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IGCA E-News

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Greetings from our IGCA President

Dear colleagues and friends,

We are at the beginning of a new Spring season 2025. These times are fast-paced and full of challenges, changes and novelties. Moreover, we are witnessing shifts in the global world. The spring season is always full of new opportunities, as customers invest in their gardens, terraces and overall wellbeing.



The strength of our IGCA community lies in the connections and sharing of experiences among garden centers worldwide. Together, we create a strong network that not only allows us to overcome challenges but also to explore new ways to innovate and improve the customer services of our garden centers.

I would like to remind everyone of the upcoming IGCA Congress in October in Cape Town. This Congress is an exceptional opportunity to meet with colleagues from around the world, exchange ideas and experiences, and increase our professional knowledge. Please do not delay your registration – I highly recommend signing up as soon as possible to secure your place at this fantastic event.

I look forward to continued collaboration and wish you all much success, satisfied customers, and inspiration in this spring season.

Stepan Smerda

Update from Australia

by Lisa McCann

Australian Economic Overview

Australia's economy is exhibiting signs of recovery. The Reserve Bank of Australia (RBA) recently reduced the cash rate by 0.25 percentage points to 4.1%, marking the first cut since November 2020. This monetary easing aims to stimulate economic activity, with Oxford Economics forecasting a moderate growth of 1.6% in 2025. Inflation has also shown a downward trend, with the annual rate falling to 2.4% in the fourth quarter of 2024, the lowest since the first quarter of 2021. This decline in inflation, coupled with the interest rate cut is expected to bolster consumer spending, benefiting various sectors including the garden industry.

Housing Market Trends

The Australian housing market is on an upward trajectory. KPMG's Residential Property Market Outlook projects a 3.3% rise in house prices and a 4.6% increase in unit prices over the next 12 months. This growth is attributed to improving affordability, rising incomes and the potential for further interest rate cuts. The resurgence in the housing market presents opportunities for the garden industry as new homeowners and property developers seek to enhance outdoor spaces, increasing the demand for plants and garden-related products.

GCA Initiatives and Events

GCA has been actively engaging its members through various initiatives:

- **The GCA Young Retailers Collective:** Celebrated its six-month anniversary in February, this group connects young professionals across Australia, fostering robust discussions on industry challenges and topics including pricing strategies, social media engagement and customer demographics.
- **Plot & Plan Monthly Sessions:** These sessions provide garden centre managers and owners with a platform to share insights on trends, merchandising and business strategies, promoting peer-to-peer learning.

State Events:

- **MIFGS Sneak Peak:** Members will receive an exclusive preview of the Melbourne International Flower & Garden Show, offering insights into upcoming trends with MIFGS Judges and industry professionals.
- **Monbulk Tour:** To commemorate the 30th anniversary of the remarkable rediscovery of the Wollemi Pine, GCA members were privileged to participate

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their natural habitat, deepening our appreciation for their resilience and the ongoing conservation efforts dedicated to their preservation. We were also most fortunate to visit esteemed suppliers including Fleming's, Anthony Tesselaar International and Monbulk Rose & Tree Farm.

- Sydney Inspiration Tour & Garden Party: Our Inspiration Tour of Sydney's hidden gems coupled with the GCA Garden Party at Darling Harbour provided wonderful networking opportunities and inspiration for our members & suppliers.



The 2025 OTPC 'Let's Get Gardening' Activity Bags

The 2025 'Let's Get Gardening' Activity Bags are in the final stages of preparation. This year's theme commemorates the 30th anniversary of the Wollemi Pine, featuring illustrations of children planting this ancient species with the assistance of Nan and their trusty dog & cat supervising not to mention the kookaburra & possum in the gumtree with the bee, butterfly, ladybeetle, worm & frog looking on!

The accompanying booklet has been expanded to cater to a broader age group of children, offering seasonal plant care activities and information as well as a fun page featuring beneficial bugs in the garden. The Lets Get Gardening Activity Bag is exclusive to independent garden centres and offers a wonderful tool for garden centres to use to attract children & families to their garden centre – promoting gardening as a fun family activity.

