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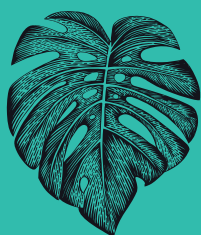
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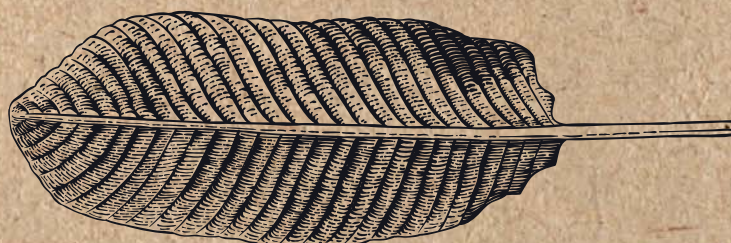
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THE GARDEN RETAIL EXPERIENCE

13-14 FEB 2019

NIEUWEGEIN
THE NETHERLANDS



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Putting the customer first in these exciting times

The start of the garden season was dramatic all over Europe and this was mainly attributed to the weather. It was very cold and wet until halfway through April (*GB, DE, BE, NL*) and in the southern countries (*IT, ES*), there was an excessive amount of rain – with similar consequences for sales. Fortunately, the sun came out in May and June. We spoke with a number of European players from the garden industry about the first half of 2018, which ended up having very positive results for the European garden centres.

Not only the weather has an effect; consumer wishes also change, and that causes uncertainty as nothing is as it was before. And if you do what you always did, you don't get what you always got. Thinking outside the box, a different approach, using technology and focusing on experience and leisure is the motto. But that is easier said than done, because what is the approach that works for your business and your customers?

I recently interviewed Joe Pine, the international authority in the field of the experience economy, and asked him about the possibilities he sees for, among other things, the garden industry. The main message: put the customer first, not your products or organisation. Garden centres tend to be mostly concerned about their merchandise. However, their real job is not to sell products, but to create a connection. This connection is the reason that customers return. The choice of today is simple: you either add relevance, meaning and personalisation, or you become a commodity, says Pine.

Consumers will not be satisfied with cosmetic changes to a retail concept alone. Reimagine Green Retail is the motto – build your formula around the consumer, not around the products or the existing store. Therefore, Reimagine Green Retail is the theme of TREx | The Garden Retail Experience at 13-14 February 2019. Here, you can learn about new green retail ideas and concepts: put those dates down in your schedule!

This autumn, after a hot, dry summer, will hopefully generate a lot of additional green sales, followed by spectacular Christmas shows. But first, we will make purchases and gain inspiration for the 2019 season during the upcoming September fairs. Think of Pine's words and choose responsible products with a good story and added value!

Anita Meuleman

Garden Retailer, editor in chief

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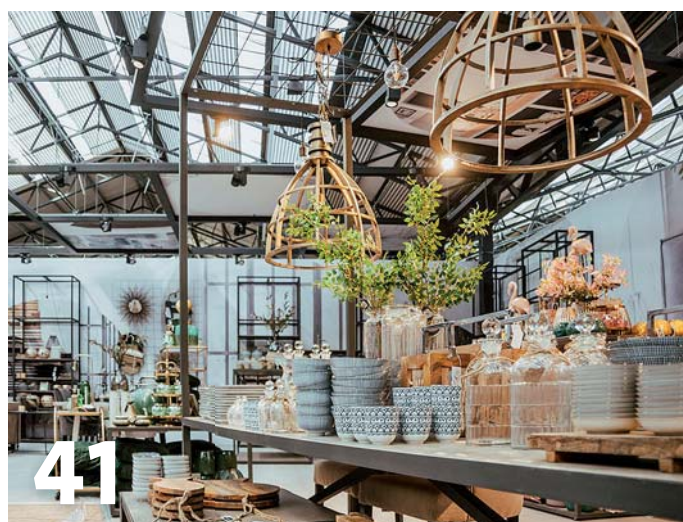




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Restart for Bakker.com

Bakker.com, the online garden specialist that was declared bankrupt in February, is making a new start. This was done together by a group of employees who became co-owners. Under the guidance of new CEO Erwin van Cooth, Bakker.com should become a platform where other e-commerce parties and retailers can deliver green products to their customers.

‘These parties can make use of the platform and our expertise, while simultaneously benefiting from a fast-growing online market for green products’, says Van Cooth. Suppliers are also more closely involved in the process.

The restart has been realised by a team of Dutch entrepreneurs, with knowledge in the field of e-commerce, sales and distribution. The initiator of the restart is Martijn van Scherpenzeel from Globitas. ‘Bakker.com offers unique op-

portunities’, he says. ‘The company has been active for 73 years, delivering directly from the growers to the consumer.’ Van Cooth mentions that purchasing and distributing quality green products to consumers is very complex. ‘With the new Bakker.com we will work closely with other e-commerce parties and retailers.’

Bakker.com has supplied flower bulbs, flower seeds and plants in seventeen countries, making it the largest mail order company in the green sector in Europe. Last year the company ran into financial problems and was declared bankrupt on February 5th. They had debts that added up to 21 million euros, according to the Dutch newspaper FD.



Purple-Sun wins FleuroStar Award



Fleuroselect, the international organisation for the floriculture sector, has awarded the FleuroStar Award 2018/2019 to *Osteospermum* ‘Purple Sun’ from Selecta one. ‘Purple Sun’ convinced with its impressive visual impact on the point of sale and trading potential. This *Osteospermum* is a real winner for the entire industry, offering the ‘Wow Factor’, according to jury chairman Heike Gronemann.

Acquisition of Italian terracotta pots manufacturer Deroma



[BY GREENLINE, GREENRETAIL.IT]

A German joint venture consisting of the Bavaria Industries Group AG (*Baikap*) and the Scheurich GmbH have acquired the Italian Deroma. Deroma, market leader in the terracotta pots segment, is located in Malo in Northern Italy. The international holding company with subsidiaries in France, Spain and the United States has a turnover of approximately 70 million euros. According to the latest reports, Deroma will continue its activities independently, its headquarters will remain in Malo and all of the roughly 400 employees will keep their jobs.

Peter Baumann, owner of Scheurich, told the German press: ‘Deroma is market leader in the outdoor segment and Scheurich is leader in the indoor segment: they complement each other perfectly and will make use of the synergy, particularly in the development of international markets’.

Chelsea 2018 was 'thrilling'



PHOTOS: ANITA MEULEMAN



In summer temperatures this year the prestigious British RHS Chelsea Flower Show took place again in London on the grounds of the Royal Hospital in Chelsea. The large show gardens displayed – to the relief of many British garden lovers – more 'real' gardens. The controversial conceptual approach of the previous edition was less satisfying for them. This wasn't noticeable in the number of visitors, however. Already on the first opening day, May 22nd, rows and rows of garden lovers shuffled past the garden designs – commenting on the designs and the garden plants on display. 'It's really thrilling this year.'

The Best Show Garden was The Morgan Stanley Garden for the NSPCC. 'This came as a surprise to many visitors because the garden is beautiful but also very modest. They focused their attention on the spectacular gold-medal-winning Mediterranean garden by designer Sarah Price for main sponsor M & G Investments and on the impressive Welcome to Yorkshire Garden, which also won gold.'

The Best Construction Award went to The Welcome to Yorkshire Garden, a design by garden designer Mark Gregory. Gre-

gory was born and raised in Yorkshire and was proud of the opportunity offered to him to present God's Own Country on Chelsea. He created a garden that contains all the elements that make Yorkshire special; the cottages, the landscape with the dry stone walls, the streams, the flower meadows and the walking routes.

The designer of The Morgan Stanley Garden, Chris Beardshaw, has been designing show gardens for twenty years. The garden is a metaphor for the emotional development of a child that is supervised by the NSPCC, an organisation that works to combat child abuse. In the front garden part Beardshaw has opted for a full plant section with mainly shrubs and trees including a twelve meter high *Betula nigra* - the tallest tree ever used in a Chelsea show garden. Furthermore, the inside-outside theme, which was frequently seen in Chelsea, is developed further here in an open pavilion with simple architecture and rectangular ponds with clear water. Beardshaw created a soothing environment in which children can feel safe.

