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2023 STATE OF THE INDUSTRY REPORT

FINDING BALANCE

From Great Recession
lows to pandemic-era highs,
IGCs are finding a new balance
that rests between boom and bust.

+

AI FOR IGCs

PG. 8



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Rooting for an extraordinary industry



THERE'S A CYPRESS TREE at Berns Garden Center (located outside Cincinnati) that towers over the eastern portion of the outdoor retail space. It stands between 30 and 40 feet tall, and the sturdy trunk acts as a hub from which paths radiate like spokes.

In terms of garden center design, the tree is an exceptional focal point and a fine way to help customers navigate the grounds and goods. Its boughs provide shade, and the planting below offers inspiration. But the presence of the cypress signifies something deeper.

For the cypress to have grown so strong and well, it had to be cared for and nurtured. It had to have a healthy root system established in nutrient-rich soil. And while it isn't exceptionally old, it does speak to a sense of longevity and permanence.

There's a nice symbolism here. After all, Berns has been operated by the same family for three generations. Like that tree, the Berns family has established roots in the community. Their business has grown and expanded over the decades, like the boughs of the cypress at its Greentree Road flagship location.

I saw the cypress in person during The Garden Center Group's The Fall Event 2023 Tour (see more in Spotted! on pg. 12). Check out the photos of some additional Cincinnati-area garden centers, most of which are also multi-generational businesses.

It will be no surprise to our readers that

a great deal of America's IGCs are passed from generation to generation. But you shouldn't take it for granted. I've covered many businesses as a writer and editor, and as a newcomer to the industry, I was startled to learn how many of your operations are now in the hands of third, fourth and even fifth generations. The knowledge and business acumen represented in that reality is truly extraordinary.

I'm thankful that many of you have shared that knowledge with us for our State of the Industry Report, which is the core of this issue. The majority of IGCs that participated in our SOI survey have been in operation for well over 20 years. And based on the responses, business has still been incredibly strong since the boom years early in the pandemic.

There are some shifts. Houseplants, while still strong sellers, are losing their top spot in profitability; the supply chain issues that have plagued the pandemic years are easing; and there is a distinct focus on organics as a means of anchoring sustainability programs.

There are also persistent challenges. Many owners are planning retirement without succession plans in place, and staffing issues continue to be painful year over year.

I encourage you to look over our data and see how your business stacks up against those of your peers. There's a wealth of information in these pages, and we've worked hard to help you navigate the information and determine the trends that are shaping and moving our vibrant and ever-flourishing industry.

Importantly, I will say that the broad message of our report is clear: Like the cypress tree in the courtyard of Berns Garden Center, the roots of the industry are strong.

So, let's keep growing.

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Going organic? Get certified or face fines.

Editor's note: This letter is in response to our September 2023 cover story, "Dynamic Organic."

AS AN IGC THAT HAS BEEN Certified Organic since the program's inception in 1999, there are several additional factors that must be considered when evaluating offering organic products.

First, the NOP (National Organic Program) through the USDA permits the use of the term "organic" only for products that have been certified through an independent agency. There are certifying agents in almost every state. Certification is the essential, and required, part for utilizing the term "organic." Those that certify and rely on organic products, many of them small farmers and growers, need to maintain the trust of consumers and value of buying an organic product.

Section 205.100 of the NOP Federal Regulations details the following: "...each operation or portion of an operation that produces or handles agricultural products intended to be sold, labeled, or represented as '100 percent organic,' 'organic,' or 'made with organic (specified ingredients or food group(s))' must be certified according to the provisions of subpart E of this part and must meet all other applicable requirements of this part."

For an IGC looking to grow products that they offer as "organic," they are required to get those products certified before being able to use the "organic" term. The penalty can be quite severe. "Civil penalty for knowingly labeling or selling a product as organic except in accordance with the Organic Foods Production Act of 1990...has a maximum of \$21,689."

What allows a product to be called organic? Simply:

- It needs to be produced according to the NOP federal regulations.
- It needs to be certified.

What doesn't allow a product to be called organic?

- Just using organic growing or potting mix.

- Just not using sprays or synthetic products on the plants.
- Just buying organic seed.
- Doing all these together doesn't allow the use of the term "organic."

As you can see, certification is the key to permitted use. Without that, it is against federal regulations to use the term "organic," and the fines can be extensive.

The great news for IGCs looking to offer certified organic products is that the certification process is not that complicated, and the costs are minimal and easily offset by the marketing value of "organic." The same records you are likely keeping now — seed sources and purchases, inputs used and sales of organic products — are most of what is required. There are federal and state grants that help offset some of the costs. Finally, each year, there is an inspection to review records and answer any questions.

Another easy option for IGCs to start offering certified organic products is to reach out to their local farmers or contact a wholesale grower that offers certified organic products. The NOP exempts from certification retail establishments "that [do] not process organically produced agricultural products or "that [process], at the point of final sale, agricultural products certified under this part as '100 percent organic,' 'organic,' or 'made with organic (specified ingredients or food group(s)).'"

In choosing a source for your organic product offering, be sure to ask the most important question: "Are you certified?"

On another note, the September article also touched on the quality of organic plants potentially not being as high as synthetically produced plants. This is a fallacy that some in the organic market use when things don't grow right for them. Organic starter plants, when properly grown and cared for, will have the same if not better quality as those grown synthetically. Organic growing relies more heavily on the nu-



trients being added into the growing mix, where the plant takes them up through their roots. This is the normal method for nutrient uptake for plants. Conventional growers rely more on foliar application of nutrients. This allows for more control and customization of the feeding, but it is not the normal method of uptake.

An organic growing mix with the right balance of nutrients and biology will provide most veggie, herb and flower plants with the required nutrients to grow healthy and strong and look great. Organic plants will typically outperform conventional plants because they have been grown with the nutrients available at their roots, which is how home gardeners will grow them. Many times, there are still nutrients available in the container continuing to feed the plant when it goes to its new home. With foliar feeding, there isn't much storage of nutrients. Most home gardeners won't foliar feed their plants but rather just plant them in soil or potting mix, so it takes time for conventionally grown plants to adjust (transplant shock). A properly grown organic plant will exhibit less transplant shock and start growing/enjoying its new home quicker. Given the short growing season in the Midwest and some other regions, reducing transplant shock can mean a big difference in yield. ⁸⁶

Randal Kohn is the owner of West Star Organics, a certified organic wholesale and retail garden center. West Star Organics has been certified organic since the National Organic Program's inception in 1999. It is one of the oldest and largest certified organic greenhouse operations in Wisconsin.

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BY C.L. FORNARI

C.L. Fornari is a speaker, writer and radio/podcast host who has worked at Hyannis Country Garden, an IGC on Cape Cod, for more than 20 years. She has her audiences convinced that C.L. stands for “Compost Lover.” Learn more at GardenLady.com



IGCs can use AI in a variety of ways, but it needs to be done with a large dose of caution.

AI for IGCs?

AI can be a helpful tool for content, but users need to make sure what it offers is accurate.

I RECENTLY ASKED A POPULAR AI chatbot to write a biography of The Garden Lady. It started out on the right track, saying that The Garden Lady was C.L. Fornari, and that I was the author of several books about gardening. But things quickly went awry as it proceeded to write that my love of plants was developed by growing up on the shores of Cape Cod. Actually, I grew up in Colorado, California, Indiana and Wisconsin, only moving to the Massachusetts coast as an adult. Among other inaccuracies, it went on to say I had a degree in natural science

from a university I'd never heard of. Clearly, artificial intelligence has no qualms about making stuff up.

In the green industry, AI is a topic of conversation at trade shows and in webinars, podcasts and articles. There are apps and websites available that use AI to answer questions about gardening and plants, undoubtedly with many more to come. In some ways, this technology can be useful for IGCs and our customers. You might ask one of these programs to generate an article for your company's newslet-

ter or blog. A photo generative program could be used to create illustrations for a presentation or website. But in these early days, we should take what the chatbots and digital art generators produce with a large dose of caution.

You may have read about the Toronto mayoral candidate whose staff used AI to create photos for his campaign platform. The illustrations appeared to be photos of real people around the city of Toronto, but they were exposed as being artificially generated because one of those images

contained a woman who had three arms. What's amazing is that none of the campaign staff caught this mistake before it was made public.

Such embarrassing errors aside, what is the harm of using a chatbot or photo generator to produce content for our garden centers? I would argue that at this point, the problem is that AI isn't accurate enough to be trustworthy. In our business, we know that all gardening is regional, and until we can have faith that a chatbot will know the plants and garden problems in our particular area, the information produced is likely to be inaccurate or misleading.

For example, in my part of the country, we had a "polar vortex" freeze last February. The temperatures plunged overnight, turning what had been a mild winter into a sub-zero event. When our customers began asking about their dead or damaged roses, lavender and heather, we knew just what had caused the problem. The chatbots I consulted could list the various reasons those plants might have died, but at this point they were unable to factor in the real cause: sub-zero weather on the night of Feb. 4. The bots didn't know that for some plants, those sudden temperature extremes are more damaging than weather that gets steadily colder into the winter.

Your experienced IGC staff will know if the summer has been unusually cloudy and cool, leading to a bad crop of tomatoes. They know when the typical insects show up, so when a customer comes in with a lacy leaf, they can not only offer an accurate diagnosis of the problem but may also know that the culprit has come and gone and that no treatment is necessary. If you're in the business for more than a few years, you know what is currently in flower in the area, and you're able to tell your customers if what they're seeing is normal or problematic.

Inaccurate, misleading or just plain wacky garden information has been passed over the garden fence for years. We have often laughed or moaned about people thinking that ants help peony buds to open, or that Epsom salt is a magic cure-all. Now, that backyard fence has turned into a world wide web where inaccuracies live forever, joined by silly garden hacks

and fake plant scams. From jars of banana peel water to seeds for rainbow roses, people can go down multiple misinformation rabbit holes that don't positively serve them or the natural world.

Perhaps someday, AI will be the counterbalance to such fads and fabrications. Maybe in the future, a chatbot will tell people that an organic, balanced fertilizer is more beneficial than a stinking jar of



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Preparing art on the topic of bringing houseplants inside before winter and looking for hidden pests, I used the latest version of Photoshop to digitally generate a mouse in a picture of a houseplant.

banana water. Maybe AI will be able to know the latest plant scams and warn people not to waste their money. And it could be aware of the weather in any given region and how that affects the garden. But until these programs get a lot smarter, it's up to us to continue to give our customers accurate, local information. Use digital generative software for illustrations, but look at them with a critical eye. Employ a chatbot to get you started on an article or paragraph for a newsletter, but have someone who is very familiar with the topic proofread the results.

I've tested four different AI software programs that are designed to answer questions about plants and gardens. I've found that about half of the time, they get the basic facts right, but the remaining 50% of answers range from slightly off to mostly wrong. In all these cases, I was told that I could go back and correct the answers so that the program would learn and improve. I'm sure that this is true, but I'd rather spend my time educating the public, not the bots.

