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## 2009 Garden Centre Canada Survey Results



The 2009 Garden Centres Canada survey results are in. Thanks to the Garden Centres Canada Committee, who championed the initiative, we had a 10% response rate for our GCC survey and we are happy to report on emerging new retail trends and overall GCC members' performance.



The data compiled confirms industry trends including the fact that majority of businesses are open almost 12 months a year.

An emerging trend shows increased volumes of sales in the 'medium category' of sales totaling between \$1,000,000-\$2,000,000. In addition, to enforce a more positive outlook for the 2009 season, the survey results show that the average dollar sale per customer has increased from \$77.74 (in 2007) to \$98.76 (in 2008) and to \$108.42 (in 2009), suggesting that customers have the money to spend on garden centres' offerings despite the current economic situation. In addition, about 72% of garden centre members indicated an increase of 5% in their customer count.

Another encouraging trend was an increase in profits in 2009, which was true for about 22% of the respondents reporting 5-10% increase and a slight decrease of 2% reported by 26% of garden centre owners. About 84% of garden centre members operate websites and the numbers of businesses looking to capitalize on sales from e-commerce are growing, from 10% (in 2008) to 18% (in 2009).



The majority of our garden centre members employ certified staff (92%) and average labour expense for most members is about 15%. Garden centres' dedication to professional development and continued improvement reflects in over 57% of members interested in participating in a national Garden Centre Inspection Program, as well as over 68% interested in offering primary school aged kids educational visits to their garden centres. Environmental stewardship being top of mind for retail

operators reveals that over 78% of our members are interested in a national Plastic Recycling Program and see the Garden Centres Canada committee as a key player in providing national programs, benefits, information on trends and industry, education and government representation.

Varying from province to province (based on the seasonal weather), some provinces, such as BC and AB saw an increase in sales of 'big containers', 'large planters', 'value items' and overall increase in business. However, the same wasn't the case in Ontario, where 'smaller purchases' were more popular and 'large ticket items did not sell'.

Some of the most successful marketing initiatives for member garden centres over the last season included: 'customer appreciation day', 'give

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away of bulbs in the fall', 'extended hours of business on the weekends and evenings', 'offering weekly sales promotions through monthly newsletter' and 'e-mail campaigns'.

The greatest challenge for the year 2009 shared by the majority of our members was the uncertainty of the economic situation and controlling costs. For 2010, this trend will continue, although some members are looking to 'increasing sales', 'keeping sales even with 2009' and 'staying focused on growing sales'.

The Garden Centres Canada committee of CNLA thanks everyone who took the time to complete the 2009 survey.

Have a great season.

Anthony O'Neill  
Garden Centres Canada Chair - O'Neill's Gardenland, NL

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