

'Hired Guns' for Displays

Can't afford a full-time store merchandiser on the payroll? No problem. Sharp IGCs have latched on to the fact that **star store merchandisers can often be hired on a contract basis.**

These hired guns, who may also help out at the Gap store in the mall, may be available on a fee basis, monthly or seasonally, to help add that extra pizzazz to your indoor and outdoor sales areas. Do a Google search, or check out local design colleges where these experts may be teaching classes.

'Local:' The New 'Organic'

One aspect of increasing "green" awareness among eco-conscious consumers: the belief that **"local" is the better choice.** IGCs have an obvious advantage in playing this up, with statements such as, "Visit us - your *local* independent garden center!" This thought shift could greatly benefit garden centers competing with the boxes - if we are aware of it and use it to our benefit. Spotting locally sourced plants and goods in your mix will also underscore the point.

'Garden' Not 'Garden-ing'

Recent research has spoken loud and clear about Gen X attitudes toward the yard. **While the term "garden" stirs pleasurable images of an outdoor recreational lifestyle, nothing could be further if you add the "-ing."**

According to the younger generation, nothing spells "work" more than the labor-intensive term "gardening," which is looked upon as something their parents or grandparents slaved over in the past. Today's consumer wants the result, not the effort it takes.

Do It For Them, Santa!

Ultra-busy consumers jumped on a trend that emerged in the Northwest this past holiday season: **live-cut Christmas trees with electric lights already strung and attached!** Many were more than happy to be saved from the needle-sticking experience. Garden centers sold the trees at a per-foot cost. This is another example of the almost limitless things for which customers will pony up the bucks. Now, if you could do the shopping, gift wrapping and dinner preparations

you can
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BE GARDEN CHIC

Thank 'Me' Very Much

Call it self-reward or even self-indulgence - regardless, it's a huge part of the retail scene today. **With the media screaming, "You deserve it!" consumers have been taught if it's a Starbucks latte or a beautiful orchid in a colorful Scheurich pot from Germany, they need it ... now.** Indulge her with quick fixes that tickle the senses with color and sweet scents. Surely, most of those Vera Bradley bags bought at garden centers are destined to be used by the shopper herself.

Smell of Money

Most Americans can't resist. By far, **the favorite smell of the masses here in the United States is freshly baked apple pie.** For many, it represents home and reminds them of a happier time, when mom would pull a pie out of the oven. Savvy IGCs can bring back these sensory warm fuzzies in a variety of ways, such as offering hot apple cider with cinnamon during the holiday season. Sure beats the blood meal or chemical scents too often associated with garden centers!