Plant of the year 2018 is *Hydrangea* 'Runaway Bride Snow White'.

Online gardening on the rise in Italy



Nicora Garden Varese

Search queries in the field of online gardening are becoming more and more popular among Italian consumers, who are increasingly dependent on e-commerce for garden purchases. This is shown by the latest survey by Idealo, the international price comparison portal for digital purchases. According to Idealo, the number of search queries of digital consumers looking for information, prices and opinions with a green theme have grown by 172.52% compared to previous years.

The interest of digital consumers in the garden reaches its peak between March and April. 60% looks for information about products for green maintenance, while 40% looks for products for outdoor enjoyment. The ideal garden of the Italian e-consumer is first equipped with a barbecue: 26.2% of search queries are about barbecues. The second place in this category goes to pools (11.2%). In the technical field, chainsaws (20%), lawnmowers (19.2%) and water purifiers (7.9%) are the most sought-after products.

‘The e-commerce has become a reference point for the green sector’, Fabio Plebani, Italy Manager at

Idealo, explains. ‘The study shows that the home & garden category has made a big leap forward (+46%) during the year.’

eBay also signals a growth in the sale of garden products. Giorgio Zonca, Account Manager Home & Garden at eBay Italy: ‘Sales within diy-home-garden on eBay are growing steadily: for some reason, the online sales have awoken in our sector. A positive trend is the sales growth in care products for plants and soil (+52%), as well as for irrigation (+31%) and electrical and garden tools (+19%).’ Zonca confirms the Italians’ growing passion for the pool – especially above-ground swimming pools that can be installed easily.

‘The category Home & Garden continues to play a leading role on eBay, and is found in the top three of sectors regarding sales volumes and growth percentages. To give you an idea of the volumes, currently, eBay.it is selling over 16 million new products in the Home & Garden category.

[BY GREENLINE, GREENRETAIL.IT]

StadtGrün by toom

Construction market Toom (DE) opened a three-month pop-up store in the heart of the Cologne shopping district aimed at organic balcony gardening. This StadtGrün by toom was also aimed at a younger target audience and was very successful.



Bonus Verde

As of this year, Italy has introduced the ‘Bonus Verde’, a tax reduction of 36 percent on the expenses for construction or renovation of private green spaces. The tax reduction does not apply to purchases of plants: to apply for credit, a professional must be involved (*such as a landscape architect or a gardener*). The limit is 5,000 euros per housing unit – an apartment complex with twenty apartments can qualify for a maximum of 100,000 euros in tax reduction.

[BY GREENLINE, GREENRETAIL.IT]



Agreement in principle Aveve for Eurotuin acquisition

The Belgian garden centre group Eurotuin reached an agreement in principle with Groep Aveve for acquisition in June. It concerns four garden centres, animal health shop Wellopet and webshop mijntuin.org. Three of the four garden centres will continue to exist under the name Eurotuin: Ophasselt, Merelbeke and Deinze. The store in Roeselare will close its doors in the course of the autumn.

Erik Haegeman, Business Unit Director Retail at Aveve Group: 'Thanks to our strong store network, we are currently experienced in operating small, medium-sized and large garden centres. With the acquisition of these Eurotuin locations, we can add three beautiful stores to the latter segment. As the largest retail chain for garden, animal and baking pleasure, we are always looking towards possible expansions of our network in order to further reinforce our future position'. This investment brings the Aveve Group to a network of 253 stores.

4 QUESTIONS FOR RUDI DE KERPEL, EUROTUIN GROUP

What a big change. 'The ball started rolling when I started talking to someone who asked me that question in September of last year. In May, I had four interested candidates. Aveve was

not in the market for acquisitions at that time at all, but showed interest and was eventually chosen.

Are you happy with it? 'That is always a very mixed feeling. I am turning 56 and don't have any successors. We were facing investments in a number of locations again. I personally wasn't all too excited about that. With the combination of that feeling and the opportunities that arose, I thought: Right, this is a good opportunity to pass it on. With the guarantee that all my people could keep their jobs, which was an important issue for me. Antony de Pauw, my partner, will also remain active within the Eurotuin Group and will deploy the plan for the future together with the Aveve Group.'

How did Eurotuin do last year? 'If you look back, three stores always did very well. It was Roeselare that was a particularly difficult store. Antony and I had already decided to exclude Roeselare this year if the figures were not significantly better in June. We did everything we could for four years – and we had actually foreseen this scenario.'

What are your plants for the future? 'I will not do anything for now, I'll just look around and see what comes my way.'



Green Happiness Festival at spoga+gafa

‘The fair is giving us a space to build something cool. At the joint EFSA stand, we use our so-called Festival Store to show how retail and suppliers can serve the new consumer. During three days of Green Happiness Festival, we demonstrate solutions and link them to the brands of the EFSA members.’

We speak with Steffi de Haan. She coordinates the new implementation of the EFSA concept store at spoga+gafa in Cologne (2-4 Sept) – a collaboration between De Haan Group and TPK Media & Events. The EFSA members want to show that they work together with retail and offer support with the purchase and sale of garden and decorative products. For that reason, a number of years ago, the decision was made to present a concept

store with tips, ideas and inspiration for retailers. The design for 2018 has been completely overhauled: the Green Happiness Festival.

‘We are building a temporary concept at spoga+gafa, in which the experience is key. The visitor enters a sort of garden centre. What we show is all feasible within a normal garden centre. It does not require major renovations. The combination of multiple disciplines flows together seamlessly. There will be various catering points in the form of food trucks and small bars.’

The festival is an experience for spoga+gafa visitors, stirs up the EFSA area, and above all, serves as inspiration for retail. De Haan Group and TPK Media & Events have developed the festival concept to-

gether and will see if there is anything they can do with it after the fair.

A total of thirteen EFSA members are participating in the Festival Store. They have all been given the space to design their ‘stall’ in their own way. They can all present their story or things. Practical or spectacular. Everyone decides that for themselves. De Haan: ‘What is also special is that we are allowed to be in the exhibition hall until after the regular closing time. The fair closes at 6 PM, but we have a happy hour from 16:30 to 19:00 PM – complete with a DJ, good music and of course, snacks and drinks. We hope this will draw as many visitors to hall 10 as possible, so that the Festival Store will also become spoga+gafa’s networking area.’



Grow your own

From the beginning of April, Tuincentrum Leurs (NL) will show the Grow your own concept in the new food market. In an authentic corrugated plant house a beautiful vintage industrial presentation was made with dark wooden shelves and rough wooden plant tables, stacks of terracotta plant pots, cloches, zinc tables with wooden auction boxes and a large collection of plant seeds along the wall. A large assortment of vegetable and herb plants is presented on the plant tables. There's also plenty of hardware on offer: from zinc watering cans to bamboo plant tables.

We developed this concept together with Kees de Haan', says owner Peggy Leurs. 'By combining greenery and hardware with each other in shops that have their own style and identity, people will experience a certain feeling and experience that they also want to feel at home. Finish with authentic decorative pieces and you get a wonderful atmosphere to stay in. That is what we want to create. Grow your own happiness: happiness for our guests. And what is more hip than sowing and harvesting yourself.'



IGCA Congress in Prague

The International Garden Centre Association, IGCA, holds its annual congress in the Czech Republic. The capital Prague serves as the base. From 16-21 September, among other things, nine garden centres are visited, from Hornbach to smaller independent garden centres, as well as a number of baroque gardens, the Budweiser Budvar Brewery, ornamental plant growers Arboeko and Botanicus and candle factory The Yankee Candle Company.

Last year, Canada was the host country, and over two hundred garden centre owners, suppliers and other industry colleagues from 21 different countries participated in the journey. In addition to the inspirational programme, there is also plenty of opportunity to exchange knowledge and experiences and to network this year. Moreover, once again, there is an interactive tour for the younger participants. More information: www.igca2018.cz

Esschert Design takes over GardenLife

Esschert Design (NL) recently acquired the Danish company, GardenLife. Along with the addition of Scandinavian design to the range, it also offers direct access to the Scandinavian retail market. To achieve the ambitions of a fast-growing company, a new shareholder has also taken office, Bolster Investment Partners.

