

# garden centers of america **Garden retail** trends report

April 10, 2014

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.



## Lighting & Dining Are Hot This Season: Are You Stocked for the Rush?

Your customers want low-maintenance gardens where they can entertain and relax, according to the 2014 Residential Landscape Architecture Trends Survey from the American Society of Landscape Architects. For the survey, landscape architects who specialize in residential design across the country were asked to rate the projected popularity of outdoor residential design elements in 2014. Here are some of the highlights:

- In outdoor rooms, 98.3 percent of architects rated lighting as somewhat or very in-demand this year, followed by seating/dining areas (97.7 percent), fire pits/fireplaces (95.4 percent) and grills (94.3 percent).
- The most popular landscape and garden elements this season include low-maintenance landscapes (95.4 percent), native plants (84.5 percent) and fountains/ornamental water features (83.9 percent).
- 76.4 percent project that food and vegetable gardens will remain ripe for demand.



## 10 Tips for Blog Content Your Customers Will Read

If you're taking the time to write great content for your garden center's blog, consider these tips from Business2Community to make sure it gets noticed:

- 1. Choose a timely topic.** Check Twitter and other social sites to see what's trending. Scan news aggregator sites for hot topics, and then link the subject of your content to what's happening in the outside world. For instance, if you're writing about how to use beneficial insects in the garden, include a link to news about the latest research regarding Integrated Pest Management.
- 2. Use descriptive titles rather than clever ones.** It may be witty to include puns in your title, but readers may not get the joke and neither will search engines.
- 3. Put the most important ideas up front.** Write in news style, with the main point of your content at the top and the details down below. You want to capture the reader's attention with your first two sentences.
- 4. Make it easy on the eye.** Use subheadings, bullets and numbers. Leave enough white space so readers can quickly scan your content.
- 5. Keep it simple.** Avoid complex sentence structures, jargon and obscure vocabulary. Steer clear of gardening terminology that could confuse novice gardeners; instead, write in layman's terms.
- 6. Keep it concise.** A good length for your blog post is between 400 and 600 words. If your topic requires much more than that, divide your content into parts and release it serially.
- 7. Use visuals.** Photos, charts and graphics grab attention and help readers understand the subject matter. This strategy is right in the garden retailer's wheelhouse, since photos of gardening possibilities and display gardens show readers what they can accomplish in vivid detail.
- 8. Give examples.** If you are explaining how to keep deer and rabbits away from your customers' vegetable gardens, give a personal example of how fencing or a repellent helped keep your own garden safe. Examples can come in the form of a story about a customer's success with a product, too.
- 9. Be generous with recognitions.** Credit other writers whose ideas have influenced your thinking. Acknowledge bloggers, friends and followers who write about gardening. Link to their posts when appropriate, and they're likely to do the same for you.
- 10. Promote your content through social media.** Use Twitter, Facebook, LinkedIn and other platforms to let your customers know when you've posted fresh content.

## Now Trending in Garden Retailing . . .

- The demand for retailers to have an online presence continues as shoppers look for a seamless shopping experience across all channels - **71% expect to view in-store inventory online and 50% expect to buy online and pick up their purchase in a brick-and-mortar store**, according to a Forrester Consulting survey.
- Weathering winter: Despite the brutal blast of cold, **February's retail sales increased 0.2%** seasonally adjusted month-to-month and 2.3 percent unadjusted year-over-year, according to the National Retail Federation.
- If you think customers find marketing e-mails annoying, think again. **Consumers rate e-mails as the most important marketing message prior to making a purchase**, with 37% preferring to be introduced to a product via e-mail, according to a study from The Economist Intelligence Unit. The study also reveals that **52% of consumers prefer post-purchase follow-ups via e-mail**.

## TAKE ADVANTAGE OF YOUR GCA MEMBERSHIP BENEFITS

### GCA Summer Tour, San Francisco, June 22-25



*This year's GCA Summer Tour takes you to the Bay Area's Best - spotlighting leading and innovative retailers in San Francisco, San Jose and the East Bay Area, and Sacramento - plus lots of local flavor and color!*

Network with your fellow garden center professionals and energize your business with fresh retail strategies driven by the best practices proven to power profits. Wine tastings, specialty dining and other exciting events are being planned now. Join us in recognizing the father of modern garden center design, Ernest Wertheim, a principal of Wertheim, Van Der Ploeg, & Klemeyer and a longtime Bay Area resident.

GCA members registering before May 31 qualify for a special early-bird rate. Sign up today! [Click here.](#)

