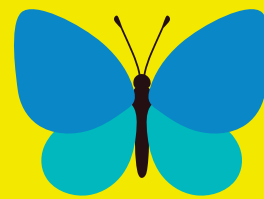
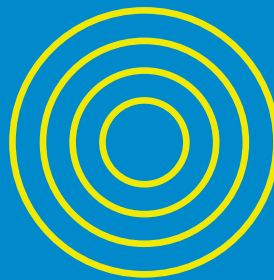


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## From Plants to Profits: Optimising Layouts and Customer Flow



### Andrew Burton

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Andrew Burton is Associate Director at Pleydell Smithyman Limited, specialising in business strategy and development for garden centres and farm shops. With over 30 years' experience in retail and leisure, he provides expert guidance on site development, operations, and commercial growth. A former Garden Centre Association Board member, Andrew now sits on the Farm Retail Association Council and has served as a judge for its retail and catering awards for the past five years.

## Proudly Partnering with the Garden Centre Association (GCA)

The first thing to understand is that there is no universal template. Each garden centre is a unique blend of size, location, customer demographic and product mix. Whether you're a high-footfall destination centre, or a local independent nursery focused on plants and core gardening, your layout needs to reflect your identity and your customers' expectations.

Your brand values should be evident from the moment a customer steps through the entrance. Do they immediately understand what you stand for? Can they find what they need while also discovering what they didn't know they wanted? Optimising layout isn't about copying the biggest players — it's about reflecting your strengths while learning from best practice.



### Look out for the latest insights from the GCA's Barometer of Trade.

A vital industry resource offering up-to-date retail performance data across key categories.

## From Plants to Profits: Optimising Layouts and Customer Flow

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A well-planned layout and optimised customer flow aren't just aesthetic choices — they're proven levers for increasing turnover, encouraging longer dwell time, and boosting add-on sales. For garden centres, where space spans indoor zones and expansive outdoor areas, a strategic layout can be the difference between casual browsing and high-value purchases.

A well-designed customer journey doesn't just look good — it drives real results. It encourages exploration, increases basket size, improves staff efficiency, and delivers the "wow" factor that turns occasional shoppers into repeat visitors. When executed effectively, layout becomes a sales tool — converting footfall into financial return.



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## Every Garden Centre Has Untapped Revenue Potential

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There's no one-size-fits-all formula. Each centre is a unique blend of location, size, customer demographic and product focus. Whether you're a high-footfall destination or a specialist nursery, your layout should support your commercial goals — increasing visibility of high-margin items, driving seasonal sales, and improving cross-category flow.

Your brand values and retail personality should be evident the moment customers arrive. Can they quickly understand your offer? Can they find what they need — and discover things they didn't know they wanted? A well-planned layout reflects your brand strengths while learning from best practice — not copying competitors, but out-performing them.



# Unlock More Sales with Data-Led Layout Optimisation

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Effective layout begins with evidence — not assumption. Through analysis, observation, and benchmarking, you can identify where you're missing sales opportunities and where layout changes can deliver commercial uplift.

## 1. Site analysis: Map Flow to Maximise Spend

Walk your site and observe where customers naturally go, and where they don't. Are core areas like gardening, outdoor plants, catering and seasonal products easy to find and logically placed? Are premium and promotional ranges located in high-footfall areas?

Use technology or manual tracking to identify hot and cold zones. Departments with lower sales might simply be suffering from poor positioning — not poor products. Tweak visibility and access, and you can often unlock previously missed sales.

## 2. Benchmarking : Compare Performance to Spot Gaps

Smart layout decisions are backed by data. Garden centres can benchmark against national averages using tools like the GCA Barometer of Trade, or work with specialist consultants who understand commercial performance across the sector.

Compare department-by-department results to reveal underperformance. Are you seeing below-average sales in areas like garden sundries, catering or food retail? Adjusting layout may be a faster fix than revising the product range.

Don't forget local context — customer types vary. Families, retirees and hobbyists each interact differently with space, signage and product groupings. Match layout to local behaviour, and sales will follow.

## 3. Brand-Led Planning: Layout That Reflects Value

Layout isn't just functional — it's expressive. Are you presenting as a curated destination, or a high-volume value retailer? Your layout should communicate your brand personality while supporting operational efficiency and sales targets.

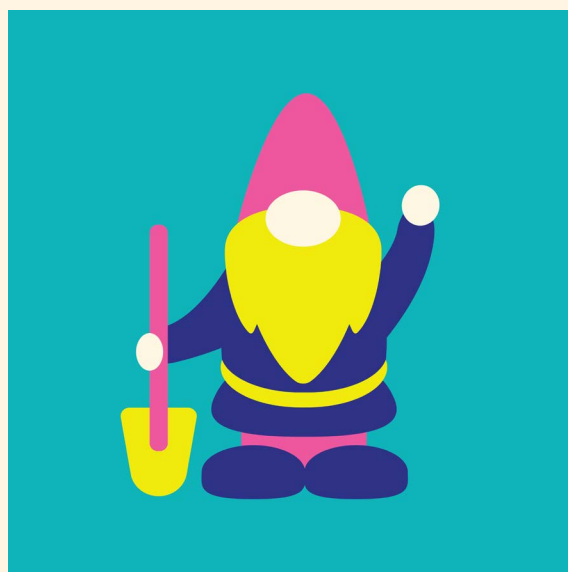
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## The Best Time to Boost Sales? Right Now.

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Waiting for the "quiet period" to make layout changes often means missing the very opportunities you're trying to capture. Every day that passes with an underperforming layout is a day of missed revenue, poor flow, and frustrated customers.

Start small if you need to — trial a product range shuffle, a fresh entrance display, or a new queueing system at the tills. Even mini adjustments can make a tangible difference. But whatever you do, don't put it off. Your customers are already experiencing your layout every day — so make that experience count.



## 5 Revenue-Focused Tactics to Action Now

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### 1. Define your objectives clearly

More turnover? Longer dwell time? Increased add-on purchases? Product management? Know what success looks like before making changes.

### 2. Use data and feedback

Site analytics, customer surveys, GCA figures, and staff observations all offer invaluable insights. Trust the data, not your assumptions.

### 3. Test and learn

Don't be afraid to experiment. Move stock, update flow signage and observe results. Monitor sales data before and after to assess impact.

### 4. Accept feedback

Be open to input from your staff and customers. Your team sees flow issues first-hand, and customers will tell you (directly or indirectly) if something's not working.

### 5. Commit to follow-through

Analysis is only as good as the actions it inspires. Once you identify a layout improvement, act on it decisively.

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## Make It Routine: Adapting to Seasons and Trends

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Garden centres are naturally seasonal, so your layout should be flexible. Regular reviews help ensure your layout keeps up with changing trends and customer needs. Retail is dynamic, and so is your garden centre. Keep the energy fresh, the flow intuitive, and the customer journey rewarding. The best-performing centres treat layout as a flexible, evolving asset – not a fixed plan.



## In Summary: Turn Footfall into Financial Return

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Layout optimisation isn't about aesthetics, it's about performance. When led by data and designed with intent, your layout can increase dwell time, raise conversion rates, and unlock new revenue opportunities.

From the entrance to the till, every step of the customer journey is a chance to increase spend and build loyalty. With the right insights and bold decisions, your garden centre can thrive – not just function.

From plants to profits, the journey starts at the entrance. Where it ends – and how successfully – is up to you.

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