

gardencenter[®]

CONFERENCE & EXPO

AUG. 5-7, 2025 | KANSAS CITY, MISSOURI

EXHIBIT HALL HOURS:

Wednesday, Aug. 6
12:15-6 p.m.

Thursday, Aug. 7
8 a.m. - 4:30 p.m.

2025 Schedule of Events

WEDNESDAY, AUG. 6, 2025

► 8 a.m. – 6 p.m.

Registration Open
Exhibit Hall Foyer

► 9:30-10 a.m.

Networking Refreshment Break
Exhibit Hall Foyer

► 10-10:15 a.m.

Welcome Remarks
Missouri Main Stage

Speaker: *Michelle Simakis*, Group Publisher, GIE Media Horticulture Group

► 10:15-11:10 a.m.

State of the Industry: Finding Focus
Missouri Main Stage

Editor Patrick Alan Coleman will present an overview of data from *Garden Center's* 2024 State of the Industry Report, highlighting key insights from participants about the overall health of the industry, revenue changes and much more. For those who have read the 2024 report, this talk will be a deeper dive into research that was not previously presented. Patrick will also offer insights on how the State of the Industry Report is connected to the new criteria for the 2025 Top 100 IGCs List.

Speaker: *Patrick Alan Coleman*, Editor, *Garden Center* magazine

► 11:15 a.m. – 12:15 p.m.

From Trend to Transaction: Capitalize on 2026 Garden Trends
Missouri Main Stage

Ready to boost sales and connect with today's customers? Join this interactive session and learn how to transform *Garden Media Group's* 2026 Garden Trends into concrete sales strategies.

Speaker: *Katie Dubow*, President, *Garden Media Group*

► 12:15-1:30 p.m.

Networking Lunch
Exhibit Hall

► 12:30-1:15 p.m.

Solutions Session

The Future of

Garden Center Retail: What Consumers Really Want

Missouri Main Stage

Today's customers want more from their shopping experience — are you ready to deliver? Square's annual Future of Retail report is based on insights from 4,000 consumers, revealing trends in evolving shopping preferences and actionable tips you can implement in your garden center today. You'll learn how to reach more customers by creating seamless in-store and online experiences, how to build a resilient business by adding new revenue streams, the latest consumer payment and communication preferences and more to fuel growth this year and beyond.

Speaker: *Anthony Domico*, IT & Human Resources Manager, *Vinland Valley Nursery*

Speaker: *Katie Miller*, Product Marketing Manager, *Square*

► 1:30-2:30 p.m.

Financial KPIs that Drive Retail Profitability
Kansas City Session Room

Tim Quebedeaux spent two decades working in garden centers before joining The Garden Center Group in 2019 to help members with financial analysis and management. In this session, Tim will detail what he is tracking in the Group's Weekly Department Review — which includes insights from more than 110 member garden centers — including transaction counts, average sales, inventory levels, general trends and other KPIs, as well as key insights from the 2024 Profit & Loss Study.

Speaker: *Tim Quebedeaux*, Service Provider, *The Garden Center Group* | Owner and Proprietor, *RetailKPI, LLC*

► 1:30-2:30 p.m.

Lessons from a Decade-Long Journey of Succession Planning, a Sale Leaseback and Relocation
Missouri Main Stage

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The idea that a family business “will take care of us” is a common one — but it only becomes true if you plan for it. All leaders need to formalize a plan to exit the business or role, and it's important that transition of a company you've devoted your life to is strategic and not left up to chance. In this session, we'll dive into how Reems Creek Nursery navigated not only succession planning, but also a sale leaseback and business relocation.

Moderator: *Chris Cimaglio*, Managing Partner, *BEST Human Capital & Advisory Group* and *PivotPoint Business Solutions*

Speaker: *Susan Reavis*, Former Owner, Consultant and Board of Directors

Treasurer, *Reems Creek Nursery*

Speaker: *David Williams*, Vice President of Operations & Co-Owner, *Reems Creek Nursery*

► 2:30-3 p.m.

Networking Refreshment Break
Exhibit Hall

► 3-4:30 p.m.

Keynote

Keynote Session: Looking Back to Move Forward

Missouri Main Stage

Stephanie's grandfather built Stuckey's into an empire — a roadside oasis that redefined America. How did he do it? What lessons can we learn from W.S. Stuckey that can be applied today? Stephanie finds wisdom in the past to define her future and how she runs Stuckey's.

Speaker: *Stephanie Stuckey*, Chair, *Stuckey's*

► 4:30-5 p.m.

Garden Center Top 100 Awards Presentation
Missouri Main Stage



► 5-6 p.m.

Top 100 Celebration and Welcome Reception
Exhibit Hall



THURSDAY, AUG. 7, 2025

► 8 a.m. – 4:30 p.m.

Registration Open
Exhibit Hall Foyer

► 8-9 a.m.

Networking Breakfast
Exhibit Hall



► 9-10 a.m.