AI and digital image generators have great potential moving forward, but right now we need a good amount of HI — Human Intelligence — to make sure we're giving our customers accurate and useful information. ⁸⁶

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QUEEN CITY QUESTING ►

During the last week of September, The Garden Center Group's members assembled at the annual Fall Event in Cincinnati, Ohio. Along with the anticipated information sharing, seminars on best practices and fellowship with IGC owners and managers, attendees were treated to a regional garden center tour. The six-stop, 83-mile round-trip tour wound through the outskirts of Ohio's Queen City and featured a wide range of IGCs, each with a unique style and customer focus. Group members explored the Fall Festival grounds of Burger Farm and Garden Center (burgerfarms.com), participated in a scavenger hunt through event-friendly and flower-focused Benken Garden Center & Florist (benkens.com), lunched at the seasonal Natorp's Nursery Outlet (natorp.com), roamed the well established generational grounds of Berns Garden Center & Landscaping (bernsgardencenter.com), marveled at the renovated White Oak Gardens (whiteoakgardens.com) and relaxed at the Cincinnati Zoo & Botanical Garden (cincinnatzoo.org). — **Patrick Alan Coleman**



1.



3.



2.

1. At its current location for 84 years, Benken Garden Center & Florist bucks the trend of declining floral operations in IGCs. A full 25% of its business is retail floral, and it also thrives as an event venue. While the events are often booked by outside customers, Benken has its own in-house event schedule, which staff said was a “game changer” in 2023.

2. Founded in 1956, Berns Garden Center & Landscaping has four divisions: landscaping, production greenhouses, personal gardener services and retail garden centers. Its flagship garden center was completed in 1996 and offers customers 10,000 square feet of retail space, 22,000 square feet of outdoor covered shopping space and a greenhouse.

3 & 4. Burger Farm and Garden Center has been holding its annual Fall Festival for 50 years. Multiple generations of visiting families love the games, rides, puppet shows and animated “Pumpkinland” at the agritourism event. Attendees also have plenty of time to shop the six acres and 48,000-square-foot covered retail area.

PHOTOS BY PATRICK ALAN COLEMAN



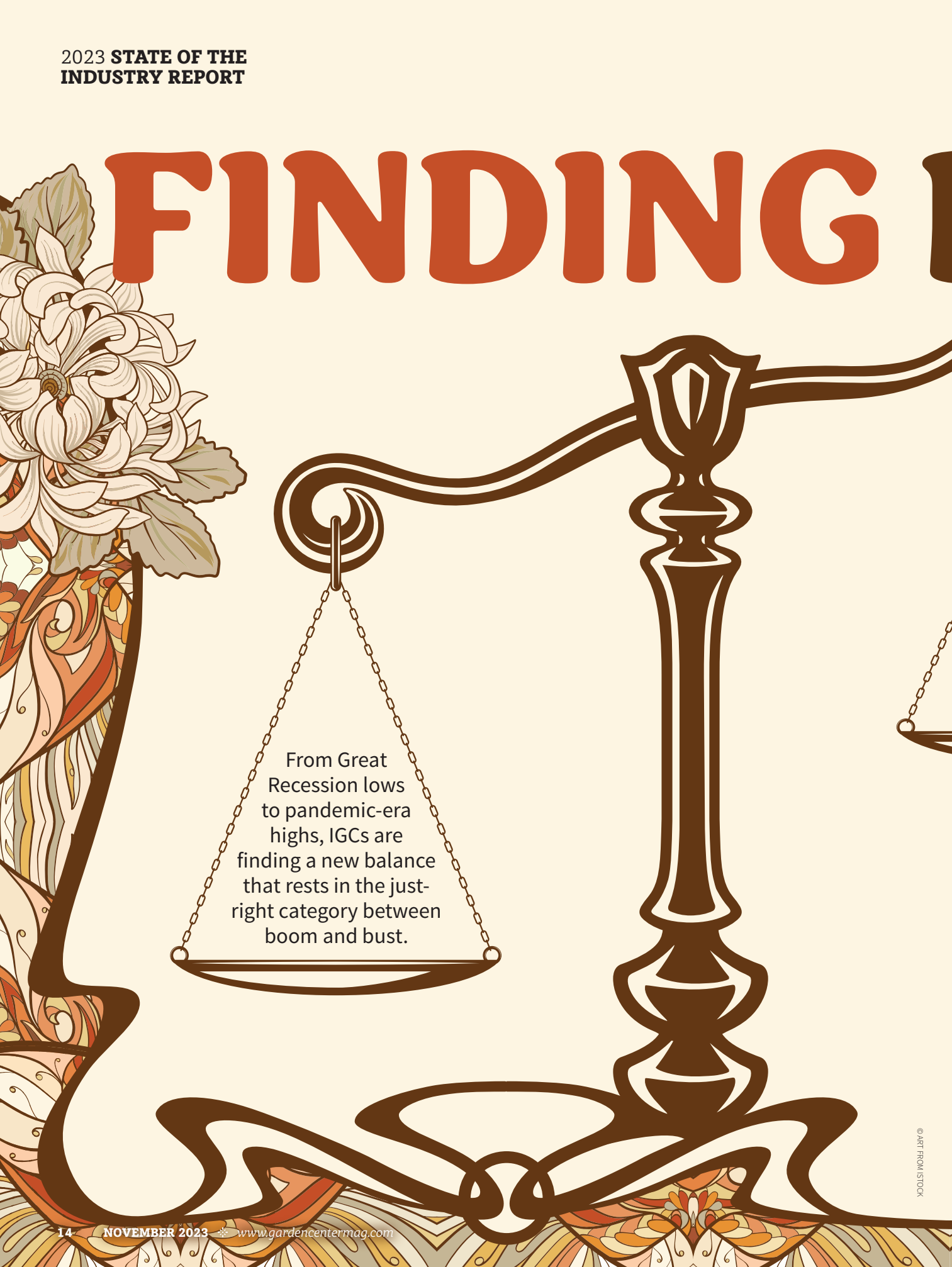
5. Natorp's Nursery Outlet is a sprawling plant complex that's all about moving volume — and it succeeds in that mission. The outlet is only open seasonally — 13 weeks in the spring and seven weeks in the fall — but manages to pull down profit while maintaining a lighthearted family-friendly atmosphere.

6. This year, the Cincinnati Zoo & Botanical Garden played host to a trial garden that extended throughout the grounds. The trial garden featured permanent plantings, allowing garden visitors to see plants side by side and in a real garden context.

7 & 8. White Oak Gardens is the story of a successful expansion. After more than 20 years of modest yet successful nursery operations, White Oak made a \$1.3 million investment in 2017. The result is a state-of-the-art, high-tech retail greenhouse that offers a sleek and comfortable shopping experience across 12,000 square feet.

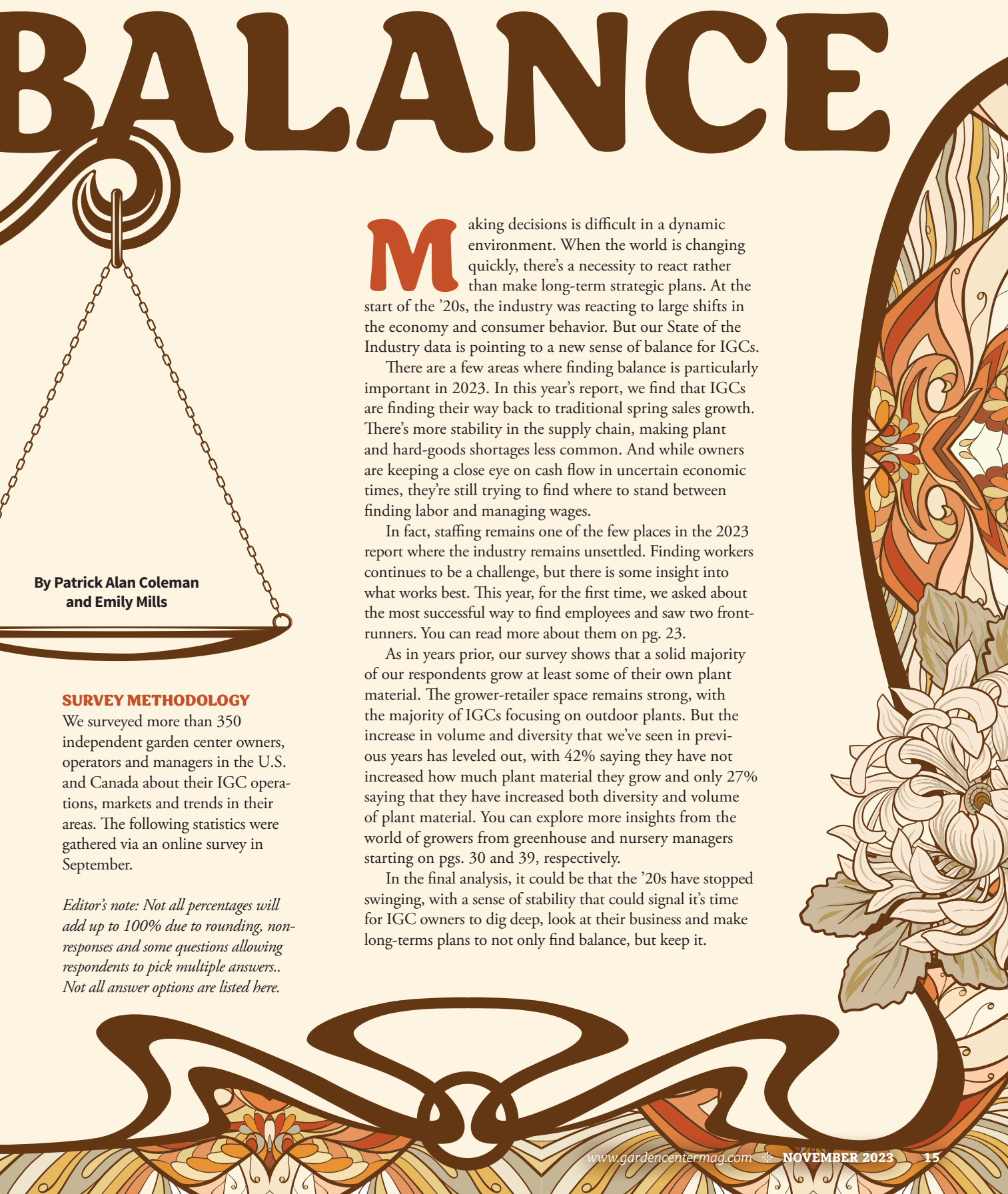


FINDING I



From Great
Recession lows
to pandemic-era
highs, IGCs are
finding a new balance
that rests in the just-
right category between
boom and bust.

BALANCE



Making decisions is difficult in a dynamic environment. When the world is changing quickly, there's a necessity to react rather than make long-term strategic plans. At the start of the '20s, the industry was reacting to large shifts in the economy and consumer behavior. But our State of the Industry data is pointing to a new sense of balance for IGCs.

There are a few areas where finding balance is particularly important in 2023. In this year's report, we find that IGCs are finding their way back to traditional spring sales growth. There's more stability in the supply chain, making plant and hard-goods shortages less common. And while owners are keeping a close eye on cash flow in uncertain economic times, they're still trying to find where to stand between finding labor and managing wages.

In fact, staffing remains one of the few places in the 2023 report where the industry remains unsettled. Finding workers continues to be a challenge, but there is some insight into what works best. This year, for the first time, we asked about the most successful way to find employees and saw two front-runners. You can read more about them on pg. 23.

