

# SCHEDULE OF EVENTS

gardencenter<sup>®</sup>  
CONFERENCE & EXPO

## WEDNESDAY, AUGUST 2, 2023

9:00 AM – 6:30 PM

### Registration Open

Minneapolis Grand Ballroom Foyer

9:00 AM – 9:30 AM **All-Access Pass**

### Welcome Refreshments

Minneapolis Grand Ballroom Foyer

9:30 AM – 10:30 AM **All-Access Pass**

### Squeeze The Orange! Creating A Sales-Driven Culture Minneapolis Grand Ballroom EFG

With the IGC trends of today showing a reduction in the number of transactions, the trend of tomorrow must be making the most of every customer interaction. From creating your “Five Star Standards” to a laser focus on maximizing the interaction with your customer is the best way to combat the trend of sagging revenue. “Up-Help” and “Guarantee Success” are a few of the many tools John will bring to this dynamic and fast-paced workshop. This is not about “aggressive selling” but more of a way to create conversations or drive community building. It’s not selling ... it’s creating an opportunity to buy!

**Speaker: John Kennedy, Owner, BoomerWrangle**

10:45 AM – 12:15 PM **All-Access Pass**

### Both Sides Of The Sale: The Story Inside The Successful Ownership Transition Of Rockledge Gardens Minneapolis Grand Ballroom EFG

Get an inside look at one garden center’s sale from longtime owners to industry newcomers in this candid panel discussion. Theresa and Kevin Riley will share the ups and downs of making the decision to sell, preparing their garden center for the market and finding the perfect buyers. On the other side, new owners Devon Klingman and Brendan Hayes-Morrison will walk attendees through their entry into the garden center industry, what made Rockledge Gardens an attractive purchase and all of the nitty gritty that goes into the buying process. You’ll also hear all about the transition process for staff, customers and the owners themselves with insights from former Managing Director Liz Lark-Riley.

**Speaker: Theresa and Kevin Riley, Former Owners, Rockledge Gardens**

**Speaker: Liz Lark-Riley, Senior Customer Relationship  
Manager, Mahoney’s Garden Centers**

**Speaker: Devon Klingman and Brendan Hayes-Morrison,  
Owners, Rockledge Gardens**

12:15 PM – 1:30 PM **All-Access Pass**

### Networking Lunch

Minneapolis Grand Ballroom Foyer

1:30 PM – 2:30 PM **All-Access Pass**

### Dive Into Garden Centers Across The Pond Minneapolis Grand Ballroom EFG

Take a virtual tour through some of the UK’s biggest and best garden centers to get an in-depth look at innovations across the pond. Longtime consultant Bob Marley, who has worked with some of the highest-grossing garden centers in the UK, will take you on a journey of best practices throughout each business, including marketing, financial planning, amenities and more. The session will also explore what makes each physical location successful from the parking lot to the cash register. Delving into specific numbers, you’ll not only take away best practices for your company, you’ll understand why they work.

**Speaker: Bob Marley, Consultant, Speaker & Horticulturist**

2:30 PM – 3:00 PM

### Networking Refreshment Break

Minneapolis Grand Ballroom Foyer

3:00 PM – 4:30 PM **Keynote**

### Keynote: Nurturing Newbies and Exuding Enjoyment Minneapolis Grand Ballroom EFG

Michael Perry, known worldwide as Mr Plant Geek, has amassed a huge following by making connections with gardeners through social media channels, his blog and TV appearances. He has developed a signature style of simplifying information for all levels of gardeners, but especially ones new to the hobby. In this witty and energetic presentation, we’ll hear how Michael went from a teenage hortpreneur to the product development team at Thompson & Morgan to the globe-trotting persona of Mr Plant Geek. He’ll explain how he makes those special connections with gardeners and provide tips on how you and your staff can do the same in your own community through social media and beyond.

Since Michael enjoys focusing on the fun and trendy side of gardening, he’ll also reveal a few trends that North American IGCs are likely to experience in the next few seasons.

**Speaker: Michael Perry (aka Mr. Plant Geek), TV Presenter,  
Speaker, Hortpreneur and Author**

4:30 PM – 5:00 PM

### Garden Center Top 100 Awards Presentation Minneapolis Grand Ballroom EFG

5:00 PM – 6:30 PM

### Welcome Reception In The Exhibit Hall

Minneapolis Grand Ballroom ABCD

Note: Times, sessions and speakers are subject to change.

