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IGCA E-News

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Greetings from our IGCA President

Dear IGCA friends,

As 2024 draws to a close, it's the perfect time to reflect on this year's challenges and successes and prepare for the opportunities that 2025 will bring.

A big thank you to the Canadian Congress organisers for hosting such a fantastic IGCA Congress 2024 in Quebec. It was a wonderful event, full of great ideas, inspiration, and the chance to build new friendships and strengthen old ones.

Thank you for your ongoing support of the IGCA. I wish you a Merry Christmas filled with peace and joy, and a New Year full of good health, happiness, and success.

We can't wait to see you in Cape Town for the IGCA Congress 2025 in October!



Update from Australia

by Leigh Siebler

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industry, September, October and November of course for us. September was not great, but October has been excellent for the members I talk to with some reporting record results and good YTD.

Australian economy ok. The media constantly reports about the “Cost of Living Crisis” that unfortunately is real for many and of course is a negative on sales but garden lovers press on regardless.

GCA Inspiration Tour planning for Sydney, NSW in February 2025 is underway and we are excited about that. The concept for this is readily moved to other states and we hope to replicate it in a different state each year. A GCA Conference in 2025 will happen if time permits with a new GCA Manager starting soon.

Our major project for this year, One Tree Per Child, (OTPC) has been a resounding success. Have a look at One Tree Per Child on Google but keep in mind that this is the Garden Centre Project, not the community project, It is a first for Australia. Click on www.gardencentresaustralia.com.au for our update. We have purchased 20,000 Activity Packs with most sent to members.



Activity Pack Bag Proof

Our GCA Young Persons Collective is new and going well. We are looking for ideas and inspiration from the younger members of management and staff.

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GCA Young Persons Collective Meeting at Pinewood Nursery

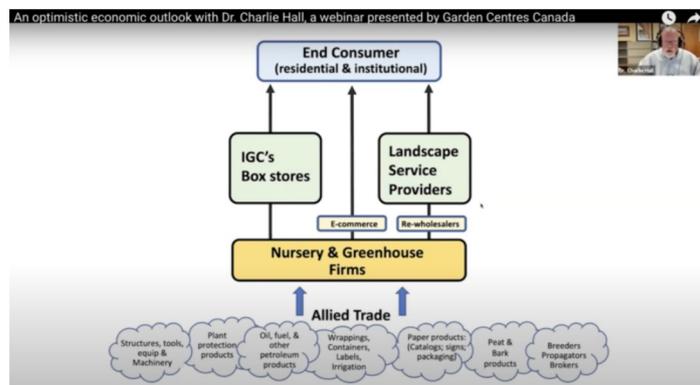
Our Communications Manager, Lisa McCann, has guided all the projects above and we thank Lisa for her dedication to GCA.

Leigh Siebler, Manager, Garden Centres of Australia

Feedback from Canada

by Anne Kadwell

While our Canadian stores began preparations for the holiday season, we had the opportunity to take in an amazing webinar with Dr. Charlie Hall.



Dr. Hall, a horticulturally-minded economist, addresses the main drivers of our current green industry, how the economy has remained as resilient as it has, and brings clarity as to why, in spite of increased wages and economic growth, consumers still perceive the opposite.

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again, and what this means for the future of green industry sales. “I really don’t care how you feel as a consumer,” he said during the November 7 webinar presented by Garden Centres Canada. “I care about how you spend your money.”

Dr. Hall’s insightful presentation is an excellent way to help prepare for the 2025 season: <https://youtu.be/ckf3PN9HW-M>

We’re looking forward to another amazing Garden Centres Canada Summit 2025, taking place in Winnipeg, Manitoba from July 6-9. We’ll visit several garden centres, growers, and tourist destinations, and learn from a compelling lineup of keynote speakers.

Don’t miss this fantastic opportunity to network with fellow independent garden centre owners and operators. If you are interested let me know anne@canadanursery.com.



News from Czech Republic

by Michal Ferencick



Christmas 2024

The Christmas season is longer this year, which could help Christmas sales. Our garden centre sales till the 3rd quarter shows an average growth of 3,4%.

