.

Source: MET Office

Current reservoir levels

Reservoir stocks increased at three-quarters of those reported on, and any decreases were 5% or less. Some reservoirs in the Northwest, Northern Ireland and Scotland had below normal levels for the time of year but were impacted by planned maintenance works. For England, total storage was 92% full at the end of January. This is positive for availability of water going into the warmer spring months.



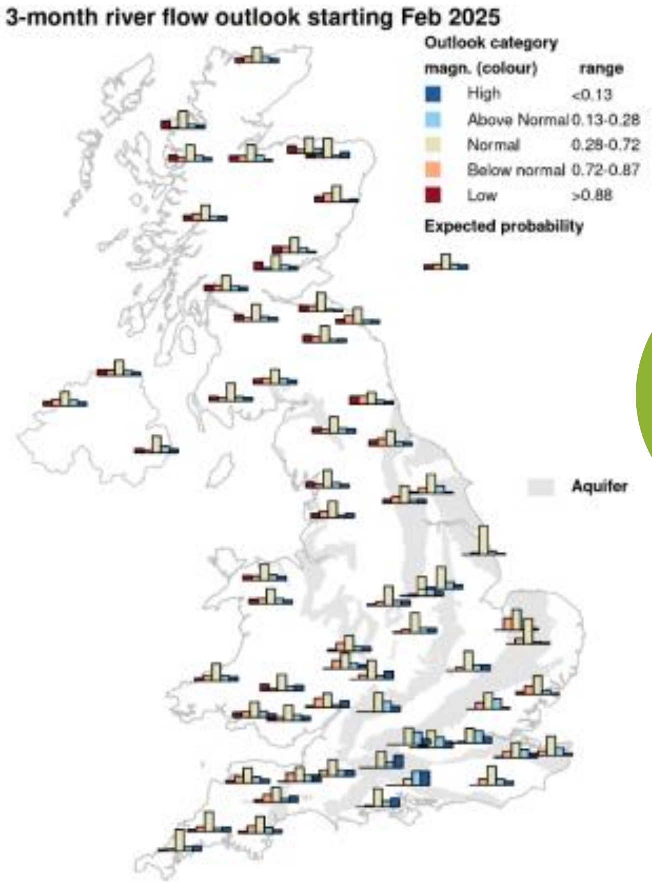
For the full reports click here

Source: Environment Agency

Forecast river flows

In the 3-month river flow outlook starting February 2025, flows are expected to be normal across southern parts of the UK and Northern Ireland, and normal to below normal in Scotland and northern England.

To interpret the infographic, the higher the bars shaded red or orange, the greater the likelihood is in that area of river flows being at low or below normal levels. The higher the yellow/fawn bar, the greater the chance of river flows in the normal range.



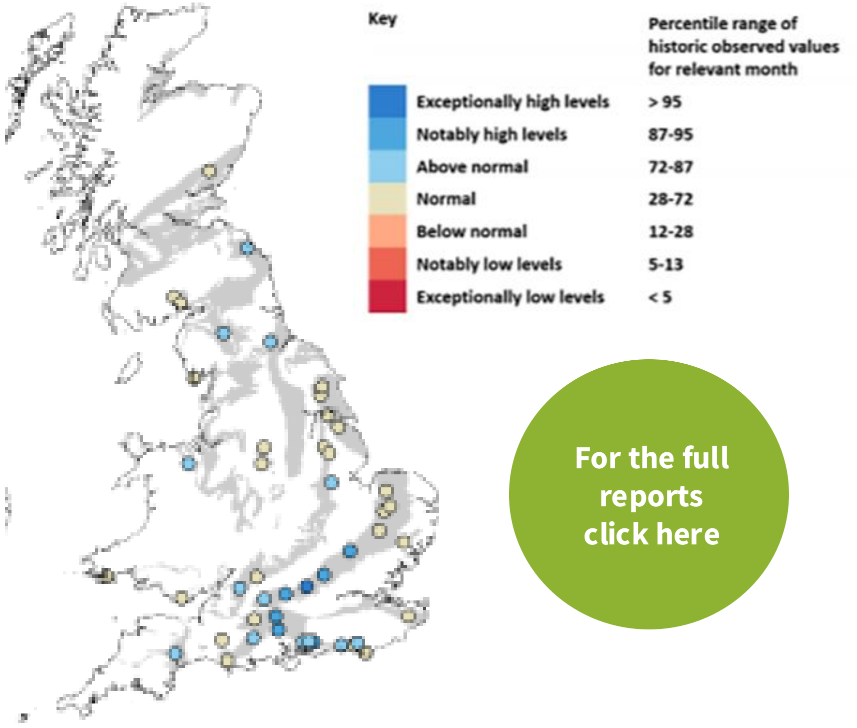
For the full reports click here

Source: Centre for Ecology and Hydrology

Forecast groundwater levels

Under median rainfall conditions, groundwater levels are predicted to return to normal conditions across much of the UK, with levels expected to remain above normal in southern England.

