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IGCA E-News

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Greetings from our IGCA President

Hello all,

The year is flying past quickly once again and I hope the season is treating you well. The seasons have changed and whilst it's warming up for some countries, its cooling down for others!

In just over 8 weeks' time our country administrators and board members will be meeting in Canada for our bi-yearly meetings.



We can't wait to see a sneak peek of some of the places that is planned for Congress in 2024!

The countdown is now on for Italy and September marks the coming together of delegates who will be based by the gorgeous Lake Como for the best part of a week. Its not too late to register, so don't hesitate and secure your spot today.

Easter is also just around the corner, and I hope you have some time to celebrate with family and friends.

From my country to yours, I wish you a warm and safe Easter and hope the bunny visits you too!

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IGCA Board Positions

IGCA is calling for nominations for two Board positions that will become vacant at our AGM on 24 September 2023. We invite any interested party, that is active in the garden centre industry as an owner or manager of a garden centre and has the support of their national association, to submit their name for election along with a motivation cover letter and CV.

The deadline date for the submission of a nomination is Tuesday, 16 May 2023.

Any queries can be sent to info@intgardencentre.org or gerdie@sana.co.za



VACANCIES: IGCA BOARD

Two board positions will become vacant at our AGM in September 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

Please send your CV and motivation cover letter to Gerdie - gerdie@sana.co.za by 16 May

*Kindly note that nominees need to obtain support from their local association Board

Update from Australia

by Leigh Siebler

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Our summer has been mixed around Australia being hot and dry in some states and floods in others. Spring did not happen in 2022 due to weather so confidence is a bit low but we are still positive.

Like all countries, interest rates have been jumping and that is affecting sales to some degree.

The Australian economy is generally strong with low unemployment, but it is still challenging finding good staff.

IGCA President Karen Moad initiated our first GCA Inspiration Tour around inner-city Melbourne. Ove one and half days, the group visited Inspirational Retailers that did not include any garden centres. The tour, set up by the Fab Four committee was a resounding success. The focus was on networking, learning from others plus some fun and fine dining. You can certainly learn from other retailers and particularly from great hospitality outlets and florists as well. We even dressed up at a clothing store.



Inspiration Tour

Our Garden Releaf day was Sunday March 19. Despite a lowish number of participants, we are optimistic of raising funds for Mitochondrial Foundation and importantly seeing events in garden centres.

GCA will be running 'Talk with the Suppliers' sessions on Zoom again this year following a successful start last year. They are short sessions, half hour, informative and held during the day.

My apologies that I am unable to be at the Administrators meeting in Canada.

Best wishes for the IGCA Congress in Italy.

Leigh Siebler, Manager, Garden Centres of Australia

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Hello from Canada

by Anne Kadwell

A majority of independent garden centres are seeing an overall downward trend in overall sales reflecting inflationary pressures on amount of discretionary household income as well as where that income is being spent.



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Food prices have seen the largest increase which could result in more homeowners growing their own fruits and vegetables during the warmer months. Early spring seed sales have been robust, which is encouraging.

Unemployment remains low at 5.0%, which may contribute to ongoing staffing challenges for retail garden centres.

Supply chain for garden retail has improved with greater predictability as well as reduced shipping costs.

Garden Centres Canada is currently busy planning numerous events including our National GCC Summit which will take place in Vancouver, BC from July 9-12.



We will be touring eight different garden centres big and small and having a full day of industry speakers.

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meeting, when we'll be viewing potential locations to visit in 2024 when hosting the world in Quebec for the IGCA 2024 Congress.

News from Czech Republic

by Michal Ferencik



Early Spring 2023

The start of this year is better than we expected, although you can see that customers do think about what to buy.

We were afraid of a bigger drop in visits, which has not not happen jet, so we hope that this trend can stay for the spring season.

Nowadays the weather is starting with nice spring temperatures and customers are coming into stores.

This year we see better support from our suppliers - compared to the last years there is a good offering of plants for the start of spring sales.