In Bolster Investment Partners we have found a strong sparring partner who shares our vision and brings in capital and knowledge to realise our growth ambitions', says director Arend Mosterd of Esschert Design. In this market there is a need for a completely European player, says Mosterd. 'The GardenLife acquisition is a good example of the opportunities we see. By taking advantage of the wave of consolidation that is expected to continue in the coming years.'

Esschert Design designs and sells garden and nature products and develops concepts that focus on wild birds and animals, outdoor fireplaces, children's gardening and working in the garden. The products are sold in more than 65 countries. The company, with an annual turnover of 40 million euros, is also active on the American market as Esschert Design USA.



Highest point Intratuin Deventer

On Thursday 12 July, the highest point of the new construction of Intratuin Deventer was reached, and that needed to be celebrated. Owner Hendrik Vreeman and manager Twan Jongbloets went up in the crane to roll out the Intratuin flag at the highest point. While invited guests, staff and construction workers enjoyed an extensive barbecue, Vreeman expressed how proud he is of everyone involved in the construction with a speech.

In March 2019, Intratuin Deventer will be opened at this new location. The store will include all newly developed Intratuin departments and concepts, fully in Intratuin 3.0 style.





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'Fresh, tasty, healthy and still accessible'



A visit to Intratuin Rosmalen, where the director of Intratuin Nederland, Peter Paul Kleinbussink, and entrepreneur Marika Kolbach enthusiastically show that the new Intratuin concept 'Eating in the tasting garden' has not only changed the look & feel of the garden café, but also particularly its menu. 'The main change is in the range you offer.'

'Enjoyable, fresh, healthy, tasty, food and drink: these are all elements that belong to Intratuin', says Peter Paul Kleinbussink. 'Barbecuing, the season on the table and eating in the tasting garden, these are all areas within Intratuin that are becoming more and more intertwined. We also respond to the seasons more; first the strawberries, then the apples and pea soup.'

In Rosmalen, the kitchen and the 'backoffice' were long overdue for a change. 'And while we're at it, let's go all the way', says entrepreneur Marika Kolbach. At the same time, Intratuin Nederland was working on the concept development of the garden café. 'Everything has been changed in terms of look & feel, and there is also more seating than before. But the main impact comes from the completely different range. This not only represents a major change for the customer, but a completely different way of working for the staff as well. Where we first worked with supplied ready-made products and semi-finished products, they now need to prepare lots of things themselves.'

Kleinbussink adds: 'There is a greater emphasis on fresh, more salads, more

fresh juices. And every month, there are new menus for the soups, salads and sandwiches: based on the seasons.' And customers are allowed to taste, which is highly appreciated', Kolbach observes. As many of the products the restaurant uses as possible can also be bought by the customers themselves and, conversely, garden centre products are presented here. You see herb plants and citrus trees in the counter. 'That is how we try to establish a link.'

The restaurant in Rosmalen has been running for just over four months now. Too early to present any hard figures. But there are already positive experiences to report. 'Things are going much better in terms of sales and there is an enormous increase', says Kolbach.

Foto: V&A

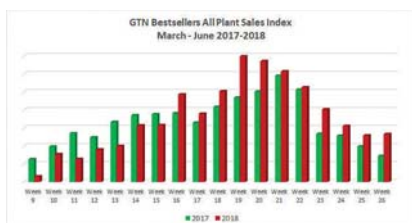


Fashioned from Nature

The V&A Museum in London is currently exhibiting *Fashioned from Nature*, a presentation of historical and contemporary clothing made from innovative new fabrics and dyeing processes and nature-inspired designs. The visitor is encouraged to think about fashion materials and sources.

'The exhibition traces the complex relationship between fashion and the natural world since 1600. It shows how fashionable clothing always returns to the beauty and power of nature for inspiration and investigates how fashion processes and the constant demand for raw materials harm the environment. Clothing is on display from fashion designer Stella McCartney, known for her dedication to developing new alternative sustainable materials. But also a mantle dress from 1860, decorated with the iridescent green shields of hundreds of jewel beetles, shown alongside natural-historical specimens of beetle species.'

UK Garden Centre Plant Sales up 43% in June



June was a super month for UK garden centre plant sales, up by 43% on June 2017, and the key driver to overall sales being 14% up for the month.

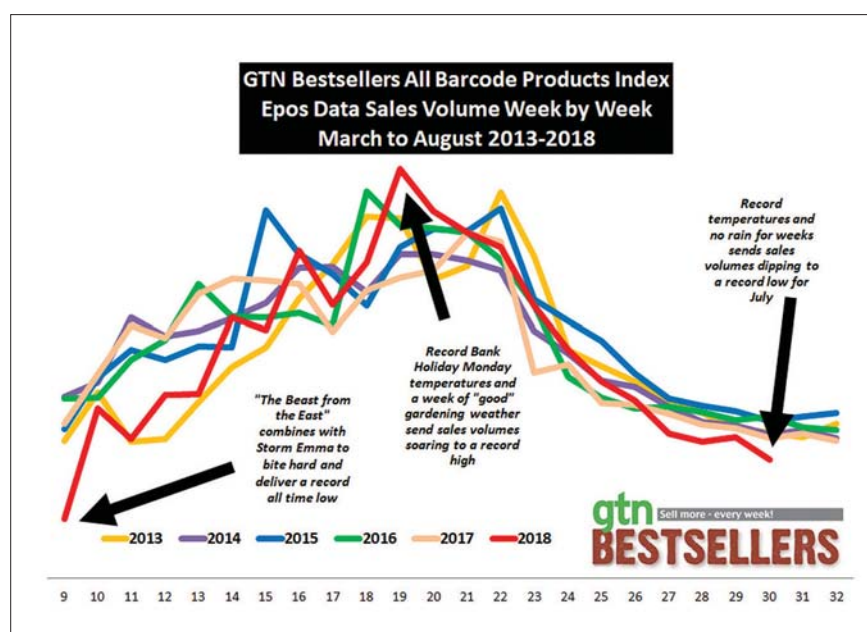
That means the half year of the GTN Bestsellers All Products Sales index is sitting at -1.4%. Not quite back to parity year on year as many would have hoped but an incredible recovery from the situation as it was in the middle of April.

With high sales levels from outdoor leisure products, driven by the heatwave, summer revenues were up and as a result many centres were reporting turn-

overs back to parity or up on 2017 at the half year end. The Summer Sun proved a bonanza for plants with the last week of June seeing an 84% year on year increase in overall volume plant sales. The

GTN Bestsellers All Plants reached 8.5% up on last year at the half year.

[BY GARDEN TRADE NEWS]



The Sale of the Century

On the 22nd May 2018, Terra Firma announced that it had put the 'For Sale' sign up on all of its 145 Wyevale Garden Centres in the UK, with a price tag of £442 million.

Unlike many other retail transactions now, Terra Firma are prepared to sell individual centres, groups of centres, or if someone wanted to buy the complete estate, all 145. That makes it the 'Sale of the Century' for garden centres in the UK and the outcome could change the face of garden centre retailing dramatically.

Christie & Co, a specialist business property advisor, has started the process of marketing the centres of which 81 are offered with Freehold and 64 as Leasehold sites. After the first round of bids, which are believed to have been in excess of 1,000, selected potential purchasers will then be invited to do due diligence before revising any final offers.

Why now? A change of ownership for Wyevale Garden Centres was always going to happen ever since Terra Firma bought the business for £276 million in 2012. As Guy Hands explained the day before the announcement: 'The fund is six years old now, we've had two years of extensions, but now the investors want us to do so-

omething. We've always said to them we're going to get the centres looking good, get the customers in and that will be the right timing.'

Selling them all to one buyer in the current climate, Homebase was bought for just £1.00, would probably mean investors would not get the returns they are expecting. Then, Terra Firma have been able to turn the peaks and troughs of the past few weeks trading into a positive sales story. According to their statement 'The sale comes at an advanced stage of a turnaround programme for Wyevale Garden Centres, which has seen significant investment in the core business. Customers and colleagues have responded positively to these improvements with the business now achieving sales and profit growth.'

