

Ziswiler Othmar

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IGCA E-News

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Message from our IGCA President

We arrive at the end of 2020, after an incredible year has passed!!

Who of us could have imagined that a little virus could change the world, our economies, our thoughts, our behaviour and our our lives!

But nevertheless, we have to live with this situation. Learn not to give up, to be flexible, to give our best every day and to develop visions and think that it will pass sooner or later.



For me is important above all, to maintain our friendships even under difficult conditions; to exchange ideas and new prospectives, stay curious and move ahead together!

For all this I really think and feel that its fundamental for us to meet in a physical place (not virtual) and I'm really looking forward to seeing you all soon!

All my best wishes for Christmas and for the new year!

Ciao e un abbraccio a tutti

Martina

IGCA Virtual Congress 2020

At the end of November we hosted a virtual tour of nurseries in Canada, Japan, South Africa, Austria and Australia for some inspiration and fresh ideas.

Information was posted daily on our [IGCA2020](#) Facebook group <https://www.facebook.com/groups/igcavirtual2020> and is available for members to view.

We also hosted a free webinar entitled “The future is Local: how to get customers from Google to your garden centre”. Edwin Meijer, founder of Garden Connect, shared some insights on how to help you get customers from Google to your garden centre. If you missed this webinar, click [here](#) to view the recording.

Thank you to everyone who joined this virtual tour - we hope you have found value in this event.

Last, but not least, a special thank you to participating garden centres for welcoming us into their stores.

Update from Australia

by Leigh Siebler



Hello everyone,

Australia has perhaps performed better than some countries as far as Covid is concerned but we certainly had our challenges.

In Melbourne (Victoria) and closer areas, garden centres were in lockdown for around 100 days. As a result, customer numbers were down, average sale well up and profitability variable to doubtful. But, they were able to trade with delivery and collection of orders and keep most staff employed while the business ticked over.

Outside Melbourne including other states, garden centres were open except for occasional lockdown. Sales figures in all states in September and October outside Melbourne were double and more on 2019 figures. In November Melbourne Garden Centres were back with a vengeance and all other states saw huge sales increases on 2019. Business slowed just a little depending on the weather, but December is very good.

Suppliers were under extreme pressure from March onwards and mainly performed magnificently and we thank them for that. From March on, (Autumn in Australia) centres were getting Spring figures and even record figures in Winter equal to Spring.

There was stock shortages but overall we managed.

My comment to members was:

“Yes, we have all had a remarkable year. Whilst I keep on saying we have been lucky as an

industry there is no doubt that you all deserve to congratulate yourselves for the effort you have put in. Your staff, your suppliers, your truck drivers, your family, your pets should all take a bow and say we did it together. But do remember, all teams need a leader and if that is you then take a bow too.”

The main complaint was that everyone was after a break, a rest, but with state and overseas borders closed then travel for leisure was near impossible.

What were the main sellers?

In the beginning, just like all around the world, vegetable seedlings and edibles walked out the door. But then anything gardening related sold. Potting Mix was a clear winner with pots not far behind.

We saw customers voting for gardening with their feet as their lockdown therapy, their Garden Releaf. We saw new, old and returning gardeners, some with no idea at all. The challenge now for garden centres is to convert those customers and keep them.



The Garden Feast, Werribee, VIC setting up for order collection



Poyntons Nursery, Essendon, VIC bursting with stock and customers in December

Best wishes to everyone in the IGCA Family for Christmas and 2021.

News from Canada

by Robin Godfrey, Chair: Garden Centre Canada



Indeed 2020 was a year like no other! Canadian Retail Garden Centres had a very successful year and overcame all obstacles to make the shopping experience easy for customers.

This included pivoting to an online sales platform, to having a hybrid of curbside and inside directed shopping.

In March, our provincial groups rallied together along with input from other countries and developed a best practice COVID guidelines to assist in reopening stores and keeping stores open. These guidelines were well received by Provincial governments, as being proactive and thorough.