With best regards and our group wish a nice spring season with lot of customers in their shops.

Michal Ferenčík – Garden centre Ferenčík, Czech Garden Centre Association, Czech Republic

Update from Denmark

by Per Boisen Andersen

Celebrating 75 Years!

The Danish Garden Center Association celebrated it's 75-year anniversary on the 28th of November last year with a Gala Dinner.

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The association was founded in Copenhagen on 28th November 1947 under the name KOP (Københavns & Omengs Plantehandlerforening).

In 1967 the name was changed to LDP (Landsforeningen af Danske Plantehandlere), and in 2002 it changed to the present DH (Danske Havecentre).

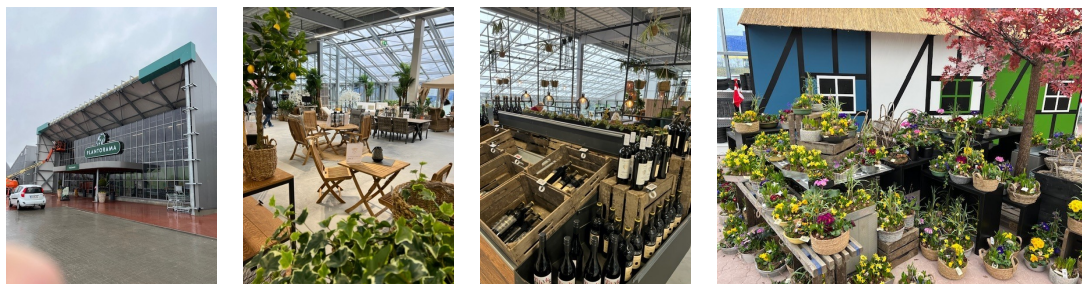
On the occasion of the 75-year anniversary two members of the association became honorary members – Jesper Nielsen, earlier president and Jørn Alstrup, earlier vice president, president and member of the board for more than 25 years.



Celebrating 75 Years!



On the 10th of March Plantorama opened up number 14. This garden center in Taastrup, outside Copenhagen, is placed beside the biggest IKEA in Denmark.



Plantorama located in Taastrup

The new Plantorama is the biggest in Denmark with a indoor arear on 15.000

News from France

by Thomas Rudelier

Since the beginning of 2023, store traffic is decreasing while inflation continues to be felt with a 6% increase since January. Garden Centers have also been affected by the legal increase of the minimum wage (SMIC

Additionally, France has experienced a winter drought in several regions, and it is expected to persist throughout the summer.

This situation raises concerns about the consumption of plant-based products, as well as the ability to water store inventories.

Feedback from Germany

In Germany, we are entering the new season with a positive feeling.

There are many factors currently weighing on business - this is the case in Germany, as in many other countries.

Nevertheless, we are optimistic about the coming season. Customers are longing for a little happiness, and the garden centers in Germany are keen to give them this special experience. We notice that with the first rays of sunshine, customers are back in our stores.

What worries us is that our suppliers are going through a difficult time. It is not certain that all companies will survive this year.

Prices in Germany have risen, but garden centers have not passed on these price increases in full to consumers. People are feeling this and hopefully will continue to be loyal to us.

Our association is in the process of further expanding its services for members. We are particularly active in the area of training. We take care of trainees and, newly, now also the qualification of trainees.

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apprenticeship. In Germany, we are in the process of establishing another horticultural apprenticeship - the gardener in sales.

Update from Japan

by Akihiro Ozaki

From around last autumn, restrictions on immigration to overseas countries were finally loosened, and economic activities related to travel and eating out, which had been severe until now, began to become active.



However, on the other hand, the majority of people say that the special demand for COVID-19 has calmed down and that our industry is approaching the demand situation before COVID-19. Even so, new store openings are starting to increase as the number of young customers grow. Especially indoor plant sales have increased and many beginners have started gardening.

However, there are few general large-scale stores stores as garden centres and it is characterised by mainly small speciality stores centered on indoor greenery.