Who will be bidding? The Top 10 groups, by number of sites, highlights the early runners: Dobbies investors Midlothian Capital stated an intent to buy new centres when they bought the business from Tesco in 2016. Blue Diamond already have negotiations ongoing for 5 new sites. Cherry Lane have been very acquisitive of late buying The Barn in Peterborough and David's Nurseries in Worcester. Charles Stubbs of British Garden Centres has

mentioned that he would like to bid for some of the Wyevale Centres. Martin Breddy of Squires, told GIMA members that they would look very closely at any opportunities to add centres within their existing geographical area.

The question now is a bit like garden centre poker. Who will twist and add to their estate? Who will stick and make the most of their existing business given all is changing yet again around them? Or who will stretch themselves too far and not pay attention to the unique challenges of the UK garden, home and catering markets and go bust? One thing is for sure, there will be plenty of meetings with potential financiers between now and September 7th as the 'Sale of the Century' comes to a close.

Footnote

On Friday 17th August, the Blue Diamond Group became the third largest Garden Centre group in the UK, following the integration of eight centres purchased from Wyevale Garden Centres. With two others sold to developers that leaves a further 135 centres to be sold and the current ownership of UK centres in groups of 10 or more.

[BY GARDEN TRADE NEWS]

Aug 18	Group	Outlets
1	Wyevale GC	135
2	Dobbies	34
3	Blue Diamond	30
4	Klondyke	22
5	Notcutts	18
6	Squires	16
7	Hillers	12
7	Cherry Lane	12
9	Hillview	11
10	British GC	10



Source GTN - updated 13-8-18

THE GARDEN RETAIL EXPERIENCE 2019

Reimagine Green



Great ideas on merchandising, concrete store concepts, retail presentations with a wow factor and hot topics: all tailored for the green retail industry. That's what visitors could experience at The Garden Retail Experience (TREx) last year. At the Dutch event suppliers show the latest trends in assortment, while visitors meet and keep up with novelties in an excellent professional atmosphere. TREx 2019 will take place on 13 and 14 February 2019. Get these dates in your schedule to keep your focus up to date.

Text Anita Meuleman

TREx is not just another trade fair but a substantive and entertaining retail event. It gives the visitor all the important aspects and trends in green retail. So was TREx 2018 in full swing this year. The event location was converted into a concept store where suppliers show their store presentations and ideas in a real garden centre environment.

At the very entrance, you stepped into a completely different world: Springtime with loads of flowers and birdsongs. After seeing an inspiring video, you could learn all about the various types of garden centre customers. That customer is what TREx is all about. Thereby the event had a completely different layout this year, with lots of concrete store concepts and hot topics from attendees.

Latest insights

TREx inspires and informs visitors with the latest ideas and insights in the field



Retail



of retail trends and consumer behaviour and the latest concepts of living green, garden and decorative items. The event is set up as a fun, surprising and enjoyable experience for the green sector. There is an extensive total programme with lectures, TREx talks, demos, expert tours and masterclasses.

Last year there were over 4.000 visitors and 150 participating suppliers at TREx: an event from which visitors return with abundant inspiration and motivation, and the perfect environment to network and connect with decision makers in the green industry.

Theme 2019

The main theme for the upcoming eighth edition is Reimagine Green Retail. The consumer has changed. Technology is developing fast. However, stores are fundamentally unchanged. It is time for real change! What would your garden

centre look like if you could start again tomorrow?

Together with 150 leading suppliers, the TREx creative team will convert the theme Reimagine Green Retail into inspiring and commercial cases, innovative store concepts and standout presentations of the new collections and latest retail trends. They will show how the store concept can look if you put the customer first.

For international visitors, there will be an interesting guided tour along three inspirational and innovative Dutch garden centres. This TREx Garden Centre Tour will take place the day before TREx at Tuesday 12 February – to combine perfectly with your visit to TREx 2019. TREx will take place on 13 and 14 February at Beursfabriek in Nieuwegein, The Netherlands. Retailers have free admission. 

10 Reasons to visit TREx

- There is a wealth of information and inspiration for all types of visitors.
- Visitors value TREx with an 8 and 95 percent indicated they would visit the event again next year.
- All relevant product categories from the green sector are presented by 150 leading suppliers.
- Discover new products and concepts in an area exceeding 13,000 m².
- Explore new ways of stimulating your sales.
- Discover the most important players in the sector under one roof.
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THE EUROPEAN GARDEN INDUSTRY OVER THE FIRST HALF OF 2018

'Green is the new gold'

After a strong decline in March and April, the past six months ended up being positive for the European garden centres. The trend continues to be more green in the home and garden, with sustainability playing an ever more important role. Halfway through 2018, it is time to take the first stock. Garden Retailer asks a number of European players from the garden industry about their findings.

Text and photos Anita Meuleman

In the Netherlands, the first half of the year was experienced as particularly erratic. After a beautiful start in January and February, there was a major decline in March. After the second week of April, the crescendo went up again. Double digits week after week until early June. Cumulatively, the industry is at plus 6.5 percent at the end of June.

The same pattern could also be seen in Germany, Belgium, Italy, Spain and Great Britain, where the season also had a really bad start: long periods of cold, wet, and snow until late April (*GB, DE*), and rain outside the norm in March, April and May (*IT, ES*). With similar consequences for sales.

Peter Paul Kleinbussink, Intratuin (NL)
'Things are looking up again, and you can see and feel that as a customer'

Intratuin is over six percent in the green at the end of June. 'We are more than happy with that. Houseplants, trees, shrubs, conifers, perennials, indoor pottery and outdoor atmosphere: these are groups with positive values of over ten percent. Basic gardening (*soil, tools*) went through a rough spell at the start of the season, but are now back around the zero level again.'

The expectations are positive. 'We are doing well economically, so it is a different kind of game. The development of the attention to green and related items is on the rise: we are very happy with that. Green is applied everywhere, including in stores and

restaurants. And that is our domain as garden centres, we are able to fulfil that expectation.'

'Also important is the return of the entrepreneurial spirit: investments are being made again – both online and offline, to better serve customers. We are to meet the needs of those customers better and better.' The Intratuin webshop has been online for one year in September, and it is doing well. 'The online sales are still quite limited', Kleinbussink has to admit. 'But not negligible. It is a very new channel with new laws.'

'The stores are up-to-date and full of inspiration and ideas, and there are events and catering: all sorts of things happen on the floor. Things are looking up again, and you can see and feel that as a customer, which is an additional reason to visit.'

'The sustainability aspect is becoming more and more important and fits perfectly with the zeitgeist. People would rather spend a bit more for an item that is more sustainable – I find that a great development that we are all more conscious about this. 'The sustainability aspects is becoming an increasingly important part of that and is naturally part of the overall concept.'

Jacky Michels, GroenRijk (NL)
'Local heroes are closest to our customers'

'GroenRijk has experienced a cumulative growth of ten percent up to and including June relative to the year before. In particular, the trees and shrubs, garden and bedding plants have shown



Nicora Garden Varese (IT)

an increase of over fifteen percent. But the houseplants are also still on the rise. Soil products, pesticides and barbecues also did well. In short, all categories profited from a good spring.'

'Online is not just important, but even crucial. Consumers want custom products, which makes data extremely important.' Michels has high expectations for the trend regarding green in the home and what it does to you. 'This will be embraced by consumers more and more. 'In the coming months, we will continue to anticipate this, and as an industry, we need to continue claiming authority as green experts.'

'With large posters in our corporate style, we have turned out own specialists into the face of the garden centre. Local heroes are closest to our customers – who respond very well to this. This interaction is worth gold! The goodwill factor generates willingness to buy from us.'

Frank van der Heide, Tuinbranche Nederland (NL) **'Not necessarily doing things big, but doing things powerfully'**

'Green has done particularly well. With pots, deco and all garden products on the rise. Online is playing an ever bigger role. Not just in terms of the purchase of larger products and price-transparent products, but also for orientation and inspiration. The amount of online green sales is also increasing – such as volume (*hedges*) and special houseplants.

His expectations for the industry? 'Positive. Of course. Today's market always presents opportunities.' He mainly expects a lot of green growth across the board. 'Show the relevance of green and offer your customers solutions. Think outside the box. Green is the new gold!'

In terms of the store image, Van der Heide sees opportunities in fully utilising the physical store. 'Make sure your team surprises and unburdens customers like no other. Create guest happiness! You also need to be present online via various channels. That is what pulls people to your store. I also strongly believe in niches. Not necessarily doing things big, but doing things powerfully.'

