



HTA Safe Trading Guidance

The following document has been informed by leading retailers, the British Retail Consortium, and the relevant government bodies as a recommendation of best practice regarding safe distancing to protect your staff and customers once garden centres are to open.

We strongly recommend that you encourage your customers and staff to follow these Guidelines.



<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/working-safely-during-coronavirus-covid-19/shops-and-branches>

The Horticultural Trades Association (HTA) has developed and issued this guidance in line with current government advice. The HTA assumes no responsibility or liability for any harm that comes to any member of staff or member of the public following the reopening of your premises, regardless of whether you have followed the guidelines or not.

Safe opening of garden centres

Macro protocols

- It is essential that all businesses carry out a full risk assessment of their entire premises before any reopening takes place. (A COVID-19 risk assessment is available from the HTA website to assist.) You should share the results of your risk assessment with your employees. You should consider publishing it on your website, all businesses with over 50 employees are expected to do so.
- [Here](#) you will find a notice you should display in your workplace to show you have followed this guidance.
- Cafes /restaurants should remain closed – no on-site food consumption.
 - For the avoidance of doubt, no takeaway food sold on site to be consumed inside.
 - Food departments; food hall; farm shops to operate under same hygiene and distancing protocols as rest of store.
 - Play areas must remain closed and preferably locked or cordoned off.
- Products to be sold to focus on plants; seeds; bulbs; composts /growing media; pots/ planters; garden hardware (tools; propagation equipment; fertilisers; pest control; irrigation etc.) and those products directly associated with the support thereof; pet foods and accessories; bird care; food products/cookware/giftware.
- Other product areas that require more significant interaction with customers such as furniture and clothing will need separate procedures to ensure safety of staff and customers. Online sales of furniture in particular are encouraged. Consider very carefully whether fitting rooms should be open, given the challenges in operating them safely. If open, clean them frequently, typically between each use.
- If you operate concessions, these will need to comply with the social distancing protocols. The concession business will need to be responsible for undertaking their own separate COVID-19 risk assessment along with direct communication to their employees if applicable.
- We encourage operators to carry out separate risk assessments for each area of the store and in particular how customers, handling of goods, merchandising and stock will be managed.
- It is strongly advised not to promote special deals or other aggressive marketing policies that lead to a surge in customer numbers.
- Operators should use their discretion as to what is the safe number of customers to allow in a garden centre taking into account overall space, aisle widths and number of checkouts.
 - Our recommendation is that customer numbers be controlled to 1 per 1000 square feet.
 - Square feet is defined as gross square footage of available retail sales area – outdoor and indoor.
 - This calculation will need to be done in advance by all those proposing to operate.
 - Customers in store should be limited to this number on a one in one out basis.
 - Advice would be to have a staff member controlling this at the entrance door but to avoid unnecessary queuing our strong recommendation would be to control the number of cars coming into the car park.
- Entrance and exit from the premises to be separate - minimum separation 2m between doors.
 - If the infrastructure at your store doesn't suit, then you should look at creating another entrance alongside or direct through your plant area.
 - Maintaining a one-way flow is a desirable outcome where possible.

Site control

Restricting numbers to the store is a key objective

- This can be best achieved by limiting the number of cars accessing your car park.
- Controlling or restricting the number of car parking spaces available. Blocking off alternate spaces with pallets may assist this.
- Installing the appropriate signage at car park entrances will help.
- We would advise having a member of staff to control site accessibility and car parking.
- Customers should be encouraged to shop with trolleys only avoiding baskets. This helps social distancing and allows easier cleaning of handles.
 - All trolleys returned for reuse should have their handles wiped down.
- Ideally, all customers should be offered gloves and hand sanitiser on arrival should they not have their own. Advance purchase of these items needs to be secured. (The HTA website will has recommended suppliers of PPE [here](#).)

Front door

- You will need to post someone immediately inside or outside the front of the store.
 - Always keep a 2m distance from customers entering.



- Businesses must figure calculate, according to the square footage of your store, the maximum number of customers able to enter and maintain social distancing.

- It is recommended that a maximum of only two people together be allowed to enter the store. (Separate discretion and assessment might need to be given to single parents with children/carers etc.)
- Use one door entry/exit to enable an accurate count.
 - Ensure that your team are taking an accurate count of those coming in/out of the store - Supply the team member with a clipboard to keep a tally if needed.
 - Allow entry and exit on a one in one out basis.
- Create a point 2m away from the door outside the store for customers who wish to wait. Using tape on the ground at 2m intervals will help this.
- POS should be issued to support this.