2025 GCA 'Together We Grow' Summit, Melbourne Convention & Exhibition Centre

To be held Thursday 31st July & Friday 1 August, the 'Together We Grow' Summit is set to feature a dedicated stream for young retailers, facilitating connections with industry leaders. Additionally a trade village will provide suppliers—from giftware to café to greenlife—with opportunities to engage directly with garden centre owners and staff.

We are actively seeking an esteemed international guest to inaugurate our conference, underscoring our commitment to global perspectives and knowledge exchange. This summit promises to be a cornerstone event, fostering growth,

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The GCA remains committed to supporting its members through these dynamic times, fostering growth and resilience within Australia's garden industry.

Feedback from Canada



Garden Centres Canada 4th annual Summit will be in Winnipeg Manitoba July 6-9. Looking forward to 3 days of garden centre and nursery tours along with a full day of professional presentations and networking throughout. Registration opens March 12, 2025. Keep an eye out on our social media.



Education is GCC's focus for the next several years as we utilize our own members expertise through interactive short videos which will eventually reside a retail library for our members to use as they need.

The new 25% tariffs from the United States are unknown territory for Canadian retailers. Time will tell what effect they will have. Retailers may need to explore alternative suppliers, adjust pricing strategies, or absorb some of the costs to remain competitive in the market. Through our IGCA network we look forward to collaborating with the global membership on new supply opportunities for Canadian Retailers to ensure competitiveness.

News from Czech Republic

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Spring 2025

Beginning of the year we prepared for the garden centres new education program for the new season. These programs were very successful.

This winter, with fewer low temperatures, let the garden centres start preparing our outdoor gardens really early, so we are hoping that there won't be any big frosts later this spring.

We also organised an inspiration tour for our staff. This year, we scheduled it just before the season to bring all the new ideas to the stores. We visited some excellent garden centres in the Netherlands, and the participants thoroughly enjoyed the tour. We wish you all a great season and lots of energy to get through the spring.

Michal Ferenčík - FloreniUm (Czech Garden Centre Association), Czech Republic

News from France

by Thomas le Rudelier

State of Garden Centers in France in 2025

A Challenging Start to the Year

In France, the beginning of 2025 was marked by unfavorable weather conditions.



January saw heavy rainfall, while February was punctuated by cold spells until mid-month. These conditions significantly impacted sales in garden centers, as well as in DIY stores and large food retailers, leading to declining or stagnant sales.

Sales Recovery in Late February and Early March

Fortunately, late February and early March showed signs of sales recovery in garden centers. The consumer confidence index slightly increased to 93 points in February, although it remains below average. Additionally, inflation dropped to 0.8%, which could encourage consumers to spend more.

Outlook for Spring

Despite a 1.2% decrease in specialized retail activity in February compared to the

Feedback from Germany

by Thomas Buchenau



Optimism in Turbulent Times

Germany is currently experiencing turbulent times. The recent Bundestag elections have concluded, and a new government must be formed quickly to address significant challenges both domestically and internationally.

After years of economic stagnation, there is hope for a turnaround this year. In the green sector, a stable outcome is expected, provided the weather cooperates.

Last season saw a slight increase in revenue, but rising costs resulted in reduced profits. The current year's revenue is average.

The association experienced two major highlights in January and February: exhibiting at the international plant fair IPM in Essen and hosting the annual Winter Conference with a record attendance of over 330 participants. The atmosphere was excellent!



Our great president Martina Mensing-Meckelburg was unanimously re-elected for another two years during the general meeting, celebrating her 10th anniversary as the association's leader. Numerous national and international well-wishers honored Martina, and a video of the greetings (in German) is available on YouTube (<https://youtu.be/tPmZptw3Jz8>).

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The VDG is looking forward to the international congress in October in South Africa, where we will present the IGCA 2026 in Germany. Several garden centers have already decided to join the trip, strengthening the group of German participants in South Africa.

Wish you all a successful season 2025! The team from Germany!

Update from Italy

by Chiara Lupano

AICG: THE NEW PRESIDENT IS PAOLO ROAGNA

The Board meeting of AICG (Associazione Italiana Centri Giardinaggio) took place on Thursday, 6th February to vote on new association positions for the three-year period 2025-2027 after the expiry of the term of office of the Board members and the resignation of the previous president, Stefano Donetti.