Iain Wylie, Garden Centre Association (GB) **'Attracting a broad range of consumers'**

GCA publishes monthly summary figures, which show that plants, barbecues and garden furniture have done particularly well. 'The poor start of the season was recovered in May, and we have seen monthly plusses of 25 percent ever since. The online market in Great Britain is also growing, but most garden centres saw their turnover grow through sales in the physical store.'

The prospect for the coming months? 'Naturally, the trade slows down in the summer, but the expectation is that (*above*) average levels will be maintained. The garden centres will transition into the Christmas sales in the autumn – those sales will be crucial for a good overall annual result.'

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Stadtgrün by toom, Keulen (DE)

'Many garden centres are investing in new infrastructure projects, mainly in restaurants. The garden industry also continues to attract a broad range of consumers of all ages.'

Bob Douliez, Garden Centre Holding (BE)
'Changes in the store image are ongoing'

'The developments of the garden centres of Oh'Green were and are good', says Bob Douliez from GCH, which opened the first Oh'Green pilot store in March. 'GCH does not provide figures. Green and plants are doing well, and so are the products related to watering – online does not yet play a role here. We expect stable growth in the coming months. Changes in the store image are ongoing, there are no new developments yet.'

Martina Mensing-Meckelburg, Gartencenter Meckelburg and VDG (DE)
'Regional is a megatrend'

'After the cold and therefore stiff season start, prior to the German Mother's Day, on 13 May, there was an explosion in garden centres: so many people, so much demand. The resulting problem was getting things where they needed to be – not a single empty truck could be found in all of Germany. In the past few weeks, it has been about thirty degrees in the North as well, which means that lots of manpower is needed for watering while there are too few customers in the garden centres.'

'Online remains difficult for our industry. The sales are not yet high enough, and with all this heat, there are fewer sales online. But it is important to be present online so that customers can inform themselves.'

'Regional is a megatrend – also for construction markets and supermarkets. Especially with fresh produce, it is important to focus on the region. A butterfly theme fits nicely with this as well, while also strengthening customers' contribution to biodiversity.'

Peter Wüst, Handelsverband Heimwerken, Bauen und Garten e.V. (D-A-CH)
'Smart gardening is an important trend'

'Over the first five months, there was a sales growth of 1.7 percent. We are very pleased with this – in March, the overall sales dropped by 20 percent, and the green sales sometimes dropped by as much as 40 percent. In April, a different problem arose: too little stock and too few people.'

'The garden-related range particularly flourished: garden tools (+7%) and watering products (+9%). What is interesting is that people spend more of their spare time outdoors. Outdoor living is relevant to garden furniture (+9.5) and to the bio trend, build-your-own-outdoor-kitchen and barbecue.' Wüst sees smart gardening, including robotic mowers, LED lighting systems and tools with replaceable batteries as an important trend.



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Centro de Jardineria Truvi, Menorca (ES)

Lots of work is being done to realise online solutions for their own webshop – the broad range of items makes this difficult. ‘But online is not the only competitor. The food retailers and the discounters: everyone works with our products. Especially independent garden centres are struggling. 90 percent of new openings are garden centres that are part of a DIY store.’

BHB predicted a plus of 2 percent for the overall sales in Germany in January. ‘It looks like we will achieve that, but it remains difficult to maintain the margins. Developing private labels and growing in solution-orientation toward customers offer opportunities.’

Santiago González Soriano, Asociación Española de Centros de Jardinería (ES)

‘New are departments with organic food’

In Spain, the economy is also on the rise, and this is clearly shown by shopping baskets in garden centres. ‘The rainy spring weather yielded poor results, but it looks like the sales figures have almost fully recovered in the past few months.’

‘The deco sections will continue to grow if you work hard on them. Departments with organic food and a few small restaurants are new. Most growth is found in the garden. And this goes hand in hand with all products and plants that contribute to sustainability. One of our association’s novelties is the fact that we edit instructional videos for use in the garden centres.’


The social networks (*mainly Facebook and Instagram*) are also growing’, says Santiago González.

Paolo Milani, Promogiardinaggio (IT)

‘Younger generations are displaying increasing interest in vegetable gardening’

‘The sharp decline in sales during the first quarter (-15 to -20%) was partially compensated for in May and June. We do not have any official GfK figures yet, but we expect the first half of 2018 to have lower figures than the same period in 2017.’

The sectors with the worst performance were garden (-11% Q1 2018) and plant protection products – the sale of which is strongly limited due to a decree for a sales ban in Italy as of May 2020. On the other hand, sales of seedlings and gardening solutions increased, and so did barbecues, swimming pools and robotic mowers.

A social trend is younger generations’ increasing interest in vegetable gardening. A second interesting trend, according to Milani, is the Internet of Things, with products that make it possible to manage garden activities (*irrigation, lawnmowing, lighting*) via a smartphone. Smart gardening is in its infancy in Italy – and is currently reserved for an elite. However, the success of robotic mowers indicates that the Italian consumer wishes are presumably headed in this direction. 

OPENINGS IN THE GREEN RETAIL

(Re)building on the positive economic wave

The garden centre branch has been on the rise again since 2017. This positive impulse was the signal for many entrepreneurs to put (*postponed*) renovation plans into operation. In a nutshell, Garden Retailer provides an overview of high-profile projects and grand openings.

Text and photos Ilse Broers, Anita Meuleman

Bauhaus is picking up steam



Bauhaus has opened its new location in Venlo, the Netherlands. It is the construction giant's fourth opening in Europe this year, after Denmark, Bruchwald in Southern Germany and Innsbruck Austria. Malmö in Sweden will follow later this year as well. Bauhaus is picking up steam.

The store has a first for Bauhaus: the first animal department. 'The first in Europe,

and we are quite proud of that. Also new are the show gardens in the outdoor area', says Herwin Oost, director in the Netherlands. The 18,000 m² building is certainly impressive: its red pops out along the ring road. With the drive-in and the Bauhaus café on the left, the construction centre in the middle and the City Garden on the right, which is a 5,000 m² garden centre with its own entrance.

'With Venlo, we are on track with our expansion plans', says Oost. 'The omnichannel strategy is getting all the attention now: there will be an online shop, doubling the number of employees at our Service Centre.' Venlo is the third Bauhaus in the Netherlands, and four more openings are planned in the next two years.

Green Trade Centre in Aalsmeer



The Waterdrinker Green Trade Centre (GTC) in Aalsmeer was built right next to the head office of green supplier Waterdrinker. The entrance is a green oasis with a LAB, in which breeders show what they are working on, a Green Café is included as well as a passage to the enormous greenhouse where visitors can make their choice from the range of greenery and flowers.

‘One-stop shopping’, that was the idea behind the new wholesale centre. Waterdrinker wants to be the green coach for its customers, says manager René Brand. ‘We want to share knowledge and innovation here, and show our customers how to inspire and tempt consumers to buy more flowers and plants.’

The enormous greenhouse spread across 20,000 m², developed by Kondor Wessels projects and built by Boele & van Eesteren and Thermoflor, is clearly arranged with clear routing. In shop-in-shops, growers present themselves and their products. In a flower cutting department, the florist can also buy special flowers per bunch and per container in addition to the standard assortment.



First pilot store Oh'Green Belgium open

The brand-new Oh'Green Aarschot of the brand new Belgian group Garden Centre Holding is a fact. A brand new building, a clear layout and peace of mind on the shop floor. Ask about their ambition and it sounds clear: 'We want to become the largest and best garden centre chain in Belgium'.

The store is a pilot of the new Oh'Green and broke all records in terms of customer visiting numbers in the first week. Sales manager Roel van Looy: 'The catering industry will come in November. We are going to bring a hospitality story that fits in perfectly with the rest of our store: a total experience with a moment to relax'.

The new garden centre chain Oh'Green with a total of twelve stores arose from a merger between the French-speaking Oh!Green, active in Wallonia, and the Hurbogroep who owned the store chain Walter van Gastel, as well as three Intratuin stores. The chain is planning several Oh'Green stores during the next two years.