Inside the store

To enable customers and till operators to maintain as much social distancing as possible, please follow the steps below.

- Create a queueing area large enough to accommodate customers and that enables them to keep 2m apart, using tape to mark safe intervals on the floor – Remove/relocate fixtures if required. Using tape on the floor at 2m intervals is recommended.
- Open alternate tills to give each till operator maximum distance from their colleagues or move till points further apart.



- Minimise customers approaching each till point to a 1:1 ratio (use visible POS to support this).

Social distancing – best practice

Site control

Inside the store continued

- Install “Queue here” POS and “Keep 2m apart” POS at appropriate points in your store to create some distance for the till operator.
- Facilitate the queue from an appropriate distance whilst at the same time encouraging those waiting to maintain 2m distances.
- Ask any accompanying family members or friends to leave the bill payer to transact with the till operator.
- Create maximum space around the fixtures and displays that are proving most popular with customers.
- Use a tannoy at regular intervals to advise customers of procedures.

If your store becomes ‘overcrowded’ and social distancing becomes difficult to achieve, minimise the number of customers coming in at the front door.

Example of POS

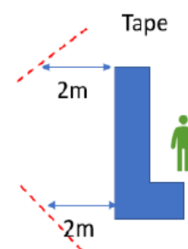


A full suite of suggested signage and POS for both inside and outside your premises is available [here](#).

Till process

- Customers should be invited forward from the queue 1 by 1 to the till point by the operator who then steps back 2m.
- Customers should be invited to drop their goods at the till point and step to the front of the till to a clearly defined 2m line.

- Use hazard tape/gaffer tape or similar to mark out this safe distance.



- Once the customer has stepped back – the goods should be processed as normal.
- Once the operator has stepped back 2m from the till the customer can then be invited to pay by card or mobile device. Use of cash should be discouraged. **NB: Apple Pay / Android Pay could be increased at the operator’s discretion to facilitate quicker payment.**
- The customer is then asked to step away 2m again while the operator completes the transaction and produces the receipt.
- The receipt is then placed with the goods purchased and the operator can step away once more.
- Customer is then invited to step forward to collect their goods and receipt then leave. This process should be marked with tape to manage effectively.
- **Remember to sanitise the Chip and Pin units and the till top (if used) between transactions. NB spraying can damage the electronics.**
- **Where appropriate store operators are encouraged to use Perspex screening as an additional protection. (the HTA website has information on suppliers of this [here](#))**

Store segregation

- You may wish to cordon off certain areas of your store to prevent customers wandering into closed areas such as cafes.
 - This may require the physical separation of product categories and possible remerchandising of areas to maximise aisle widths and social distancing.
 - The use of shop fixturation to achieve this would be encouraged or taped off areas robust enough to discourage customer wanderings
 - Aisles should be as wide as possible and free from stock that would impede free flow.
 - Fire escapes clearly kept open even if behind taped off areas.

- You may or may not wish to have customer **toilets** available for customers.

- If you do then it is advised you have a separate risk assessment carried out for this area.

- Keeping a disabled toilet operational could naturally assist social distancing.

Queueing guidance

- Place tape markers on the floor at 2m intervals along the route you wish customers to queue.
 - This will help customers to gauge the 2m distance.



- In car parks or on walkways:
 - Use stacks of bagged compost or other suitable product to lay out a queueing zone with the bags positioned 2m apart.
 - This will prevent bunching up in the queue.

Employee protocols

It is essential that staff are fully involved and consulted on the implementation of these guidelines, for their own safety, and for the safety of customers.

Everyone needs to assess and manage the risks of COVID-19. As an employer, you have a legal responsibility to protect your employees and others from risks to their health and safety. You need to consider all possible risks and do everything reasonably practicable to minimise them, recognising you cannot completely eliminate the risk of COVID-19.

Employers have a duty to consult their employees on health and safety. If you do not already have an appointed H&S representative or committee, consider appointing one. This person/s can provide a liaison and communication point to inform and consult with your employees.