This year the smaller centres has a bigger growth around 19% than the bigger centres with a growth around 2 - 2,5%. Along with that growth, wages are also increasing by an average of 9.5%. The average sale per customer have grown around 3%.

When we look at the product groups we are losing in the decoration and hardware, which is a challenge for Christmas season. Companies like Action are growing the number of shops in Czech. We are still successful in all green – outdoor, indoor and



Our marketing project FloreniUm is growing. We had some successful campaigns and we are now finishing the plan for the year 2025, to grow faster to help our centres to grow their businesses.

Michal Ferenčík - Garden centre Ferenčík, FloreniUm (Czech garden centre association), Czech Republic

News from France

by Thomas le Rudelier

In November, inflation slowed to 1.7%, offering some relief to households. However, this reprieve was not enough to reverse the negative trend affecting sales across many sectors, including garden centers.



Nevertheless, November saw a slight boost thanks to key events such as All Saints' Day, which drove sales of chrysanthemums, and the seasonal popularity of poinsettias. These highlights helped soften the overall decline, but the current political instability continues to weigh heavily on consumer spending across all types of businesses.

All eyes are now on the Christmas season, a traditionally critical period for recovering annual figures. However, the outlook remains bleak: it seems almost certain that 2024 will end in negative territory for garden centers.

The Federation is actively working on data initiatives to provide better insights and accurate analyses to inform the market.

Feedback from Germany

by Thomas Buchenau

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Garden centers in Germany are currently experiencing a lively yet challenging economic situation.

The Christmas business looks promising, but the expectations for plant sales have not been fully met throughout the year, and especially high-priced product groups are still experiencing rather subdued demand.

Nevertheless, the industry remains optimistic.



This year, the VDG intensified its initiatives for young talents. In addition to working with juniors, apprentices are also in focus: The popular "Azubitag" offers them valuable learning opportunities, and with the new "Azubitag XXL," they can now also train practical skills by working hands-on in a nursery and gaining valuable experience.

Amidst these developments, Germany is awaiting an important political decision: In February 2025, a new government will be elected, which could also be crucial for the economic future of garden centers and retail. The VDG is looking forward to the upcoming changes and the opportunities that could arise for the industry.

We would like to invite you to Germany today to visit the international plant fair IPM 2025, from January 28 to 31, in Essen. For your visit, Messe Essen will send you the following online invitation code for free admission: ug2c-9b89-ncrr-itzd. This code can be used multiple times and can be redeemed for a free day ticket in the ticket shop (<https://www.ipm-essen.de/tickets/index-17.html>).

On **January 29, from 2:00 PM to 4:00 PM**, our association, together with Messe Essen, will host a meet and greet, a **coffee gathering**, at the VDG booth (in the Galeria, booth **GA23**). We are very much looking forward to your visit!

We recently hosted the IGCA Administrator Meeting in the Munich area in preparation for Congress 2026 and would like to extend our heartfelt thanks to all the administrators who attended. We hope you had a fantastic experience and enjoyed it as much as we did!

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Administrators meeting

#IGCA2026together
#IGCA2026Germany

Best regards from Germany!
The VDG Team

Update from Ireland

by Fergal Doyle

Retail Excellence Ireland has observed a notably mixed retail environment in the wake of Ireland's recent general election, as the country's economic climate remains uncertain.



In the third quarter, overall spending rose by 2.3%, driven largely by essentials such as grocery, pharmacy, and hardware, while more discretionary sectors—clothing, footwear, and department stores—experienced negative growth.

The lead-up to the holiday season presented a varied picture: November's elongated Black Friday sales period saw some sectors reporting up to 5% growth, but others struggled with declines. Online channels performed well, reflecting consumers' evolving shopping habits.

Unfortunately, December's first significant storm hampered trading conditions in many regions, further underscoring ongoing volatility. The escalated cost of living following a period of high inflation is undermining consumer spending power, but

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Nonetheless, there were reasons for optimism.

