

Ziswiler Othmar

Von: SANA - Gerdie Olivier <gerdie@sana.co.za>
Gesendet: Dienstag, 2. Juli 2019 08:41
An: Ziswiler Othmar
Betreff: IGCA E-News June 2019 🌸

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IGCA E-News

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Welcome from IGCA President, Koichi Akatsuka

It was great to meet with the board and administrators in Johannesburg in March. During our meeting, we had great discussions and SANA gave us an excellent programme which we visited lovely garden centres, the SANA trade fair and some cultural places. Our meetings were very productive and successful. The South African team are now preparing a fruitful congress for us in 2020. Thank you very much SANA for hosting a memorable administrators meeting.



I am delighted to report that we have over 200 delegates registered for the IGCA congress coming up in UK. We know that the UK organising committee team is working hard to make a great programme. We are looking forward to meeting with many of you for a week of learning, enjoying, networking, feeling, visiting impressive garden centres and seeing the best of UK hospitality. Every IGCA congress open up new possibilities. This year the UK

team will give us some new field to IGCA and it will be a great opportunity for all delegates to find something new. I believe you will have a very special congress!!

In Memoriam

Michael Cooling: 13.10.34 – 28.2.19

Michael was the only son of Arthur and Miriam Cooling who lived in the town of Chislehurst.

Having trained at the Kent Horticultural Institute in Swanley and completed his National Service in Germany, Michael joined his father in business, which was then called 'Little Farm'. Michael had many new ideas and was an early pioneer of soil-less composts, often comparing notes with Arthur Bower. He corresponded with George Ball in USA who was achieving great results with hybrid seed of colourful annuals. Early experiments with growing shrubs in large tin cans (salvaged from the local hospital) were quite successful, too. These early containers allowed easy self-service by the customer and could be successfully transplanted all year round.

The early 1960s saw the first Garden Centre in Chislehurst, when Michael was allowed to take over one end of a small Dutch-light greenhouse. Michael was an early member of the Horticultural Trades Association - Garden Centre Group (which went on to become the GCA) and along with Jeffrey Bernhard he was one of the UK delegates at the first Garden Centre Congresses held in Germany.

In 1961 Michael married Shirley and they had two sons, Paul (54) who is married Carol and has two children, and David (51).

By 1988 it was clear the one-acre site in Chislehurst was too small to sustain the thriving business and was sold for housing. This allowed the purchase of Robinsons Gardens, a fourteen-acre site in Knockholt, whilst still having sufficient funds to build a new shop a year later.

Always one to re-invest the profits, never borrow money, and develop people who were keen to learn, the business continued to thrive. Michael was very proud to collect the first

ever Horticulture Week “Retail Nursery of the Year” award in 1997 and this was followed in 2005 by the GCA Garden Centre of the Year. Coolings remains the only business to have twice been voted the Best Garden Centre in the UK by readers of Which? magazine.

Over the last 20 years Mike and Shirley gradually withdrew from running the business to enjoy travelling and spending time in their own garden in Chislehurst. The team that Michael put together, continues to run and develop the business and this legacy now comprises three sites over 45 acres. More than 200 families gain some or all of their income through working at Coolings.

Shirley Cooling died in February 2018 after suffering with Alzheimers disease for four years. Michael passed away after a short illness in February 2019.



Michael Cooling demonstrating to customers, how to get the best from the new Fisons Grow Bag in the 1970s.

News from Australia

by Leigh Siebler

It seems that our political scene with revolving Prime Ministers, Ministerial staff ups combined with poor weather and lack of consumer confidence has finally caught up with the industry.



Retail has been flat at best through our Autumn period. Most retailers, not just garden centres, have been affected. However, a good Spring sees most members still positive and pressing on with confidence.

House Plants are booming still. We are seeing even better containers coming into Australia to complement the amazing range of House Plants available. We are also seeing trendy boutique shops jumping on the trend and doing a better job of marketing than Garden Centres. Rather than worry about them, they are just more competition, we need to learn from what they are doing and work with their ideas.



GCA President John van der Horst has excellent displays at Acorn Nursery

Colour is still the name of the game with Cyclamen, Orchids and many other flowering plants being produced in excellent quality by our growers. Gift plants are very popular if the quality and presentation is right.



The Garden Feast – newly named The Garden Feast had lovely new Cyclamen

The Independent Garden Centres group have a conference in Sydney in July and GCA is working with them to get numbers there. It will be excellent.

