

garden centers of america Garden retail trends report

March 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.

Retail Outlook Is Sunny for 2014, According to NRF, Kiplinger Forecasts

Retail forecasts for 2014 from the National Retail Federation (NRF) and the folks at Kiplinger have IGC retailers looking on the bright side. NRF projects retail industry sales (which exclude automobiles, gas stations and restaurants) will increase 4.1 percent, up from the 3.7 percent growth seen in 2013. It also predicts online sales will grow between 9 and 12 percent this year.

Kiplinger points out that while consumer spending and confidence are currently below normal levels, the return of job growth will lead consumers to feel more secure. This should spawn a cycle of spending, leading to higher consumer incomes, which would then lead to more spending - and so it continues. If this happens in 2014, quarterly growth is likely to surpass an annualized pace of 3 percent, according to the business forecast publisher.



Four Ways to Grow Your Garden Center Business - Without Adding Resources

Independent garden centers, especially smaller businesses, are often challenged to do more with less and draw more customers without breaking the bank. To help you grow your garden center without adding overhead, Entrepreneur.com has these four tips:

- 1. Automate tasks** - Social media management tools like Buffer or HootSuite allow you to queue up content and have it post automatically on your garden center's social media channels, freeing you up to produce new material. E-mail marketing can also be automated using software from vendors like HubSpot and Marketo.
- 2. Focus on scalable channels** - E-mail is the most efficient and scalable channel, and even the smallest retailer can use it to drive in-store traffic. Digital advertising and social media are also inexpensive and scalable.
- 3. Referrals** - Asking customers for referrals is low-hanging fruit garden centers can take advantage of. Develop a rewards system to encourage them to put in a good word.
- 4. Time management** - Focus on efficient communications by training people to contact you by e-mail instead of phone - it's searchable, documented and available 24/7. Another time-saver: schedule your entire week in advance and stick to it.

Flora Grubb Gets Funky to Sell Urban Gardening

Flora Grubb Gardens gets funky when it comes to selling the love of gardening in the city. The San Francisco retailer, a stop on this year's GCA Summer Tour, shows its urban customers how to bring their small spaces to life with eclectic displays that mix vertical gardening, stylish pottery, Fermob furniture, succulents, boxed plants and more.



Creative "garden art installations," like the Edsel garden pictured here, make the store a must-see for city residents and visiting tourists alike. The dilapidated classic Ford Edsel is a remnant from the site's former life as an auto services lot. Flora Grubb decided to keep the late '50s relic and plant it up - to the delight of its customers.

Flora Grubb 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.](#)

Now Trending in Garden Retailing . . .

- Mobile marketing is quickly becoming the way to influence customers using the devices they keep closest to them - **80 % of marketers who use it say they believe mobile efforts do or will produce a ROI**, according to ExactTarget's 2014 State of Marketing report.
- Are you stocked for the **three most popular landscape and garden elements for 2014**? These are the trends customers are looking for this year, according to the American Society of Landscape Architects' 2014 Residential Landscape Architecture Trends Survey: **low-maintenance landscapes (95.4%), native plants (84.5%) and fountains/ornamental water features (83.9%)**.
- **Focusing on your employees' strengths on a daily basis**, rather than ignoring your staff members or only focusing on improving their weaknesses, **will result in more engaged employees and yield 12.5% greater productivity** at your garden center, according to Gallup's State of the American Workplace Report.

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.](#)



Hiring for the Busy Season? Ask Yourself These Questions Before the Interviews

Spring is almost here, and garden centers like Pike Nurseries - ranked No. 1 in IGC Magazine's IGC 100 report with \$138.5 million in sales along with Armstrong Garden Centers - are bulking up their staff so they're ready for the busy-season crowds. While your garden center may not need to hire 250 employees like Pike is doing right now, you will want to make sure you bring in the right people this season. Before the interviews, ask yourself these three questions, from the National Retail Federation's Retail's BIG Blog:

- 1. Who will be in the new hire's "network"?** More than half of employees regularly work with people outside their team. Identify the position's team members and direct reports, as well as colleagues who may work in other areas of the garden center. If you anticipate a change in the person's role in the next six months, identify how they will fit with future peers.
- 2. What competencies should you be hiring for?** Don't try to replicate your highest performers or find someone who has their same skill sets. Instead, look for new hires who can contribute to your store operations in ways that make up for what the team lacks.
- 3. Who should be on the hiring team?** Including peer groups in the hiring process can give you a 10 percent better hire - they understand how candidates could fit in the work environment. Consider introducing prospective candidates to the people they will work closely with before they are hired to work at your store.



And the Winner Is ... Your Garden Center, When You Run a Contest

Win the attention of your customers, and potential customers, this spring with an online contest that entices them with the prospect of a prize, and they're more likely to turn into loyal shoppers, according to punchbowl.com. When planning your garden center's contest on social media, keep these tips in mind:

- Choose a platform** - Consider which social media outlet your customers are crazy for, whether it's Pinterest, Facebook, Twitter or another option. Make sure to research the rules each platform has in place regarding contests.
- Set goals** - Design your contest with specific goals in mind, such as generating leads or bringing in more traffic. Shortstack.com reports 82.4 percent of brands that created a contest said the contest met their goals.
- Keep it fair** - Be very clear about how the winner is chosen. Is it by a randomly generated number or a post that gets the most "likes" on Facebook?
- Reward generously** - You don't have to put out a pricey prize, but make it a valuable reward for taking the time to enter. Is it a gift certificate, a gift basket or a featured plant? Make sure the prize is in line with your garden center's brand.
- Increase engagement** - Promote the contest via social media, and announce it at your website, in your e-newsletter and in-store.
- Stay consistent** - Running one stand-alone contest will give you some quick results, but running a series of contests will help you build on that success. It keeps interest high and consumers wanting more.