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# EXHIBIT HALL HOURS

Wednesday, August 2

5:00 PM – 6:30 PM

Thursday, August 3

10:00 AM – 6:00 PM

**THURSDAY AUGUST 3, 2023**

8:00 AM – 6:00 PM

**Registration Open**

Minneapolis Grand Ballroom Foyer

8:00 AM – 9:00 AM

**Networking Breakfast**

Minneapolis Grand Ballroom Foyer

9:00 AM – 10:00 AM

**Executive Track**

**Taking The Fear Out Of Talking Tech**

Minneapolis Grand Ballroom EFG

From SMS to AI to data analysis and more, there are exciting opportunities for garden centers on the market. But how do you navigate this new world of technology and feel confident in your investments? In this session, Katie Elzer-Peters will translate computer-speak into language we can all understand. By examining examples of tech opportunities in our industry, you'll walk away from this session feeling confident about exploring how new tech can improve your business.

**Speaker: Katie Elzer-Peters, Founder and CEO, The Garden of Words**

9:00 AM – 10:00 AM

**Management Track**

**The Right Staff**

Duluth

It's harder than ever to find reliable staff members who can help your business thrive. In this session, you'll not only learn unconventional avenues to look for employees, you'll learn new ways to help them thrive in their roles at your garden center.

**Speaker: Valerie Nalls, General Manager, Nalls Produce & Garden Center**

10:00 AM – 11:00 AM

**Networking Refreshment Break In The Exhibit Hall**

Minneapolis Grand Ballroom ABCD

10:00 AM – 10:45 AM

**Merchandising and Solutions**

**Discovering The FELCO DNA: How Curated Hardgoods And Expertise Differentiate Your Garden Center In A World Of Me-Too Products**

Duluth

In this seminar we will explore the history and core values of the 75-year-old-Swiss-Made brand. We will discover how those values can symbiotically enhance the customer experience and repeat sales of your garden center. We'll also investigate how product curation, merchandising, and product knowledge can be harnessed to create business success.

**Speaker: Ryan Amberg, General Manager, FELCO North America**

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11:00 AM – 12:00 PM

**Executive Track**

**"I Don't Need To Know About AI" And Other Lies You Tell Yourself**

Duluth

Generative AI tools are widely accessible for your customers and your staff, and are becoming standard issue components

of software as a service (SaaS) that you use to run your business, such as email marketing and ERP software. What's the big deal? Why should you care? Unlike cryptocurrency and the metaverse, AI tools are here to stay, and their adoption will change the way you interact with customers, manage staff, and grow your business. If you're unclear what generative AI actually is, and why its rapid adoption will matter for your business, this session is for you.

**Speaker: Katie Elzer-Peters, Founder and CEO, The Garden of Words**

11:00 AM – 12:00 PM

**Management Track**

**Creating Customer Experiences**

Minneapolis Grand Ballroom EFG

Retail is becoming more about experiences than ever before and the new generations of IGC customers are looking for community. Today's garden centers need to create multiple access points for customer experiences that speak to their interests. In this session, Rob will discuss how to turn your garden center into a town square where customers come for community, how to bring online and offline experiences together to create multiple access points and how to create an event that's more than a class or workshop, but a community-building experience.

**Speaker: Rob Sproule, Co-owner, Salisbury**

12:00 PM – 1:30 PM

**Networking Lunch In The Exhibit Hall**

Minneapolis Grand Ballroom ABCD

1:30 PM – 2:30 PM

**Executive Track**

**Data-Driven Decision-Making**

Minneapolis Grand Ballroom EFG

By taking the right approach to data analysis, you can gain valuable insights that can drive better decisions. But with so much data at your fingertips, how do you know what matters? It's time to learn how to filter through your data to focus on the numbers that matter, cut out the noise and set the foundation for successful data-driven strategies.

Join Peter Wigren to learn how your data can give insights into your customer's preferences, needs and behaviors, and offer tailored product suggestions that foster customer loyalty. You'll find ways to connect marketing, online sales and in-store sales data for a selling strategy that really works. You'll also learn how to identify effective marketing channels and strategies to improve reach and engagement with your target audience, as well as ways to utilize data analytics tools and key performance indicators to make informed business decisions.

**Speaker: Peter Wigren, Founder and CEO, Simple Spring**

1:30 PM – 2:30 PM

**Management Track**

**Survey Says! Leadership Development For Existing And Emerging Managers**

Duluth

This unique workshop invites the participants to take a Self-Assessment Survey on their current leadership capacity at the beginning of the session, and then follow along with John as he discusses the top core competencies of successful leaders. The audience members will be able to compare their score to others, find blind spots to address and chart a course for leadership development into the future.

