



IGCA E-News

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President's Welcome

What a week in Germany.

From 16 to 22 August, representatives from 21 countries gathered beneath the shadow of Neuschwanstein Castle for what I can say with confidence was one of the finest IGCA Congresses in recent memory. Our hosts at Verband Deutscher Garten-Center, led by President Martina Mensing-Meckelburg, set a standard that will be talked about for years.



They gave us the Flower Gaudi, a Bavarian evening inside a garden centre greenhouse, complete with dirndl, beer steins and an amazing evening of energy, laughter and fun. They put us on rafts for the Flossfahrt and let the river do the rest. They brought us to Tegelberg with the Alps stretched out behind us. And through all of it, they reminded us that this industry knows how to celebrate itself.

The country reports presented at Congress are now available to all members. Gerdie has distributed them directly to country administrators for sharing across your membership. They cover the economic landscape our industry is operating in, from labour costs and trading conditions through to consumer spend benchmarks across our member nations.

From our formal meetings at Congress, we left with real momentum and clear commitments.

Japan. At the closing event in Munich, we officially launched IGCA Japan 2027. Since that moment, 100 members have already registered. That is the kind of momentum that tells you something. Japan brings extraordinary depth, creativity and horticultural tradition, and we cannot wait to welcome you there next year.

Digital. We have committed a €20,000 provision for a full revamp of the IGCA website and App, including congress functionality. We are actively pursuing sponsorship to support ongoing costs and I welcome any leads from within the membership. LinkedIn will receive renewed focus as our primary official channel, so if you are not already following us there, please do.

IGCA Insights. Our webinar programme is being formalised and rebranded as IGCA Insights. The goal is a minimum of 4 sessions per year, with topics and facilitators that genuinely serve our members. More details to follow shortly.

Next Gen. One of my personal highlights of Munich was seeing our Next Gen members in action. Going forward, we are formalising a mentorship strand at Congress, bringing experienced members directly into the Next Gen space to share knowledge and open doors. This is the future of our association and we should invest in it accordingly.

Governance. The Board has established a formal Risk Register to ensure we stay ahead of what could go wrong, how serious it could be and what we are doing about it. At the AGM, members agreed to add Directors' Liability Insurance to that register, with each association now reviewing their own policy.

Until we meet again, in Japan in 2027.

Yoroshiku onegai itashimasu

Fergal Doyle

President, International Garden Centre Association

Update from Belgium

by Chris Van Wesemael

THE WINNERS OF THE GARDEN CENTRE AWARDS HAVE BEEN ANNOUNCED!

At the Green trade fair in Ghent – Belgium's leading trade fair dedicated to the green sector – the biennial awards recognising Belgium's best garden centres and nurseries were presented for the eighth time during a festive evening held at Flanders Expo.

This competition is organised by the Belux Garden retail Association – the trade federation and advocacy body for the garden retail sector – and, in Flanders, is supported by VLAM, which had the honour of presenting the 'Most Sustainable Garden Centre' award.

We see this as a new development. "Consumers are increasingly looking for responsible, eco-friendly and sustainable solutions for their outdoor living spaces,"

explains Chris Van Wesemael, director of BTV-ABJ. “Garden centres are the place where consumers can find the right information, suitable plants and products, as well as plenty of inspiration – far more so than at other non-specialist retailers. “As an association, we are also strongly committed to this cause and have, for example, recently signed the ‘Code of Good Practice in Ornamental Horticulture’, which aims to combat invasive alien plant species,” explains Chris. That is why the criteria have been adapted this year to place greater emphasis on how in-store staff handle these situations. Another new feature: participants were not only assessed by a highly diverse panel of experts, but were also visited twice by a mystery shopper. Garden centres and nurseries take part not just to win the title, but above all to receive the independent and detailed report from the judging panel that they are sent afterwards.

THE LAUREATES

The title of ‘Best Garden Centre in Wallonia’ was contested between Tournesols in Chatelineau, Oh’Green in Frameries and a previous winner, **BRINDILLE**, which will be able to hold the title again in 2027 and 2028.

The competition for the title of ‘Best Garden Centre in Flanders’ saw Rijmenants Massenhoven, De Molen Moen and Tuincenter LISSENS go head to head, with **Tuincenter LISSENS** once again taking home this highly coveted award!

