

garden centers of america Garden retail trends report

April 10, 2013

Welcome to GCA's New Monthly Newsletter

Garden Centers of America (GCA) has a renewed vigor and is continuing to expand the services available to you. As part of this expansion, we have revamped the whole concept behind our monthly newsletter. It is the goal of GCA to provide you with the information and resources to help you grow your business. Garden Retail Trends Report is designed to keep you on top of what's hot in retailing, both within the industry and out.

Top 10 Food Trends This Year



Sterling-Rice Group has announced its predictions for 2013's Top 10 Food Trends. The list, compiled by the group's culinary council of chefs, restaurateurs and foodies, includes the following:

- **Sour Foods** - Tart and bitter flavors, such as fermented cherry juice and vinegars, will take the stage.
- **Healthy Dining Out** - Chefs will work behind the scenes to make your meals healthier by using ingredients like brown rice and vegetable stock.
- **Asian Comfort Foods** - Thai, Vietnamese and Korean flavors will work their way into traditional American menu items.
- **Vegetables as Main Dishes** - Veggies will take over entrees - options such as cauliflower steaks and squash noodles are becoming more common.
- **Kid-Friendly Versions of Adult Foods** - Kids' menus will focus less on hot dogs and grilled cheese and more on fruits, grains and authentic Asian flavors.
- **Local Artisans** - American artisan shops will become destinations for foodies who used to travel to Europe for exotic flavors.
- **Individualized Servings** - Menus will offer singular servings for perfectly sized meals.
- **Savory Fruit** - Chefs will be less interested in sugary tastes than in adding savory touches to their recipes.
- **All-Inclusive Menus** - No diner will be left behind as restaurants offer options to accommodate all eaters.
- **Popcorn** - Popcorn will be the snack of 2013, popping up in all types of food!

'Drunken Botanist' Now On Tour



Sake began with a grain of rice. Scotch emerged from barley, tequila from agave, rum from sugarcane, bourbon from corn. Thirsty yet? Amy Stewart, best-selling author and garden blogger, has just started a nationwide tour promoting her new book, *The Drunken Botanist*. She explains the dizzying array of herbs, flowers, trees, fruits and fungi that humans have, through ingenuity, inspiration and sheer desperation, contrived to transform into alcohol. Of all the extraordinary and obscure plants that have been fermented and distilled, a few are dangerous, some are downright bizarre, and one is as ancient as dinosaurs - but each represents a unique cultural contribution to our global drinking traditions and our history, Amy says. Amy writes exclusively for GCA's [Garden Chic magazine](#) as an every-issue contributor.

Look for lots of local and national consumer garden media buzz on growing herbs for cocktails. This fascinating concoction of biology, chemistry, history, etymology, and mixology - with more than 50 drink recipes and growing tips for gardeners - will make you the most popular guest at any cocktail party. And it will not surprise you that there is a line of branded cocktail-friendly plants to grow yourself - check out [Territorial Seed's Drunken Botanist Plant Collection](#). Initial wholesale availability is on the West Coast, served by wholesale nursery [Log House Plants](#).



Product Design Trend Points

NYC-based startup Quirky, Inc. takes crowd-sourced ideas for "cool" new products, puts the ideas through a rigorous voting process and then manufactures the winning designs, selling them to retailers like Bed Bath & Beyond, Target, Best Buy and the Container Store.

Julia Troy, a product designer at Quirky who has worked on everything from toys and kitchenware to sporting and medical goods, shared with FOXBusiness.com the six up-and-coming design trends she expects to see in 2013:

Muted Colors - "Five years ago, everything was bold and bright," says Troy, comparing the colors used to those found in a toy store. "Everyone was adding splashes of bright red to kitchen products." Today, color is still relevant, but it's softer and more muted in hue. In terms of specific colors, Troy says yellow is big, and she has her eye on a darker burgundy.

Geometric Patterns - "Patterns are very common and add a nice little accent," says Troy, "but they're tricky, because they date a product quickly." She says the hot trend is subtle geometric patterns, "whereas a couple of years ago [patterns] were more in your face."

Functional, Not Frivolous - "I compare product design to fashion, where sometimes you see a look that is very over-accessorized, and it looks like you're trying to hide something," says Troy. "We're very honest in our designs and don't add anything frivolous ... anything that we add has a reason to be there."

Matte Is Back - With design, something is really hot and then, within a year, it's so old," says Troy. "With electronics in particular, everything was high-gloss, which seemed so cool and so sexy, and now it's back to matte, sleek looks, like the Batmobile."