As in years prior, our survey shows that a solid majority of our respondents grow at least some of their own plant material. The grower-retailer space remains strong, with the majority of IGCs focusing on outdoor plants. But the increase in volume and diversity that we've seen in previous years has leveled out, with 42% saying they have not increased how much plant material they grow and only 27% saying that they have increased both diversity and volume of plant material. You can explore more insights from the world of growers from greenhouse and nursery managers starting on pgs. 30 and 39, respectively.

In the final analysis, it could be that the '20s have stopped swinging, with a sense of stability that could signal it's time for IGC owners to dig deep, look at their business and make long-term plans to not only find balance, but keep it.

By Patrick Alan Coleman
and Emily Mills

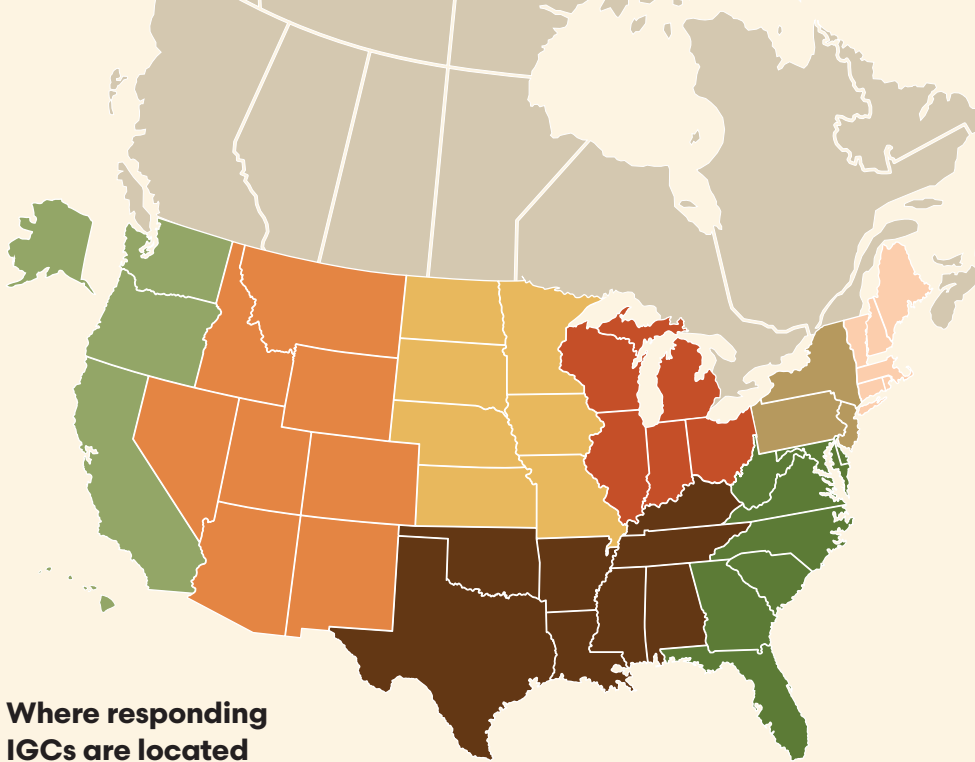
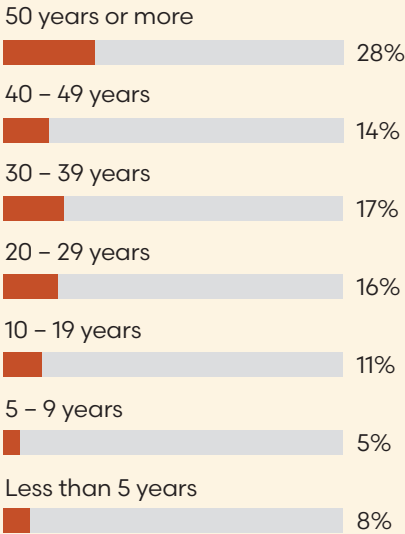
SURVEY METHODOLOGY

We surveyed more than 350 independent garden center owners, operators and managers in the U.S. and Canada about their IGC operations, markets and trends in their areas. The following statistics were gathered via an online survey in September.

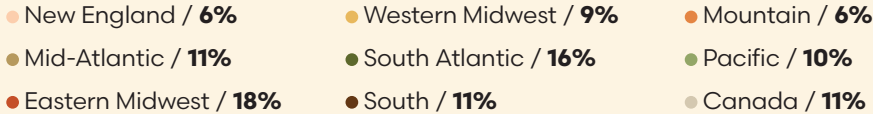
Editor's note: Not all percentages will add up to 100% due to rounding, non-responses and some questions allowing respondents to pick multiple answers.. Not all answer options are listed here.

WHO TOOK OUR SURVEY

Years in business



**Where responding
IGCs are located**



BALANCING PROFIT AND PRICES IN IGC DIVISIONS

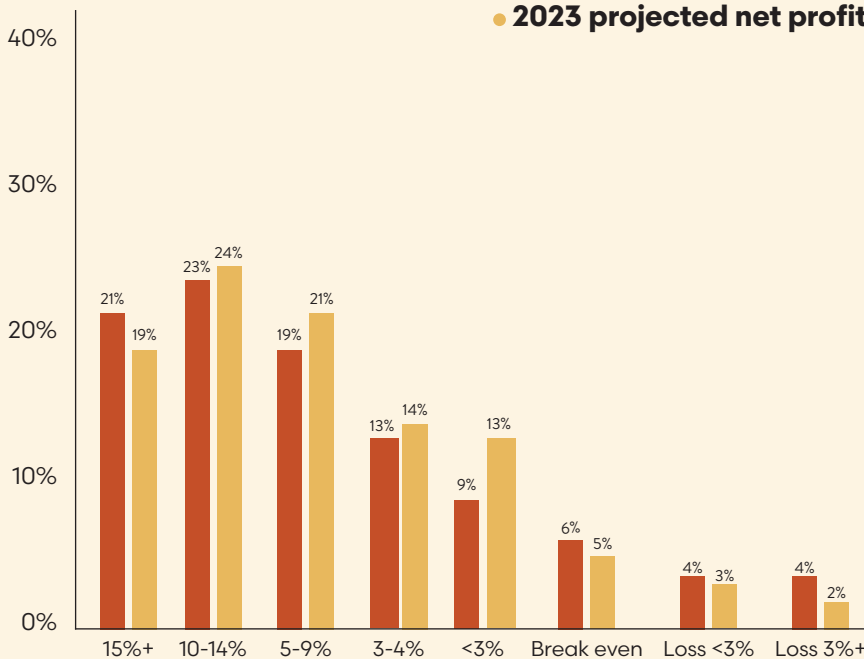
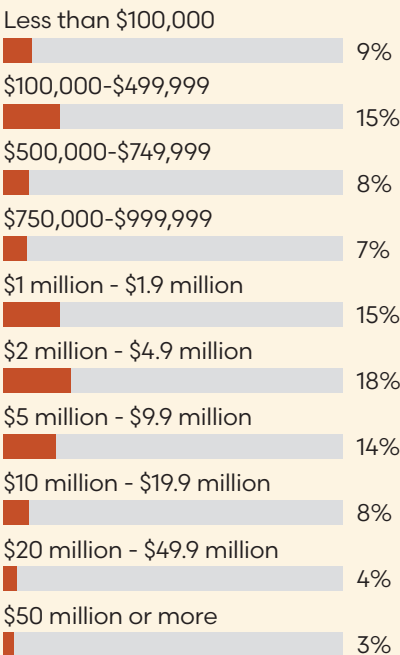
IGCs reported making more money in 2022 than in the last few years, with 62% making \$1 million or more, compared to 55% in last year’s report, 52% in the 2021 report and 53% in the 2020 report. A full 85% of respondents reported profits in 2022, with only 9% reporting losses

(6% broke even). That’s similar to the figures for the last few years, but there is a slight downward trend in those reporting profits, while those reporting losses are on a slight upward trend.

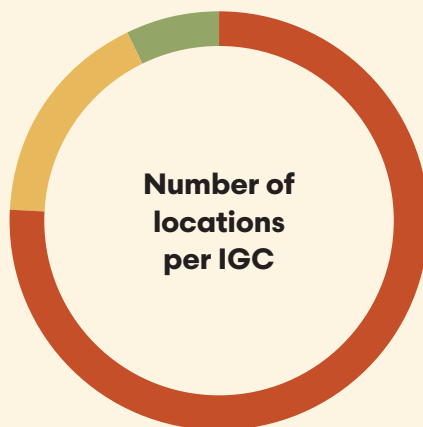
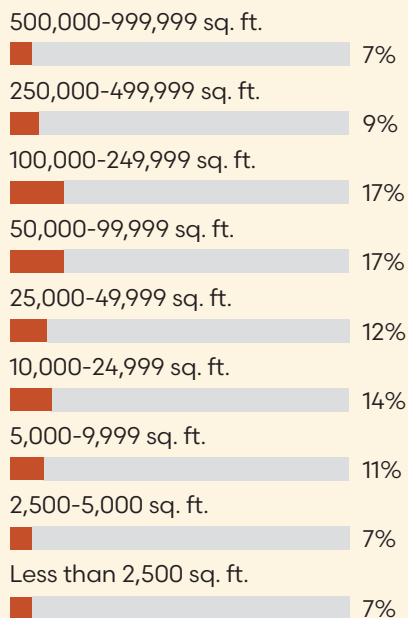
And while garden centers are continuing to raise their plant prices, our survey showed the up-

ward trend starting to flatten toward traditional levels. This year, 88% of respondents reported raising prices in 2023, compared to 92% in 2022, 75% in 2020 and 71% when we started asking the question in 2017. Only 78% of respondents plan to raise their plant prices in 2024.

2022 sales volume



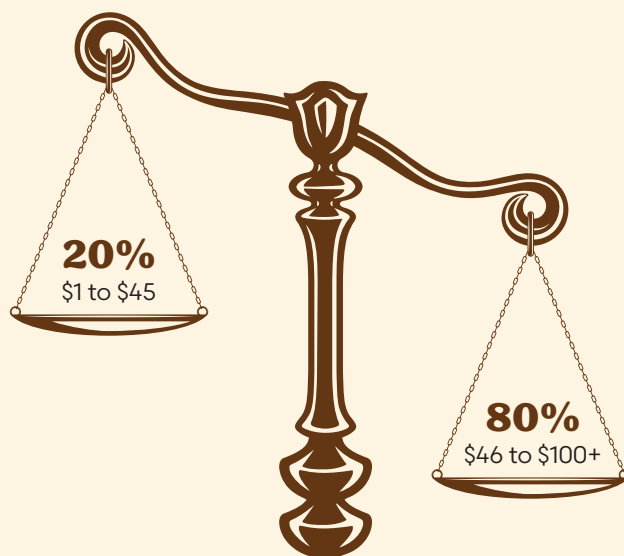
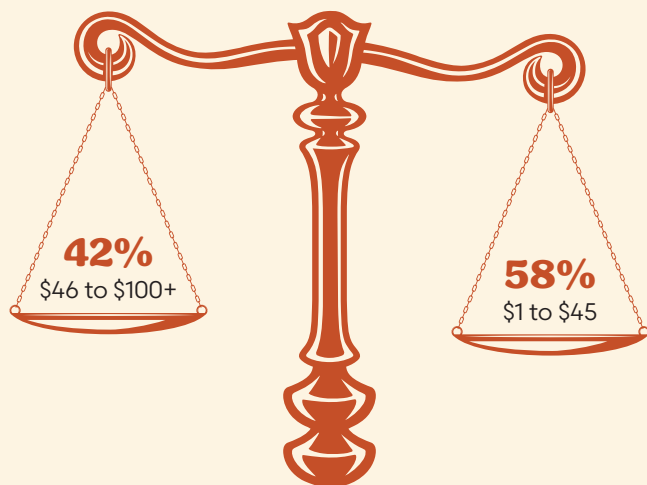
Store size



