

## Conventional Ads Are 'Out'

Without question, **garden centers across America are shifting their local marketing efforts from newspaper ads to a more personal approach that includes e-newsletters and even personal e-mail.** While advertising in print seems to be "out," many IGCs are finding success with spots on radio and TV. The added payoff is that these ads often lead to on-air "news" coverage that positions the IGC as the local plant and gardening weather expert to the public.

## Viva Independents!

In news that will warm the cockles of our industry's heart, **consumers this past season favored independent garden centers over the boxes.** The Garden Writers Association surveyed consumers before the spring season, and IGCs came out on top as the place where 47 percent of consumers expected to buy their plants. The even better news is, a post-season survey confirmed most actually did go to their local garden center. Wonderful validations that IGCs rule these days!

## 'Status Skills' Are 'In'

Trendwatching.org says the next big thing may be "status skills:" **Instead of that rock diamond or shiny Mercedes, big spenders will look for the opportunity to flaunt their newly acquired skills.** The Whisky School at Ladybank Distillery in Scotland is tapping this trend, instructing participants on whisky making and tasting. The program includes a sample of the "new-make" whisky created by participants. Can you say, "Advanced Container Gardening School?"

you can  
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BE GARDEN CHIC

## A Cashless Future?

You'd better take the "plastic." At least, that's what the majority of both Baby Boomers (79 percent) and their kids, Echo Boomers, (74 percent) say. They believe our society will one day operate without cash and checks, conducting all payment transactions electronically. **According to research by Visa, the preference for plastic at the checkout transcends age - with both generations favoring credit cards.** By the way, Visa recently featured a gardening consumer in one of its TV spots!

## Grocery Organics Surge

**Any garden retailer who needs proof of the surging interest in all things "green" need look no further than the grocery industry.** Publix, a major grocer in the Southeast, is taking the likes of Whole Foods head on. It recently opened a 39,000-square-foot store dedicated to natural, organic and earth-friendly products under the Publix GreenWise Market banner in fashionable Palm Beach Gardens, FL. Consumer demand is so high, three more all-green stores are planned by the grocer.

## Lawn Love Still Strong?

Is America's love affair with the expansive lawn on the wane? **"Green" awareness makes lawns the water and chemical bad guys among some consumers.** Alternative groundcovers and expanded garden beds in place of lawns are on the rise. In Sunbelt areas, the ornamental peanut is catching on as an earth-friendly alternative, requiring no fertilizer, minimal care and cutting only every 90 days. IGCs could lead as the expert providers of knowledge and products for these interests.