General images of garden centres

At the same time, our association resumed its real-life activities, and in February, we held the Aichi prefectural congress and general meeting for 2 days and 1 night with the participation of 55 members.

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Aichi prefectural congress

One of the characteristics of Aichi Prefecture is that it is the center of plant production in Japan, and where most of the foliage plant production is concentrated.

The association is undergoing a generational change, and the number of young members is increasing, as well as the number of new members from all over Japan, making it a very lively congress. The Tochigi prefecture congress is also decided in July, so I would like to tell you about it next time.

Feedback from The Netherlands

by Frank van der Heide



The Dutch garden centers are waiting for spring 😊. The stores are ready for the season but is it too cold and windy. Hopefully next week it will go on.

Next week we will be opening the 60th Climate Square in a garden center! We are working on 'greening private gardens'.

More and more we see (local) governments and water companies joining this movement. Also from abroad there is interest in this idea. We are very glad that the big theme 'climate' is seen as a chance and opportunity for our garden center business. But mostly that we can have a crucial role in this. We have to take care of the world for future generations.

Sector ambitions on pesticides (on plants but also for private use), peat and packaging are on top of mind. As organization we try to connect and facilitate for our members and to put the dot on the horizon.

In Q2 we will start with experts groups thinking about garden retail 2030.

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and think together about how our future will (or could) look like and what that takes and asks from our business and entrepreneurs.

From the Netherlands, we wish you all a very good and green spring.

News from Poland

Current economic situation

The economic situation in Poland is stable, but inflation is raging, especially in food products, especially vegetables. Therefore, there is a great interest in purchasing seeds for self-cultivation.

Industry trading conditions

For several days the weather has been conducive to work in the garden, and the traffic in garden centers has also increased, which are well stocked for the new season.

Already in autumn, the prices of fertilizers and horticultural soil increased significantly. The prices of garden plants have only minor cosmetic increases.

Association update

As for our Association, since the beginning of the year we have been conducting weekly online training for our members. Now that the traffic in garden centers is high, we are taking a break from training. For the last two months, we have also conducted a contest of gardening novelties. This competition promoting new products entering the market in a given season has been organized for the third time. Companies submitted their new products to us, and our members, the owners of garden centers, chose the most interesting and innovative ones from among them. Now we promote these gardening novelties in the media. We also handed out occasional medals. Despite numerous difficulties, wars among neighbors, garden centers hope for a good season.

We wish all IGCA members a successful gardening season!

Feedback from Spain

by Santiago Gonzales

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campaign has not yet started in Spanish garden centers. The month of January was good, but sales were paralyzed in February for various reasons, mainly due to the weather.

It seems that in a few days the weather will allow us to plant. However, our stores and suppliers are very prepared with good presentations of plants and products.

In February we celebrated our annual sectoral congress, which was held in Seville this year with great success. We have surpassed the previous figures and reached the record attendance of gardens (106 points of sale) and 50 exhibiting companies.



Presentation during AECJ Congress

The most remarkable thing was that the assistants have valued very positively the conferences and parallel activities that were held there. The 6 presentations were presented by great external professionals focused, above all, on the importance of training the teams of garden workers and motivating them to improve customer service. For the AECJ, this professional meeting is vital where we can all meet again and learn together as a big family.



Exhibitions during congress

Feedback from South Africa

by *Gerdie Olivier*

We all waited for 2023 to start on a positive note after 2022 ended vapid. Our country's economic woes have continued to escalate and due to various factors, that include political turmoil, we have seen our Rand weakening and living costs increase.



This has resulted in very conservative consumer spending. As food and basic living costs continues to grow, consumers are left with less money to spend on (perceived) luxuries like gardening. The most recent report on SA's GDP has indicated that there was a decline of 1.3%. Our industry is under strain at the moment and it appears that we will have to weather the storm a while longer.

Electricity loadshedding has become a daily event and from 1 January to 6 March 2023, we experienced 65 days of loadshedding. In plain terms, this means that we have had at least 2 hours of no electricity every day this year.