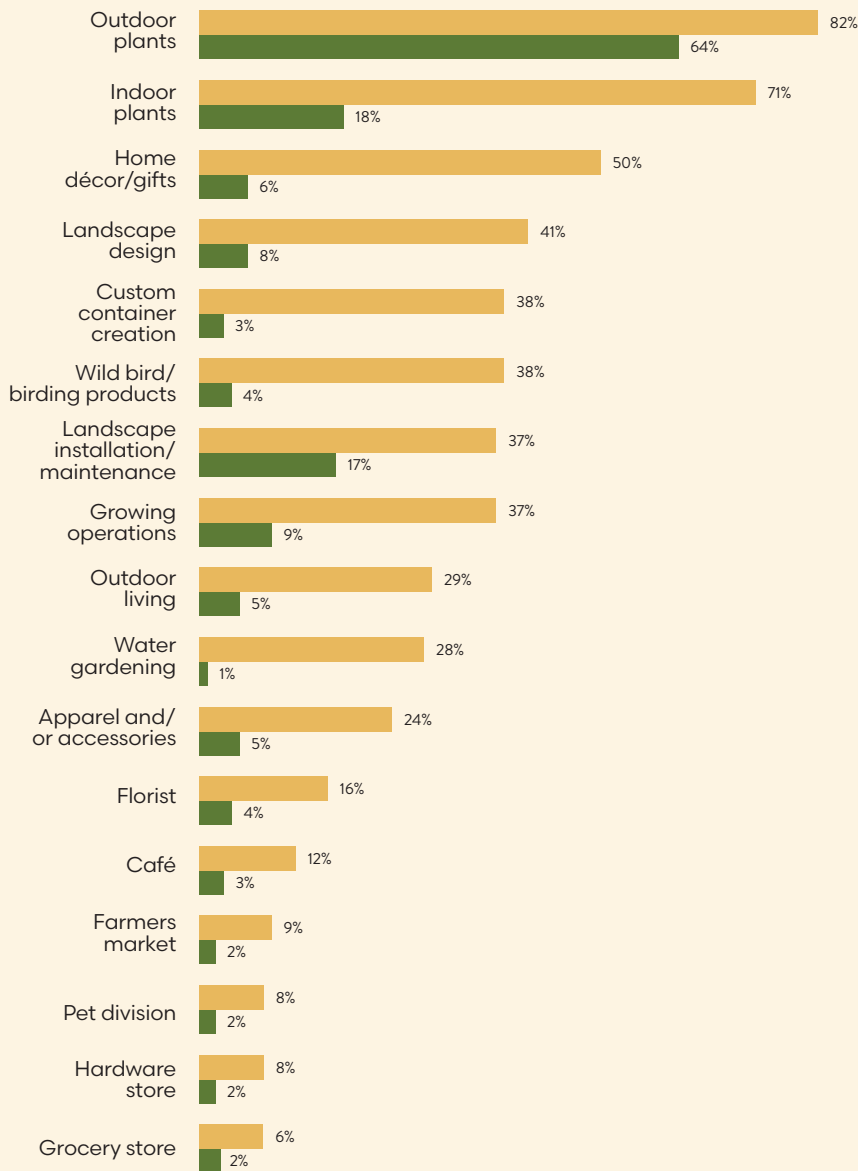
- Single store / **76%**
- Chain with 2 to 5 stores / **17%**
- Chain with more than 5 stores / **7%**

INCREASING AVERAGE SALES TICKETS

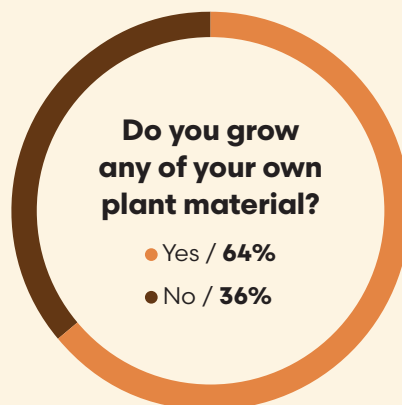
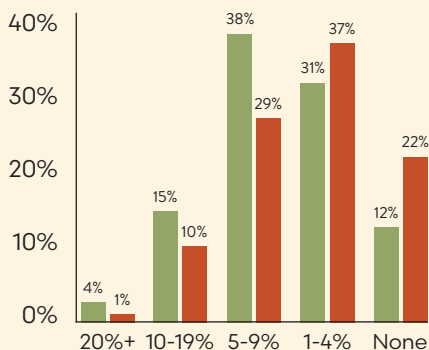
Average sales tickets have continued to rise in both the weakest and strongest months. While average sales tickets during the weakest month still lean toward dollar totals below \$46, they are closer to balancing with sales tickets that range from \$46 and up. That's nearly a 10% shift toward the higher end from the previous year. For the strongest month, average sales tickets above \$46 easily outweigh those between \$1 and \$45, representing a more than 10% increase from last year's strongest month.



What divisions do you have? What division is your most profitable?



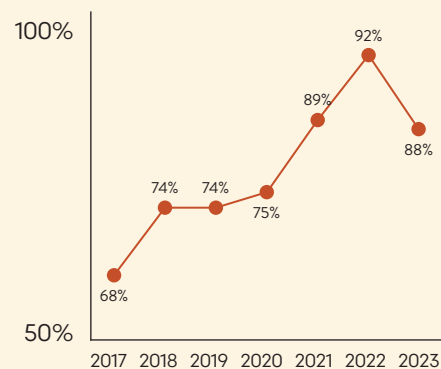
2023 plant price changes
2024 projected plant price changes



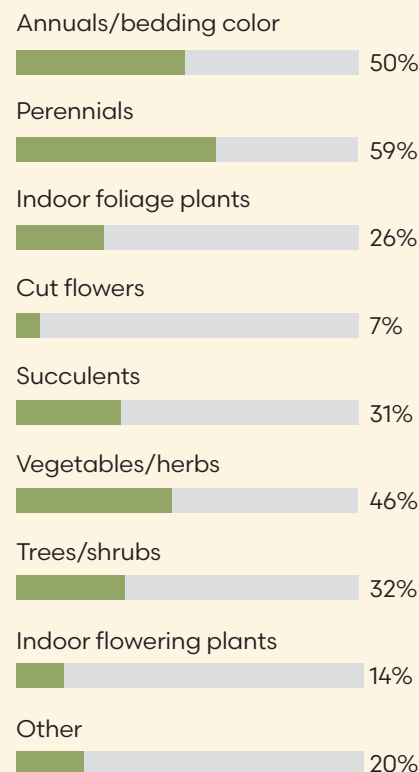
GROWER-RETAILERS

The trend of IGCs growing their own plant material continued in 2023. The number reached an all-time high of 72% in 2021, with IGCs choosing to grow their own material to manage increased demand that led to plant shortages on top of pandemic-induced supply chain issues. This year's figure of 64% is close to last year's number of 66%.

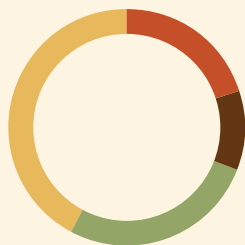
Percentage of IGCs that have raised plant prices, by year



What does your garden center grow?



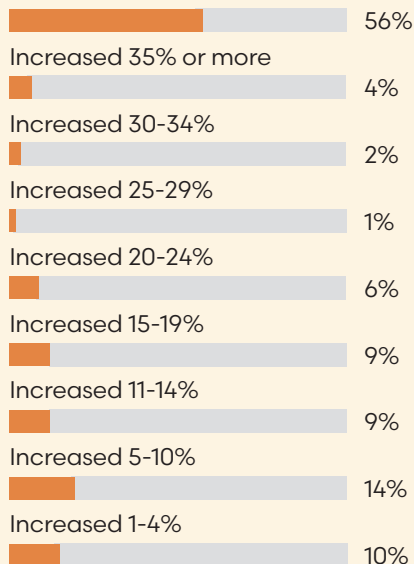
Have you increased the amount of plant material you grow in the past two years?



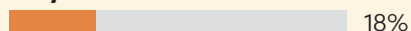
- Yes, increased volume / **20%**
- Yes, increased diversity / **11%**
- Yes, increased both volume and diversity / **27%**
- No / **42%**

How did your garden center's spring 2023 sales compare to spring 2022?

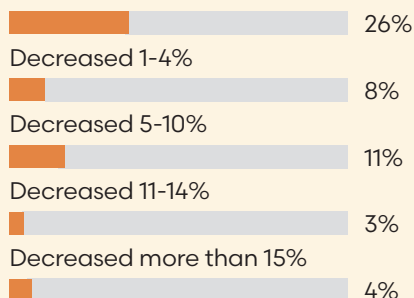
Increased



Stayed about the same



Decreased



SPRING ETERNAL?

IGCs continue to see a cooling of the explosive spring sales in 2020 and 2021. This year, spring sales increased for 56% of respondents, which is more consistent with pre-pandemic years.

There are notable trends, however, in what areas saw increases in spring sales versus decreases. For instance, indoor plant sales decreased for 11% percent of respondents. But that decrease appears to be balanced by reported increased sales in both annuals and perennials. This could reflect that the plethora of customers who bought houseplants during the pandemic have taken their new hobby outdoors.

Which one area saw the biggest **increase** in sales at your garden center this spring compared with spring 2022?

- ▲ Annuals / **23%**
- Apparel/accessories / **2%**
- ▼ Birding/nature products / **1%**
- ▼ Edibles — vegetables and herbs / **8%**
- ▲ Miniature gardening / **3%**
- ▲ Fountains and statuary / **3%**
- Furniture / **1%**
- ▲ Hard goods (growing media, mulch, fertilizer, tools, etc.) / **4%**
- ▲ Home décor/gift items / **4%**
- ▼ Indoor plants (houseplants, tropicals, succulents) / **13%**
- ▲ Perennials / **17%**
- ▼ Pottery/containers / **1%**
- ▲ Trees/shrubs / **11%**
- ▼ None / **8%**

Which one area saw the biggest **decrease** in sales at your garden center this spring compared with spring 2022?

- ▼ Annuals / **3%**
- ▲ Apparel/accessories / **3%**
- ▲ Birding/nature products / **4%**
- ▼ Edibles — vegetables and herbs / **6%**
- ▼ Miniature gardening / **3%**
- ▲ Fountains and statuary / **5%**
- ▼ Furniture / **3%**
- Hard goods (growing media, mulch, fertilizer, tools, etc.) / **7%**
- ▲ Home décor/gift items / **8%**
- ▲ Indoor plants (houseplants, tropicals, succulents) / **11%**
- ▼ Perennials / **3%**
- ▲ Pottery/containers / **8%**
- ▼ Trees/shrubs / **14%**
- ▲ None / **15%**

TROUBLES ON THE LEVEL

IGCs still face a challenge trying to find a balance between reacting to economic headwinds while offering new customers increasingly excellent plant products. In fact, most respondents report the quality of plant products and an increasing customer base among their biggest positive business influences.

