



Formbar specialises in high quality and bespoke shopping trolleys and retailer baskets for garden centres and other retail stores

Trolley specialist Formbar was invited to exhibit at Glee 2018, which was so successful for the firm that they booked for Glee 2019 on their return. “We were absolutely overwhelmed and blown away by the interest we got,” says Hannah Lewis, Managing Director of Formbar. “I had a very interesting time talking to the buyers and learning about the different challenges that garden centres have.” Hannah started researching trolley designs with the eyes of a garden centre buyer and their challenges. “Some have different surfaces around the site like gravel or sloping car parks. Others find that after years of buying lots of different trolleys it is frustrating to have nothing nesting together properly. Metal trolleys can rust through. Centres also have a very diverse customer base from families with small children, to more elderly or disabled customers who create different challenges.”

Hannah had taken a prototype Garden Centre trolley to Glee 2018 and collated the feedback from the garden centre retailers and used that information to improve the trolley for the garden centre sector.

“I am really interested in the garden centre sector and their customer experience. I found the buyers really keen to look at new innovations and ideas for the trolleys because they all know that there is no perfect trolley out there for the garden centre market. It depends on so many factors; their customers, their flooring, their gift to plant ratio. The other thing I learnt was that a lot of garden centres needed a strong metal, big basket trolley that was easy to steer to complement rather than replace the common garden centre trolley.”

Hannah’s double basket four-wheel prototype was displayed at Glee 18 for feedback and then made a triumphant return at Glee 19 improved and better value “It sits about middle to higher in the cost bracket, but we have made it from a much thicker gauge wire with much better welding and wheels. We’ve improved everything. We’ve made the second smaller basket much deeper so things don’t fall out of it. It got a really good reception and we

took quite a few orders. We feel it will last a lot longer than others on the market, and because we’ve built it we can maintain it.”

POLY CART

The latest innovation in garden centre trolleys is the Poly Cart made from 100% plastic.

“They are very light and very well made, so they run over different flooring like gravel and block paving and in and out of the gift area really



easily without the rattle that you get from a metal trolley. Even though there is a big anti-plastic movement this is a much more environmental choice over a metal trolley.

A plastic trolley is not single-use plastic, it's going to last for ten years plus and then it can be fully recycled, at the end of its life. More importantly the manufacturing process to produce it is a lot cleaner because a metal trolley goes through a ten-phase chemical dipping process to layer on all the different rust protection. A plastic trolley just pops out of injection-moulding machines and that's it. There is no chemical dipping process and because they are lighter and nest closer in together they are less of an environmental burden to transport."

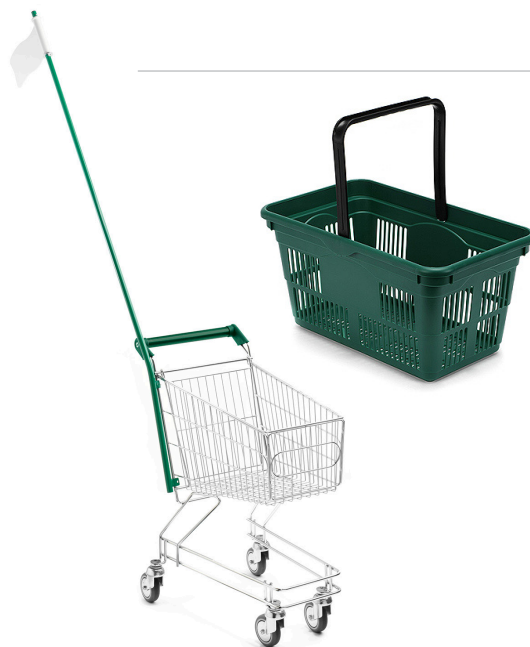
POINT OF DIFFERENCE

Competition between garden centres is fierce. You only get one chance to make a first impression and the trolleys and baskets are often the first point of contact for customers.

"You have to get the customer experience right," says Hannah. "If the basket is about to fall apart or the trolley is difficult to push, customers are not going to fill it up.



"It's also really important for centres to provide the right mix of trollies for their customer base, especially by providing one or two disabled trolleys for example so the centre is opened up to new customers. We've even got a miniature trolley that children can push round; it's an exact scaled model of a full size shopping trolley. – and has a flag on it so you can see where the kids are. It really amuses them and they want to come back because they want to push the trolley. That brings back the



parents, who tell their friends about it. By providing just one or two of these sorts of specialist trolleys, you're creating an extra point of difference between yourself and a different garden centre."

TROLLEYS FOR HIRE

When a garden centre has a special event or a busy period, Formbar offers a trolley hire service. "It's really popular over the Christmas or Easter periods, or if they have got an end of season sale," says Hannah. "We have a big fleet of shallow and deep wire trolleys and they can hire 10 to a hundred or more, so it's a great value way of having extra trolleys when you need them. After use we come pick them up. You haven't even got to maintain them or look after them. Usually people want them for 2-4 weeks and we charge them out at just £4 a trolley for a week so it's really cost effective."

For garden centres with a fleet of trolleys, maintenance is important. Formbar offers an on-site maintenance service for any brand of trolley. "Our maintenance engineers come out to the garden centre, they can spot weld and carry all the tools and spares needed like castors and wheels. It keeps the trolleys safe and extends their life too."

BASKET MATTERS

Basket theft is surprisingly high from garden centres, even when the stores provide boxes or a carry-to-car service.

"I don't have a perfect solution, but we do have a really wide variety of baskets and our plastic hand baskets can have a logo screen printed onto them – at really a low cost, it only adds about 75p to a £1 per basket. It's permanent so it doesn't rub off

and it's not a label so it can't be removed. I now have a supplier who will screen-print just fifty, so that's not a huge commitment."

Formbar also has a range of baskets including a very attractive patented oval basket, the Ellipse and it also supplies trolley-baskets.



"There's some interesting research that putting trolley-baskets into stores that had only had hand baskets before and the customer spend went up on average by 18%, just because they didn't have to carry a heavy basket."

Formbar is a small business and thrives on all the advantages this brings providing a tailored service to each and every customer.



For more information contact
Hannah Lewis

Phone: 01235 850368

Email: info@formbar.co.uk

