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IGCA E-News

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Greetings from our IGCA President

Dear members and friends!

Greetings from the Czech Republic, where Spring has arrived early and brought with it a noticeable sense of anticipation and joy. It's heartening to witness people eagerly preparing to welcome the season by purchasing new plants and embracing life's renewal.



I wish for a successful season and hope that this year, we won't be caught off guard by any unexpected weather.

In February, we had a highly productive board and administrator meeting in Cape Town. Warm compliments to all organisers for their hospitality! The main message is that planning of IGCA 2025 is in process, and there will be many exciting things happening at this congress!

I'd like to remind you to finalise your registrations for the upcoming IGCA Congress in Quebec/Montreal 2024. The program promises to be enriching, filled with valuable business insights. I look forward to reconnect with you all in August.

I wish you a nice Easter Holidays and excellent Spring season!

Update from Australia

by Leigh Siebler



Hello everyone,
The Australian economy is still generally strong with low unemployment. High interest rates are hurting everyone and particularly those with a large mortgage, usually younger people of course.

As usual though, changeable weather affects our industry more than anything else and it has been very variable.

Industry trading is all over the place, mainly due to weather, but there is lots of negative reporting on Australia's high debt levels so that does not help.

March 20 sees our major International Melbourne Flower & Garden Show start and that always lifts the spirit of the industry and gardeners.

It looks as though there will be a retail garden centre conference in Sydney in July but not confirmed yet.

Our major project for this year is One Tree Per Child, OTPC. We are very excited about it as we believe it will bring many customers into Garden Centres. Have a look at One Tree Per Child on Google but keep in mind that this is the Garden Centre Project, not the community project, and it is a first for Australia. Click on www.gardencentresaust.com.au for our update.

GCA has prepared the artwork for an exciting Activity Pack for Kids. The marketing will be aimed at parents and grandparents. The aim is to have parents/grandparents come to garden centres, buy a tree or shrub for OTPC and receive a free Activity Pack. We want them then to plant the tree or shrub with their child. The Activity Pack has a planting guide, a Certificate of thanks and lots of games & puzzles for the kids.

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GCA Activity Bag



GCA booklet inside rear cover



GCA booklet inside front cover

We have ordered 10,000 Activity Packs.

Leigh Siebler, Manager, Garden Centres of Australia

Update from Canada

by Anne Kadwell

Winter and spring weather in Canada have exhibited stark contrasts this year, with cooler temperatures in the west and warmer conditions in the east. Despite this, Canadian retail garden centers are gearing up for a fruitful season.



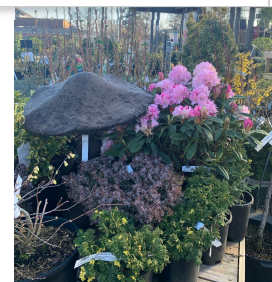
This spring, the focus shifts to younger generations, emphasizing smaller spaces filled with diverse plant materials. Moreover, there's a notable emphasis on utilizing a broader range of social marketing channels to reach consumers. As the season approaches, anticipation grows for a vibrant and innovative spring in the gardening industry.

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*Still chilly days but warm inside,
Lakeland Plantworld, Nova Scotia*



*Spring has sprung on the west coast,
GardenWorks, British Columbia*



*Christmas Cheer Rhododendron
spring blooming, at GardenWorks,
British Columbia*

We are all looking forward to seeing you at the Quebec IGCA Congress in August 2024.

Feedback from Czech Republic

by Michal Ferencik



Early Spring 2024

Spring starts early this year. We are little bit afraid that the frost could come later this season, which would not be good. But now the weather is warm and customers are excited to get all the plants to the gardens 😊

The year 2023 was for our garden centres 1,2% plus comparing to 2022, which we see good, taking into account the cold beginning of the year. Even though inflation was still high, this year inflation is slowly declining.

FloreniUm, our association's new project has now been launched to the public. Main reason of this project is to support the garden centres with marketing, by preparing special and quality products for our customers. If you would like to know more about visit our pages <https://www.florenium.cz>



Michal Ferencik - FloreniUm (Czech garden centre association), Czech Republic

[Subscribe](#)[Past Issues](#)[Translate](#)*by Thomas le Rudelier*

Overall, there was a 2% decrease in sales for the year 2023. The projected growth for the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) in 2024 stands at 1%.

The water scarcity issue in the southern regions continues to be a matter of concern.

Collaborative efforts with local governments have led to the creation of a communication strategy, which is targeted at residents, to facilitate the process of acquiring permits for garden watering.

Additionally, March marked the commencement of the 25th annual Gardening Week initiative for schools, continuing our long-standing tradition of promoting gardening among kids.

Feedback from Germany

by Thomas Buchenau

In Germany, the new season has already begun.

The German members have kicked off the new season with very strong turnovers. The results were already good in January but were far exceeded in February.

Especially over the weekend of March 2nd-3rd, our garden centers were practically stormed by customers.

This gives us encouragement for the weeks ahead. Customers are looking forward to spring and are in a buying mood. This applies to garden centers – other retail formats like DIY-stores are facing challenges in Germany. They have experienced a decrease in sales from 2023. Not so for garden centers. We have been able to grow!

Currently, our association is still gearing up for several events. We are planning our member evening, a trip with trainees from garden centers, and two training days for plants. However, we notice that the season has started and employees

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economic support of our member businesses takes precedence.

Preparations for the International Garden Center Congress, which we will be hosting again in 2026, are also going well. We are looking forward to guests from all over the world. Our hashtags for this are: #igca2026germany and #igca2026together.