Managing & Motivating the Multi-Generational Green Industry
Kansas City Session Room

For the first time in history, five generations collide in the workforce: the Silent Generation, baby boomers, Generation X, millennials and Generation Z. In this session, we will share various perspectives inspired by professionals across the four prominent generations in the workforce today (boomers, Gen X, millennials and Gen Z) and provide best practices when it comes to working alongside various generations, plus how leaders are managing and accommodating today's workplace standards on company culture, communication and work-life balance.

Speaker: Paige Franks, Senior Executive Search Adviser, BEST Human Capital & Advisory Group

► 9-10 a.m.

How to Leverage AI To Gain a Competitive Advantage

Missouri Main Stage

The spotlight is on AI (artificial intelligence) and how businesses can use this technology to increase efficiencies. This session will break down both the capabilities and limitations of AI and how retailers can use the technology to support everything from customer service and education to email marketing and automating recurring tasks.

Speaker: Rob Sproule, Co-Owner and Marketing Director, Salisbury Greenhouse

► 10-10:45 a.m.

Solutions Session

AI for the Green Industry
Kansas City Session Room

Learn how to overcome labor shortages, grow revenue and optimize inventory by leveraging AI. In this session, we'll cover tactical tools and insights — relevant to all green industry owners and operators!

Speaker: Ashley Wright, CEO, Plantista



► 10-11 a.m.

Networking Refreshment Break
Exhibit Hall



► 11 a.m. – 12 p.m.

Navigating Your Work Injury Claims With Empathy and Evidence
Kansas City Session Room

An employee's perception of the workers' compensation process is just as significant as the quality of care provided while they are recovering from an injury. Employers have the power to have a positive impact based

on effective communication and detailed information shared with healthcare providers. This session will cover cases in which communication and documentation have benefited or hindered this experience and strategies to help businesses mitigate prolonged work injury claims.

Speaker: Rob Townsend, Senior Clinical Consultant, Bardavon Health Innovations

► 11 a.m. – 12 p.m.

Expanding with Experience: Petitti's Lessons from a Complex Build
Missouri Main Stage

Cleveland-based Petitti Garden Centers opened its 10th retail location in spring 2025 in an area the company had been eying for 20 years. In this session, President AJ Petitti will share lessons learned from the process, which started more than two years ago and was more expensive and complicated than when the company built three garden centers in 2018. He'll share what has evolved in the building process, why the location was right despite a Lowe's being next door and what other owners should consider when expanding.

Speaker: AJ Petitti, President, Petitti Garden Centers

► 12-1:30 p.m.

Networking Lunch
Exhibit Hall

► 12:45-1 p.m.

Lightning Track
Sol Soils
Immersive Garden Center,
Exhibit Hall

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► 1:10-1:25 p.m.

Lightning Track
Fertilizer
Packaging Plus
Immersive Garden Center, Exhibit Hall

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► 1:30-2:30 p.m.

From Seasonal to Steadfast Staff: Strategies to Develop Careers, Boost Morale and Drive Results
Missouri Main Stage

Join two trailblazing horticulture industry business owners as they discuss proven strategies for building a resilient and rewarding company culture — one that supports both your people and increases your bottom line. This session will dive into the tangible benefits of financial transparency, why profit-sharing may be a more practical option over bonuses, the long-term value of investing in full-time team members and how cross-training during the onboarding process and beyond can prevent burnout and boost morale.

Moderator: Kelli Rodda, Editorial Director, GIE Media Horticulture Group

Speaker: Lyndsi Oestmann, Owner, Loma Vista Nursery

Speaker: Robyn Schmitz, CEO and Founder, High Prairie Outdoors

► 1:30-2:30 p.m.

Profit from Pottery: How Incorporating Some Direct Import Can Increase Margins
Kansas City Session Room

For more than five decades, Sloat Garden Center has built a pottery business rooted in long-standing relationships and international sourcing. In this candid, numbers-backed session, Zack Straus, president and CFO, breaks down how you can increase your margins by not solely relying on distributors — without sacrificing quality, convenience or selection.

Speaker: Zack Straus, President and CFO, Sloat Garden Center

► 2:30-3:30 p.m.

How to Create a Third Place: Cafes, Meaningful Experiences, Zoning Considerations and More
Missouri Main Stage

In this panel discussion, leaders from exceptional Kansas City-area garden centers will dive into the various ways they've created a "third place" and ideas that have helped make their companies destinations.

Moderator: Patrick Alan Coleman, Editor, Garden Center magazine

Speaker: Paul Abugattas, Executive Director, Colonial Gardens/DCA Outdoor

Speaker: Jonah Nelson, CEO & Third-Generation Owner, Family Tree Nursery

Speaker: Matt Stueck, Owner, Suburban Lawn & Garden

► 3:30-4:30 p.m.

Networking Reception
Exhibit Hall



► 6-9 p.m.

Garden Center Conference & Expo
Chicken N Pickle After-Party
1761 Burlington St.,
North Kansas City, MO

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Join us as we wrap up the conference and celebrate the independent garden center industry with a casual evening of conversations, connections and friendly competition at the Kansas City-founded Chicken N Pickle.



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