The problem comes from connecting those customers to the products in an unsettled economy. The biggest challenges IGCs report are all connected to economic factors, including inflation; high operation, labor and shipping costs; and staffing issues.

Luckily, supply chain issues are easing. Fewer IGCs are reporting plant and product shortages, reflecting a significant drop from both 2021 and 2022.

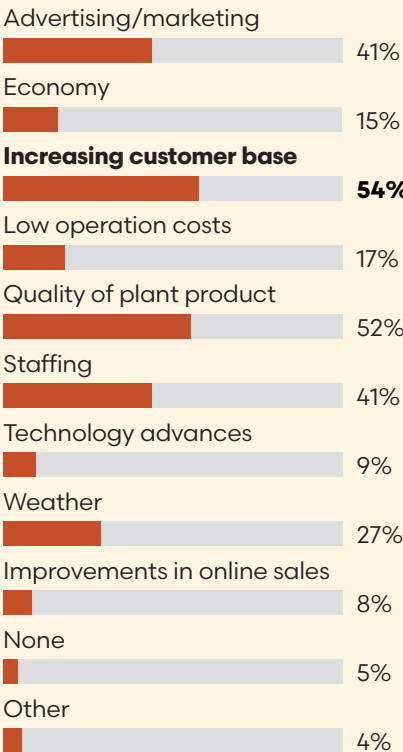


How are you managing economic uncertainty?



(Growing more, being more selective about orders and markup, diversifying income, moving, decreasing staff hours, replacing less inventory as it sells, comparing pricing of product/delivery between suppliers)

Which factors are positively impacting your garden center's 2023 sales?



(Educated customer base, special events/ classes, social media, continued new home construction, supply, crop timing)

What are your garden center's greatest challenges?



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STACKED UP AGAINST STAFFING

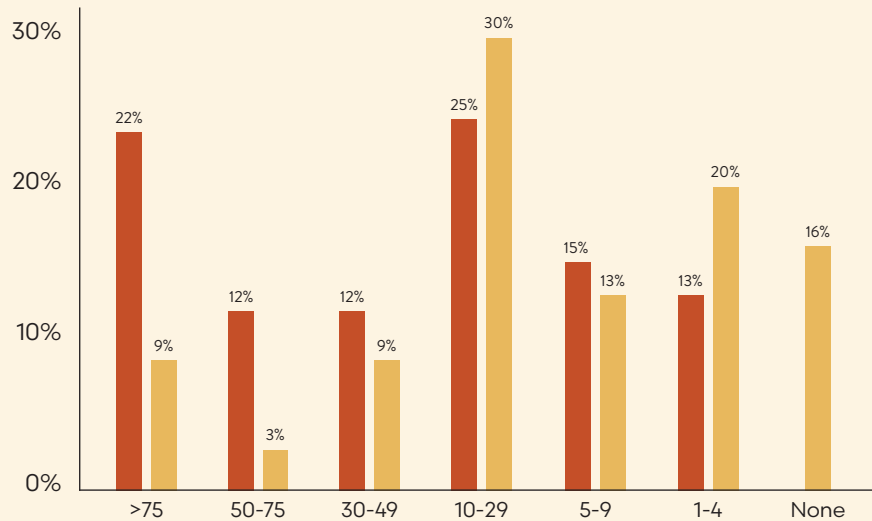
More survey participants than last year are saying it’s extremely difficult to find staff, even though staffing needs have stayed stable over the last three years. That struggle to find staff is directly connected to wage trends in our 2023 survey. This year, a majority of respondents reported that they are paying \$15 per hour and above as the minimum starting wage for hourly employees. That includes a doubling of those that are paying \$19 and more (2% in 2022 compared to 4% percent in 2023). While part of that is undoubtedly a response to inflationary pressures that make life more expensive for workers, it’s also an indication that IGCs are trying to keep wages competitive in order to attract talent. That’s not an easy task: 57% of respondents who said they limited hires in the last 12 months reported “insufficient available qualified employees in the market.”

But the way IGCs are attracting talent is unique compared to other industries. This year, for the first time in our survey, we asked respondents about the most successful way they find talent. While many cite confidence in online job boards (like Indeed and ZipRecruiter), they are nearly equally matched with those that say word of mouth is their most successful recruiting tool, followed by “customers becoming employees.”

It could be that those IGCs who have not tapped into their word-of-mouth network, or sought to recruit shoppers, are missing out on an opportunity to find motivated and qualified talent.



- **How many total employees (both seasonal and year-round) does your business currently have, including all locations?**
- **Of these employees, how many are seasonal?**



How have your garden center’s 2023 hourly rates and annual salaries changed compared with 2022?

	Decreased	Stayed the same	Increased	Do not have
Hourly rates	1%	19%	77%	4%
Annual salaries	1%	24%	61%	13%



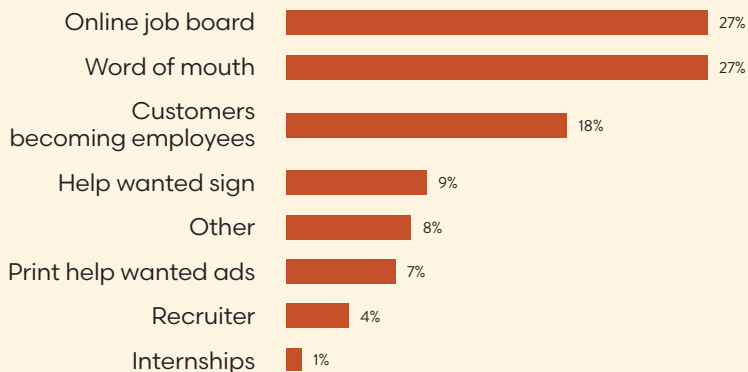
Overall, how difficult is it for your garden center to find high-quality hires for its available positions?

Not at all difficult ▶

◀ Very difficult



What is your most successful method of finding employees?



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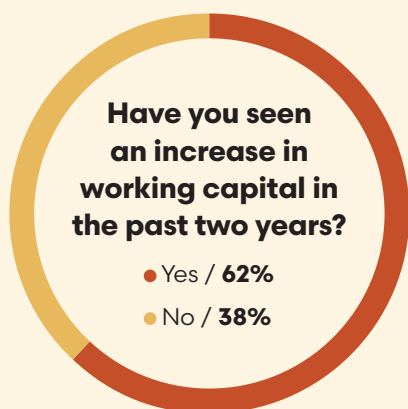
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BALANCING WORKING CAPITAL AND IMPROVEMENTS IN 2024

This year, consistent with 2022, well over half of IGCs report increasing working capital. But there is a significant change in what owners are planning to do with capital. Expanding and improving retail and growing operations is at the top of the list, along with increasing pay, bonuses and incentives — and saving it.



How are you managing your working capital?



(Investing, donating, adding solar panels, buying equipment, expanding distribution)

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BUILDING **BALANCED** INVENTORY

Profit dies as non-perishable inventory ages, but there are ways to keep it from lingering on the shelves.

By Tim Quebedeaux

Late February for me used to be time to get the garden center ready for spring, but now my time is spent in a unique way: analyzing why garden centers were and were not profitable in the previous year. As one of the service providers for The Garden Center Group, I compile and analyze The Annual Profit & Loss Study. This ground-breaking study is only made possible by aligning specific annual data from reporting independent garden centers. The data has made it possible for The Garden Center Group's clients to compare P&L statements down to the category and account level.

The past few years have been a roller coaster for IGC revenue and profit. But as I dug deeper into the numbers this summer in preparation for The Garden Center Group's Fall Event 2023 in Cincinnati, I noticed a pattern: We are good at retailing perishable products, while we always need more work with non-perishable ones.

One Key Performance Indicator (KPI) that I focus on is Gross Margin Return on Inventory Investment (GMROI). This KPI is your attained margin dollars divided by your average inventory over a 12-month period. I like to think of this simply as margin dollars returned for inventory offerings. In my analysis for the 2022 Garden Center Group P&L Study, two trends intrigued me. First, the "Best of the Best" of the Group's IGCs (the top 10 in profitability out of 82 centers reporting) separated themselves by not only selling more perishables as a percent of revenues (76% vs. 66%); they also generated more margin dollars per inventory dollar invested. That is a winning combination. Their profitability was 18.5% vs. the total Group at 10.4%. The second result that intrigued me, is that *everyone* had at least half of their non-perishable categories not making money.

When collaborating with my clients, I always have a



two-sided approach to reaching more profitability. To start with, I suggest they get better at the categories that are profitable. Next, I recommend that they act on those that are not. Diving into what the Best of the Best group did better, I saw five categories rise above the rest of the group: annuals, live Christmas, shrubs, trees and tropical plants — with a much higher GMROII in shrubs and tropical plants. These are areas where IGC owners and buyers

should perform better, as these are typical categories that define us as garden centers.

As we consider the non-perishable categories, we often see these categories as supporting our perishable categories. As the supporting cast, we need to make sure they are profitable even if they are not the focus. The non-perishable categories that are not profitable for The Group are casual furniture, artificial trees, giftware, outdoor living, pet and pottery.

Why are these categories not profitable? Because garden centers carry more inventory than what they need for seasonal demand. That can lead to fewer turns and an added cost often hidden to owners and buyers called “carrying cost of inventory.” Where does the cost come from? Borrowing money, loss of opportunity of profit, facility costs, wage & wage benefits costs, and the scale of total amount of old inventory. After a year, you can add 30% to the initial cost of the items.

Often, IGCs see non-perishable products as not costing anything to have sitting longer. So, the tendency is to not push it out the door and allow for higher inventory than they need. That’s a problem we call “bad inventory.” But how do you fix it? A simple one-two punch: Get it out, and make sure it doesn’t come back.

First step: Get it out!

Lean on your POS system data to point the way. Aging inventory reports show which items have been in stock longest. I tell The Group’s IGC owners, “No birthdays.” Inventory items should not celebrate a year in your store. If they turn a year old, the carrying cost of inventory starts to add up. Find those items and act: Re-merchandise, discount, donate and, if needed, dispose. Of course, the action depends on what your customer traffic dictates. If you still have adequate customer traffic, you can discount, re-merchandise and expect good movement on older inventory. When your customer traffic slows down, it is time to donate or shrink out.

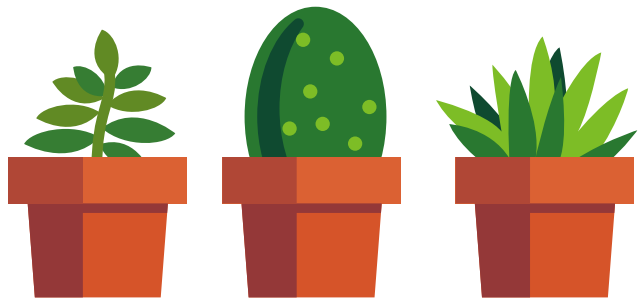
Second step: Do not let more in

Understanding how much is enough is the hard part. I can help. I am an IGC buyer. And as buyers know, there is a certain amount of power we enjoy, especially when it is not our money! I know most inventory issues begin with buying issues.

Let’s step back and look at why perishable products are so profitable: They have a forced efficiency that generates higher turns. IGC owners understand that if they do not sell a 4” annual/perennial/herb/veggie within a few weeks, the value decreases, and you will be forced to take action. This does not occur with non-perishable products. If we treated all categories like a 4” annual, what would that look like?