Three-month groundwater outlook starting February 2025 (based on median rainfall forecasts)



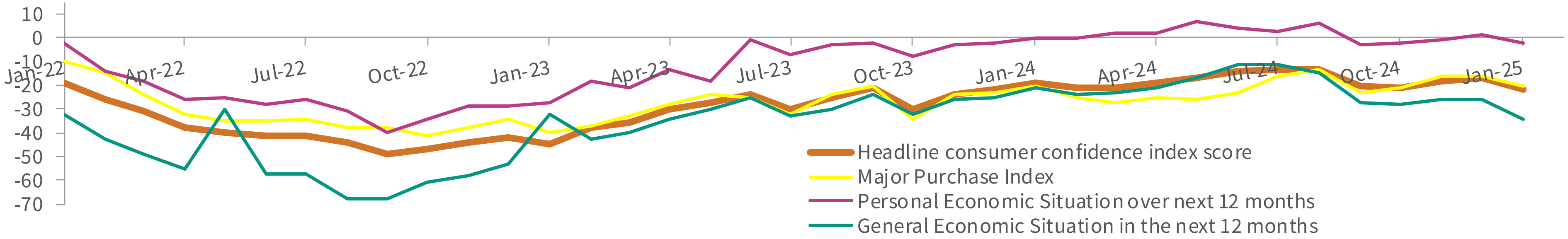
For the full reports click here

Source: Centre for Ecology and Hydrology

Source: Centre for Ecology and Hydrology

Consumer Confidence

January's Consumer Confidence Index revealed a 5point drop in confidence from December. All five contributing measures declined, with greatest pessimism around the UK's General Economy. The Savings Index measure doesn't contribute to the overall Index score, however this increased by 9 points in January – a sign that consumers are thinking of saving rather than spending.



Overall index score for Jan:

-22

*this is 5 points lower than Dec 2024

Measure	Relative score (January 2025)	vs. Jan 24
Personal financial situation: during last 12 months **over next 12 months**	-10 **-2**	3 points lower **3 points lower**
General economic situation: during last 12 months **over next 12 months**	-46 **-34**	7 points lower **8 points lower**
Major Purchase Index	-20	4 points lower
Savings Index	30	9 points higher

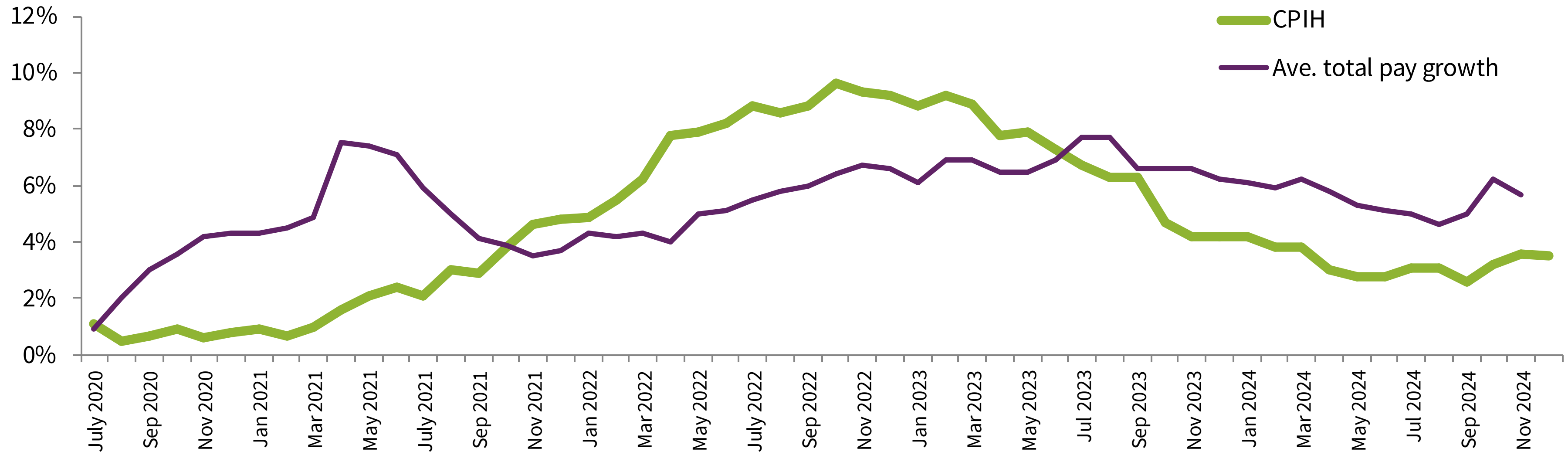
Base: 2,007 UK Individuals aged 16+, interviewed Jan 2nd-16th