Our annual awards ceremony showcased excellence in Irish retail, introducing new categories like Sustainable Retailer of the Year, which Arboretum proudly secured, and Independent Retailer of the Year, awarded to Windyridge Garden Centre. Additionally, a sold-out AI in Retail event, hosted with Google, demonstrated the transformative potential of generative AI, positioning the industry for future growth and innovation.

Update from Italy

by Chiara Lupano

13 th AICG National Conference "Naturally we cultivate innovation"

NOI TechPark South Tyrol
Bolzano - 14, 15, 16 January 2025



The 13th National Conference of AICG (Italian Association of Gardening Centres), one of the main and most anticipated events in the sector in Italy, will be held on 14, 15 and 16 January 2025 in Bolzano (in the extreme north-east of Italy), Comparison and update for representatives of the Garden Centres and companies in the sector.

Programme Overview

Join us for a three-day event celebrating innovation, inspiration, and networking in the garden industry.

On **Tuesday, 14 January**, participants will visit top garden centers and horticulture companies across the region, including Garden Paradise Siegfried, Psenner, Floricoltura Wielander and Blumissima, concluding with a dinner at Castel Flavon.

Wednesday, 15 January focuses on the Members' Assembly, board elections and engaging talks by industry leaders at NOI TechPark, ending with a gala dinner at Restaurant Laurin.

Finally, on **Thursday, 16 January**, the conference wraps up with inspiring

Update from Japan

by Yasuaki Hirata

Japan's economy grew 0.9% annually in Q3 2024, driven by consumer spending but hindered by weak capital investment and declining external demand. Inflation remains high, with rising costs passed to prices. The IMF forecasts 0.3% growth in 2024, rebounding to 1.1% in 2025, supported by expected wage and consumption increases.

The Japanese floriculture market is steadily growing, valued at 973.8 billion yen in 2023. Key drivers include urbanization, rising interest in landscaping, and cut flower demand. Challenges like logistics issues and sustainability concerns persist, prompting industry efforts in eco-friendly practices, reducing waste, and improving distribution efficiency to ensure sustainable growth.

JGCA is an organization that brings together garden centers, green shops, producers, and wholesalers nationwide to exchange opinions on the current state and future of the horticulture industry.

Recent Activities

- In June 2024, a general meeting and research conference were held in Ishikawa Prefecture.
- In August 2024, members participated in the International Garden Centre Association (IGCA) conference held in Montreal and Quebec, Canada.
- An upcoming 157th research conference and general meeting are scheduled for January 28-29, 2025, in Saitama Prefecture.

For more details, visit [JGCA official website](#).

Feedback from Poland

by Karolina Filipiak

The Polish economy is slowing down. However, the main engine of the economy this year remains consumption and demand for services. Investments and foreign trade

that the Polish industry is emerging from stagnation.

Wages continue to rise, but employment falls.

Last season was not great in terms of sales. There were large sales until May, then smaller ones. Plant protection products and fertilizers sold very well, as every year. Tools sold less this year. We see a slight increase in sales of high- and mid-range products at the expense of cheap tools. Sales of conifers, stones, shaped and aquatic plants are falling, while sales of deciduous trees and shrubs, perennials, grasses, plants for interiors and balconies, and pots and products related to animal feeding are growing.

December in garden centers means sales of decorations and Christmas trees.

However, in many garden centers the number of customers decreases year by year and to achieve growth, the sales basket must be increased. The biggest challenge of the new year will be to attract customers and once again encourage them to become more interested in gardening - growing crops in gardens, balconies and terraces.

Garden centers also struggle with the problems of rising labor costs and the shortage of employees, their recruitment, motivation and retention.

We cannot forget that in garden centers it is important to advise customers and we must also ensure the appropriate number and training of employees.

In the Polish Association of Garden Centers (PSCO), autumn is an intense time and full of industry events.