Materials Matter - "Silicone in the kitchen [for cooking tools] just makes sense - it has a nice quality and gives you control, much nicer than rubber," says Troy.

"We're also adding a lot of metal accents, which adds a touch of quality. Think of the iPhone ... the metal backing used to be plastic, but now it's metal, and we're pulling that detail in."

Playing for Emotional Attachments - Troy says consumers are tired of feeling that things are only going to last for a brief period of time. "If it's only going to last a minute, why buy it?" she asks. So the Quirky team tries to evoke an emotional feeling and create an instant personal attachment to its products. "You pick something up because it looks great, but it also has to work well - form and function are very relevant and have to coexist together."

'Life Is a Garden' In South Africa

"Life is a Garden" is the consumer gardening promotion used by the IGC industry in South Africa.

The campaign was launched by the South African Nursery Association to promote gardening as the ultimate leisure-time hobby.

"Life is a Garden" also supplies gardening editorial to the media across South Africa to assist with the promotion of gardening, and organizes regional charity promotions in local garden centers. Good job, mates!



Now Trending in Garden Retailing . . .

- **Grafted tomatoes** rise to even higher visibility in *USA Today's* featured coverage. [Online version featured video of breeders.](#)
- **"Colour your Life"** is a promotional campaign targeted to show consumers the value of plants and green spaces in Euro markets. It has just won backing from the Flower Council of Holland. English website: <http://www.colour-your-life.co.uk>
- Slow-food movement queen **chef Alice Waters'** next cookbook, due out in October, is going to play up the "kitchen garden" in a big way.
- **Jonathan Pedersen**, former marketing and branding head at Bailey Nurseries, following a two-month stint with a Canadian grower, has just been named Business Development Head for Monrovia Growers.

TAKE ADVANTAGE OF YOUR GCA MEMBERSHIP BENEFITS

GCA's Summer Tour - Ohio: Registration Is Open!



The GCA Summer Tour, June 23-26, takes IGC retailers to the heart of the "Garden Center Belt," with even more best practices, emerging trends and proven strategies than ever before.

This year's GCA Summer Tour heads to not one but four major metropolitan areas in Ohio, giving IGC retailers the unprecedented opportunity to see first-hand what puts the host garden centers at the top of their markets. The guided bus tour will visit a full roster of garden centers in Cleveland, Dayton, Cincinnati and Columbus as behind-the-scenes look at the best practices that drive their profits.

Sign up today! [Click here.](#)

Save Big at IGC 2013!



GCA Members save \$100 on each IGC Know2Grow Retail Conference Passport registration during the early bird registration period, and \$60 off each IGC Show Garden Center Bus Tour registration!

Other benefits include:

- Two free drink tickets per company for use at Wednesday night's reception and concert.
- Special reserved seating at the 38 Special concert Wednesday night. Be sure to come early - seating is limited!
- GCA Member Networking Lunch on Thursday.

Log in to get your discount code before registering.

IGC Show Registration: [Click here.](#)

Five Tips to Grow Your Store Brand

Created specifically to address the needs of small retailers, the Main Street Retailing Forum at Retail's BIG Show in NYC brought together retailers of all sizes to look at how to connect with customers and build community. Here are five key takeaways you can apply to your garden center:



1. **Facebook isn't free.** Tanna Dang is a small Honolulu boutique owner with a big Facebook page. While her 13,000 fans haven't come through advertising, Dang is the first to say that the best way to leverage Facebook is to spend money on it. Believing that Facebook is an extension of her brand, Dang pays a professional photographer and a copywriter to put together Facebook posts and cover photos. Her Facebook look always matches the company's website - which you can believe takes some finagling. Her editorial calendar with a checklist of 10 items that take a post from concept to approval would make even the most "Type A" personality proud. But the benefits are worth it. During her presentation, Dang shared a number of examples of how one Facebook post has helped move product that had been sitting on shelves for weeks (by declaring purple and yellow the new "it" color combination), and how the company has been able to sell out of items in mere hours after one post.

2. **Look for reasons to celebrate.** Personalized stationery shop The Polka Dot Press likes to party, and Kim Williams doesn't wait for the obvious celebrations to bring people into the store. During the "This Is Retail" video contest, she hosted a chocolate martini party for customers just to say thank you. During the party, she intentionally turned off the cash register - though so many people wanted to make purchases, she ended up turning it back on. She also encourages customers to pop in to celebrate staff members' birthdays, and she holds a series of workshops to get kids busy - and give their moms time to shop.