Consumers are asked how the financial position of their household has changed over the last year and is expected to change in the next year, as well as that of the general economy. They're also asked if they believe 'now' is a good time to make major purchases or to be saving money. The first three measures in the table make up the overall index score. Whilst the Savings Index indicates whether consumers are looking to save rather than spend their money. **Relative scores are given as a comparative to when records began in 1974.**

Source: NIQ & GfK

Inflation and Wages

Each month, we report on the latest official Consumer Prices Index including owner occupiers' housing costs (CPIH) inflation rate, which was 3.5% in December 2024, remaining the same as November. Stabilising inflation is positive for household and business budgeting. Average earnings growth was 5.7% between September and November 2024, tracking consistently above the rate of CPIH inflation. This real-terms wage growth provides some relief for households. The unemployment rate remained relatively stable at 4.4%, indicating a tight labour market.



CPIH inflation (Dec 2024) **3.5%**

Average pay growth (Sep-Nov 2024) **5.7%**

Unemployment Rate (Sep-Nov 2024) **4.4%**

Sources: gov.uk

Retail inflation on garden products

Our January Trolley

(January 2025 vs January 2024 price inflation)

Spring/ summer bulbs
+3%

Garden Lights
-9%

Wild Bird Care
=(0%)

Vegetable & herb seeds
+2%

Garden gloves
+4%

Foliage Houseplants
=0%

Growing Media
+3%

Flower seed
+4%

Plant feeds
+2%

Seed potatoes
+11%

Our analysis compares garden centre prices between January 2024 and January 2025, comparing the prices of individual items transacted in garden centres. We calculated a **median inflation rate** across each category featured in our seasonal trolley. The 'trolley' of goods selected is intended to be seasonally appropriate, as a model of the level of price inflation in consumer's baskets.

Between January 2024 and January 2025, there was notable price variation across our garden centre basket. Seed potatoes showed the highest inflation at +11%. Meanwhile, garden lights demonstrated significant price deflation at -9%.