In October, we organized a Garden Fair for our members, owners of garden centers, and invited 50 companies from the gardening industry to present their products for the new season. The fair, which has been organized for years, enjoys great interest and allows our members to place orders for the next year. During the fair, we also organized one day of stationary training for our members.

Autumn is the time to place orders for goods to garden centers for the next season and training time.

In November, we started online training via the Zoom platform. These weekly training courses will last until spring and the start of seasonal sales in garden centers. The topics are diverse, from advertising, social media, team management, customer service to product training. We train our members, garden center owners,

News from Spain

by *Santiago Gonzales*



The growth of Spanish economy in 2024 has been above European average so far. Spanish population has grown by 3 million people in a few years, immigration is increasing mainly due to the need of workers.

And there is certainly a shortage of housing, which causes rental and home sales prices to a neverending rise.

All of this affects sales and results in our sector. The average sale in our garden centers from January to October 24 has decreased by a -2%. But there's room for growth if teams become more professional and trained. There are no official qualifications and garden centers need to train them by their own means. In this case, the AECJ plays the role of providing webinars on more than 70 product categories so that employees and garden center staff can use them to learn and teach, and it is accesible for members on the Spanish Association's website.

The association is very excited preparing its annual congress in Malaga that will be held in February next year. One of the new features are "Good Practices" workshops that will be held in groups of 12 people, all of them managers and staff, and eventually global conclusions will be shared and detailed, an experience unknown to our organization yet.



Feedback from South Africa

by *Gerdie Olivier*

South Africa's economic situation remains mostly unchanged, with a predicted growth rate of 1.1% for 2024. Consumer price inflation has dropped from 4.4% to 3.8%.

In August, there was a 0.25% cut in interest rates, and in November, another 0.25% was cut, which is good news for people with home loans and vehicle financing.



Official reports show that unemployment has decreased by 1.5%, now standing at 32%.

Since March 2024, there has been no electricity loadshedding due to improvements in power generation. A Generation Operational Recovery Plan, initiated in 2022, has delivered positive results this year.

Water scarcity remains a significant challenge. Poor infrastructure maintenance by water authorities and local councils has led to the loss of 40% of potable water due to leaks and mismanagement. A large maintenance project is currently underway, but this has added to the issue. With spring and summer increasing water demand, some areas are experiencing supply interruptions, and water restrictions are in place.

The season started late this year, but October saw phenomenal sales, with some members reporting record figures. August and September were average months.

Weather in Gauteng has been very hot, with sporadic rainstorms.

Overall, the season has been good but not exceptional, leaving some retailers and suppliers disappointed.

Our ongoing consumer marketing campaign, Life is a Garden, communicates gardening-related topics through social media platforms (Facebook, Pinterest, Instagram, YouTube) a central website and traditional print media. This year's campaign highlights GCA members and drives foot traffic to their garden centres.

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campaigns.



Life is a Garden

October 9 · 🌐

When you shop at a GCA garden centre, you choose quality and expertise. Find a GCA garden centre near you.



Another new project, that complements Life is a Garden, is the creation of gardening videos. These videos are advertised on our Life is a Garden and SANA social media platforms, especially YouTube, and are also available for members to use on their pages. [Click here](#) to view one of our videos.

In addition, quarterly Facebook Live Question and Answer sessions will be hosted by one of our vibrant gardening personalities and a selection of GCA members. Consumers can tune in to the one-hour programme and post questions in the chat box to be discussed and answered by the panel. This is a new initiative, and we hope it will be successful – our first session will be held in December 2024.

Our Congress 2025, launched in Canada, promises a diverse array of experiences, including visits to leading garden centres, the chance to marvel at Cape Town's

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captivate every delegate.

Early bird bookings are valid until 28 February and more information is available on our website www.igca25.co.za

As the year comes to an end, we extend our warmest wishes to all our IGCA friends for the holiday season. Here's to a thriving 2025 for the green industry!

Highlights from Switzerland

by *Othmar Zisweiler*

Like many garden centers in Europe, the Swiss centers have not had an easy year. Lots of rain and rather cool temperatures meant that customers' desire to buy was rather modest.