As a buyer, bringing in products like gifts or pottery would be different. Those items cannot make it all summer, so the gifts you bought for spring will decrease in value by the fall and will be unsalable. That is how you need to think — bring in product for one season, sell it during that season and get rid of it somehow by the end of that season. Just like plants, the





answer lies in seasonality.

To control your buying at the category level, you need to figure out the following:

- When do you plan to sell the product? Name the season.
- What is your revenue goal for that season?
- What is the attained margin?
- How much do you currently have — inventory value at cost — on hand?
- How much is coming in, and what orders are pending?

With all that information, you can calculate the inventory at cost you still need to buy to reach that revenue goal at that attained margin for that season. This is the science behind buying that will restrict the artists who tends to buy too much. The art behind buying is to know what to buy, not how much. Give your artists limits and let them paint your garden center with exciting inventory that will inspire your customers to come back again!

Profitability on non-perishables has always been a struggle for a business model that depends on the forced efficiency of the majority of their revenues to make a profit. Looking harder at inventory control KPIs down to the category level still shows us we have room to

grow, but it takes the commitment to be able to measure those KPIs. It takes the commitment to plan to change behaviors and processes that have been entrenched for decades. It takes the commitment to want to be more profitable and build wealth on the bottom line.

Retailing is not an easy business, and as IGCs, we struggle running our business, as such. It is time we all take on the challenge of being the best business owners we can be and realize our customers don't only want our product; they need it.

For more information about the Chart of Accounts, P&L Study or The Group, contact me at timq@tqconsulting.biz 80

Tim Quebedeaux is owner, proprietor & The Cajun CASHMAN of RetailKPI LLC and chief statistician for The Garden Center Group, managing The Group's two major financial sharing programs, the Weekly Department Review-Online (WDR) and Annual Profit & Loss Study. Tim is available to help garden centers in The Group with their individual financial tracking needs. He presents at The Fall Event each year and will also continue presenting the Financial Basics of Garden Center Retailing Workshops Series.

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INSTINCTIVE *MOMENTUM*

With prudent yet positive attitudes, growers endure, indicating healthy increases in sales and profits.

GOING FORWARD equals momentum. This year, in our sister publication *Greenhouse Management* magazine's State of the Industry survey, just over half of respondents expect double-digit profits this year — and 42% said that's an increase over last year. And 65% project this year's

sales to increase compared with 2023. In anticipation of another solid year, most respondents plan to increase production for 2024. Attitudes also seemed brighter with this year's survey, as 89% of respondents revealed they were confident about the growth of the industry in 2024.

CROPS AND PRODUCTION

GROWERS said they grew more perennials and annuals/bedding plants this year compared with last year, while indoor foliage plants did not see as many gains in production space this year. Next year's plans call for increased numbers in perennials and bedding plants, as well.

To date, which crop had the biggest **increase** in production for your greenhouse in 2023?

Annuals/bedding color	29%
PERENNIALS	31%
Indoor foliage plants.....	5%
Potted flowering plants.....	13%
Cut flowers	5%
Succulents	4%
Edible crop transplants	8%
Herbs.....	10%
Finished produce.....	6%
Other	16%
<i>Other answers included ferns, caladiums, native herbaceous plants, aromatics (i.e. lavender, chamomile, pelargonium)</i>	

In which of these categories does your greenhouse plan to **increase** production during the next 12 months?

Annuals/bedding color	30%
PERENNIALS	35%
Indoor foliage plants.....	10%
Potted flowering plants.....	12%
Cut flowers	5%
Succulents	7%
Herbs.....	17%
Edible crop transplants	17%
Finished produce.....	6%
None — do not plan to increase production of crops	18%
Other	15%
<i>Other answers included caladiums, ferns, native herbaceous plants</i>	

To date, which crop had the biggest **decrease** in production for your greenhouse in 2023?

ANNUALS/BEDDING COLOR	15%
Perennials.....	10%
Indoor foliage plants.....	8%
Potted flowering plants.....	8%
Cut flowers	5%
Succulents	10%
Edible crop transplants	10%
Herbs.....	6%
Finished produce.....	5%
Other	3%
<i>Other answers included microgreens, flowering hanging baskets</i>	

In which of these categories does your greenhouse plan to **decrease** production during the next 12 months?

Annuals/bedding color	9%
Perennials.....	9%
Indoor foliage plants.....	7%
Potted flowering plants.....	6%
Cut flowers	5%
Succulents	7%
Herbs.....	6%
EDIBLE CROP TRANSPLANTS	10%
Finished produce.....	5%
None — do not plan to decrease production of crops.....	43%

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STATE OF GREENHOUSES

PROFITS, SALES & PRICES

PROFIT PROJECTIONS for 2023 are something to celebrate, with 89% reporting a positive amount and 1% reporting a loss. Some 65% of growers expect sales to increase this year compared with last year.

HOW DO YOU PROJECT YOUR GREENHOUSE'S 2023 SALES TO CHANGE COMPARED WITH 2022?

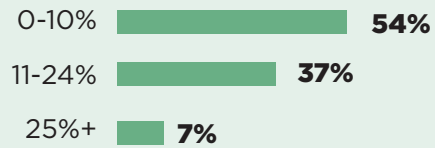
⬆ Increase by 40% or more	⬇ Remain about the same
4%	22%
⬆ Increase by 20%-39%	⬇ Decrease by 1%-9%
5%	8%
⬆ Increase by 15%-19%	⬇ Decrease by 10%-19%
5%	3%
⬆ Increase by 10%-14%	⬇ Decrease by 20%-39%
14%	1%
⬆ Increase by 5%-9%	⬇ Decrease by 40% or more
24%	0%
⬆ Increase by 1%-4%	
13%	

ON AVERAGE, HOW MUCH DID YOUR GREENHOUSE RAISE OR LOWER PLANT PRICES IN 2023?

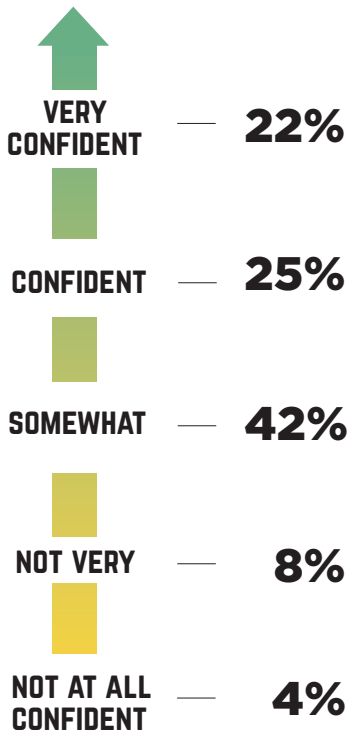
⬆ Raised 20% or more	⬇ Lowered by 5%-9%
3%	0%
⬆ Raised by 10%-19%	⬇ Lowered by 1%-4%
13%	1%
⬆ Raised by 5%-9%	⬇ None — did not raise or lower plant prices in 2023
45%	9%
⬆ Raised by 1%-4%	
29%	
⬇ Lowered by 20% or more	
0%	
⬇ Lowered by 10%-19%	
0%	



IN GENERAL, HOW MUCH DID INPUT COSTS (GROWING MEDIA, CHEMICALS, POTS, ETC.) INCREASE IN 2023 COMPARED WITH 2022?



HOW CONFIDENT ARE YOU THAT THE COMMERCIAL GREENHOUSE INDUSTRY WILL GROW IN 2024?



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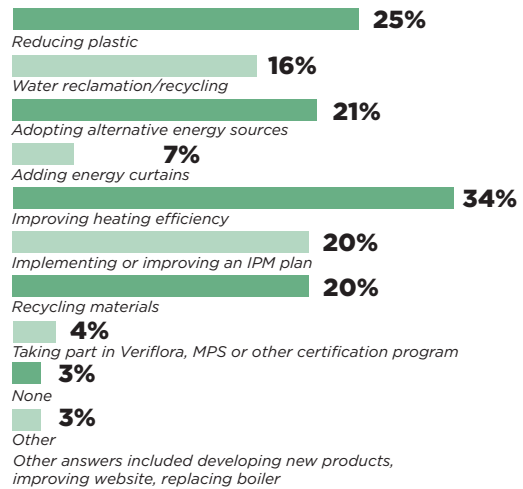
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IN TERMS OF SUSTAINABILITY, WHICH ISSUE CONCERNS YOU THE MOST?



Wind River

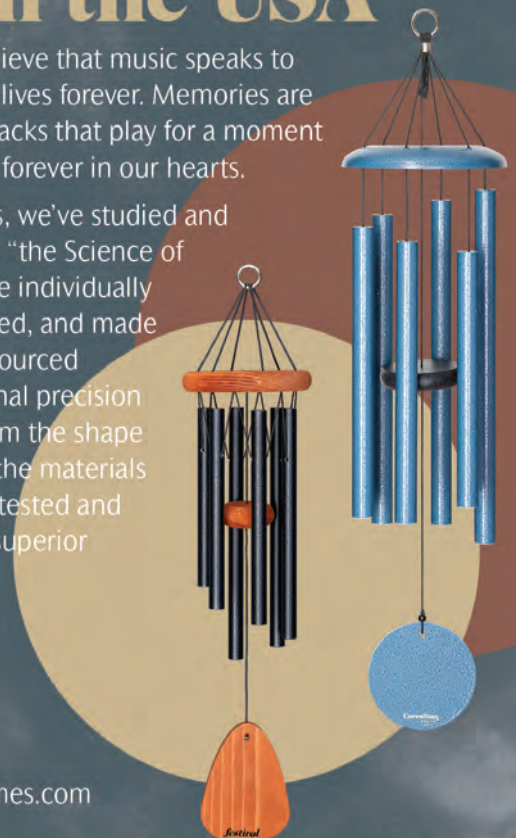


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CANDID OBSERVATIONS FROM GREENHOUSE GROWERS

“[The market] is still stable. ... I think this last spring, I didn’t feel like we slowed down. Sell-through was really good at our IGC partners. That’s about 30-40% of our business.”

– Hans Stokes, plug seedling business manager/head grower, Swift Greenhouses (Gilman, Iowa)

“ We are having a very good year financially due to a 10% price increase and strong sales of native prairie and woodland plants.”

– George Radtke, owner, W. & E. Radtke in Germantown, Wisconsin

“ Our biggest concern this year has been high inflation and how that translates to the final customer’s spending habits. I believe the flower industry has proven its value. People know how flowers make them feel, they value a beautiful landscape, they know the health benefits of plants and flowers, and consumers — all of us — need to be able to afford them.”

– Ed Vermolen, sales manager, Aldershot Greenhouses (Burlington, Ontario)



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Community calibration

How becoming a third place can make IGCs first place in sales.

By Emily Mills

Winters in Brandon, Manitoba, are frigid and bleak. But you wouldn't know it if you visited The Green Spot Home & Garden each February. That's because for a brief moment, the garden center at the edge of town is transformed into a balmy island oasis.

Its annual Tropical Day is celebrated with a load of sand in the greenhouse, steel drum music and margaritas. And, despite the latitude, the February sun is strong enough to warm up the space, allowing kids to play on the faux beach while their parents or caregivers gather in patio chairs to “sit and relax and visit or have a snooze,” says owner Bernie Whetter. “Lots of them will come in the morning, and they'll just stay for hours.”