### Save Big at IGC Chicago and IGC East!



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

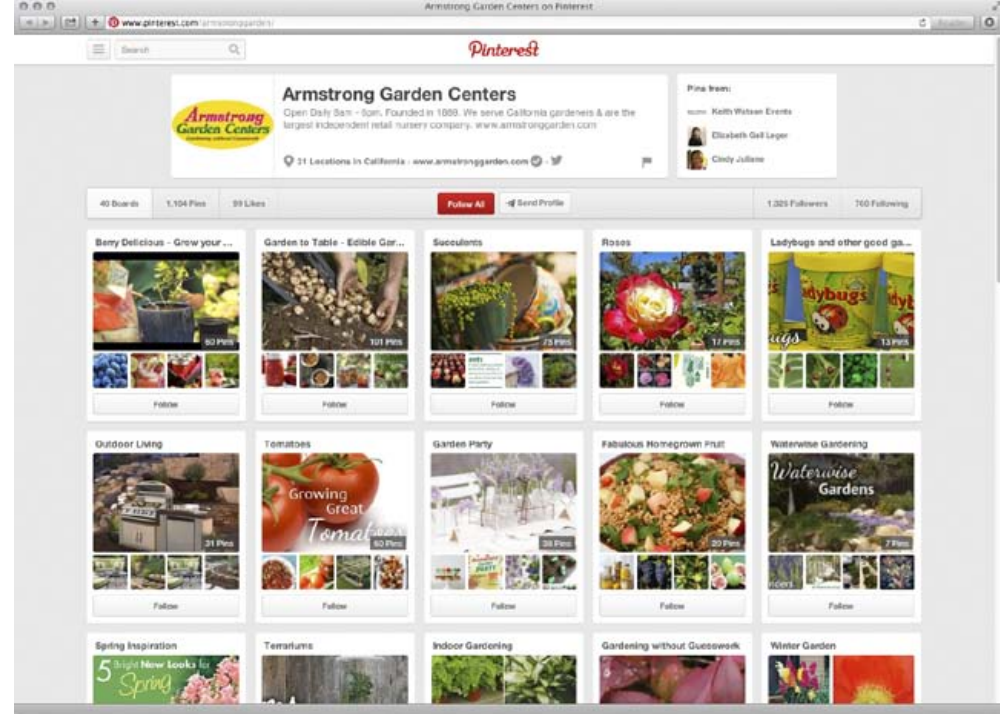
Other benefits include:

- Two free drink tickets per company for use at the events' receptions and concerts
- Special reserved seating at the concerts - be sure to come early, seating is limited!
- GCA Member Networking Lunches

Log in to get your GCA Discount Code before registering: [Click here.](#)  
IGC Chicago Registration: [Click here.](#)  
IGC East Registration: [Click here.](#)

## Get Pinning! Pinterest Is Social Media Traffic Hub, New Research Shows

IGC retailers who want to drive traffic to their websites find success when they increase their presence on social media channels, especially Pinterest. According to Experian Marketing Services' "2014 Digital Marketer: Benchmark and Trend Report," social media sites now account for almost 8 percent of all traffic to retail websites. Of all the social media sites, including Facebook and YouTube, Pinterest is supplying the greatest percentage of downstream traffic to retail sites.



Consumers are increasingly using social media sites like Pinterest as discovery platforms, says Bill Tancer of Experian Marketing Services. A visually driven Pinterest board allows your garden center to engage your existing customers and attract new shoppers with the latest colors in plants and pottery, and stylish garden art and decor, all the while connecting them with your brand and your website. Including a "Pin It" tab on images from your website will help the traffic flow, too, as customers pin your images on their personal Pinterest boards.

The report also reveals that more retailers are directing their customers to social media via their e-mail campaigns - 96 percent of marketers now promote social media in their e-mails. Pinterest alone, it says, is now being promoted by 64 percent of brands within e-mails.

## GCA Summer Tour Spotlight: Green Acres Roseville Store Redeems Former Dump Site

Green Acres Nursery & Supply puts the saying, "One man's trash is another man's treasure," to the test. Its Roseville, CA, store, which opened in 2003, was a transfer station for the city dump before the IGC retailer transformed it into a garden center. The store's first customer actually brought in a bag of trash! The hold area where trucks used to pull in and transfer their loads is now a storage area for products and supplies. The garden center has revamped the space to include a waterfall and pond, an indoor houseplant area and more.



Green Acres' locations in Folsom and Sacramento were existing retail spaces before the garden center converted them, as well. Now, a new store planned for Elk Grove, CA, will give the retailer a chance to start from scratch. The new location, scheduled to open in 2015, will be a prototype store built from the ground up.

Green Acres Nursery & Supply is just one of the many garden center hot spots featured on this year's GCA Summer Tour, which heads to San Francisco, June 22 - 25. Secure your spot today. GCA members registering before May 31 qualify for a special early-bird rate. [Click here.](#)

## What You Can Do To Win Older Shoppers' Dollars

With all the focus on attracting Gen X / Gen Y and Millennial generations, let's not forget our older shoppers. The Department of Health & Human Service's Administration on Aging estimates that nearly 55 million people will be age 65 or older by 2020, compared with 40 million in 2010. So what can you do to make



the shopping experience better at your garden center for this growing segment of the consumer population? Graeme McVie, Vice President of LoyaltyOne, a global provider of loyalty and marketing programs, recommends the following:

- Adapt the in-store experience.** The physical layout of your garden center will play a significant role in attracting and retaining a mature consumer base. Lower shelf heights to allow easier access to products. Larger, easy-to-read signage and on-cart magnifying glasses further encourage a loyal following.
- Adjust quantities.** Value promotions that encourage consumers to purchase larger quantities than they need will increasingly become less effective. Think monetary discounts, not buy-one-get-one-free.
- Leverage technology.** Unlike previous generations of seniors, many baby boomers have integrated the Internet into their daily lives. A report by Revera Inc. in partnership with Leger Marketing finds that more than half of online seniors older than 75 belong to a social networking site, and more than one-third of them go to those sites daily.