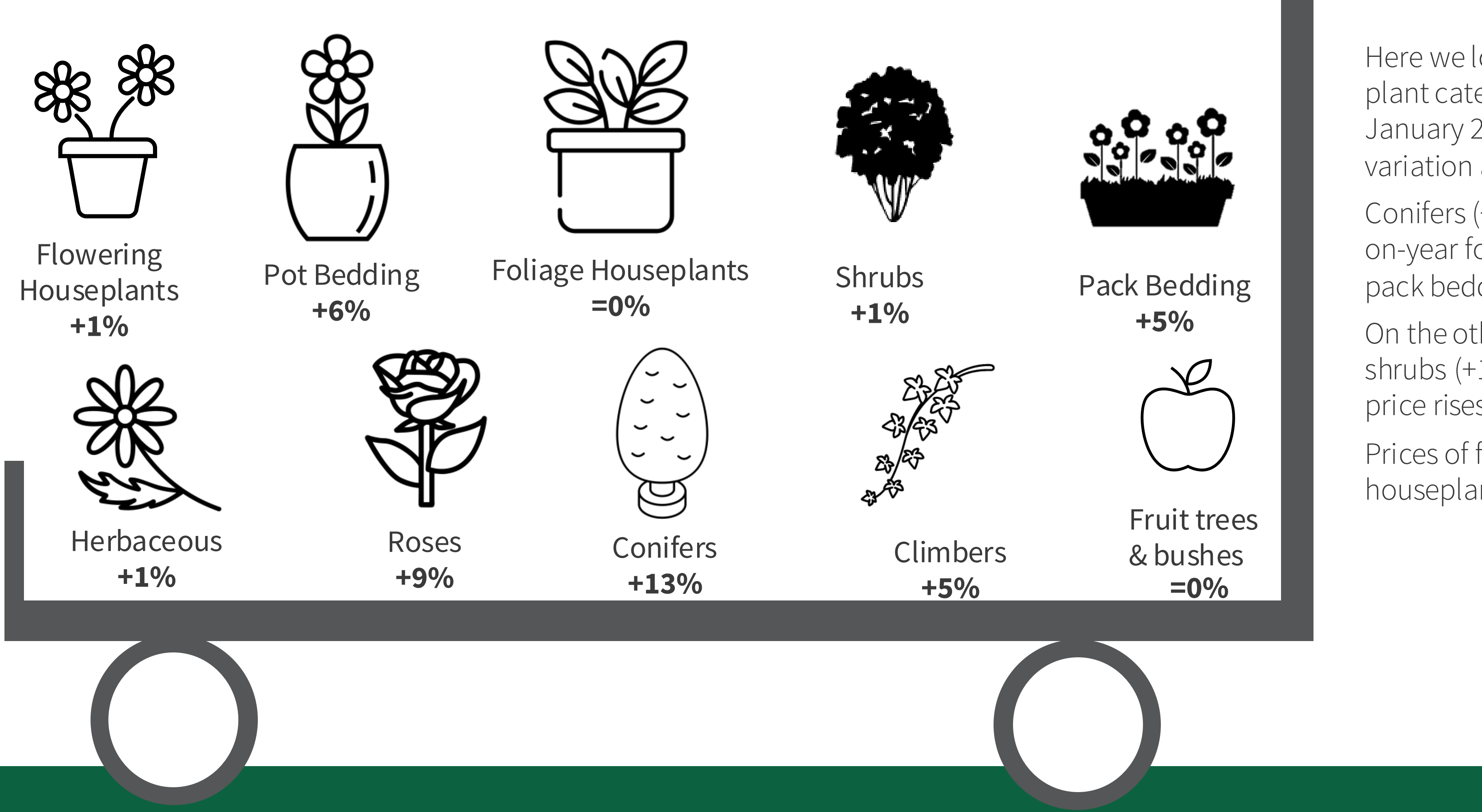
Many key categories showed inflation rates broadly in-line with the CPIH inflation rate (3.5%; see page 18). Spring/summer bulbs and growing media both recorded slightly-below average inflation of +3%. Whilst garden gloves and flower seeds prices both rose by +4% on average. Plant feeds and vegetable & herb seeds experienced slightly lower inflation at +2%.

Wild bird care and foliage houseplant prices remained stable with prices largely unchanged from January 2024.

Source: HTA Garden Retail Monitor

Retail inflation on plants

(January 2025 vs January 2025 price inflation)



Here we look at retail price inflation across various plant categories, comparing January 2025 with January 2024. The data reveals significant price variation amongst our basket.

Conifers (+13%) saw significant price increases year-on-year followed by roses (+9%), pot bedding (+6%), pack bedding (+5%), and climbers (+5%)

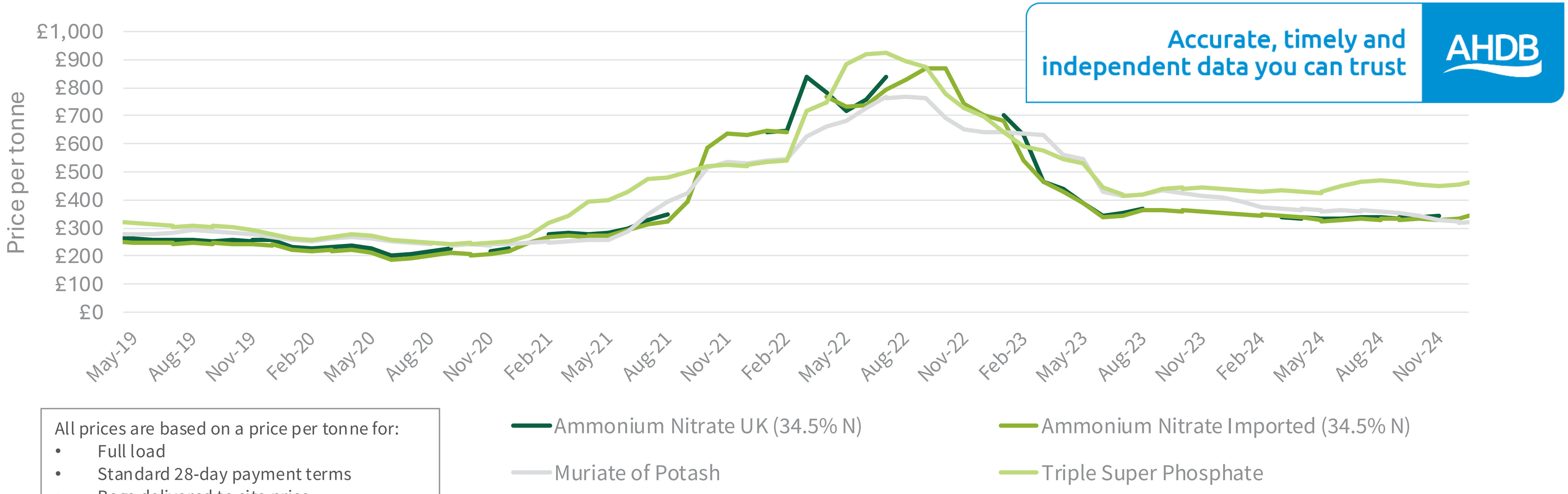
On the other hand, flowering houseplants (+1%), shrubs (+1%), and herbaceous (+1%) saw marginal price rises.

