



Building a learning business

Retail Business Improvement Scheme: how Lyonshall Nurseries have benefitted



Business Improvement Scheme

The HTA's Retail Business Improvement Scheme (RBIS) has benefitted many businesses over the years. Read on to see how it works and what others think.



About RBIS

Launched in the 1980's, the HTA's Business Improvement Scheme is a subscriber service designed to support members, helping them to grow and improve their businesses. It is aimed at retailers with a turnover of less than £5m, but there are no restrictions on size or scale of business.

How it works

Group members work closely with each other and with a specialist garden industry consultant who facilitates the regular meetings. The idea is to share experiences and to help each other solve problems. Discussions include identifying potential new products, and how to make significant changes to improve business. A regular and popular feature of every meeting is a round table review of recent trade activities. This includes a discussion on what is selling well and what is not. As part of this discussion members confidentially share data about their businesses.

Distribution

There are currently five RBIS groups around the country, working with garden retailers of various turnovers and stages of development. They meet up to six times a year and if you want to try before you join, the first meeting is always free of charge.

The RBIS regions are:

- > Scotland
- > Midlands
- > East Anglia
- > South West
- > South East

Testimonials

“We have been in the scheme 28 years. It’s a great way of meeting like minded people all with the same intent of improving our businesses. When we joined we were the smallest member and we learnt from the larger players, Now we’re the largest member learning from the smaller centres. You’re never too big to learn new tricks!”

Gerald Ingram
Managing Director, Planters Garden Centre

“Brilliant scheme, great way to compare notes with others, good and bad. Good for brainstorming and checking your ideas before you commit to any expenditure”

Sarah Daniel
Owner, Pengelly Garden Centre

“Joined at the end of 2017 and had a good experience so far. Friendly group and I really love how I can discuss work related topics”

Liz Finney
Manager, Goonhavern Garden Centre Ltd

Lyonshall Nurseries

We asked Lyonshall Nurseries owner Simon Thomas about his experience with the Retail Business Improvement Scheme. Simon is a member of the Midlands RBIS group.



About Lyonshall Nurseries

Lyonshall is a family run nursery and garden centre specialising in seasonal and bedding plants. Their aim is to provide quality long-lasting plants backed up with a friendly service and sound gardening knowledge. Lyonshall Nursery is situated in the beautiful Herefordshire countryside close to Wales and you will find everything you would expect from a modern garden centre, together with a refreshingly traditional experience.

Q How has being an RBIS member changed the way you run your garden centre?

“The RBIS was suggested to me over 10 years ago by the HTA. I was keen to develop the nursery into something that would be able to support my family and staff members long into the future. The RBIS opened my thinking into what can be achieved. I didn’t have a lot of capital behind me and had to develop the business as and when money allowed. Without the RBIS, I don’t think I would have built the solid turnover I have today. There are 6 meetings a year. Discussing wide topics from development plans, marketing, business strategies, margins, stock turn, wage and overheads and back office topics. In fact anything to do with running a successful garden centre. The openness and positive contributions of the group members is priceless. Everyone wants the other garden centres to be successful!”

Q What advice would you give to someone who has never been to an RBIS meeting before?

“Go! Once you have seen what can be achieved and the help offered it will only help your business one way – for the best. There is no commitment in joining and you would be warmly welcomed.”

Q What do you enjoy most about RBIS meetings?

“Seeing how other garden centres do things. Informal chats with other members about the industry or non-garden centre related discussions. The chairman is always fantastic and gets me thinking. I always come away with so many thoughts I don’t remember the journey home!”

Q What about the social side of things?

“It’s like a big family if you want it to be. You can be involved as much or as little as you want. There is always laughter and fun as it’s relaxed. You can pick up the phone or send a quick email to the other members at any time and ask questions or have a chat, arrange a get together - 7 days a week, if you wanted to!”

Q What would you say to someone thinking of becoming a member?

“If you want to drive your business forward you will be in the right place. The networking alone is invaluable. Go to a meeting and find out if it is for you.”





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For more information on the RBIS
and other business improvement
schemes visit:

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