After a careful discussion and exchange on the next goals of the Association, the Board members voted unanimously for Paolo Roagna (Vivai Roagna, Cuneo) as new AICG president, and Mara Maschi (Idea Verde Maschi, Cremona) and Vittore Nicora (Nicora Garden, Varese) as vice-presidents.

This is the first comment of the new president Paolo Roagna:

"First of all I want to thank the outgoing president, as well as my friend, Stefano Donetti for the incredible work done in his two mandates, before facing the difficult Covid period, then taking care of the organization of the important international

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Vice-Presidents - Nadia Cavinato and Davide Michelini - and by the Board members, who with total availability and altruism have worked for the growth of our Garden Centre sector and have managed with the supporting members to improve synergies and relationships that have always been at the basis of the development of our companies. Many of them will still be an active and fundamental part in the new Board. I also hope for an increasing participation of Gardening Centers members and supporting companies: I am sure that they will be proactive and stimulating for the development and growth of projects we have in the pipeline".

Paolo Roagna, 58 years old, who since 2018 is part of the AICG Board of Directors, runs, together with his sister Roberta and his father Giuseppe, the Garden Roagna Vivai in Cuneo, a family gardening center founded in 1975. Paolo's two sons, Alessio and Matteo, have recently joined the company.

The members of the Board of Directors for the three-year period 2025-2027 were already elected during the General Annual Meeting last January in Bolzano and are:

- CAVINATO NADIA (Garden Cavinato - Arsego di San Giorgio delle Pertighe PD)
- GIRELLI SILVANO (Flover - Verona)
- MASCHI MARA (Idea Verde Maschi - Cremona)
- MICHELINI DAVIDE (Floricoltura Michelini - Borghetto Santo Spirito SV)
- NICORA VITTORE (Nicora Garden - Varese)
- ORLANDELLI ANDREA (Valle dei Fiori - Mantova)
- RAGANATO ENRICA (Il Germoglio Soc. Coop. Salzano VE)
- RAPPO FABIOLA (Viridea)
- ROAGNA PAOLO (Roagna Vivai - Cuneo)
- SIMEOLI EMANUELE (Sime Garden - Quarto NA)
- ZANNONI ANDREA (Zannoni Garden - San Lorenzo Nuovo VT)

News from Poland

by Karolina Filipiak

The Polish economy is forecasting moderate growth this year.

- GDP growth to 3.6 percent
- inflation is stabilizing

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- industrial production is falling, construction is growing
- the exchange rate of the Polish currency is also stabilizing.

In recent years, the horticultural industry has been increasingly leaning towards natural and organic methods, which are a response to global ecological challenges and changing consumer preferences.

The shift towards natural plant protection products, abandoning peat in favour of other organic substrates, as well as the growing interest in growing vegetables, herbs and fruits on your own and establishing gardens in urban spaces (on roofs or balconies) pose new challenges for the owners of garden centres. Customer awareness is growing and the main determinant is no longer price, but product quality.

The proper sales season started at the beginning of March. Now the weather determines the number of customers in the centres.



New plants are delivered to stores practically every day. There are many new products from both Polish and foreign nurseries, mainly from the Netherlands, Italy and Germany.

In the Association, we have concluded the online meetings with members and horticultural producers that have been ongoing since autumn. It was a good time for training and learning about new products for the new season. Now garden centres are fully servicing their clients, and the Association is already preparing to organise autumn fairs and visit several plant producers in garden nurseries.

Feedback from South Africa

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South Africa's economic forecast shows little change, with expected growth of about 1.5%. Consumer prices rose by 3.2% annually in January 2025, up from 3.0% in December 2024. The country's headline inflation is expected to average approximately 4.5% this year.



