



Garden retail trends report

May 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. GCA's Garden Retail Trends Report is designed to keep you on top of what's hot in retailing, both within the industry and out.

Big News for IGCs! New Homes Are Getting Bigger



New homes in the United States are growing, according to U.S. census data, as homeowners buck the housing-bust mentality of smaller-is-more-sensible. The data shows the average new American home built last year grew to an unprecedented 2,300 square feet. **This trend toward larger living spaces likely means these sized-up homeowners will seek out ways to beautify their larger lawns and gardens - great news for your garden center biz!**

The increase in home size is linked to a few factors that could point to key opportunities for IGC retailers. Tight loan standards have pushed the typical buyers of small homes out of the home-buying market. The homeowners who are able to build larger homes have money to spend and high credit scores - in other words, purchasing power. They are taking advantage of low home prices and low interest rates, and will want to keep their investments brag-worthy, with gardens and landscaping that one-up the Joneses.

Another look at home buyers going bigger comes from the National Association of Home Builders, whose recent survey shows Gen X / Gen Y consumers are more likely to pursue extra square footage. The survey reveals buyers younger than 35 generally sought homes more than 400 square feet larger than the homes of those 65 and older. If they stay on trend, these young families will need a perfect spot for an edible garden and a low-maintenance landscape that leaves a lasting impression. What is your garden center doing to draw Gen X / Gen Y? (For inspired ideas on how to win younger consumers, turn to the pages of *Garden Chic* magazine and visit www.everythingigc.com.)

Top Pinterest Trends Point to Niche Potentials



Pinterest, the third most popular social media site, is dominated by women - your primary customers. According to Punchbowl.com, moms are 61 percent more likely to use Pinterest than other Americans. Repinly, a Pinterest directory website that provides stats and other insights into the social media

site, shows the top 10 pinners with the most followers on Pinterest are women. Check out this year's most popular pins and boards for the niche categories your garden center could capitalize on:

Food & Drink - This top pinning category presents an opportunity for your garden center to showcase the demand for edible gardening, specialty foods, and even beer and wine. Pin recipes that use home-grown herbs, vegetables and fruits. Did you just get a batch of fresh local honey in-store? Pin it! Hosting a wine tasting at your garden center? Pin the vintages that pleased your customers' palates the most.

DIY & Crafts - Coming in second in pinning popularity, the DIY & Crafts category is easily translated to promotional opportunities for your garden center. Pin simple-yet-spectacular DIY landscaping projects and container gardens bursting with color.

Hair & Beauty - Natural products with a botanical base appeal to Pinterest users looking for something different and "green" in the beauty department. Capture clean, simple images of your garden center's cosmetics and body care products, and pin them for women to add to their wishlists.

Home Decor - This is the fourth most popular pin, and it is the most popular category among Pinterest boards. Use that popularity by pinning photos of colorful pieces of pottery, garden art, floral arrangements and everything else you sell to spruce up the home, indoors and out.

For a complete look at the most popular pins and boards on Pinterest, visit www.repinly.com/stats.aspx.

Consumers Still Hungry for Edible Gardening

Consumer appetites for edible gardening aren't waning, according to a recent report from The Garden Writers Association Foundation - **in fact, the category is gaining in popularity.** The group reveals that among the 68 million households that have a lawn or garden or grow plants in containers, 81.5 percent have grown edible fruits, vegetables or herbs since 2009. That percentage equals around 55.5 million households, and of that number, 91.4 percent were still growing edibles in 2012.



More homeowners are expected to jump on the edible gardening trend in the upcoming year. The survey forecasts the number of households growing edible plants to increase by 11.3 percent among all U.S. households in 2013. Those who plan to tend and grow edible gardens this year say their top five challenges are time, insect and disease control, wildlife control, irrigation and cost. These newbie edible gardeners will likely need expert advice just as much as they need seeds and supplies. Independent garden centers can make sure they are poised for success by providing information through classes, blogs and signage. Remaining accessible by phone and e-mail will also let these gardeners know they can turn to your store for assistance.

What's Hot in Aussie Gardening

Gardening trends Down Under harken back to simpler times by appealing to the senses of smell, taste and sight. Here are four ways Aussies are transforming their gardens in the upcoming year, according to Australia's LifeStyle HOME channel. We could see these trends make their way stateside soon!



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Fragrant Flowers - From roses to gardenias and oriental lilies, these beauties add color and aroma to any garden. Flower beds and pots can be planted up to make even the smallest spaces smell amazing.

Homesteading - Homeowners are looking to become more self-sufficient. Inspire them with ideas for a simple vegetable patch or a balcony herb garden.

Less grass, more flowers - In the Queensland heat, drought-tolerant flowers are replacing large grass coverings for a bright and healthy garden year round. Group natives together for your North American customers who are looking to do the same.

Vintage - Gardeners seek the comfort of nostalgic terra-cotta or seed boxes in their green spaces. The vintage items contrast nicely with a modern landscape, and they are cost-effective.

Now Trending in Garden Retailing . . .