3. **You don't need the government to make change happen.** Frame of Mind owner Mark Plessinger told the story of the rundown Main Street in his hometown of Columbia, SC, and his efforts to bring it back to life. After finding success with art shows in his eyewear store, Plessinger used the concept of synergy to band together the merchants along the street in the hope they would collectively draw more than each storefront could draw on its own. And now that the merchants have come together to drive traffic downtown (to great success - some events bring up to 1,500 people), you can believe the local government officials are noticing. It's no wonder half a dozen new businesses have chosen to open their doors recently in the once-abandoned Main Street storefronts.

4. **Be authentic.** While each one of these business owners sees tremendous recognition among his or her customer base, there's no question that a promotion or traffic-driver that works for one may not work for another. Frame of Mind has hosted fire-spinners and belly dancers to appeal to its cutting-edge customers. Eden in Love uses philanthropy to connect with its customers through "buy one, give one" scarf promotions to help cancer patients and magazine collections to distribute in doctor's offices and hospitals. The Polka Dot Press has held back-to-school photo sessions and "meals in minutes" workshops for its moms.

5. **You can't do it all, so stop trying.** After one attendee asked about the ROI of Twitter, several of the panelists talked about their lessons learned on the importance of prioritizing. Twitter doesn't lend itself to showcasing experiences or a brand, said the panelists, so they haven't found it as valuable. And even those channels that do help demonstrate your brand need to be evaluated. Williams talked about choosing to shut down her blog after several years because it was a "time suck," and she didn't see the work translating into sales. Instead, she has chosen to focus on Pinterest, which has already proven to be a better way of connecting with the moms who visit her store.

Americans Loosen Up Spending

High-end lipstick and gourmet coffee may not top everyone's list of "needs," but for some, these small luxuries are simply untouchable, according to exclusive consumer research by the National Retail Federation, the industry advocacy group that counts your GCA as a member.



The survey found that items and services such as on-demand video streaming and upgraded mobile devices have, in recent years, maintained staying power, despite heightened economic uncertainty. On the other hand, as consumers increasingly look for ways to cut back, they are more inclined to give up high-end jewelry, maid services and magazine subscriptions.

Economic ups and downs have an irrefutable impact on Americans' spending habits that extends well beyond gas and groceries. Over the past five years, many consumers have had to rein in spending as fiscal woes plagued budgets. Now, however, the most recent findings suggest consumers are loosening the grip they've had on their wallets - though admittedly just slightly. What's also evident is that consumers, after several years of practice, are adapting to the "new normal" of an uncertain economy, reports NRF.

On average, 53.9 percent of adults said they cut back on some items and services in 2012, down from more than three-quarters (76.4%) who said they'd done so in 2011. And, as a possible sign that consumers have adjusted to budgetary constraints, almost every category saw a year-over-year decrease in the number of people who plan to cut back on items and services:

	2012	2011	2010	2009	2008
Daily cup gourmet coffee	28.8%	40.8%	35.6%	38.2%	36.9%
Luxury handbag	24.6%	39.8%	32.5%	34.9%	30.8%
New pair of jeans	45.0%	54.2%	55.0%	55.8%	54.7%
Casual sit-down restaurant	49.1%	54.5%	57.5%	63.0%	62.1%
Dept. store apparel shopping	39.6%	50.0%	47.4%	50.9%	51.6%
New pair of shoes	43.1%	50.8%	51.5%	53.7%	51.9%

The survey of 8,333 consumers was conducted by BGIinsight, December 4-10, 2012 for the National Retail Foundation. The consumer poll has a margin of error of plus or minus 1.0 percentage points.

HGTV Names Top Garden Trends

Consumer powerhouse HGTV recently named its top trends in the yard and garden:

Mainstream Sustainability - Low-maintenance gardens, drought-tolerant plants and less turfgrass have become the norm in landscape design. Homeowners now assume sustainable design will be a major part of the plan - both for financial and environmental reasons.

Edibles, Front and Center - Blended gardens that incorporate edibles and ornamentals do double duty, giving gardeners a bountiful harvest of fruits, vegetables and herbs and an alternative to turfgrass. Edible gardens also create community, as urban farmers share their bounty around the neighborhood.

Better Quality, Less Bling - Post recession: Over-the-top, showy landscapes are out. Now, homeowners prefer to invest in quality and natural materials. Scale is key to a good design.