In the ‘Best Nursery’ category, **GENKER PLANTENCENTRUM** has won the trophy yet again, closely followed by Het Wilgenbroek and De Pauw.

The race for the title of ‘Most Sustainable Garden Centre or Nursery in the Country’ was a neck-and-neck contest between Sampermans, Brindille, Genker and Lissens. It was **Lissens**, ultimately, that took its place on the podium for the second time.

It remains to be seen who won the grand prize for ‘Belgium’s best and most sustainable garden centre or nursery’. The battle of the green titans was a neck-and-neck contest between Lissens and Brindille (with a barely 1% margin), but it was ultimately **GENKER PLANTENCENTRUM** that clinched the 2027–2028 title with an overwhelming score of over 87 per cent.

Kristof Rijmenants, the newly appointed president of the association, concluded: “I would like to offer my sincere congratulations to all the nominees and winners, but above all to all the participants. Because here, there are only winners who understand that the small entry fee provides them with a wealth of information to help them build a sustainable and successful future!”

Belux Tuinretail Vereniging vzw – Association Belux du commerce de Jardin asbl

Feedback from Canada

by Anne Kadwell

Rising costs and slower overseas shipping are reshaping holiday shopping this year, and our garden centres are turning that into an opportunity. Shoppers everywhere are leaning into buying local, and independent garden centres are answering the call with experiences you simply can't order online.



Cozy Autumn evenings are drawing crowds with fall workshops, seasonal DIY sessions, and the ever-popular Plant Bingo nights. Plant bingo has been so popular that some locations are running them twice a week with 60-80 people in attendance.



Weekends bring pumpkin festivities for the whole family with patches, photo ops, and annual wreath-making workshops kick off the countdown to the holidays with hands-on creativity and fresh-cut greenery. Skip the shipping delays and the big-box lineups: this Fall and Winter, customers are making memories, not just purchases, 'tis the season to shop close to home!

News from Czech Republic

by Michal Ferencick



Summer 2026

Despite a very warm summer, Czech garden centres have had a positive season, with sales increasing by an average of 3% compared to last year.

The high temperatures brought some challenges, but customers continued to spend on their gardens, terraces and outdoor spaces. The results show that interest in gardening remains strong, even under demanding weather conditions.

Overall, the summer season can be seen as a successful one for Czech garden centres. The positive sales development gives us confidence for the second half of the year and confirms that customers continue to enjoy creating and improving their outdoor spaces.

Michal Ferenčík - FloreniUm

Feedback from Denmark

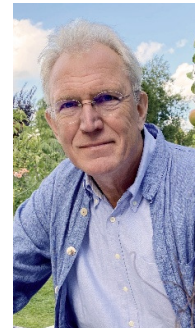
by Per Boisen Anderson

Formland Autumn 2026
MCH Messecenter, 16–18 August

Emilia van Hauen was present on Sunday morning when CEO Georg Sørensen welcomed all exhibitors to Formland Autumn 2026.

Community

Emilia van Hauen explored the busy exhibitors' need for a sense of community in their careers.



Most people are well aware that work provides the financial means to live, eat, and experience life. Yet, the majority say that it is the sense of community that makes them show up at work every day.

"What matters to us as human beings is being part of a community. When we think of the best experiences in our lives, they almost always revolve around other people, relationships, and a sense of belonging—and this applies to the workplace, too. In a time of constant change, where artificial intelligence is altering how we navigate the world, vibrant communities are becoming increasingly important. We need to feel that we are part of an 'us'," stated Emilia van Hauen.

She also discussed hierarchies and new generations, noting that traditional hierarchies are under pressure.

"Younger generations are challenging traditional hierarchies because they have grown up being asked for their input, listened to, and involved in decision-making. They naturally bring this mindset into the workplace; therefore, we should view an organization not merely as a hierarchy, but as a community.

The workplace of the future still requires leadership and structure, but it must also offer people the opportunity to be included, build strong relationships, and feel that

A display of various home accessories against a textured, light-colored wall. On the left, a wooden ladder stands with a checkered blanket draped over it. Above the ladder, several woven baskets and bags are hanging from a metal rack. In the center, a large, round, textured metal tray sits on the floor. To the right of the tray, a wicker basket holds a folded grey sweater. Further right, a small wooden folding stool is visible. On the far right, a wicker basket hangs on the wall, and a pair of brown leather shoes sits on the floor.