Hornbach continues full steam ahead



Hornbach Zwolle (NL) is open. Thousands of people came to the opening days of the project construction market with a garden centre of 2,500 m². Special attention was paid to sustainable construction and selection of materials.

'We have our eyes firmly on the future', says general manager Evert de Goede. 'For

example, we have worked in a sustainable water-safe way and we use water-permeable paving and an infiltration technique that automatically cleans groundwater.' The Zwolle Hornbach is the fourteenth in the Netherlands. The plans for city shops have taken a backseat for the moment. 'They will not come to the Netherlands for the time being. In Germany the city shops

are still in the testing phase.' The construction of the fifteenth shop in Duiven has started.

Recently, another location was opened in Affoltern am Albis in Switzerland, after last year's opening in Halle, Germany. Another opening in Sweden is planned for later this year.

Thousand seats at Intratuin



Intratuin Duiven, with 24,000 m², the largest Intratuin in the Netherlands, has opened its new catering business. It has become a mega restaurant with two floors and 950 seats. The restaurant is combined with a large climbing garden

and playground for children. Manager Gerard Niesink: 'The hospitality industry has become a company in itself'.

The approach was to give the shoppers of the large retail park a moment of rest



and children a place to play. 'With this combination, we think we can attract a broad target group.' The extension was delivered by Thermoflor following a design by Breddels Architects.

Stox reopens under his own name

In the Netherlands Peter Stox said goodbye to the Praxis building market, where he developed and rolled out the vision and strategy for the Praxis Garden Centre formula, and chose to continue without a big formula.

This spring, the entrepreneur reopened his three garden centres in the south of the Netherlands under his own name: 'bijSTOX'.

'Our ambitions were too big. Interestingly, the customers keep coming. A formula name is therefore not the 'be all and end all'. The DNA of your company is the most important thing. He reopened a fourth store, including a grower, under the name 'Linssen bijSTOX'. Customers choose their own plants here through Linssen, the grower's greenhouse, and pick their own flowers in the picking garden.



Expansion of Nicora Garden Varese (Italy)



Nicora Garden in the Italian Varese has been expanded by nearly 2,000 m², bringing its total surface area to 4,000 m². Plants are being given more and more space in the renewed garden centre, and they spare no expense for Christmas either.

Nicora Garden is part of the Giardinia Group. It is a true family company. Founded by grandfather and continued by father Ambrogio Nicora. Sons Ambrogio and Vittore Nicora took over the company in 2010. In addition to the company in Varese, there is also a garden centre in Gazzada.

What is striking is that products are often presented by brand rather than by use. 'I don't see why we should find a way to mix brands, as it only results in confusion for customers', says Ambrogio Nicora. [BY GREENLINE, GREENRETAIL.IT]

New garden centre for Hobbyland in Denmark

In the town of Roskilde, about 35 kilometres west of Copenhagen, Smiemans Projecten will build a new garden centre for Hobbyland next to their existing building. The owner of Hobbyland has chosen to divide the construction of this project into two phases. The construction for the first phase will start in September.



Next to the existing building a 'widespan' greenhouse construction will be built, with a new spacious entrance. A glass

corridor will be built around the outdoor area, which offers visitors more convenience and comfort to buy outside plants

in bad weather. After completing the construction, the garden centre will have a total indoor sales area of over 3,000 m².

New construction De Haan Group



The international garden centre designer, De Haan Group, started the construction of a new building in Waalwijk, in the back-

yard of their current office. De Haan Group has been experiencing solid growth in recent years. They hope to wel-

come their customers to this new location by the end of this year.

Owner Kees de Haan, is actively involved in the construction. For him, it's about more than just extra space: 'Our new building has to become a place where we can show customers that we breathe creativity and think beyond the fixed regime. Garden centres are our specialty. It will not surprise anyone that green, in all forms, is a very important aspect in our design and layout'.

Intratuin expands to 10 stores in Germany

Intratuin is going to expand its stores in Germany considerably. Intratuin Dulmen opened in the spring of 2018, near Münster. It is the third branch owned by the Moubus family. Earlier, Intratuin director Peter Paul Kleinbussink spoke about growing to 25 branches in Germany. Is that aim still there? 'Yes, that is still possible.'

'In the first instance we focus on the border areas, our preference goes to North Rhine-Westphalia, so that it can be tackled logically from the Netherlands. And we have made agreements with two other entrepreneurs who will be there in January 2019. Together they have seven

stores. 'As of January 2019 there will be ten Intratuin stores in Germany, with among three entrepreneurs.'

The degree of cooperation is different in both Germany and Belgium, compared

to the Netherlands, says Kleinbussink. 'The Dutch are polderers, and they will roll up their sleeves collectively somewhere: That culture is less developed in other countries. They still have to experience the benefits of that.'



New look for Erika Vivai Mancinelli (Italy)

In May, the renewed Erika Vivai Mancinelli garden centre opened in Rome. The new glass greenhouse construction (550 m²) has replaced the previous one and is a clear, transparent concept aimed at emphasising the plant range. 'We offer fertiliser, seeds, pots and other essential garden accessories. But we actually wanted to emphasise the plants most with the new construction', owner Erika Mancinelli explains. The latest technologies in the field of floor heating and computerised climate control were applied for the construction.

Within the garden centre, a sort of 'greenhouse in a greenhouse' has been created for the orchids, one of Erika Vivai's specialties. In addition to the garden centre, Erika Vivai Mancinelli also provides green maintenance and construction, irrigation and lighting system construction, and decoration for weddings and events. The nursery (8,000 m²) is a reference point for professionals and enthusiasts in the Rome region. Erika Mancinelli: 'We see a greater interest in green and beauty. This is a magical place!'

[BY GREENLINE, GREENRETAIL.IT]



Restaurant as a crowd puller in English coastal town



Groves Nurseries in Bridport, England, opened its new 300-seat restaurant in May, designed by architect Malcolm Scott Consultants.

In the coastal town of Bridport in England, Groves Nurseries wanted a restau-

rant much like many other garden centres in England.

The restaurant has high, lit up, arches and has a ridge height of 8.5 metres with an area of 415 m². Three different rooms with a total of 300 seats have been set up here.

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Highlighting the strengths and peculiarities

German garden centre Landgärtnerei Meier, Stephansposching (*egesa garten member*) has made some major changes. Together with the owner Ms. Claudia Meier and NBB-egesa, De Haan Group has developed individual solutions from the concept of *egesa garten*. These should highlight the strengths and peculiarities of the Meier landscape gardening.

A focal point is the agricultural market with fresh fruit and vegetables, which is placed in a central location and is clearly visible to the customer through a perimeter pergola. Together with Ms. Meier, De Haan Group has developed special presentation furniture for this area and integrated it into the overall concept of *egesa*.

Furthermore, the in-house production of bedding and balcony plants is one of the strengths of Meier. Therefore special tables are developed, which can be used both as a plant table and as a decoration

table. Thus, plants from the own production can be optimally staged with a variety of hardware. Natural, warm wood materials, such as Douglas fir or larch natural or spruce gray, were applied.



Importance of the terroir department is growing

Magasin Vert Point Vert Metz part of the French chain Magasin Vert, has made two major expansions in the past year. The cold greenhouse has been added in its entirety to the existing warm greenhouse. Then a completely new cold greenhouse was acquired.

We see that in France the terroir department is becoming more and more important. Sales of fresh items such as fruit

and vegetables are increasing. The Terroir department is therefore increasingly becoming a separate area that is accessible through the store and its own entrance. Besides fruit and vegetables, this is the place for the sale of, among other things, wines, olive oil and other foods.

Magasin Vert Point Vert Metz has converted the existing warehouse into a complete terroir division. At the moment De

Haan Group is working on expanding the terroir departments at three other stores.

With these renovations the entire shop is under control. The route has been redesigned so that customers can walk across all departments in a logical manner. The old interior has been updated to the new starting points and signing communication has been added.



20 YEARS OF CAPI EUROPE

Production & sustainability in harmony



A brand new factory, an impressively large warehouse and an atmospheric, spacious showroom: a lot of work has been done here. Construction began in April 2017, logistics were already in by October. And the office and production moved in November. But that is not all, because Capi Europe is also celebrating its 20th anniversary.