This has resulted in many companies investing in solar systems, which is quite a large capital expenditure or the usage of generators – that has become a huge operational expense to many business and unfortunately unsustainable for many small enterprises.

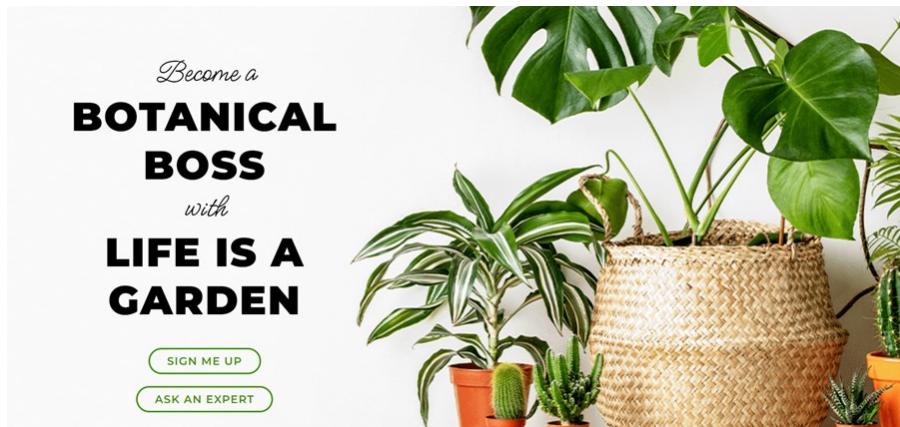
Weather always has an impact on sales. Throughout the Summer season we have experienced very hot days and rain over weekends which resulted in low sales. Since weather restrictions were imposed in Gauteng in October last year, sales have been flat.

Our association has made contact with local councils to try and standardise the water restrictions imposed on different municipal jurisdictions. Furthermore, we are in the planning phase of a "Responsible Use of Water" consumer campaign to educate consumers about gardening in dry areas and drought conditions. We hope to launch this campaign in Spring 2023 as current weather patterns are predicting that we might be heading into a drought.

Our association has remained stable through these trying times. Our consumer marketing campaign, "Life is a Garden" keeps on spreading the gardening

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to spread our gardening message with our website remaining the central information portal.



To enhance our campaign and give exposure on consumer level, regular articles are published in print media and posters are available for retailers to use in their garden centres.

Grading results for our GCA Garden Centre evaluation were released in February and garden centres who achieved a grading of 90% or higher, were invited to take part in the Garden Centre & Home Store of the Year competitions. These competitions will be finalised at the end of March and the Garden Centre & Home Store of the Year and the two runner-ups will be announced at our annual Convention in June.

The start of the Autumn Season is celebrated by hosting our SANA Autumn Trade Fair in Johannesburg. This show was held on 8 March and has remained one of our biggest events with 80 exhibitors showcasing their products to retailers, landscapers and other related companies.



Displays at the SANA Trade Fair

Our association's training calendar for 2023 is quite full and includes Customer Care, First Aid and Merchandising training. We have recently concluded an 8-week Marketing Bootcamp where members learnt the ins and outs of marketing your business and products. These training sessions are exclusive

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Update from Switzerland

by *Othmar Zisweiler*



With March, the spring season slowly but surely starts in Switzerland. This not only marks the end of winter, but also the end of the period of preparation and uncertainty.

Now we will see whether our industry will also be affected by the feared decline in consumption or whether the optimists, who see the dawn of a golden age for the green industry, are right. A first indication of where the journey is headed will be the number of visitors to Giardina in Zurich. This is the big garden show in Switzerland and will be held for the first time this year after an interruption of two years.

In any case, it has never been so difficult for garden centers to set prices for their plants. Due to higher purchase prices, increasing personnel costs, inflation etc. they are forced to increase their prices. However, there is great uncertainty as to whether higher prices for plants will be accepted by consumers.