A number of our members are going to the IGCA Congress in the UK and will certainly come back with great ideas.

Garden Centres Canada Activities



by Rebecca Doutre & Anne Kadwell

The Garden Centres Canada group has been busy planning the first of many inaugural independent garden centre (IGC) Summits, taking place July 10-12th in Mississauga, Ontario. On July 10th this stellar event will kick off with a networking registration evening in Mississauga, Ontario. July 11th the bus will be loaded to head off to four unique garden centres plus lunch at a well-known farm to table market and dinner under glass, the a perfect way to end a busy bus day. On July 12th our conference will be held with keynote speaker Dr. Charles Hall who will address many topics including strategic thinking in the positioning your garden centre. Following Dr. Hall, local industry experts will be discussing such topics as what customers notice from your plants to understanding the customer lifestyle perspectives. It's an event not to be missed and one that will accelerate as it moves across Canada.

Garden Centre Canada's goal is to continue to educate current industry trends and nationally support our IGC's. For more information or to register, visit <https://cnla.ca/events>

Another recent activity GCC is involved in is reviewing online training and how customer service modules can assist new employees coming into the garden centre industry. These have to easily accessible, timely to have sound uptake from employees. The UK's GCA Grow has been one which we have been corresponding with and a model which Canada is reviewing further.

Spring in Czech 2019

by Michal Ferencik



This year was really excellent start of the spring season with great weather without the frosts. Our centres went rapidly up. Then comes the change in weather for more rainy days, which was great for getting water, but not for the sales. This Year season was on the other hand much longer than last year because in Czech the hot weather come one month later. But the sales were not so good, so our centres are finishing with a little grow in sales.

1st Positive quarter 2019 for French garden centres

by Etienne Bodin



With a weather that looks like the mid of spring, non-professional gardeners have come to garden centres with enthusiasm. The 1st quarter growth of +27% counterbalances the bad beginning of 2018.

After a light decrease in January (-2% compare to 2018), the months of February and March are splendid (respectively +29% and +40%).

The growth of garden centres in France was supported by the garden category, mainly by garden centre (+73%), bulbs, seedlings and seeds (+70%) and products garden (+58%).

Let's wait to see what the second quarter holds!

Category of products	Accumulated evolution (from January to March 2019)
Garden centre	+72,6%
Massive plants	+41,3%
Bulbs, seedlings and seeds	+69,2%
Flowering	+1,4%
Houseplants	+9,1%
Garden products	+57,8%
Container	+44,5%
Exterior decoration	+25,9%
Garden tools	+42%
Gardening equipment	+61,2%
Landscaping	+62,1%
Leisure in the garden	+68,6%
Christmas	+18%
Interior decoration	+2%
Food	+1,5%
Others	-0,2%
Pet store	+2,4%

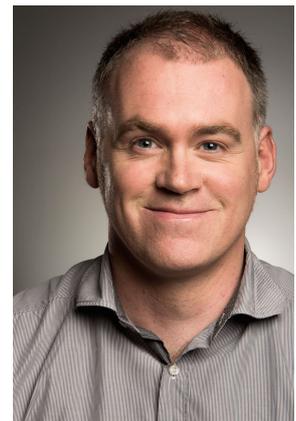
Turnover including all taxes, comparable store perimeter

Update from Ireland

by Fergal Doyle

Against Irish retail figures for Q1 2019, the garden centre sector saw significant growth in comparison to Q1 2018.

A very mild early spring in comparison to a very bad storm last spring brought consumers out into their garden much earlier this year. In comparison to the wider retail industry in Ireland, the garden centre sector in Q1 2019 outperformed the industry by 10 times the industry growth rate.



This has been followed by quite a mixed Q2 season with very few periods of sunny weather. This is reduced the gains of early in the season but with still quite a bit left, we will have to wait and see how it ends. Summer colour, hanging baskets and indoor plants such

as Cacti have seen strong growth. The economic uncertainty around Brexit discussions hasn't helped consumer spending especially on larger ticket items such as outdoor furniture and Barbeques.

Retail Excellence Garden Group continues to push our GroMór campaign to promote gardening and visiting your local garden centre. This year we have focused more on digital activation to engage with new gardeners and also the keen experienced gardener.