In the spring, soil, seeds and seedlings hit an all-time high in sales, and in most cases, were sold out as fast as they could be stocked.

There is an overall unease in the market regarding supplies for spring 2021. Will the demand be higher than what growers will be able to grow?

Canada would like to thank the great connections we have built with IGCA. In 2020 we reached out to many other countries to ask about their experiences through COVID and their retail solutions.

Countries coming together to assist one another was not only heart-warming it was impressive to see what our industry can do for one another regardless of where we grow!

Update from France

by Etienne Bodin

In 2020, we changed our name to be more compatible with our sector's evolution, as well as our members and our collective projects such as the Label on animal well-being.



Additionally, Les Jardinerias et Animaleries de France (Garden Centers and Pet Shops of France), has continued to assist its members and develop its services: two working groups were created on communication and sustainable development, we also hired a new employee who will be in charge of monitoring regulations related to selling plants and animals.

Economically, this year's performance has been strongly impacted by the Covid Crisis with two lockdowns in Spring and Christmas, key moments of the year. After intensive lobbying by our Federation, Garden centers were allowed to open during the lockdowns, but not every products could be sold. We have noted that French people were very enthusiastic about buying plants, it was like a green-frenzy from the moment our stores were allowed to be reopened and when the lockdown was over. They even went to garden center during summer which is usually a less important moment for our sector. The year is not over yet, but after several months of growth, the French garden centers are barely recovering their level of activity of last year at the same time. The negative impacts of March (-62%), April (-39%) and November (-11%) are still felt and the yearly result should be around 0 to 0,5% in 2020.

Hello from Germany



Together with a new managing director into a green future! The board of German Garden Centers Association has unanimously appointed 48-year-old Mr. Thomas Buchenau as the new managing director. He started his new field of activity on October 1st, 2020.

The new managing director defines digitization, an environmentally friendly initiative for more sustainable action in the garden centers and recruiting for young people to work in our stores as important components of his personal agenda. He will further strengthen the association as an independent institution.

Spoga + Gafa exhibition in Cologne from May 30th to June 1st, 2021 - www.spogagafa.de

Visit us at spoga + gafa in hall 8! For the first time can you meet us in our own "VDG-Village". We will hold our annual (winter) conference here on Monday, May 31st from 9:30 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. You are cordially invited! If you need an entrance ticket, please contact us hermann@garten-center.de.

Best Regards and a merry christmas time!

Update from Ireland

by Fergal Doyle

Overall quarter 3 of 2020 saw a continued growth of 4.7% in the Irish Retail Industry. A further lockdown in the middle of October until the 1st of December caused a further shock to all retail sectors that were deemed non-essential including garden centres.



Consumers turned to online shopping, with our members achieving a range from 20% to 50% of last year's November turnover online. Since reopening on the 1st of December, pent up demand as caused a significant growth in turnover in December, which we will have to wait and see if this will continue.

Consumer trends such as increased spending on home improvements has continued into the winter, with a greater focus on purchases for inside the home. Departments such as

electrical, homeware and indoor planting have continued to do well.

Retailers are growing increasingly concerned over a knock on effect from Brexit negotiations and a possible further lockdown in the early spring, which could restrict consumer spending. A real concern for 2021 is the ability to secure stock.

On the positive side there is news that the logistics and roll out of vaccine beginning on December 27th, There is much money saved in the economy and consumer spending will happen in 2021 and continue to do so on the home and garden with travel and holidays abroad still on pause into 2021.

A very happy Christmas to all the IGCA family!

Feedback from The Netherlands

by Frank van der Heide



In The Netherlands we have to deal with a lockdown from 15th December till 18th January. Just as in a lot of other countries in Western Europe. That gives a really strange feeling and it gave a really sudden end of the Christmas shows in our garden centers.

But on the other hand, if we had to chose a moment for a lockdown, this would be the best moment. Last year has been a crazy year for garden centers in The Netherlands. Till 15th December on the average, garden centers made a plus in turnover in 2020 of 22,5%. Covid-19, every body working at home, no sports, no restaurants open and a beautiful spring and summer made a great year to gardeners. Everybody who has a garden, was gardening.