This time, the FlyHelsted trend zone focused on the antithesis of the digital world in which we all rush about. An old record player plays the sound of a Sebastian LP through its stylus. We make an active choice when selecting the record and flipping it over after about half an hour. The pace slows down.

TOUCH – SMELL – TASTE

Award-winning seed paper



The Formland Design Award went this time to the Kolding-based company Spirpapir; its founder, Seherzada Dedic, expressed great delight.

Lifestyle expert and jury chairman Mads Arlien-Søborg explained that, with this award, the jury wished to recognize a company that combines strong values with a compelling design aesthetic. He justified the choice of Spirapapir by highlighting, among other things, that the company's production is local, the material is 100% biodegradable, and the entire approach reflects a conscious decision to create products that respect both craftsmanship and the environment—all while maintaining a high aesthetic standard.

GREENHOUSE – Green living – Nature to the People - GREENHOUSE



A large, impressive display featuring inspiring ideas for product presentation. The "Nature to the People" exhibition was divided into four zones: two for outdoor spaces and two for indoor areas. One outdoor zone catered to the creative customer, featuring plenty of color and playful elements, while the other offered a calm, neat, and refined atmosphere in shades of green. The indoor spaces were similarly divided; one room was vibrant and festive, while the other was decorated with indoor greenery.

The four zones:

Outdoor – creative



Help your customers by offering a selection of plants that allow them to easily create

harmonious arrangements.

Outdoor – green



Create an inspiring patio garden using plants in ready-to-sell pots.

Indoor – creative



Display plants in a colorful and creative setting.

Indoor – green



GRAB & GO – boost sales with convenient solutions for customers.

Greetings from France

by Thomas le Rudelier



As in many parts of Europe, France has experienced an exceptionally hot summer, with significant impacts on garden retail activity.

On 9 October, the French Federation of Garden Centres and Pet Stores will host a morning dedicated to the garden market, bringing together the entire distribution landscape – from garden centres and DIY retailers to supermarkets and suppliers.

This event will provide an opportunity to share market insights, discuss consumer trends and explore how the industry can adapt to a rapidly changing environment.

Highlights from Germany

IGCA 2026 in Germany: We Still Feel the Energy

Sixty-six years after the first international garden centre congress started in Germany, IGCA came back to its roots. More than 270 delegates from 21 countries joined us in Munich.

Our motto, “Together”, became the feeling of the week. Our “Gute-Laune-Lied” – our good-mood song – was heard again and again. At a time when the world often feels divided, this open and positive spirit mattered. People were happy to meet again, and a real community grew during the week.

We were especially pleased by the success of our Study-Next-Gen-Bus. Young delegates from 15 countries quickly became one group. They shared their experiences and enjoyed the week together. This gives us great confidence in the future of our industry.

The Congress is still having an effect. We have met many participants again, and the connection is immediately back. These meetings show us how much positive energy IGCA brought into our Gardencentre industry. There is also real appreciation for what our association achieved together with its members.

A heartfelt thank you goes to all the garden centres that opened their doors to us. Every business had its own character. Together, they showed our international guests how diverse and vibrant Germany’s green industry is.

Without the support of our sponsors, a Congress of this size would not have been possible. We are sincerely grateful for their confidence in us.

Our heartfelt thanks also go to our office team, our Bus Captains and everyone who worked behind the scenes. They put an enormous amount of time and energy into this Congress.

Everyone goes the extra mile, that make such a event so special.

IGCA 2026 showed what can happen when our industry comes together. If you have never attended an IGCA Congress, we can only say: do it. You will return home with new ideas and a much bigger international family.



We hope to see many of you again in Japan in 2027.

Martina Mensing-Meckelburg
President of the VDG

News from Hungary

MAKERT – Connecting Hungarian Garden Centres with the International Community

We are grateful for the opportunity for MAKERT – the Hungarian Association of Garden Centres – to become a member of IGCA, and we look forward to being part of this international community.

MAKERT brings together Hungarian garden centres and focuses on professional development, knowledge-sharing and international connections. One of our flagship initiatives is the “**Excellent Garden Centre**” Award, recognising outstanding garden centres and encouraging the continuous development of our industry.