Prices of fruit trees & bushes and foliage houseplants were on par with January 2024.

Source: HTA Garden Retail Monitor

GB Fertiliser Prices

Fertilisers are a major input cost in plant production and rising costs increase the likelihood of squeezed margins through the supply chain. Using data supplied by the AHDB, the below graph shows how straight fertiliser prices have changed since 2019. Whilst those included are not typically used in the production of container-grown ornamental crops, nor an exhaustive list of specialist compound fertilisers used by ornamental growers, the data gives a relative indication of N, P and K fertiliser price trends. Overall fertiliser costs have remained (comparatively) stable over the last year. The cost of the key components tracked remained like those seen a year ago, and substantially below the peaks of 2022.

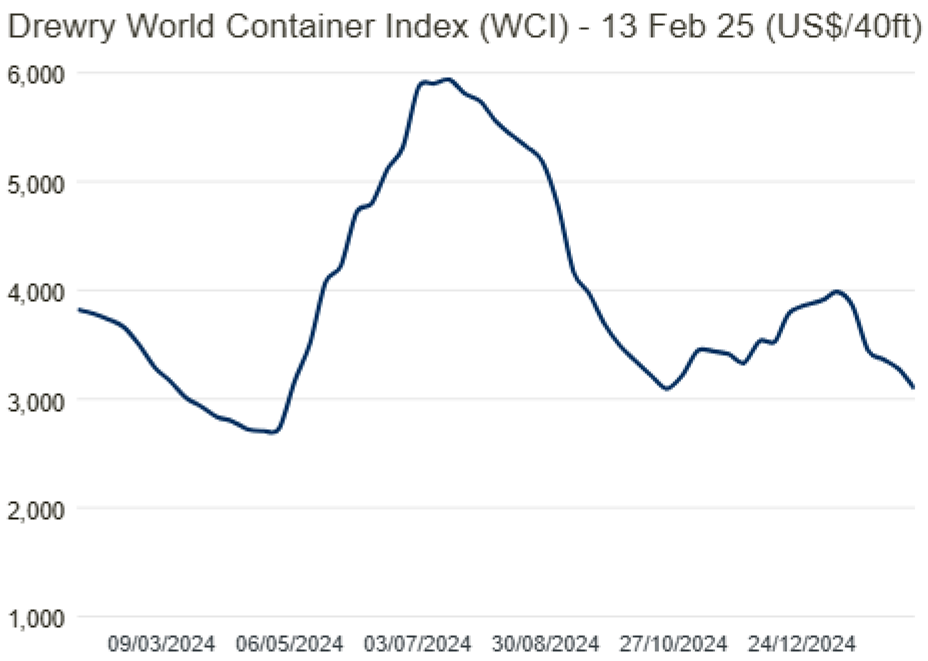


All prices are based on a price per tonne for:

- Full load
- Standard 28-day payment terms
- Bags delivered to site price
- Spot price: prices for delivery within a month (28 days)

Shipping container prices

We report on a composite index which is an aggregate of shipping costs across various routes. The Drewry's World Container Index was at $3,095 for a 40ft container as of 13th February 2025, with prices on a downward trajectory since the beginning of 2025. Prices remain more than $1,000 higher than the 10-year average however, so are still putting pressure on profit margins for businesses importing goods.



$3,095

We are reporting on the aggregate of the major shipping routes.

Source: Drewry

Closing Comments

Get in touch

We hope you enjoyed the format and content of this Market Update. If you have any questions or would like to see something else included, please get in touch.

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