Future and climate

From our organisation we have a new big theme. As we all know, the climate is changing very fast. And people (also garden owners) do want to do something about it. But they don't know what they can do. We need more green cities. Not only in public spaces but also in private spaces. We want to help people, giving them an action perspective to create more green in cities. Our theme to help them is called "een Veluwe erbij" (creating a nature reserve extra of 55.000.000 m²). In Holland we have about 5,5 million gardens. If every garden gets 2 m² each year greener for the next 5 years, we have 55.000.000 m² extra green. That is as big as the nature reserve 'De Veluwe'. So that's why we say, an extra Veluwe. Every body is into the climate. But we have to help them. To show them that green cities are cooler in summer and green gardens let through water (in stead of tiles) when it rains very heavy. There for, we designed and build a climate square. In the square, customers can find about 12 square meter solutions, each of 1 m², for in their own garden. How to use a rain barrel, plants instead of tiles, a hedge instead of a fence, a small pond to catch water, plants for biodiversity, etc, etc.

At this moment, we have 3 climate squares in a pilot in garden centers. Next two months in 20 other garden centers, climate squares will be placed and in the next half year, an other 15.



We will keep you posted and if you are interested in a climate square, let us know. Maybe, all over the world, we can create a nature reserve as big as?

Have a very merry Christmas with your family and friends and a healty 2021!

News from Spain

by Santiago Gonzalez

AECJ has started conducting webinars as training every fortnight since October of this year. These webinars are seminars of approximately 35-45 minutes that are offered live to all the gardens of the association on topics of great importance to them such as fruit trees, pruning, orchids, treatments, etc.



During the course of the webinar you can ask questions that are answered at the end of the presentation. They are recorded and uploaded to the AECJ and YouTube website for later use by gardens and their workers. They are aware that in addition to a great attendance at the webinar, they are subsequently consulted in bulk. Since they have been a success, during 2021 they will continue to deliver new webinars fortnightly.

932 40 50 72 info@aecj.org CONTACTO Webinars Área Privada

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AECJ - Protegido: Webinars

Webinars

Nuevo servicio Formación: Webinars AECJ

Aquí encontrarás los webinars grabados para tu uso con distintos temas de interés para todos los equipos de trabajadores de nuestros centros de jardinería. **Recuerda que la programación es quincenal, o sea que casi todo el año podréis asistir a un webinar los miércoles a las 10 de la mañana.** Confirma con la AECJ tus correos electrónicos y números de Whatsapp para recibir directamente el link personalizado.

Últimos webinars realizados

 <p>14/10/2020 "Cuidado de los frutales en otoño e invierno", por Massó Garden</p>	 <p>28/10/2020 "Crear la sección las hojas en el jardín", por GARDENA</p>	 <p>11/11/2020 "Cómo montar una zona preciosa de orquídeas combinada con macetas y complementos", por FLOWER</p>	 <p>25/11/2020 "Consejos para una buena sección de poda en el garden", por BELLOTA</p>
 <p>9/12/2020 "5 Pasos para vender (mejor) ratificadas en un Garden Center", por SBM</p>			

There is already a program of more than 30 product categories or sections of gardens to prepare a useful training pill for many years to come.

The AECJ finances this service with contributions of about 300 euros from the collaborating companies that make them, a very small amount for the companies, very profitable for them, and an excellent investment to have content for the partners.

Regarding trading, it has been a very irregular sales season, in some areas where you can buy Christmas is selling well and in others with restrictions Christmas sales have stagnated.

Hello from South Africa

by Gerdie Olivier



In April, our industry was affected by lockdown regulations and members were not able to continue with production of plants nor allowed to trade for 4 - 5 weeks.

Once hard lockdown was lifted, there were still some restrictions that had a negative impact on our members i.e. number of staff on duty, dividing your workforce into teams etc.