Best regards from Germany!

The VDG Team

Update from Japan

by Yasuaki Hirata

Declining birth rate and economic recovery are still issues.

The cost of living is increasing slowly.

- Inflation: 2.1%
- Unemployment: 2.4%

Minimum wage was increased by 3%. As labor costs rise, increased logistics costs become a problem. It is problematic to get workers because it's tough to retain them (and their expertise and skills).

Sales are similar to pre-COVID.

The membership of the association is increasing with new members joining. We meet twice a year to exchange information with each other. A homepage was set up for the association to share information.

Update from Poland

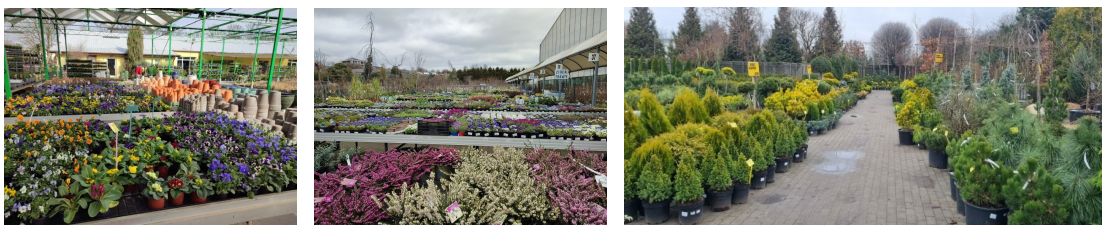
We still have slow economic growth in Poland, which is optimistic and these are the prospects for the next two years. Consumers are willing to spend more, inflation is falling and wages are rising.

Currently, the best sellers on the gardening market are flower bulbs and seeds, as well as all substrates, fertilizers and biological plant protection products.

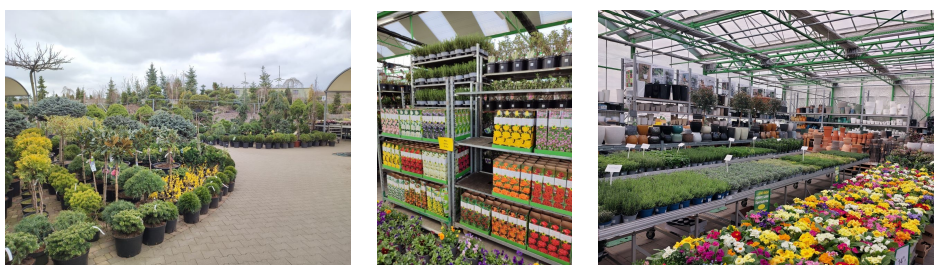
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more environmentally friendly.

Spring sales have already started in earnest in our garden centers.



February was exceptionally warm in Poland, so customers started spring work in their gardens earlier than usual. Garden centers speed up delivery times, especially of plants.



Our Association has published the first gardening bulletin, which will be sent to associated garden centers in March and will ultimately be sent to the clients of these centers. It will be published in printed and electronic versions. It is a newspaper combining information functions about news, trends, interesting facts with gardening tips for the current season. We hope that our customers will like it and we are already thinking about the next edition.

Due to heavy traffic in garden centers, we have suspended online training for our members and center employees until the fall, now is the time to sell.

We wish everyone a Happy Easter and a successful season this year!

News from Spain

by *Santiago Gonzales*

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cold or bad weather and areas where the heat has already begun.

One of the biggest problems is the drought in some areas in Spain and we're trying to negotiate with the government measures that help the sector.

This first quarter of the year we've had our annual conference in Alicante (Expogarden) with about 50 exhibiting companies and about 100 garden centers. At the event we offer several conferences, assembly and team building.

We're planning promotional campaigns for Father's Day and Mother's Day, which are very important dates here.

We continue with personalized visits to the gardens to inform them of our activities and suggestions for improvement, it is the best way to take the pulse of the members.

Feedback from South Africa

by Gerdie Olivier

The ongoing issues with electricity are still causing headaches, as power cuts have become a regular part of our routine. Those who can afford it are finding alternative solutions for a steady power supply, while businesses are turning to solar power systems.



The economy is still struggling, with consumers feeling the pinch of higher costs and less money to spend. This is hitting various industries, including our own members.

While there's some relief in sight with a projected decrease in core goods inflation, economic growth is predicted to slow down in 2024.

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the coming months particularly interesting.

Weather continues to be a major factor affecting our industry and sales, with more extreme heatwaves and unpredictable rainstorms causing disruptions. Some regions have even experienced flooding, damaging properties and infrastructure over the past few months.

Although this season has been slightly better than last year, challenges persist, with rising costs eating into members' profits.

Despite all this, SANA remains a stable association, and we're actively looking at ways to make membership more appealing and support our members during these tough times.

Our consumer marketing campaign, "Life is a Garden" keeps on spreading the gardening message to consumers to support our members.



We recently hosted our Autumn Trade Fair and was blessed with stunning weather. The show remains one of our most important events with 68 exhibitors showcasing their products to retailers, landscapers and other related companies.



Grading results for our GCA Garden Centre evaluation were released in February and garden centres, who achieved a grading of 90% or higher, were announced as Garden Centres of Excellence and invited to take part in the Garden Centre & Home Store of the Year competitions. These competitions will be finalised in mid-April and the Garden Centre & Home Store of the Year and the two runner-ups will be announced at our annual Convention in June.