While the event is a great winter warm-up for customers, it also means more visitors to the Manitoba mainstay — started by the Vreeman family in 1978 and now operated by Whetter, who purchased the business in 2007. That's important for an IGC that doesn't get much drive-by traffic.

“We're truly a destination location, so they have to have a reason to come here,” Whetter says. “My idea is to give them as many reasons as I can to come here so that it's sort of second nature for them to come

this way.”

It also allows The Green Spot to transform into a community gathering space — a “third place.”

“It is an extra effort over and above the daily chores, but it is nice to do it,” Whetter explains. “And people generally really appreciate the venue for just being something different...They can see beyond the walls: there's plants, there's sky, there's sunlight and those things that kind of make us feel good.”

What's a third place?

Urban sociologist Ray Oldenburg coined the term “third place” in his 1989 book, “The Great Good Place.”

Oldenburg, who passed in 2022, described third places as informal public gathering places distinct from home and work, which are the first two places. The third place, he posited, allows people “to gather easily, inexpensively, regularly, and pleasurably,” with no expectations or pressures. Third places include locales like cafés, coffee shops, community centers, bookstores, bars, hair salons, churches, social clubs, libraries, gyms and parks.

Third places are critical, Oldenburg said, because “social well-being and psychological health depend upon community.”

Stuart M. Butler and Carmen Diaz from the Brookings Institution have built on Oldenburg's ideas. In a 2016 report, they wrote that the third place has become virtual for many young people: extending from in-person places to digital spaces like Facebook, chat rooms and group texts. That shift was amplified during the COVID-19 pandemic, when it wasn't safe for people to gather in public.

But the world continues to recover, making in-person gatherings possible again. That's a good thing when it comes to third places, since Butler and Diaz write that “the most effective ones for building real community seem to be physical places where people can easily and routinely connect with each other.”

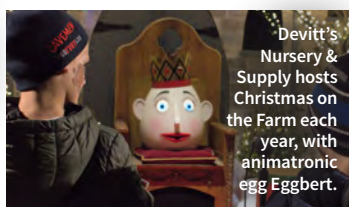
So now, in the waning of the pandemic, garden centers have an opportunity to engage in conversations, build community and simply help people enjoy each other's company. They can become a third place.

Garden centers as third places

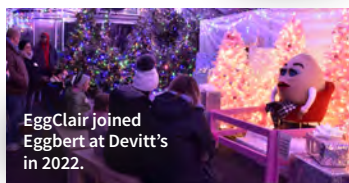
According to *Garden Center* magazine's 2023 State of the Industry Report, garden centers hosted a wide variety of events in the past year, top among them plant workshops, seminars and holiday markets. But they also



English Gardens hosts a yoga event at one of its Detroit-area garden centers.



Devitt's Nursery & Supply hosts Christmas on the Farm each year, with animatronic egg Eggbert.



EggClair joined Eggbert at Devitt's in 2022.

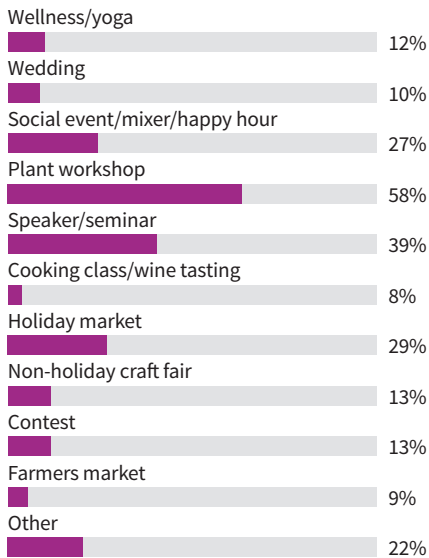


The Green Spot features a tropical fishpond with nearby seating.



The Green Spot hosts Tropical Day every February.

What kind of events have you held at your garden center in the last 12 months?



(Open house, fashion show, tool sharpening, movie night, butterfly release, painting)

engaged in events that one might not associate with a garden center, like yoga and social mixers. The report also found that more than a third of garden centers considered classes and events as an important part of how they market themselves to customers.

Some garden centers charge for some of their events, but many of the events are free. The focus is more on building community, drawing new customers and capturing return visits for future sales, rather than making money directly from the events.

Devitt's Nursery & Supply in New York's Hudson Valley (#69 on *Garden Center* magazine's Top 100 Independent Garden Centers List for 2023) features an

especially unique event each holiday season that's been an annual tradition for decades.

Devitt's Christmas on the Farm event features Eggbert, an animatronic egg created in 1930 at Cornell University to help promote the egg industry during the Great Depression. Former owner Jack Devitt, who attended Cornell, acquired Eggbert in 1971.

"Eggs are a symbol of hope and renewal, and that's why they're usually linked to Easter. But those same concepts work for Christmas," says co-owner Joe Gizzarelli.

Many people grew up with Eggbert. But after the late '90s, the ovum was shelved due to ownership changes and business shifts — until Gizzarelli and co-owner Chris Fitch purchased Devitt's in 2010.

Gizzarelli had been at the business, which started in 1951, for 20 years, so he'd set up Eggbert plenty of times. But he wasn't sure if he'd be as popular as in the past. They decided to restore him to the throne in 2011, and he was once again a huge hit.

Eggbert remains hugely popular today. And after a two-year COVID hiatus, he was joined by a new friend, EggClair (who likes to go by just Clair). This year, the pair will feature motorcycle-themed costumes to align with a toy drive Devitt's is hosting with a local motorcycle shop.

"Not that events at the time generate tons of money," Gizzarelli says. "They don't, at least for us, but they do give us a lot of word of mouth as far as advertising."

Animatronic eggs aside, Gizzarelli said he absolutely agrees that garden centers are becoming community hubs.

"So many people come here to meet. I think a garden center's often a lot of people's happy place," he says. "I think the

millennials have really ushered it in to being much more of a thing."

Know your customers

For event offerings to work, IGC owners need to know what customers want. For New York's Hudson Valley, that's Eggbert.

For Moana Nursery, which has three locations in northern Nevada, it's all about education, say director of marketing Deanna Gescheider and assistant director of marketing Kylea Scott.

"We've been working hard to make sure that Moana Nursery is more of a destination experience than a retail experience," Scott says.

The business — founded in 1967 and #19 on the Top 100 list — focuses on plants suited to the high desert climate of northern Nevada. Moana makes it clear that it's not an event company.

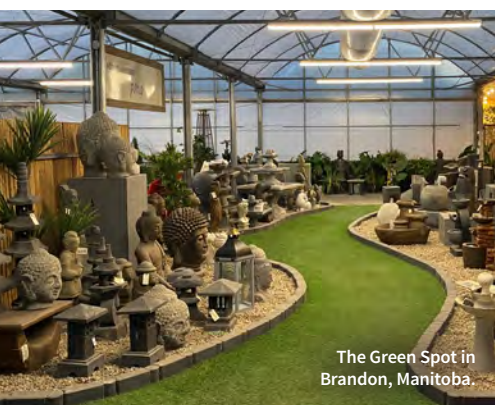
"I think what our philosophy has become is that we don't run events," Gescheider says. "We just add value to the shopping experience."

Its annual Ladybug Release has become hugely popular. The business also gives away free T-shirts as a draw to get people to attend, which has worked well.

Moana hosts several seasonal after-hours open houses, including "Fall-O-Ween," which drive more sales.

"Let's be honest, it's basically a sale that we're having after hours. But we invest just a little bit of money in the music and the hors d'oeuvres and cocktails or tastings," Gescheider says. "It's carefully curated so that it becomes community engagement-motivated, not about making money."

One area the business has cut back on is



The Green Spot in Brandon, Manitoba.



English Gardens hosts a hydrangea seminar at one of its Detroit-area garden centers.



Moana Nursery holds a popular Ladybug Release each year.

workshops, which were held weekly before COVID, when they transitioned to making online videos. They became so popular that they’ve stuck with weekly videos instead of returning to workshops.

Become a destination

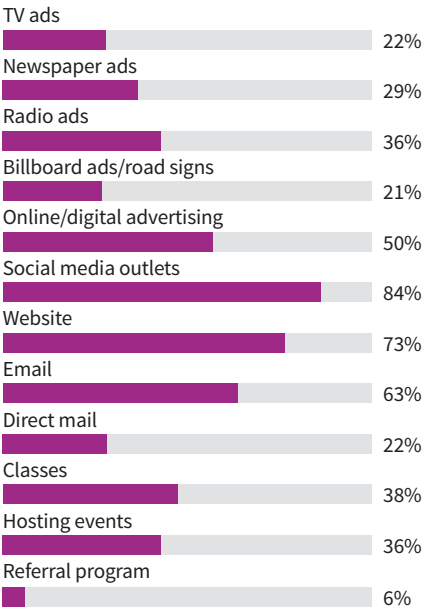
Like many businesses, English Gardens — which has six locations in Michigan and is #16 on the Top 100 list — scaled back its event offerings during COVID, but in a survey conducted this past January of customers and target audiences, the results were resounding: they wanted events, education seminars, yoga and more.

“That kind of helped solidify us continuing with bringing events back,” says vice president of marketing Olivia Zarndt, who added that there’s a specific focus on being a destination for wellness.

Its events include a houseplant adoption event, where customers can get extra help picking out the plants and necessary products best suited for them; a “garden party” weekend of seminars in the spring; a summer yoga series; a fall festival; a Christmas open house; and ladies’ nights.

Next year, English Gardens plans to host more consistent monthly seminars, quarterly workshops and monthly kids’ events. (The

What methods were used to market your garden center in the past 12 months?



EVEN IF YOU DON'T have a ton of extra space or a large garden center, there are plenty of ways you can still connect with your community.

Hillside Feed and Seed Store in Wichita, Kansas, is a fixture in the community, starting as a co-op and farm store around 1948. But it doesn’t have the space to host events in its 5,000-square-foot store and 5,000-square-foot plant yard.

So the business participates in a “plant hop,” a coordinated effort among about eight different greenhouses, plant shops and boutiques in Wichita.

Shoppers are given a punch card, and after buying \$5 worth of products at any of the locations, their card is punched. At the end, there’s a drawing with prizes from the participating shops. Some businesses also have their own mini-drawings.

The first hop was held in 2019, and after a COVID hiatus, it returned this year. Another plant shop came up with the idea and pitched it to colleagues in the community, with George Sander, whose family bought Hillside in 1959, jumping in to participate.

“I think it was positive,” Sander says of the effect of the plant hop on his business. “It’s not one of those things that we’ve directly tracked afterwards, but we did see a lot of new faces, and we’ve retained a number of them, so it’s just kind of a means of giving you a little more visibility in the planting community...It seems to favor the younger generations a little more than the older ones. We felt it was a good way for us to get exposure to some people who hadn’t seen us before. And we like to keep new faces coming in.”

family-owned business turns 70 next year.)

It’s all about building community and becoming a destination.

“In our garden centers, it’s an experience. It’s a place that you can kind of just get captivated away,” Zarndt says. “At the end of the day, we still need to drive sales, but how can we inspire and give our customers a place to go and have some fun as well?”

Third place advice

For garden centers looking to develop as a third place through events, the recommendation is to start slow — but still start.