We are also pleased to welcome international garden-centre expert Boyd Douglas-Davies to Hungary on 6 October 2026 for a full-day practical workshop. We kindly ask IGCA members to share the invitation with their members and garden-centre networks. Participants from other countries are very welcome to join us!

More information and registration: <https://makert.hu/boyd-douglas-davies-2026-10-06/>

Feedback from Italy

by Giacomo Brusa

One year after his election as president of the Italian Garden Centre Association (AICG), Paolo Roagna has initiated a major strategic shift for the sector. The flagship project of his mandate centers on introducing a shared Data Collection and Benchmarking system among member garden centers.



By anonymously gathering and analyzing data on sell-out, seasonal footfall, and key performance indicators (KPIs) such as average receipt value and yield per square meter, the association aims to enhance store management efficiency and gain deeper insights into Italy's green market dynamics.

Update from Poland

by Karolina Filipiak

Autumn at Polish garden centers follows the cycle of various trade events.

Our members participate in trade fairs featuring stock from both Polish and international nurseries, as well as other industry events. In early September, the PSCO partnered with the "Green is Life" (Zieleń to Życie) trade fair in Warsaw; we co-organized training sessions and took part in a panel discussion on opportunities for market growth. As it does every year, the PSCO also organizes a trade fair for its members and suppliers.

This year, we expanded participation to include non-member garden centers from across Poland and enhanced the event format by adding a lecture series covering topics such as expanding application areas, improving display quality, and the use of AI in the horticultural industry.

Over the past year, the situation for Polish garden centers has remained stable. However, unpredictable weather is becoming a major challenge, complicating plant

care and causing significant fluctuations in customer sentiment. We are observing a substantial rise in online sales and the influence of artificial intelligence tools on customer purchasing decisions.

Highlights from The Netherlands

by Frank van der Heide



Market Update

Overall, 2026 can be considered a satisfactory year for Dutch garden centres. Up to week 36, the market is showing an average sales increase of around 3%, slightly above the inflation rate. As always, performance varies considerably between individual businesses. While some garden centres are achieving strong growth, others are experiencing declines in turnover.

At this time of year, many medium-sized and large garden centres are transforming their stores into impressive and inspiring Christmas worlds. Together with their teams, entrepreneurs are creating spectacular displays that will surprise and inspire customers from late September and early October onwards, helping them prepare their homes for the autumn and festive season with warmth, atmosphere, and decoration.

Meanwhile, smaller and more specialised garden centres are focusing strongly on autumn as the prime planting season. Their efforts are aimed at encouraging consumers to plant and improve their gardens, highlighting the many benefits of planting during this period of the year.

Another major topic in the Netherlands is the presentation of the national budget for next year, which will take place this week. A key question is the future VAT rate for flowers and plants. The current proposal includes an increase from 9% to 21%, which would have a significant impact on our sector by making flowers and plants considerably more expensive for consumers. This comes at a time when the industry is actively promoting greener gardens and encouraging biodiversity and climate-friendly outdoor spaces.

Together with industry partners, we have commissioned research into the potential effects of this VAT increase. The findings indicate substantial negative consequences for both the sector and consumers.

As a result, we are actively lobbying policymakers to prevent the measure from being implemented.

Within the coming weeks, we expect greater clarity on the final decision and its

implications for the Dutch horticultural industry.

Frank van der Heide

Greetings from South Africa

by Gerdie Olivier



South Africa's economy remains under pressure, with slow economic growth, high unemployment and rising living costs continuing to affect both businesses and consumers.

Inflation is currently at 4.3%, while interest rates remain relatively high, making borrowing more expensive.

There have been some positive developments, particularly with improvements in electricity supply as well as efforts to improve government finances. However, structural challenges continue to limit economic growth and businesses and households remain cautious about spending and investment.

Fuel prices also remain high and volatile, influenced by international oil prices, global supply disruptions, exchange-rate movements and geopolitical events. This continues to put pressure on transport and operating costs, as well as consumers' disposable income.

South Africa is experiencing a somewhat different spring weather pattern this year, with forecasts indicating warmer-than-normal temperatures and generally below-normal rainfall in many areas. At the same time, some regions are experiencing sudden thunderstorms and heavy rainfall, making weather conditions more variable and unpredictable.

