

## Environmental Policy 2017 (4<sup>th</sup> edn)

### **Goals**

We recognise that The Gardens Group has a duty to help to improve the environment and that we have the opportunity to have a significant impact on the world around us as we interact with so many customers and their gardens.

#### **Chemicals**

- Educate and assist customers in making an informed decision about any chemicals they choose to use in their garden.
- Provide environmentally friendly options wherever possible and present these in an easy to understand manner.
- Review the range of chemicals available regularly to ensure any excessively harmful products are removed. We cannot stop stocking 'traditional' chemicals altogether as many customers would simply shop elsewhere to obtain these. Beside the financial loss this would incur we would also lose the opportunity to educate the customer and encourage them toward a more sustainable method of gardening.
- Use of chemicals within the gardens centres is kept to a minimum and alternatives sought wherever possible.
- Any grower from whom we purchase plants is encouraged to use environmentally friendly methods of pest and weed control.
- We offer free talks to gardening clubs and groups on subjects including organic gardening and chemical free gardening.
- For some of our customers gardening without any chemicals at all would prove to be too big a challenge – they would respond by paving over/reducing the area of garden that they have causing a loss of diversity and habitat. It is important to us that these customers are supported in getting the maximum possible amount of enjoyment out of their garden with the minimum of chemical intervention.

#### **Community**

As an active part of our local community we are able to support environmentally friendly activity in many ways.

- We support the creation of school and community wildlife gardens, edible hedges, allotments and orchards.
- We sponsor the wildlife gardening competitions for Dorset Wildlife Trust.
- We hold themed events in the garden centres designed to promote environmentally friendly gardening, with attention to sustainability and wildlife opportunities.
- We invite groups of school children to visit the garden centres to learn about the work we do and encourage them to find a passion for plants.
- We even dedicate an area of our Christmas display to 'green' products.
- We work with organisations such as The Green Shed and The Hub to support their recycling work and provide an outlet for their products.

## Energy

We are conscious of the amount of energy used within the garden centres and constantly look at ways to reduce this. We also invest large amounts of money in technology that allows us to generate our own energy without impact on the environment.

- Air source heat pumps have been installed at Castle Gardens and Brimsore Gardens.
- Heat extraction technology can be used to move excess heat from kitchens and some modern chiller cabinets to help heat our greenhouses and other enclosed spaces. We look for this feature when replacing old refrigerating units.
- A charging point for electric vehicles is now available at our Poundbury garden centre.
- Solar panels have been installed at Brimsore Gardens, with further introductions planned.
- We provide a local delivery service, allowing customers to order compost and other bulky goods by telephone rather than making a separate journey to the garden centre.
- Our computers have automatic shutdown triggers to prevent them being left turned on while not in use overnight.

## Reduce, Reuse, Recycle

We are conscious of the resources used to run our business. We endeavour to produce as little waste as possible and ensure that as much of that waste as possible is recycled.

- Almost all of our timber products are made with wood certified under the Forest Stewardship Scheme to be sustainably and environmentally sensitively grown.
- All redundant electrical goods, glass, metal, paper, cardboard and plastics are recycled.
- We provide a place for customer's unwanted flowerpots to be returned for re-use or recycling.
- Our green waste is composted at Castle Gardens.
- We collect and re-use rainwater. The main tank at Poundbury has a capacity of 27,000 litres.
- We encourage our customers to use alternatives to peat where this will not adversely affect their gardening and we recommend reduced peat composts for most situations.
- We are committed to providing a permanent special offer on at least one peat free compost.
- Our 'buying blueprint' is being developed to help stock purchasers consider all of the environmental and ethical impacts a new product may have.
- We strongly prefer to buy our plants from nurseries in the Southwest.
- We collect used cardboard boxes from other local businesses for our customers to take their shopping home in.
- Our restaurants use as much local food as possible.
- The Apple Tree Farmshop has local food at the core of its ethos.

## Results

We benefit directly from this pro-active approach in several ways.

- Our customers are very interested in their own environmental impact and come to us as a source of expertise.
- We are marked on our environmental efforts by the GCA.
- We can achieve cost savings by working sustainably.
- We have an honest and effective framework to cope with the challenges of running the business in an environmentally friendly way, responding to the needs of our customers and also to assist in taking the aims of sustainable living forward in our own small way.