“Ease into it slowly. They aren’t going to bring in big dollars on the event itself. But you’re in it for the long haul,” Devitt’s Gizzarelli says. “You want to show you’re part of the community, that you’re their neighbor... You want to make them feel supported.”

Gizzarelli also notes that events throughout the year allow garden center staff to better connect with customers who visit in the hectic spring season.

“You can’t spend the time that you’d like to talking to people and explaining things the way you really want to; it’s always kind of a rushed conversation,” he says. “You’d rather take a little time and get to know them and build a relationship. And the events give us that opportunity.”

Consider partnering with other local businesses, charities or nonprofits to add value and further the community feel.

For instance, Moana partners with a local chocolate company for some of its events.

Many garden centers host events throughout their properties — like English Gardens, which makes for picturesque and plant-filled yoga events — while others have built specific event spaces.

The Green Spot, in Manitoba, added a 5,500-square-foot building for its store in 2021. Combined with utilizing free space in the greenhouse in the off season, that additional space means the ability to host more — and different — events.

The business also features a tropical fishpond with a waterfall, tropical plants and seating, as well as a café and a flower studio, providing even more reasons for customers to come, even if they’re not making a purchase at the garden center.

Whether it’s Tropical Day or not, the garden center is a little oasis amid the Manitoba prairies, offering fellowship, community and, of course, plants.

“People do come here and just enjoy wandering around in the atmosphere,” Whetter says. “It’s always warm; it always smells like earth and water and plants. We’re known for people coming out and enjoying the experience of being here.”

They’re known for becoming a third place. ☺

Emily Mills is associate editor of Garden Center magazine. Contact her at emills@gje.net.

STEADY AS SHE GOES

Growers are keeping a tight hold on the reins of their businesses as 2023 winds to a close.

Our sister publication, *Nursery Management* magazine, surveyed more than 200 nursery owners and operators this year to provide insights on the market. Here's what they found:

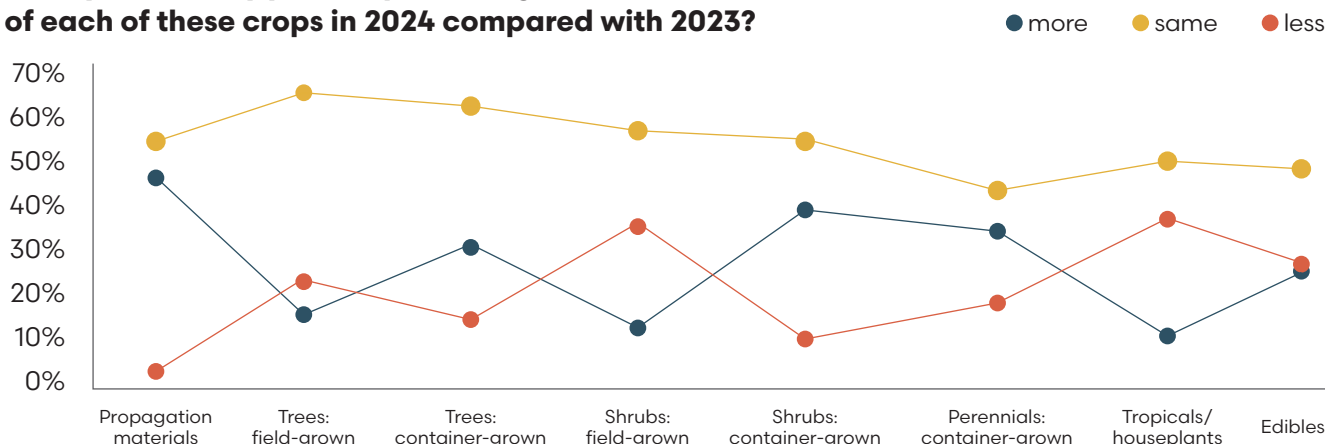
PRODUCTION & CROPS

Looking to 2024, a whopping 80% of nurseries plan to expand less than 5 acres next year.

The 2023 survey saw a bit of a rebound for field-grown trees. Last year, 5% of growers said they plan to increase production in that category. This year, 15% plan to increase the number of trees in their fields.

Tropicals/houseplants continue their slide, with 50% of nurseries holding steady and 38% decreasing production numbers. However, edibles are making a comeback, with 25% of growers adding more and 49% staying the same, an increase from 12% adding more and 62% holding steady in 2022.

Does your nursery plan on producing more, the same or less of each of these crops in 2024 compared with 2023?



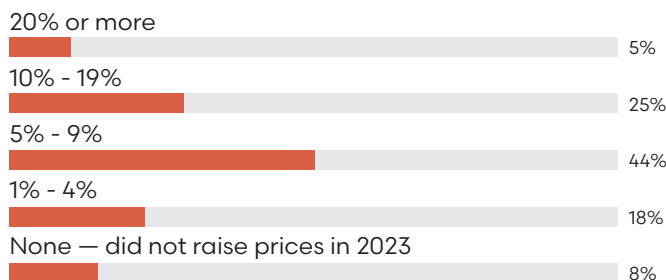
PRICES & MARKET SEGMENTS

Although growers continue to raise prices, the amount they're adding to that price tag each year keeps getting smaller.

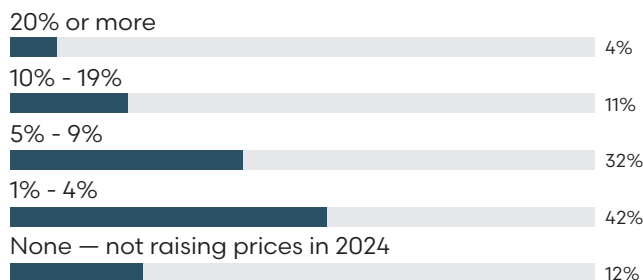
In 2021, 18% of growers raised prices more than 20%. That figure dropped to 8% in 2022. Nearly 5% of growers made big price hikes of more than 20% in 2023.

The price increase sweet spot appears to be moving down. In 2022, nearly 40% of growers raised prices from 10-19%, and 33% raised prices by 5-9%. Only 10% raised prices less than 5%. In 2023, the 10-19% group dropped to 25%, 5-9% grew to 44% and 1-4% increased to 18%.

Overall, by what percentage has your nursery raised its prices in 2023 compared with 2022?



By what percentage does your nursery plan to raise its prices in 2024 compared with 2023?



92% of nurseries raised prices in 2023

How confident are you that the market demand for nursery products will grow in 2024?



1 being not confident at all and 5 being very confident

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- Eliminates Chemical Sprays
- Helps Soil Conserve Water
- Lets Air, Water and Nutrients Pass Through

4 Simple Steps

1. PREPARE: Clear a bare patch of weeds and soil.
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4. COVER & ENJOY: Cover with soil, seeds or mulch.

Applications: LANDSCAPE PLANTINGS, BARRIERS

DeWitt Basic Weed Control



DeWitt Weed-Barrier
STANDARD WEED CONTROL
3' x 50' (150 SQ FT) **15**

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- Lets Air, Water and Nutrients Pass Through

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4. COVER & ENJOY: Cover with soil, seeds or mulch.

Applications: LANDSCAPE PLANTINGS, BARRIERS

DeWitt Standard Weed Control



DeWitt Weed-Barrier
PREMIUM WEED CONTROL
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- Eliminates Chemical Sprays
- Helps Soil Conserve Water
- Lets Air, Water and Nutrients Pass Through

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4. COVER & ENJOY: Cover with soil, seeds or mulch.

Applications: LANDSCAPE PLANTINGS, BARRIERS, EROSION CONTROL

DeWitt Premium Weed Control



DeWitt Weed-Barrier
PREMIUM PLUS WEED CONTROL
3' x 50' (150 SQ FT) **25**

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- Eliminates Chemical Sprays
- Helps Soil Conserve Water
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3. ANCHOR & SEED: Secure fabric with 2x4s or 2x6s.
4. COVER & ENJOY: Cover with soil, seeds or mulch.

Applications: LANDSCAPE PLANTINGS, BARRIERS, EROSION CONTROL

DeWitt Premium Plus Weed Control
Grey



DeWitt Weed-Barrier
PROFESSIONAL WEED CONTROL
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- Resists Tears & Puncturing
- Eliminates Chemical Sprays
- Helps Soil Conserve Water
- Lets Air, Water and Nutrients Pass Through

4 Simple Steps

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3. ANCHOR & SEED: Secure fabric with 2x4s or 2x6s.
4. COVER & ENJOY: Cover with soil, seeds or mulch.

Applications: LANDSCAPE PLANTINGS, BARRIERS, EROSION CONTROL

DeWitt Professional Weed Control



DeWitt Weed-Barrier
PROFESSIONAL WEED CONTROL
3' x 50' (150 SQ FT) **30**
EARTHTONE

No Weeds. No Chemicals.

- Resists Tears & Puncturing
- Eliminates Chemical Sprays
- Helps Soil Conserve Water
- Lets Air, Water and Nutrients Pass Through

4 Simple Steps

1. PREPARE: Clear a bare patch of weeds and soil.
2. GET A PLACE: Roll out Weed-Barrier fabric, unroll it on the ground.
3. ANCHOR & SEED: Secure fabric with 2x4s or 2x6s.
4. COVER & ENJOY: Cover with soil, seeds or mulch.

Applications: LANDSCAPE PLANTINGS, BARRIERS, EROSION CONTROL

DeWitt Professional Weed Control
Earthtone



DeWitt Weed-Barrier
PROFESSIONAL MAX
3' x 50' (150 SQ FT) **LIFE TIME**

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- Eliminates Chemical Sprays
- Helps Soil Conserve Water
- Lets Air, Water and Nutrients Pass Through

4 Simple Steps

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WHY IT MATTERS

American Express' 2022 Small Business Saturday Consumer Insights Survey found that Small Business Saturday drove an estimated \$17.9 billion in spending, with 72% of shoppers strongly agreeing they'll continue to shop small throughout the holiday season because of the impact to their local community.

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PREPARE YOUR PHYSICAL STORE

Make sure you're stocked and staffed for success. Think about your staff and what their strengths are, then assign tasks to each member to cut out any confusion when your store is filled with eager shoppers.

Print out an email sign-up sheet ahead of time and encourage shoppers to sign up.



FOLLOW UP AFTER SMALL BUSINESS SATURDAY

In the week after Small Business Saturday, take to social media to thank your customers for their support. Include photos from the day.

Add your new email subscribers to your list and send out a quick email reminding them of their great experience, plus an offer to bring them back.



GIVE AN OFFER OR DISCOUNT

Ideas include a 15% discount on new items, free coffee and cookies, a free gift with purchases over \$50, discounts on future purchases or free gift wrapping.



OWN YOUR IDENTITY

Customers want to shop small, so tell your story: how and why you got started, ways you've gotten involved in local community efforts, and what makes your products or services special, personal and different from big-box stores.



UTILIZE EMAIL MARKETING AND SOCIAL MEDIA

Email your customers with your Small Business Saturday offers or discounts. On social media, use hashtags like #SmallBusinessSaturday and #ShopSmall. You could even create a hashtag specific to your business.



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Resources from American Express include the Shop Small Resource Hub, the Business Class pages with retailer resources and the Business Savings Suite for savings on services ranging from Wix website creation to FedEx shipping solutions. (You don't have to pay or be an American Express cardholder to access them.)



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