Spring, which is our peak trading season, arrived at just the right time. Consumers have been in lockdown and restrictions on travel and leisure activities, meant that people spent time in their gardens beautifying their surroundings. In general, members reported an excellent trading season, with our retail sector sales increasing by more than 30%. The trend started with seeds and edibles being sold as food gardening exploded but quickly expanded to general plant sales. Due to the gap in production in April there were shortages in certain product lines, but this did not have a negative impact on sales in general.

South Africa is currently on level 1 lockdown and most activities can go ahead as "normal" - masks are compulsory and the public is advised to be responsible and maintain social distancing, especially during the Festive Period. Mass events are still prohibited.

Our economy has suffered under the regulations and many businesses had to retrench staff or had to close down. Recovering from the impact of this pandemic will be a long-term process. Luckily our industry has been very fortunate to have grown during this difficult time.

In August, our new SANA President, Paul Vonk, was inaugurated - unfortunately without real ceremony as it was done virtually. Our association has not had a physical function since March and all business matters are attended to via virtual platform and staff members are operating from home at this stage.

The IGCA2020 Congress postponement, followed by SANA withdrawing the hosting of our South African IGCA Congress in 2021 due to these uncertain times, was a huge disappointment to us all. We won't be able to welcome IGCA members to our beautiful country just yet but we look forward to planning an event in future.

Wishing you a safe blessed Christmas and happy New Year!

Update from Switzerland

by Othmar Zisweiler



Now at the end of the year, we are looking back on an incredible year.

The Swiss garden centres were in lockdown from 16th March to 28th April.

Through webshops, pickup stations and deliveries, the garden centres were able to meet customer requirements even during this period. Innovative sales models such as drive-through also emerged very quickly. Especially for the large garden centres this meant a lot of work with relatively little turnover.

After the lockdown, the garden centres recorded a high customer frequency whereby the customers didn't dwell as long, but spent a bigger amount. This meant that many centers were able to make up the lost sales. According to a survey among JardinSuisse members, 50% of the businesses had a higher turnover at the end of June compared to the previous year and 30% had lost less than 5% of their turnover. However, only the annual results will show how the additional expenses due to Covid-19 will affect the income statements.

In a long term view, the crisis offers positive aspects. A lot of customers visited a garden center for the first time or came back during or after the lockdown. Many of these customers have now returned in autumn and have noticeably stimulated sales. This trend in particular allows many of the Swiss garden centers to look positively into the future.

News from UK

by Iain Wylie

2020 started off with so much optimism for our members after a really great conference in January. Little did any of us know what lay ahead.

The lockdown in March saw garden centres closing as the pandemic took hold.

With some intense lobbying to government the rules were updated to allow garden centres to open, with strict social distancing measures in place in early May, many weeks before other retailers were allowed to do so. Restaurants and cafes were not permitted to open until much later, in August.



As the year has progressed the situation became less clear with different restrictions in different parts of the UK, with Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland following different rules to England. With the exception of Wales, garden centres have been permitted to stay open since May even with the most recent lockdown in November.

Just as I write this note Covid-19 seems to be on the rise again and deeper restrictions were placed across the UK, with Wales insisting garden centres should close again. It seems like it will be many months before any sense of normality will return.

The year's events have meant that Brexit has taken a back seat in the news. However, it is only days until the transition period ends and as yet there is "no deal" and arrangements for importing goods are an ever-increasing concern.

Having cancelled our inspections back in March, in May once centres were open again, we asked our inspectors to visit a few centres across the country during the summer months to see how they had coped with the lockdown and trading when they reopened. The good news is that gardening was as popular as ever and many have made up most if not all the lost sales. We have produced a short video from the visits which we would like to share with everyone. I hope you find it interesting.

The link to the video is: <https://vimeo.com/487250091>

To view the video, you will need the password: ***advantage***

Finally, I would like to wish IGCA members across the world a peaceful and happy Christmas and a prosperous 2021.



Wishing you
a joyous
Christmas
and a
prosperous
New Year



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