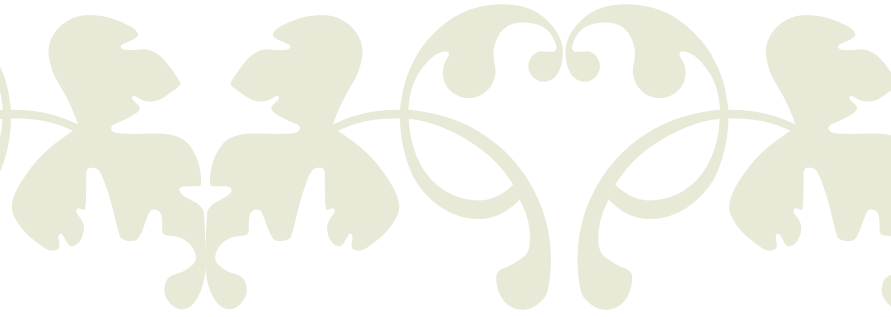


RETAIL trends

by
Clint
Albin



Trends on Tap at IGC 2010

IN HELPING CHERYL AND JEFF MOREY put together the educational conference at this year's Independent Garden Center Show, August 17-19 at Navy Pier, Chicago, our goal was to present world-class sessions based on trends, and to use the research, life and business experiences and presentation skills of the speakers to make a real difference for garden centers.

The IGC 2010 Educational Conference program will stretch your thinking, while sending you home with practical business advice mixed with good old-fashioned knowledge of consumers. You'll never find this mix of speakers and topics anywhere else.

Seven themed tracks shape this year's program: Store Management, International Trends, Consumer Trends, Selling Plants, Being Independent, Grow Your Own Movement and Eco Chic. Each theme is designed for retail owners, managers and buyers. From merchandising and marketing to planning and operations, there is some-



Expanding tastes More garden centers are profiting from food. The Specialty Food Market @ IGC Temps assembles a group of leading vendors, from soft-serve ice cream and smoothies, pies, donuts and produce to food service equipment and more.

thing for garden centers of every size.

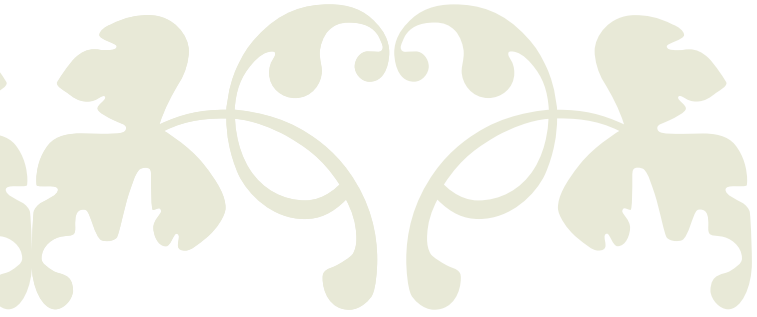
Here are a few of the many wonderful things in store that I'm especially excited about!

The Long View

The world economy changed and affected local businesses in 2009. Retailers must have a long view for development, growth, expansion and a new profit standard. That means changing our business style, attitudes and operations.

For the perfect combination of thoughts and ideas to move your garden center forward, this year's conference showcases the "best of the best" industry consultants, including Ian Baldwin, John Stanley and Robert Hendrickson, to name a few. From Ian helping garden centers understand why they must incorporate operational systems for growth, to John sharing his experiences from across the globe and Robert teaching about how the localization movement matters, you will "get the goods" here.

In addition to the consultant perspective, you will learn



about international business and consumer trends from garden center business owners. With more than 100 years of combined operational experience in merchandising and management among the presenters, you will see what worked and what didn't from the U.K., Ireland, Germany and South Africa. Their stories are engaging.

Food for Thought

Selling food is great to get into, but if it were that easy, more garden centers would already be doing it. Beyond vegetable and herb starts for spring, what are other edibles that are selling at garden centers?

This year, Wednesday morning's IGC keynote comes from Josh Viertel, President of Slow Food USA, which has a worldwide membership of more than 80,000. Slow Food is working to educate consumers, both adults and children, about the benefits of good nutrition. As they work to create better eaters, they are also making a better shopper, one who knows the varieties, types and cultural aspects of food products that will make them healthier. Garden centers must understand this national movement to truly adapt their product mix, staffing, packaging, education and communication to expand the "season" - food is a year-round business.

The Grow Your Own Movement track has been added this year. The lesson here is to realize the number of garden coaches who are making a full-time living in the United States, helping families weekly with their at-home food-growing needs. Whether it is garden design, nutritional assessment, weekly assortment or preservation, garden centers are missing a business opportunity if they're not expanding their landscape services to include at-home vegetable gardening guidance.

Beyond fruits and vegetables, attendees will have the opportunity to view the latest in food selling. The Specialty Food Market @ IGC Temps assembles a group of leading food vendors, from soft-serve ice cream and smoothies, pies, donuts, specialty coffee and teas, old-fashioned candies, condiments and produce to food service equipment. This group of vendors will enable garden centers that don't have the opportunity to put in a full-service restaurant to see there is a way to offer food and make money. There are retailers selling up to 75,000 pies a year. Did you know that a cup of soft serve ice cream that sells for \$2 reaps \$1.66 in profit?

The educational conference at the IGC Show will help you connect the dots. There is something for everyone, from the details about how to sell a million 4 1/2-inch vegetables and herbs to the truth about the eco-movement from the founders of the Garden Rant blog. It is a must-attend.

See you in Chicago! ■