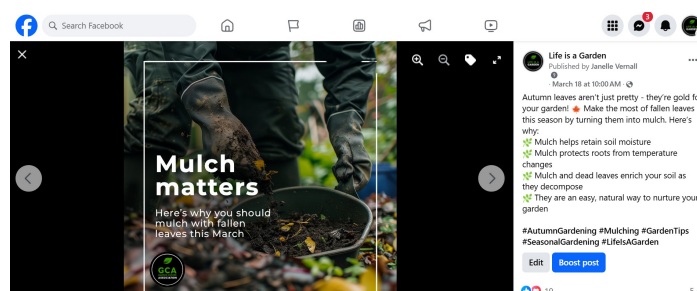
On a positive note, our electricity grid has stabilised and as of 31 March, load shedding in is largely suspended, although there is a risk of intermittent returns due to ongoing challenges with our electricity provider's generation fleet and planned maintenance.

Our peak trading season began in August but saw a slow start, with major sales peaking in October and continuing steadily through December. This year started off challenging, marked by erratic weather and above-average rainfall, which have subdued the enthusiasm of gardeners.

Recently, we successfully hosted our annual Autumn Trade Fair in Gauteng, benefiting from beautiful weather. This event remains one of our largest, featuring 73 exhibitors showcasing their products to retailers, landscapers and related industries.



Our ongoing consumer marketing campaign, Life is a Garden, continues to play a crucial role in spreading gardening awareness. It focuses on engaging consumers through various social media platforms (Facebook, Pinterest, Instagram, YouTube), a dedicated [website](#) and traditional print media.



Final preparations for the IGCA Congress 2025 are well underway, with our

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professional insights with the beauty of and cultural richness of Cape Town. Delegates will have the opportunity to visit 12 garden centres, varying in size, appearance and ambiance, offering a diverse and inspiring experience.



Beyond the business aspect, the congress will showcase some of South Africa's most remarkable horticultural treasures, including visits to the renowned Kirstenbosch National Botanical Garden and the historic Babylonstoren.



For more details, a full itinerary, and to secure your booking, visit our website:

www.igca25.co.za

Highlights from Switzerland

by Othmar Zisweiler



Swiss garden centres have varying degrees of satisfaction with the second half of the year. From disappointed to very satisfied. However, the focus is now back on the coming season, which got off to a promising start at the beginning of March.

As the Swiss economy is characterised by uncertainty and concern about the future, consumption is expected to be subdued. This is particularly likely for higher-priced

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Ecology, sustainability and biodiversity are still important, but they have lost some of their appeal and there is nothing new in sight. This was also evident at Giardina. Europe's largest indoor garden show, which took place in Zurich from 11 to 16 March. With 57,000 visitors, it was well attended. This shows that the public is still interested in gardening. This is a positive sign for our business.

Update from The Netherlands

by Frank van der Heide



Dear industry colleagues,

The mood in the Dutch garden industry is positive. Most entrepreneurs finished 2024 on a high note, especially with Christmas sales. Although we faced a cold and wet second quarter, most companies ended the year around the break-even point.

As a result, liquidity is generally in a good position, and purchases for the fall season have already been made.

We started the year with a relatively normal spring in terms of weather, and the sales in garden centers reflect this as well. Many entrepreneurs, however, focus too much on last year's sales, which is not wise. In 2024, spring started much earlier than this year, leading to very strong sales, which we are now only able to match on weekends, but not during the weekdays. This is why we are also trying to focus on a multi-year average and compare our current sales with that.

From the industry association, we are actively involved with groups of entrepreneurs in the *Garden Retail 2030* project. How do we expect the industry to look in 2030 (in terms of consumer behavior, employees, the role of garden centers, technology application, sustainability, etc.), and what steps should we take now to ensure we are there in 2030?

In addition, we are continuing to focus strongly on sustainability—both in hardware and in plants. How can we ensure that our flowers and plants are grown even more sustainably, and, importantly, how do we communicate this to consumers?

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group of entrepreneurs (retailers and suppliers) as part of the *Garden Retail 2030* program. As a sector, this is where we can make a difference.

For now, we wish everyone a wonderful, successful, and flourishing spring.

Warm regards from the Netherlands,
Frank vd Heide



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

Upcoming IGCA Congress

2025: Cape Town, South Africa



Remember to follow us on Social Media to stay updated on current news and events!

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