Tuinbranche Nederland signs third Dutch Retailer Ambition Document

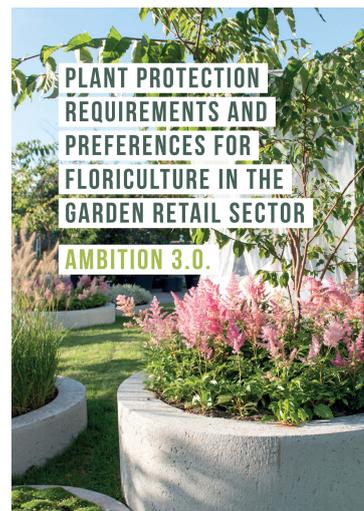
by Frank van der Heide

The Dutch Garden Retail sector has signed its third Ambition document for the period 2019-2020. The document sets out two main ambitions.

1. In 2022, 60% of the products used in the cultivation of (ornamental) plants will be sustainable.
2. Growers supplying Dutch retailers are making efforts to achieve comprehensive sustainability.



By signing the document Dutch retailers have committed themselves to ensuring that an increasing amount of their stock is bought from certified suppliers. In addition they have asked suppliers, where possible, not to use neonicotinoids even where they are still allowed to be used by law. The aim in the long run is to phase out the neonicotinoids and in doing so making sure that the whole supply chain is made sustainable.



Tuinbranche Nederland – Dutch Garden centre association Sustainability plan 2019-2020

The Dutch Garden Centre Association has set out its sustainability goals for the coming two years. The plan describes the main area's that the Garden Centre Association is focussing on in the coming years.

The focus area's that they will work in making garden centres more sustainable are;

- Promoting biodiversity in the private garden and in public spaces where possible, this also includes water friendly gardens.
- Reducing plant protection agents in floriculture, and reducing the domestic use of protection agents.
- Making sure that garden centres adhere to the packaging pact that has been drafted for the sector. This includes ways to reduce and reuse and recycle packaging.
- Ensuing that sustainable wood is sold by garden centres
- Promoting organic plants from being sold.
- Preventing invasive plants from entering the environment and promoting native species top be sold in garden centres.



Season update from South Africa

by Gerdie Olivier

End of February to the middle May is our Autumn trade period and traditionally mini-season in South Africa. Due to economic factors, trading has been quiet resulting in average sales statistics.

As we move into Winter, sales slow down considerably until early August when Spring arrives. The start of the Autumn Season is celebrated by hosting our SANA Autumn Trade Fairs and our Key fair in Johannesburg is still the biggest green fair in South Africa.

In the build-up towards IGCA2020 in South Africa, SANA hosted the IGCA Administrator's meeting from 12 – 15 March. Sixteen member countries were represented by either Administrators or country representatives and it was wonderful to show them our beautiful country as well as the diversity of our garden centre industry.



Our GCA Evaluation has been completed and results recently announced at our annual winter convention held in June. Garden Centre of the Year 2019 was won by Greener Tidings based in Polokwane. Home Store of the Year was won by Builders Warehouse Port Elizabeth.



Colourful display at Greener Tidings

As garden centres differ in size, we have 3 categories namely Large, Medium and Small and identify winners in each category. The small category was won by Concrete Garden Creation, the medium category by the overall winner, Greener Tidings and the large category winner was Greenside Nursery, based in Bloemfontein.

Our ongoing consumer marketing campaign, Life is a Garden, is now in its ninth year and the administration of this project was handed over to a new marketing company in March. We focus on generic marketing to end-users through social media channels with our [website](#) being the central information portal. To enhance our campaign and give exposure to a wide spectrum of consumers, regular articles are published in print media.

Spanish Garden Center Association colaborates with a new Talent Show on TV

by Santiago Gonzalez

The new renovation and decoration talent show, produced by Atresmedia Television, called 'Masters of the reform', will be aired on Antena 3 during prime time. This show has a production effort never seen before on our television. Indoor testing is recorded on a set of more than 2,500 square meters.



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The AECJ is part of the companies that have actively collaborated in this talent show, specifically, providing all the plant material to finish the decorations of each project with plants for indoor and outdoor.



The AECJ has made a great human effort and economic investment to facilitate many plants to complete these projects. Our goal is to market that that the garden Center channel is the specialist in plants as well as provide decorating ideas with plants to the final consumer.

We would love to hear from you!



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|LIST:IGCA Admin|

Our mailing address is:

International Garden Centre Association
PO BOX 514
HALFWAY HOUSE, Gp 1685
South Africa

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