Text and photos Anita Meuleman

Capi Europe's new factory is in good company at the new location. At the new industrial zone in Tilburg (NL), you can find Tesla, Coolblue, Coca-Cola, Nokia, Sony, Samsung and H&M. And the view of Capi Europe is also impressive. Twenty loading docks and a large office building with lots of glass. With an entrance that features a seven-metre high mosaic wall of an iconic product photo with one of the large lightweight pots that Capi is famous for.

This mosaic application, in which any picture can be converted to mosaic, is

something Capi will now be offering as well. The spacious office garden borders the warehouse, which has a white steel structure. This has a friendlier appearance and makes the building much brighter, fresher and more pleasant for people to work in. The warehouse is really built for growth, with the logistics office, where drivers can report in, at the centre.

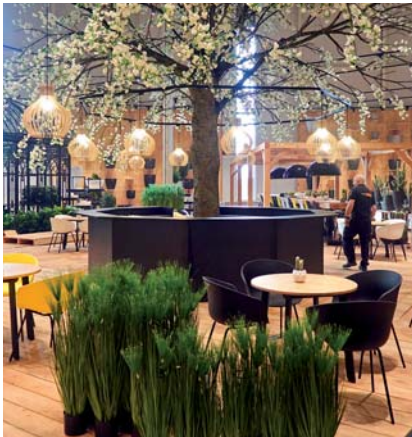
Capi Europe sells its products in over 70 countries. This is also necessary for the season spread. All pots with the orange insides are made here in Tilburg. This

required a significant expansion of the product capacity into two production lines of twelve robots.

New business

A large showroom was chosen as a characteristic of new business. An experience space complete with a treehouse, a theatre and a stripped land rover as a coffee corner. The blossom tree forms the heart of the showroom - which is a real tree that was covered with artificial flowers. The twelve-metre long table is an eye-catcher as well and is made of a single piece from an African *Acacia*. Stacks of pots are found here and there.

The showroom has a pleasant atmosphere, in part due to the use of blond wood, the many plants and the abundance of light that shines through the twelve-metre high windows. Somewhat hidden and surprising is an actual theatre. With red velvet chairs from the Midtheater in Tilburg that had to be demolished. 'Here, we can give presentations and workshops and receive large groups of customers and schools.'



The large showroom demonstrates the possibilities of Capi's pots in an abundant way. They make use of artificial plants from Edelman and presentation furniture from De Haan Group for this. These companies may also use the showroom to show the applications to their customers.

Industry and green

In addition to the new location, there is also Capi Europe's 20th anniversary. How did it look twenty years ago? Managing Director Toine van de Ven: 'I started small by making concrete sculptures, bird boxes and vases. And yes, garden gnomes as well. I kept changing my company to take the next step – concrete production in Vietnam, then lightweight in China, and then production in the Netherlands'. The entire design of the products, the shapes and the sizes were all done by Van de Ven himself until recently. 'Now I have hired a full-time designer, and we work on that together.'

Sustainability and CSR are in Capi Europe's DNA. That started with the Made in Holland line and continues to be very impor-


tant. 'The roof will have solar panels, we have sheep to maintain the grass rather than tractors, and there will be lots of trees and beehives on the embankment.'

The new building is BREEAM certified, which is the Dutch quality mark for assessing the sustainability performance of new construction projects. 'We are the only ones on this industrial zone without gas, we heat the building with the cooling water from our factory. Across from here is the nature area Galgeneind: we have installed a lot of bird boxes, including for the many birds of prey. And we are going to do something with water as well.'

Step forward

What gave you the idea to bring production to the Netherlands? 'I don't believe in the future of China and don't like working there. I can't change the Chinese culture, and desperately wanted to bring automated production to the Netherlands and create jobs here. The protection of your own technology and products also plays a part.'

'Once the production is up and running, we will try to take another next step', says Van de Ven. 'This year. That is the plan, at least.' A tip of the veil? 'We started a partnership with De Haan and Edelman.' We already knew that in part. 'And I bought an interest in Xala, known for its beautifully designed watering cans. I am now co-owner of that: we are going to take care of all sales and also start producing: We have seven new models.'

When I leave, my eyes catch the large letters on the side of the Capi building that read: From here we spread our wings. 



NEW PFLANZEN BREUER FORMULA

Green connoisseurs in a warm and open store concept



‘Es war Wahnsinn’, says Doris Breuer of Pflanzent Breuer. Together with her husband Frank she runs the flagship store belonging to the Grün Erleben chain, which has been given a complete makeover. The customers continued to come into the store after the reopening in early March, even for the new restaurant, where they would then spend hours at a time. First improvement point: more parking spaces.

Text Ilse Broers **Photos** Schwitzke GmbH and Ilse Broers

Sankt Augustin is a town with 50,000 inhabitants, located between Cologne and Bonn. On the main road nine years ago the current building of 8,000 m² was erected here. During the redesign the entrance was more prominent in the store. It has rhythm, peace and space. The entrance sparkles; the shopping area you’re

entering is shown in capital white letters with a black surface as a backdrop. This makes the store transparent and at the same time inviting.

Green is omnipresent: from the entrance to the checkout area. Shop designer Kees de Haan, who supervised the project,

says: ‘The whole shop has to breathe that you are here among green specialists: you need to be better if you want to do something with plants. Pflanzent Breuer has traditionally always been hugely dominated by green. Founder Hugo Breuer is an icon in the Grün Erleben group;



Doris is one of his three daughters – and all three have a garden centre’.

Warm and natural

The light oak that has been chosen for the interior and exterior panelling creates an instant warm and natural look. Inside, nothing has been cut down. A local shop can be found in the entrance hall; selling popular items, pickles, potatoes, and seasonal products. ‘The entrance, which was narrow and dark, was previously not used for retail. Now you have an open view from the entrance into the store.’

For the new formula, three parties worked together on a new logo and new colours: the garden centre, branding and commu-

nication agency Schwitzke GmbH from Düsseldorf and the Dutch shop furnishing De Haan Group. De Haan: ‘Our starting point was very clear: we wanted to create a new atmosphere while retaining all the past goodness. That was the basis. An open structure and very clear communication suited this.’

German hiking routes

The signposting is simply humorous and catches the eye: the same yellow arrows are used on German walking routes. ‘It is logical that you want to follow it and then just walk the entire shopping route.’ The routes can never be indicated clearly enough, according to De Haan. ‘Every entrepreneur thinks that his shopping route is logical, but the reality is that the

customer often has to search, especially in the larger stores.’

The use of open low racks is notable; visibility isn’t compromised anywhere by high product stock lined up throughout, so long you get long stretched out views. With regular showstoppers along the main path with great presentations and an eyecatcher at the end; a wooden house, a green wall.

Baked potato

And then: the new showpiece of the formula. Café Bistro Garten Küche. With 300 seats, spread over three sections. ‘The spheres are different; you can lounge, work and of course enjoy a pleasant dinner. Catering is a new important pillar.’

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Capi Nature Clay NL



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Capi Nature Rib NL



New
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frost in the winter.



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The dishes are freshly prepared on the spot: pasta Bolognese, baked potato with grilled vegetables, schnitzel with fries, and the most fantastic cakes. 'Germans do not do sandwiches at noon, lunch is a serious meal here.'

The play area with ball box and climbing frame for children is sound proofed with a glass wall in front of it, a blessing for the ear. Mothers sit relaxed with a magazine while the children are enjoying themselves. And as a surprise: the outdoor terrace. An oasis between the green, with tables that have a view of the outdoor plants; a great place to sit.


What is the concept for the new Pflanzen Breuer garden centre? 'On 8,000 m², visitors can now expect a green Experience Location with an open, modern design as well as an inviting café area.' Design office Schwitzke has also developed the basic brand and store concept for Grün Erleben. To underline the natu-

ral context of the garden centre, Schwitzke chose puristic wooden slates as special features for the entrance and parts of the façade.

By rebuilding their garden centre, the owner family Breuer has responded to a changing and demanding market, says Schwitzke: 'Due to the emerging garden trend, diverse target groups with high expectations are evolving. Furthermore, it was necessary to position the company as strong and future-oriented, different from its competitors. As an already embodied connection, the combination of Garden and Experience was to be sharpened and enhanced, the external appearance of the garden centre optimised and opened up. The goal: more natural, more openness, more zeitgeist as well as a better quality of stay so visitors want to stay longer.