In 2025, there will be a massive change in the field of chemical pesticides.

The authorities are withdrawing approval for 40% of the chemical pesticides on retail shelves. This means they can no longer be sold and chemical products will no longer be available to control some diseases and weeds. Robust and resistant plants will become even more important in sales.

A regional group of gardeners organized the “Chol und Chabis” (cabbage and cabbage) campaign this autumn. They planted attractive varieties of edible cabbage (tree cabbage, feather cabbage, etc.) in large pots and presented them attractively in the garden centers. JardinSuisse accompanied the campaign with media reports.



has been shown that a good idea and good pictures can achieve a great deal and that an expensive, large-scale concept is not always necessary.

Update from The Netherlands

by Frank van der Heide



Dear garden sector entrepreneurs,

We look back on a somewhat erratic year from the sector in the Netherlands. On the one hand, this can be explained by the unrest in the world, but on the other hand, we continue to notice that we as a sector remain extremely dependent on the weather.

The year started off well in terms of weather and turnover, but Q2 was too cold and wet to really enjoy gardening. This led to considerably less sales at garden centres. In mid-July, the sector was cumulatively at -6%. We had not been used to that in recent years. The summer was also variable. The autumn restored the situation for most retailers.

Garden centres that really focus strongly on Christmas, atmosphere, show and decoration did (very) well. On average, turnover on Christmas items increased by approximately 8%. At some garden centres, this amounted to 15 to 20%. Garden centres that 'do a bit of Christmas on the side' scored considerably lower. Smaller and medium-sized garden centres that focus on green also did good business in the autumn. Ultimately, the expectation is that as an industry we will end up around the zero line or just below it.

We can conclude that consumers want to make things cozy and atmospheric in and around the house in uncertain times. Perhaps that is logical. Moreover, garden centers know better than anyone how to build very beautiful and attractive Christmas shows, which brings in a large flow of customers. We also see that consumers have no problem with easily driving 100 kilometers or more to visit an attractive garden center or show. A visit to the catering facilities in the garden center makes the stay even more fun and pleasant, which leads to sales in that category doing very well.

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together with and for our entrepreneurs.

We wish everyone very happy holidays together with family and friends and a great start to a healthy and successful 2025.

On behalf of members and team of Tuinbranche Nederland,
Frank van der Heide

Feedback from UK

by Peter Burks

The first budget from the recently elected Labour Party was not at all helpful to small or medium sized businesses in all sectors. The scale and speed of the additional costs have both angered and dismayed our members who were still working through the necessary changes from the 10% rise in Minimum Wage in April.



The rise in National Insurance and further rise to the minimum wage will add another 10% to wage costs in 2025. The change to business rates will double payments next year. There is also a new Employment Rights Bill due out soon and complex regulations around Extended Producer Responsibilities both adding significant costs to all business.

We can see from our Barometer of Trade that currently our members are about level on sales compared to last year. The big successes are Catering +12% Food Halls and Farm Shops +8% and Clothing +8%. The biggest decrease is once again Furniture and BBQ's at -8% with Hardy Plants at -3%.



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Our annual conference with the title “The Unique Garden Centre Experience” is from 26th-29th January 2025 with bookings going well. If anyone would like to attend please get in touch.



VACANCY: IGCA BOARD

A board position will become vacant at our AGM in October 2025 and we invite any interested garden centre owner or manager to apply.

WHY SERVE ON THE IGCA BOARD?

- Gain valuable experience & skills training
- Personal development
- Make a positive impact on IGCA activities
- Build a bigger professional network

Contact Gerdie - gerdie@sana.co.za for more information & requirements.
Closing date for nominations: 30 April 2025

*Nominees need to obtain support from their local association Board

The announcement is framed by a decorative border of blue floral and leaf patterns. On the left side, the IGCA logo is visible, featuring a stylized 'GC' inside a circle with the text 'INTERNATIONAL GARDEN CENTRE ASSOCIATION' around it.

Upcoming IGCA Congress

2025: Cape Town, South Africa



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