Probably due to the long drought during the last summer, the topic of heat and drought tolerant plants is already a subject in the media. JardinSuisse has picked up on this trend and provided corresponding media material. Those garden centers will profit from this trend which manage to link the topic with sustainability and regionality. In this sense, they will have to promote in their marketing plants that are native, heat- and drought-tolerant, and produced in the region.

Feedback from UK

by *Peter Burks*

We had a good trading period up to Christmas with much of the industry posting satisfactory

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was nicely positive was food, with both restaurants and farm shops trading nicely up which has continued into the new year.



Since Christmas we have seen the weather mostly cool, but very dry, which has kept garden centre car parks busy, mostly for the restaurants, but lately also driving good gardening sales. These have also been helped by the shortage of Tomatoes, Peppers and Cucumbers in the supermarkets here which is getting people buying vegetable seeds and young plants causing an uplift in sales of over 50% compared to 2022.

The general economic mood is still very cautious but there is an optimism for the year ahead in garden centres.

In January we held our annual Conference which was the first since 2020 due to Covid and it was attended by just over 300 delegates. There was a fantastic atmosphere throughout the event as everyone was able to meet up and enjoy a great program of speakers and events. Thanks to the amazing efforts of Guy Topping and Family at Barton Grange over £100,000 was raised for the Greenfingers charity that constructs gardens in Hospices.

Finally we were all devastated by the loss of Paul Cooling at such a young age soon after Christmas. A great supporter of both the GCA and IGCA. He will be greatly missed.

News from USA

by Ken Fisher

Current Economic Conditions

The U.S. market is on “recession watch”, but the slow down keeps getting pushed back by six months as employment, wages, and consumer spending numbers are still robust for the U.S. economy. But that also means inflation at over 6% (Consumer price index) continues to run well ahead of the government’s targets and the Federal Reserve has pledged to continue raising interest rates until the economy cools off. In the meantime, US consumer spending is strong especially on travel and entertainment. There is evidence

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Industry Trading Conditions

At this point in the season the attention is on the weather. The Northern and Western regions of the U.S. are experiencing winter and much of California is stuck in an extended snow/rain pattern. However, a survey of retail garden locations across the country is reporting early sales numbers (through March 5th) up 6% to last year (which also had a late-lasting winter). South, Southeast, and Mid-Atlantic regions, which warm up the earliest, are reporting relatively strong pricing and transaction counts. Although 2022 garden retail net sales were slightly down year over year, prices were up, transactions were down, but overall profit held strong. Our key metric to watch in the weeks ahead will be retail transaction counts as consumers emerge from their winter slumber and enjoy plants and the outdoors.

AmericanHort News and Events

Membership continues to hold relatively strong with gains in both company and individual memberships in 2023. The association represents many segments across the industry with key focus on greenhouse, nursery, garden retail, landscape, and allied suppliers. Garden retail engagement is up 9% over last year. Our D.C. based advocacy team is busy working to manage and influence a variety of legislative and regulatory issues affecting horticulture growers and small businesses. Taxes and workplace regulations are always in focus. Our research and education teams have a full slate of weekly webinars to help education and train our industry workforce. And we have opened up registration for Cultivate'23, our all industry conference and tradeshow held in Columbus, OH in July. Early registrations are pacing ahead of last year and we hope to have another strong industry event this summer.

IGCA CONGRESS 2023

The annual IGCA congress which held for one week between August and October provides a key opportunity for association members to learn about international trends and network with peers from around the world. It comprises a business meeting, a concentrated tour of garden centres and an excellent social programme.

[This year September, the IGCA 2023 International Congress will land in Italy!](#)

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The Congress, entitled "La grande bellezza. Food, Fashion, Flowers", will be held from 24th to 30th September, based on Lake Maggiore, and will propose a program that every day will take us to a different part of Northern Italy: Bergamo, Brescia, Como, Milan, Novara, Turin, Varese, Verbano-Cusio-Ossola... discovering interesting realities of our sector, but also architectural and landscape beauties and, of course, food and wine excellences.

Go to their website for more information and bookings: <https://igca2023.com/>

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

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