**Speaker: John Kennedy, Owner, BoomerWrangle**

Note: Times, sessions and speakers are subject to change.

2:30 PM – 3:30 PM

### Networking Refreshment Break In The Exhibit Hall

Minneapolis Grand Ballroom ABCD

2:45 PM – 3:30 PM

**Merchandising and Solutions**

### Tech Talk – Extensions And Partnerships

Duluth

One of the biggest lessons businesses learn along the journey is that you can't do it all by yourself and be successful. The focus should be on what you do best and finding resources to assist in areas where help is most needed to advance your goals. In this session, we will discuss how businesses can improve eCommerce, customer engagement, employee productivity, and more by building relationships with partners who can help in troublesome areas and thereby allow you to focus on your core business objectives.

**Speaker: Jessica DeGraaf**, Director of Retail Accounts, Proven Winners®

**Speaker: Sam Kirkland**, Strategic Relationship Manager, Epicor

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3:30 PM – 4:30 PM

**Executive Track**

### Pain Points: Identifying Roadblocks In Your Customer's Shopping Experience

Duluth

Pain Points is a concept most often applied to online product access: it covers all those glitches to signing up for, accessing or discontinuing online services or products. If you have tried lately to discontinue an online subscription either for a streaming service or a print magazine, you have encountered common pain points. This concept can also be applied to your customer's journey through your garden center. In group presentations and interactive workshops, we'll identify and address common pain points like parking, customer flow and car wraps and "Can you get that hanging basket down for me?"

Participants are urged to identify the pain points in your own store – those places where confusion overrides customer-merchandise contact and staff must mitigate the pain, often repeatedly. Bring your pain to these interactive sessions and we'll try to find remedies for your customer's pain – and yours.

**Speaker: Judy Sharpton**, Owner, Growing Places Marketing

3:30 PM – 4:30 PM

**Management Track**

### Content Is King

Minneapolis Grand Ballroom EFG

Join garden center pros and GardenComm members for a panel on the importance of creating engaging, unique and educational content for your customers. Hear from freelance content creators and internal garden center staffers about how to find your IGC's voice, stay on message and give your customers the confidence they need to keep on gardening. Plus, you'll hear from professional content creators about how they work with garden centers that outsource blogs, newsletters and more. You'll leave with the inspiration and tools you need to consistently provide information that establishes you as the expert in your market.

**Speaker: C.L. Fornari**, Writer, Speaker and Host, The Garden Lady

**Speaker: Perla Sofia Curbelo-Santiago**, Founder, Agrochic

4:30 PM – 6:00 PM

### Networking Reception In The Exhibit Hall

Minneapolis Grand Ballroom ABCD

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## FRIDAY AUGUST 4, 2023

8:00 AM – 11:30 AM

### Registration Open

Minneapolis Grand Ballroom Foyer

8:30 AM – 9:00 AM

### Networking Continental Breakfast

Minneapolis Grand Ballroom Foyer

9:00 AM – 10:00 AM

### Social Media Strategies

Minneapolis Grand Ballroom EFG

This panel from Tonkadale Greenhouse takes you on a day, week, month in the life of content planning and creation. You'll discover new ways to connect with your customers, find your voice, and plan your social media calendar. Bring your questions about your social media strategy for this exciting conversation.

**Speaker: Jessie Jacobson**, President & Owner, Tonkadale Greenhouse

**Speaker: Aaron Kessler**, Social Media Director, Tonkadale Greenhouse

10:00 AM – 10:30 AM

### Networking Refreshment Break

Minneapolis Grand Ballroom Foyer

10:30 AM – 11:30 AM

### Roundtable Wrap-Up

Minneapolis Grand Ballroom EFG

Join your peers for lively roundtable discussions and examine the important topics of the week. In a small group setting at each table, you'll have the opportunity to share ideas and solutions with one another. Each table will have a list of questions to jumpstart the conversation. Before we depart, we'll share some of those ideas and solutions with the entire room. This is an excellent way to extrapolate the information presented during the sessions, as well as learn about some of the topics you may have missed.

#### Here are a few of the roundtable topics:

- How will you create a sales-driven culture? From the tips John Kennedy shared, what's the first one you plan to implement? How are you using your staff's knowledge and strengths to sell more plants and hard goods?
- Are you ready to turn your garden center into a community gathering place? What steps do you need to take first? If you've already created this type of environment, what's your best advice for your peers?
- Do you feel like you're drowning in data? What data points are you collecting from customers? How are you using them to improve inventory management, sales and marketing?

11:30 AM

### Event Concludes