- Talk about social media growing! Between 2009 and 2012, **Twitter tweets increased by 13,500 percent** to 340 million per day! Nothing for us to ignore.
- More than **75 percent of all TV viewers** these days are using some type of Internet device - computer, pad, phone - while watching. They're catching up on e-mail, looking for products mentioned on the tube, etc.
- American consumers' fascination with **English gardens** is the focus of Thomas Mickey's new book, *America's Romance with the English Garden*. Mickey details how Americans first became captivated by colorful images of English gardens published in seed catalogues of the 1890s, and how the modern garden industry began as a result.

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 for a behind-the-scenes look at the best practices that drive their profits.

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

Mark Your Calendar: July Is 'Independent Retailer Month'

IGC retailers know the value of doing business locally. Now, you have the chance to share that knowledge with your customers and your community during Independent Retailer Month this July. Through a range of in-store, online and community events, Independent Retailer Month connects consumers to the independent retailer sector and highlights its positive social and economic impact. The month-long shopping movement celebrates the diversity of local independent retail while stimulating the economy.

GCA QUICK TIP!
Download this poster for your store.
Go to www.independentretailermonth.com and click on Marketing Materials.



Tom Shay, Principal of Profits Plus and an every-issue *IGC Retailer* columnist and IGC Show track leader, and Kerry Bannigan, Founder and CEO of Nolcha, started the promotional campaign in 2011. The campaign's website, www.independentretailermonth.com, offers ideas and printables to help your garden center get involved in the activities. For instance, the site offers these statistics to promote at your store, touting the benefits of shopping local to your customers:

- **More money stays in the community** - Indiana Main Street Program and others have determined that only 6 cents of every dollar spent with a big box retailer stays in the community. For a chain store, it's 20 cents of every dollar. Every dollar spent with a sole proprietorship keeps 60 cents circulating in the community - that's 10 times more than the boxes and three times more than the chains. (Indiana Main Street Program)
- **Money stays in the community longer** - When consumers shop locally-owned businesses, the money will stay in the community three times longer. Local businesses tend to buy from local suppliers and hire local service providers such as printers, accountants and lawyers, which means more jobs for the community. (South Dakota Rural Enterprise)
- **Local businesses give more to community causes** - Many of the non-profit organizations that serve a community are supported largely by local businesses. What's more, local radio stations, newspapers and television stations are kept alive by local business advertising. (Buy Local Western North Carolina)
- **Expertise** - Local business owners and employees often have more knowledge and expertise. The benefit of shopping local businesses for a product or service is that they often specialize, which means better customer service. (Buy Local Western North Carolina)
- **Job creation** - Local businesses provide the most new jobs nationally, and new local businesses have the potential to create high-paying jobs in the form of business ownership. Local businesses can also collectively achieve a larger local economy by finding new small niches that are often missed by non-local businesses. (Buy Local Western North Carolina)
- **Bringing awareness** - Independent retailers in cities with active Buy Independent/Buy Local campaigns report stronger holiday sales than those in cities without such campaigns. (American Independent Business Alliance, 2010)

What Customers Want from Your Bricks-and-Mortar Store

Independent garden centers need to take note of how e-commerce sites like Amazon are drawing customers, says the National Retail Federation, an industry advocacy group that counts your GCA as a member. **With e-commerce carving out an ever-growing piece of the sales pie, how can garden centers ensure shoppers' bricks-and-mortar experiences are productive, personalized, convenient - and most of all, memorable?**

Experts have varied opinions, yet all agree on the importance of traditional stores and consumers' enthusiasm for shopping. "The problem is that the digital arena has gotten better at delivering on the things shoppers have always valued in a retail relationship - someone who knows you, someone who can help you find what you're looking for and remembers what you bought the last time you visited," says Al Sambar, Retail Strategist at global management consulting firm Kurt Salmon.

Sambar expects that to change, though. "The technology exists for store-based retailers to replicate that personalized shopping experience," he says. "It's now possible to know who a shopper is when he enters the store and recall past purchases. It can also be used in the store to provide dynamic recommendations based on a shopper's purchasing history."



Sambar says there is no rush for retailers like garden centers to exchange their traditional POS systems, which provide valuable information, for mobile devices. He says the primary focus should be on catering to consumers' needs and giving them a pleasant shopping experience, not on cutting-edge marketing. A survey last year by FITCH, a global brand design consultancy, shows that U.S. consumers want to be inspired, learn something new and have fun while they shop - but above all, they want it to be easier to find products.

Most 'Stumbled Upon' Garden Trends

One garden trend report based on activity at the social bookmarking and discovery site, StumbleUpon, has one of the largest directories to back it up: the site's 30 million users. StumbleUpon directs users to "stumble" through web pages based on their interests and rate those pages with a Like or Dislike. The site recently compiled a list of its top garden trend stumbles:

Top 5 Most Popular Garden Trends on StumbleUpon

- Wall hangings and walled gardens
- Eccentric potting - teacups, colorful bowls, cork pots, etc.
- Wildflowers - organic shapes and plantings
- Trees - apple, pear and magnolia
- Topiaries - inspired by the English landscape