

# garden centers of america Garden retail trends report

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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.

## Thinking about a Store Remodel? New Research Touts the ROI of a Revamp

This may be the year for that garden center remodel you've been considering. New market research from Monash University shows sales increase after a retail store remodel, and this increase lasts a full year. Interestingly, the increase in sales during the year after a remodel is predominantly from new customers. In a small independent retail store, there was a 43 percent increase in sales among new customers and 7 percent among existing customers. New customer visits to the store were 16 percent higher after the first purchase in the remodeled store. The small independent retail store that was part of the study recouped its remodeling costs within three years.



## Make Sure Your Store Checkout Lines Are as Painless as Possible

Waiting in line is a top pet peeve with customers. Make it less painful for them with these tips from Perry Kuklin of Lavi Industries:

**Design for first-timers.** Observe the habits of your first-time customers as they make their way to and through the wait line. Do they easily find where they need to go? If not, what are the hang-ups? Use this information to adjust your flow and prevent customers from wandering aimlessly in search of the wait line's entrance or stopping dead in their tracks, trying to decipher your signs.



**Get ready to change checkout line configurations on the fly.** Make sure you are able to adapt your wait line to the changes in customer flow throughout the day, week, month and from season to season.

**Choose clarity over creativity.** Clever signage is fun, but sacrificing the clarity of your message in this case could turn your customer flow into no-flow. Keep your checkout line directions clear and concise.

**Plan the entrance and exit.** Use guides, like stanchions and retractable belts, to create a clear checkout line entrance. Also, create a clear end to the line to avoid misunderstandings right before the customer reaches your checkout.

## Displays Strategies You Can Use for a Customized Shopping Experience

Your store displays serve as silent salespeople, so make sure they build brand recognition, educate your customers and inspire customer interaction. Here are four ways to focus your displays for a more personalized shopping experience at your garden center, from Retail TouchPoints:

**1. Evaluate the effectiveness of your current displays.** Garden centers that rely on the same old merchandising and POS displays risk falling into a rut. Static stands are being replaced by tablet PC displays, self-service kiosks and digital signage. To assess the effectiveness of your displays, ask yourself: Are they are customizable? Do they offer personalization? Are they delivering an effective return on investment?



**2. Research new display options.** Take a close look at today's growing assortment of display options, including vendor-supplied POP, store fixtures, digital signage and interactive kiosks. Many of these connect customers with other sales channels, such as Internet and social media, allowing shoppers to access outside resources while in your store.

**3. Ask retail display vendors these top 10 questions:** (1) With the primary objectives of my garden center's project in mind, how can you help? (2) What look and feel can you create for the display? (3) What strategic decisions can you help me make in terms of where the unit will be placed? (4) How many units will be deployed, and how quickly can you deploy them? (5) What size requirements do you recommend? (6) How long will the display be in the field? (7) What products, and how many of each, will be displayed? (8) What are the packing and shipping requirements? (9) What are the installation and support requirements? (10) What experience do you have with garden centers and other independent retailers?

**4. Implement and evaluate your new display strategy.** The first step to establishing a successful display program is to create a timeline that maps out your selections. Then, you will need to decide between a test phase or a full rollout of the new displays.

## Now Trending in Garden Retailing . . .

- If you want to drive more traffic to your garden center's website, try blogging. **Blogs on company websites result in 55 percent more visitors**, says ContentPlus.
- A trend that has **one U.K. store banning chocolates and other sweets at its checkout in favor of healthier options, like dried fruits, nuts, juice and water**, could find a place in your garden center as a way to attract health-conscious moms.
- **Pre-existing home sales climbed 2.4 percent in September to a seasonally adjusted rate of 5.17 million**, according to the National Association of Realtors. Is your garden center ready to help these homeowners spruce up their new digs in time for the holidays?



## Psst! Your Garden Center Needs a Secret Shopper

Hiring a secret shopper to check out your garden center is smart retailing, and here's why, according to Network Media Group. First, it measures the guest experience - your customer service and brand presentation - from an objective point of view. It can also provide a return on investment by identifying areas where company standards need to be established, giving you the opportunity to gain more control of the guest experience.

External assessments from secret shoppers are crucial to confirming your store brand is presented in ways that are consistent with your operating philosophies, guidelines and principals. As far as your garden center staff is concerned, mystery shopping can catch an employee doing something right, discover superstars on your team or reveal employees you thought were good but are actually hurting your business.

## Don't Turn a Blind Eye to Staff Conflicts - It Will Come Back to Hurt You

When conflict arises among your garden center staff, the tendency could be to let the problem work itself out. But be warned: that approach could do damage to your business. According to James Kerr, Management Consultant and Organizational Behaviorist, bad things happen when leaders routinely avoid addressing conflict in the workplace:

- **Communications become strained.** A conflict that goes unresolved festers and causes communication breakdowns at your garden center.
- **Teamwork diminishes.** As communications become strained within your team, cooperation and teamwork will lessen, and animosity will build.
- **Productivity suffers.** When teamwork goes south, so does your staff's productivity. Results suffer when the sense of togetherness is gone.



- **The customer experience is compromised.** Team dysfunction is felt by your customer every time. It rears its ugly head as poor-quality customer service.
- **The best and brightest leave.** A consequence of conflict avoidance is the departure of your store's best people. Those who can will move on to greener pastures.
- **Brand value weakens.** Your shoppers will find substitute providers that deliver high-quality products and services - and better customer experiences.

## Technology's Reach In Retail: Three Trends to Watch from IGC's Kyle Lacy

It's no secret that technology is changing the way we retail at light speed. Kyle Lacy of ExactTarget, an every-issue columnist for *IGC Magazine* and a track leader at this summer's IGC Retail Conference at IGC Chicago, Navy Pier, and IGC East, Baltimore



Convention Center, describes these key trends that will affect the way your garden center sells in-store and online in the near-term:

**The Ecommerce Effect** - Amazon continues to revolutionize retail with enhanced product recommendations and personalization of the online shopping experience.

**Brand Personalization** - Indeed, it's time to get personal. There is a 12 percent to 25 percent increase in sales when your transactional message includes personalized product recommendations, ExactTarget Marketing Cloud's Predictive Intelligence Benchmark Report reveals.

**Mobile Reach** - From a retail marketing perspective, smartphones are noted with a strong potential for growth since only 30 percent of the total market uses them. Of those who have smartphones, 83 percent research products in-store using the devices, according to Lacy.

## TAKE ADVANTAGE OF YOUR GCA MEMBERSHIP BENEFITS



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

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

Other benefits include:

- Two free drink tickets per company for redemption at the pre-party evening receptions and IGC Classic Rock Concerts
- Special reserved seating at the concerts - be sure to come early, seating is limited!
- GCA Member Networking Lunch

More details and registration information will be available soon.