



## **British Garden Centres helps Kent school to harness the power of plants in its new green library**

**Family-owned chain, British Garden Centres has been helping students reconnect with nature after installing a green oasis in their school library. Tonbridge Grammar School's library has been completely transformed into a healthy and inspiring environment for students to research, study and read for pleasure with the help of indoor houseplants.**

The high-achieving grammar school with academy status worked with Paddock Green Garden Centre (part of the British Garden Centres family) when it wanted to refresh its school library at the heart of its site. The library is a key resource in supporting reading and research across the curriculum at Tonbridge.

Having redeveloped the book collection over the last 5 years, Tonbridge Grammar School's librarian, Ruth Maloney, turned her attention to the physical surroundings. Inspired by Year 9 student projects, she decided to pursue a long-held ambition to bring plants, and a breath of fresh air, into the library. With the support and expertise of Tom Cook, British Garden Centre's Houseplant expert, they sought to create a library with a peaceful, calm, and thought-provoking atmosphere. It was a natural step to include the benefits of plants and doing so has proved extremely successful.

In total, Paddock Green Garden Centre generously provided 161 plants at a cost price for the new and improved library. These included Dracaena, Monstera, Kentia palms, Calathea, and Ceropegia. It is a well-known fact that houseplants promote positive feelings of relaxation, calm and well-being and remove harmful toxins and chemicals from the air. Research demonstrates that adding plants to a classroom environment will help reduce student anxiety and sickness.

The resulting space, paid for by donations to the school's Enrichment Fund and generously supported by British Garden Centres, is proving to be an extremely popular place for book lovers and plant enthusiasts alike. The addition of the greenery provides a secondary purpose for the space. What was a thriving book collection is now housed in a physical environment that reflects its value and popularity with the students.



**A Year 12 Student** said: “Since the addition of the plants to the library, I have noticed that the tranquil atmosphere has attracted so many more students to come in at break times to read and study. It creates a very welcoming and caring environment, especially as students are involved with tending to the plants’ needs. The library now has a strikingly verdant appearance and makes everyone feel more connected to both the books and the natural world”.

**Ruth Maloney, Librarian at Tonbridge Grammar School** said: “When the opportunity to refurbish our library arose, I had high aims. We are extremely fortunate to have such a thriving and well-supported school library, but the room was clinical and uninviting. Inspired by some of our Year 9 Community Projects, I wanted to realise a long-held ambition to bring plants into the space. The connection with British Garden Centres and their support has allowed us to realise this vision fully, not one or two plants growing slowly, but a lush oasis within which our books reside. We are planning on this being the beginning of Tonbridge Grammar School. This is the start of a school-wide greening project with the library at its heart. This is a wonderful opportunity for our students and demonstrates how highly the library is valued by the school.”

**Amy Stubbs, Project & Development Manager at British Garden Centres** said: “We were delighted to help Tonbridge Grammar School green up their library with our vast range of houseplants. Scientific studies have shown that engaging with plants and nature stimulates our senses, leads to healthy minds, and benefits our physical and mental well-being. We hope the new green space taps into the students’ imagination and opens up a link between ourselves and Tonbridge Grammar School, especially for students who are considering a career in horticulture”.

For more information on British Garden Centres and your nearest store, please visit [www.britishgardencentres.com](http://www.britishgardencentres.com)

For more information on Tonbridge School, please visit [www.tgs.kent.sch.uk](http://www.tgs.kent.sch.uk)

**ENDS: 656**

**WORD COUNT:**

**Notes to Editors:**

British Garden Centres (BGC) is the UK’s largest family-owned garden centre group and the second-largest garden centre group in the UK with 60 centres around the country. The group is owned by The Stubbs family, who also own and operate Woodthorpe Leisure Park. BGC was launched in 1987 with the opening of Woodthorpe Garden Centre by brothers Charles and Robert Stubbs and has expanded rapidly ever since. In April 2022, the group opened their 61st location, Hatton Garden Centre within Hatton Country World.



**For more information or images please contact:**

Cassie King PR Officer Tel: 07875 337290 Email: [cking@britishgardencentres.com](mailto:cking@britishgardencentres.com)