Know your workforce

Consider your workforce and plan for what resource is required prior to reopening. Ask yourself the following questions:

- > **How long have my employees been furloughed?** Employees need to be furloughed for a minimum period of 3 weeks before returning to work.
- > **Are any of my employees vulnerable due to pregnancy, underlying medical conditions and age?** In this pandemic you also need to consider family situations and individual personal circumstances.
- > **Are my employees willing to return to work?** Some employees may not be prepared to return to work, you may want to consider a phased return or a voluntary return application process/form.
- > **Do you have the right employees available, are there any training requirements?** There are a number of eLearning modules available including specific advice about COVID-19 and personal hygiene to support employees back to work. It is a good idea to rehearse with your employees anticipated customer behaviours to support them with customer interactions.

Employee communications

It is essential to ensure consistent communications to all employees in a timely manner.

Do not underestimate the impact that the current situation will have on employees. Furloughed employees may be feeling insecure and anxious about their future.

Listen to employees concerns and suggestions as these will help you to reassure them about their return to work.

Allocate key employees to cascade communication and be a point of reference for other employees.

Employee wellbeing

Employers have a statutory duty of care for people's health and safety and provide a safe place to work. There is also a moral responsibility to ensure employees feel safe and secure.

Employee protocols

Limiting the spread of COVID-19

Government Advice

- To help reduce the spread of Coronavirus, remind employees of the public health advice by using the appropriate communications.
- Display information about hand washing, the recommended frequency being every 20 minutes. Use sanitiser products employees should frequently disinfect and clean objects and surfaces that are regularly used. You should supply appropriate cleaning products for use.
- Keep informed and follow government and official medical advice as it is updated. Links to this are available on the HTA website.
- Makes sure employees understand the sick pay and leave policies and how these are being implemented.
- Consider any employee assistance plans or healthcare plans in place, ensure that everyone is aware of these, these can provide helplines and assistance for those employees who may need additional support.
- We recommend that all operators provide the appropriate PPE for all employees – as a minimum this should be gloves and masks. There are some circumstances when wearing a face covering may be marginally beneficial as a precautionary measure. The evidence suggests that wearing a face covering does not protect you, but it may protect others if you are infected but have not developed symptoms.

Practical steps

- Ensure staff rotas are in place to include holiday, first aid and fire marshal cover.
- Maintain minimum coverage during trading hours.
- Where possible, where staff are split into teams or shift groups, fixing these teams or shift groups so that where contact is unavoidable, this happens between the same staff.
- Stagger staff arrival and departure times at work to reduce crowding in and out of your centre, taking account of the impact on those with protected characteristics. If possible, provide additional parking or facilities such as bike-racks to help facilitate your staff to walk, run or cycle to work where possible.
- Allow regular breaks to ensure continued upkeep of personal hygiene and hand washing.
- Provide personal protection equipment including disposable gloves, masks, and face visors if necessary.
- Have a dedicated bin at each washing station for disposing of all PPE equipment. This should then be double bagged and stored for 72 hours before disposal of.
- Stagger staff breaks and ensure social distancing of 2m.
- Encourage staff to bring in their own lunch provisions.
- Rearrange furniture in staff rest areas aligned to social distancing requirements.
- Provide antibacterial wipes and hand sanitiser in staff rest areas.

Safe opening of garden centres



Employee protocols

Practical steps cont.

- Ensure staff toilets adhere to social distancing, if not close a cubicle and adopt a one person only in the washroom area.
- Staff working in the back-office environment need to adhere to social distancing rules and sit 2m apart, either side by side or back to back, avoid staff sitting face to face as much as possible. Office staff attendance should be minimised to any employees not able to work from home.
- Staff working in the warehouse/stockrooms and delivery drivers all need to adhere to social distancing rules.

Keeping till areas clean – Employees responsible for:

- Till screens should be cleaned before and after each employee shift.
- Chip and pin machines should be cleaned after each transaction.
- Phones and keyboards should be cleaned before and after each employee shift.

Warehouse – Employees responsible for:

- Signage will be provided to drivers to ensure social distancing measures are maintained.
- A process will be in place for accepting deliveries and signing relevant paperwork.
- Plant trolleys should be removed from lorries by the driver maintaining a 2m distance from colleagues.
- Gloves will be worn throughout the process of unloading and taking trolleys to the sales area.
- All warehouse equipment will be regularly cleaned and there will be a cleaning station provided for this activity .
- Access to the warehouse by shop floor employees will be limited.



Please note – Given the multi and varied nature of retail enterprises, it is the responsibility of all businesses to carry out their own risk assessments in relation to all of the above.

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We'll get through
this together