These changing conditions have a direct impact on our industry - both growers and garden centres. For retail garden centres, unsettled weather is affecting customer visits, particularly over weekends and during key trading periods. Unpredictable weather also affects growing cycles, stock availability and the timing of consumer purchases.

Despite the challenges in the broader environment, SANA remains a strong and active association, with a continued focus on growing our value to members and strengthening connections across the industry.

We had a change of EXCO and President in June 2026, with **Dr Cary Goodwin** taking over as President. We look forward to a productive term ahead, with sustainability and environmental responsibility receiving increased attention.

Strengthening communication with members, growing membership and creating meaningful connections across the industry will remain important priorities for SANA in the year ahead.



Dr Cary Goodwin

Life is a Garden (LIAG), SANA's consumer-facing initiative, continues to provide South African consumers with gardening inspiration, information and practical advice through its website and social media platforms. Content covers seasonal gardening, plants, food gardening, wildlife, sustainability, DIY projects and general gardening tips.



Social media platforms, including Facebook, Instagram and YouTube, are used to share engaging and visual content and reach a wider audience. Life is a Garden has a strong established presence in the South African gardening market, particularly on Facebook, with an estimated 82,400 followers. Overall, LIAG plays an important role in connecting consumers with gardening and the garden-centre industry, encouraging people to garden, visit their local garden centres and support the sector.

Feedback from Switzerland

by Othmar Zisweiler



Heat and extreme weather conditions challenge Swiss garden centres

High temperatures and prolonged drought affected customer numbers at Swiss garden centres during the summer months.

While the return of rain and cooler temperatures from mid-August onwards brought customers back, it also raised numerous questions and uncertainties that the industry is yet to answer. Terraces and balconies, in particular, are becoming increasingly challenging environments for growing plants. New planting concepts are needed that can withstand both.

At the same time, the summer emphasised the importance of plants in providing shade and increasing local humidity. This growing public awareness and interest among garden owners offers new opportunities for garden centres, particularly in terms of customer advice and the promotion of suitable planting solutions.

Another major issue was the spread of the Japanese beetle (*Popillia japonica*). The larvae of this invasive species feed on grass roots. Garden centres therefore had to intensify their inspections and ensure that their plants were weed-free, exercising particular caution when selling ornamental grasses. Thanks to these preventive measures, Swiss garden centres did not face any sales bans.

Update from UK

by Peter Burks

Members had a very challenging summer with the drought, heat and the water companies placing restrictions on hose pipe use. Plant sales were reduced but not by as much as we feared, but wastage was generally much higher, and the cost of watering was also significantly higher both in terms of quantity used and the time required.



Fortunately sales in other departments such as Furniture and BBQ's +11% Clothing +8% and Catering +6.5% meant that overall the year to date performance is just positive at +2.4%. Within the GCA we have been working on several projects including looking at our branding, introducing a CRM and new website and updating our barometer of trade.

Our Rising Stars and Hospitality Rising Stars programs for the year have just concluded with very positive feedback. We have two Christmas Study Tours organised for early December one in the North West visiting four Garden Centres and one in London looking at top retail venues.

We are also welcoming a group from Germany and from France for tours of our top Christmas Garden Centres in the London area, in November.

Upcoming IGCA Congress
Tokyo, Japan: 17 - 22 October 2027



Dear friends from all over the world,

It is a great pleasure to invite you to the IGCA 2027 in Japan-Tokyo. After the cancellation of our 2021 event, we have been looking forward to welcoming you back for a long time. Now, we are truly excited that this special opportunity has come again. More than just a congress, we hope this will be a time to reconnect, build friendships, and share meaningful experiences with colleagues from around the world.

We are preparing a program that brings together the latest ideas in garden retail along with the unique beauty of Japan. You'll have the chance to explore not only inspiring garden centers, but also Japan's rich garden traditions, culture, and the deep connection between plants and everyday life.

As "Team Japan," we are committed to making your visit memorable, comfortable, and full of discovery. We hope you will feel our spirit of hospitality and enjoy the power and beauty of plants that are so central to our lives.

We are very much looking forward to spending this special week with you—learning, sharing, and enjoying together. We hope IGCA Japan 2027 will be an unforgettable experience for you. We look forward to welcoming you to Japan!

For more information and bookings, visit our website: <https://www.igca2027.com/>

Akihiro Ozaki
President of Japan Garden Centre Association