



Garden retail trends report

September 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.

Millennials Want Deals, Disposable Garden Fashion

Millennials have their own motivations to shop, and deals are one of the primary drivers, according to a recent [cnbc.com](#) article. Consumers who came of age during the recent recession will continue to hold on tightly to their money, market researchers say. This customer base still wants garden fashion, but wants it to be disposable and at a lower price point. Consider offering inexpensive, on-trend ways for Millennials to add pop to their apartments, such as creative succulent arrangements, pre-planted containers and other small-space gardening options that are easy to transport or inexpensive enough to throw away when they move.



Put More Muscle Behind Your Garden Center's Brand

A successful brand connects emotionally with the customer and drives her to shop. To help your garden center make that all-important connection, here are five ways to build a strong brand, from ExactTarget:



Offer great products.

What you sell should be an essential part of your customer's daily life, have multiple functions and be one step ahead of your customers and competitors.

Be transparent. Every employee at your garden center should know your brand and what it stands for. This way, customers will receive a consistent brand message no matter who they talk to. Find a concise, simple way to explain what your store does.

Master the art of communication. Create experiences that encourage your customers to interact with your garden center brand. Respond quickly and positively to questions you receive via social media.

Be aware of your online presence. Make sure your website makes a positive impression, update your social media pages and stay on top of the content that you're putting out there for everyone to see.

Promote your brand, not your industry. Avoid using cliches to describe your garden center brand. Be aware of what your customer really wants. If it's organic vegetable plants, focus on the customer's desire for a healthy lifestyle rather than the vegetable plant itself. A brand strategy should focus on the core value proposition, not superficial features.

Here's What to Look for In Your Front-Line Greeters

First impressions are lasting impressions. [RetailCustomerExperience.com](#) lists these traits found in the most effective front-line staff:

- **Confidence** - makes eye contact and strikes up conversations.
- **Innate friendliness** - customers don't want to deal with employees who have to force themselves to be nice.
- **Ability to multitask** - juggles customer needs and attends to duties.
- **Patience** - able to deal with all types of customers.
- **Articulate** - formulates answers and give information when asked.
- **Proactive** - able to anticipate when someone needs help.
- **Empathy** - looks at a situation through the eyes of the customer.

Now Trending in Garden Retailing . . .

- Today's customers are on the lookout for deals, with **42% shopping for sales more often as a result of the economy**, according to the National Retail Federation. What promotions are you planning at your garden center for the upcoming holiday season?
- If you want your customers to feel good about your brand, **cater the information you give them on your website, in your e-mails and other marketing tools to fit their interests**. Sixty-one percent of consumers say they feel better about a company that offers custom content, reports [punchbowl.com](#).
- If your garden center doesn't offer gift cards, you're missing out. **Seventy-seven percent of consumers have given a gift card in the previous year, and 90% have received one**, according to a Retail Gift Card Association survey. More food for thought as the holidays approach.

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.

5 Ways to Get Customers to Choose Your Store Over the Boxes

Customers will travel out of their way to patronize a small business rather than a larger-sized, better-known company because they know and like the people there and enjoy the shopping experience, says *Bloomberg Businessweek* writer Karen Klein. As an independent garden center, developing the kind of relationship with your customers that will lead to repeat business is paramount. Use these tips to keep your customers coming back for more:



1. Give stellar customer service. Make sure your customers are dealt with promptly, courteously and efficiently. They will remember a good experience, but will remember a bad one even more.

2. Be a people person. Remember names and family details. The decision to purchase is more emotional than logical.

3. Resolve problems quickly. Don't ignore or get annoyed by complaints. Your customers will remember if you've worked hard to resolve an issue to their satisfaction, and they'll feel comfortable shopping your garden center again when you do.

4. Don't oversell. Focus on how you can help your customers rather than on how you can sell them something.

5. Keep in touch. Let your regulars know about sales, specials and new products at your garden center. Thank them in person and with special discounts for being loyal customers.

Transform Your Staff Into Sales Superheroes!

Keeping your garden center customers happy depends largely on employees who demonstrate positive attitudes. To foster a staff of sales superheroes who are strong advocates of your garden center's brand, *Entrepreneur* recommends the following:



• **Develop a plan** - Create an effective business plan that spells out what you want your store sales staff to accomplish.

• **Communicate effectively** - Let everyone know what the job requires, and don't leave all the explaining to the managers. Interact with your employees to ensure everyone is on the same page.

• **Listen** - Pay attention to what your employees have to say, and refrain from arguing with those who disagree with you.

• **Admit your mistakes** - You will not be right all the time. Employees like to work for those who are fair, honest and able to admit when they're wrong.

• **Don't show favoritism** - A sure way to create resentment is to treat certain sales staffers better than others. Treat every employee at your garden center fairly, and grant them the same opportunities.

• **Compliment employees** - Praise those who do a good job. Don't assume anyone is above hearing a word of encouragement, and don't take anyone for granted.

• **Reduce potential conflicts** - When a problem begins to arise among your sales staff, work to find a solution immediately.

• **Offer incentives** - Train your staff in multiple areas to reduce boredom, and offer incentive programs so employees can earn extra money for their hard work.