The final result is a place that both the family owners as well as future visitors

can identify with and that sets the standard for competitors'.

Furthermore, gastronomy enhances the experience through all senses within the garden centre: 'The green industry already offers a special and unique atmosphere. A potential that can be increased with a suitable gastronomy concept' 

'An inviting host'

Klaus Schwitzke, managing director of Schwitzke Group is excited about the renewed store. 'Garden lovers now experience a warm welcome. With the new garden centre, the family Breuer presents itself as a garden and plant expert, but also as an inviting host, who provides real additional value for his customers. These are the requirements to future retail concepts.'

Belgian market for garden centres in motion

Big news in Belgium, March 2017: plans for a merger between the four shops of the Flemish garden centre chain Walter van Gastel, three Flemish shops of Intratuin (*all seven of which are a part of the Hubo-group*) and the Walloon competitor Oh!Green, with the objective of becoming a new national chain. After a period of radio silence, a few surprising developments mark new beginnings.

Text Anita Meuleman

Starting with the opening on 14 March of a first pilot store of Oh'Green in Aarschot. This first shop of the renewed Oh'Green-concept is situated at the location of the former Intratuin store. The shop was rebuilt from scratch. Construction is carried out in two stages: in all close to 10,000 square metres of shopping area is created.

'The group Garden Centre Holding has resulted from the merger of the Walloon chain of garden centres Oh!Green with its Flemish competitor Walter Van Gastel, as well as with three Intratuin franchises. Garden Centre Holding was founded specifically in 2017 to combine the activities of the three brands in a single brand. The new garden group chooses

to retain the brand name Oh'Green for the new stores', explains Marleen Bellen of Garden Centre Holding.

An experience

With the opening of a pilot store in Aarschot, the new Oh'Green has acquired a look. After a period of trial and error, over the course of the coming months the other eleven stores will also be transformed according to the new concept. They all will be integrated under the flag of Oh'Green. In an interview with TuinZaken earlier this year, Bob Douliez, CEO of Garden Centre Holding, tells us about his plans for the future of Oh'Green.

'The main aspect we focus on is the experience! The experience of customers and the offering of solutions based on customer needs is one of the priorities of our approach. Also the transfer of know-how concerning all kinds of activities in and around the house is important. And fair pricing: incredibly good products for a fair price. These are the three pillars we are going to build on.'

'Aarschot for us truly is a pilot store, and not a concept store. In July 2017, we decided that we would roll out in this way.





Foto: Anita Meuleman

Some seven months later, we opened the store. We have incorporated a number of items there which are specific to the formula, and now it is a matter of letting them evolve and to evaluate so we can plan the entire roll-out and conceptualise it. We will have to wait and see how the market will respond, but matters will in any case be subsumed under the visual identity of Oh'Green, so that we will be able to communicate with greater ease.'

'When it comes to gardening per se, people over 45 will remain our core-customers: meaning those who invest – planting the garden, adding a barbecue, garden furniture. In addition, we want to offer items of interest for a younger generation, which is much more interested in atmosphere and awareness: well-being, living well. But also the integration of work and personal life: how to deal with it; how can you integrate green in your life, adding healthy nutrition, a vegetable garden, home-growing.'

'Staff, that's where the actual added value is. That's where your ambition must lie. And that also means that you deploy technology where people do not

have an added value. Giving your customers added know-how and reconfirmation is a part of the experience. That's where you want to have people; close to your customer, as much as possible. In our sector, I still haven't seen any shops which use self-scan technology. Progress can be made there. When I receive customers in my store today, they are quite knowledgeable; they have looked everything over on the internet already, yet they have come to the store. That also means that they seek a component of human interaction', says Douliez.

Intratuin Belgium

The changes in the Belgian gardening market have major consequences for Intratuin as well. Three of the five Intratuin branches in Belgium are transferred to Oh'Green. Peter Paul Kleinbussink, general director of Intratuin: 'We are talking about three stores which have always been commercially successful, and we are losing them. We regret that. That does not mean that we will leave Belgium: we are going to open a third store with Peter van Hulle. He has taken over Bloemenparadijs in Zwevegem, restructuring and an extension are under way:

mid-September Intratuin Zwevegem is opening'.

'With the three Intratuin stores of Peter van Hulle – Lovendegem, Maldegem, and Zwevegem – we are carrying on with our strategy in Belgium. Thereby we hope to collaborate with independent entrepreneurs from Belgium who want to team up with the partnership to further develop an organisation which is able to respond to the demands of the Belgian marketplace. This is the objective.' 

Garden Centre Holding has twelve garden centres in Flanders and Wallonia, with a total of around 280 people who realise an annual turnover of 70 million euros.

Five Belgian garden centres of Oh!Green, and three Belgian Intratuin-branches will continue their activities under the name of Oh'Green. The four shops of Walter van Gastel will be sub-titled 'part of Oh'Green'. In turnover, the new group will be ranked number two in the Belgian garden supplies sector.



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THREE STAKEHOLDERS ABOUT
THE NEW START-UP IN ESTONIA

'Gardest is the market leader in Northeast Europe'



Garden centre Gardest in Tartu, the second-largest city in Estonia, was opened in the spring of 2018. A next level garden centre in a developing market in Northeast Europe, says export manager Ferry Breugem from Thermoflor who supervised the construction. 'It can measure itself with top garden centres in Europe.'

Text Ilse Broers **Photos** Thermoflor

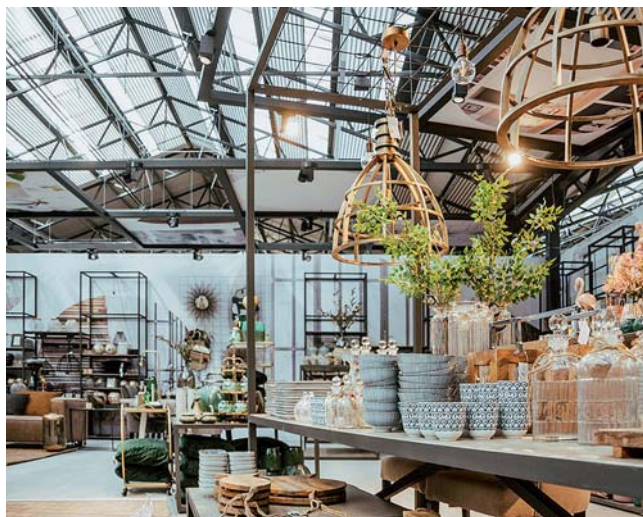
Entrepreneur Raul Jeets is a new player in the green industry. He chose a destination garden centre, the garden centre as a day out, with a restaurant and a play area for children. Gardest wants to compete with large shopping malls in the area and brought together various areas in a space of 6,000 m². He wants to at-

tract customers from a large area. Green sale and catering are the foundation, next to interior and animals.

The design includes local influences. A local architect and local marketing agency helped with that. It became a modern building with an additional floor,

made of glass and steel and lots of natural materials. It is a great mix: the sleek design of the building with the wood and other elements such as bricks from old farms that used to be in this place. Breugem: 'Those stones are a hundred years old, and give it a great look. And it is great to be able to reuse materials in this way.'

It is a 'bright building'. That means the natural light incidence is combined with a sustainable appearance; one of Thermoflor's specialties. In addition to the black metal elements at the entrance, the interior has an industrial atmosphere with a Solid Black colour scheme. 'The green comes out particularly well against the matte black of the racks. The tranquil undertones unify the interior. Screen fabrics make for an atmospheric look and a



peaceful overall appearance. Here, it is considered a special formula.'

The construction, during the winter of 2018, took place under harsh Baltic weather conditions. That was 'hard enough', explains Breugem. 'It was ten degrees below zero during the day; a major concern was that there could be no ice be-

The entrepreneur worked together closely with a team of Dutch garden industry specialists (including *De Haan Group*, *Thermoflor*, *Peter Dekker Installaties*, the *Store Performance Group*, and various suppliers) in the field of market research, purchasing, design and training.

tween the roof panels, and that the interior floors might freeze.'

Raised brows

A fantastic project is what Pepijn Janssen calls it. The consultant from the Store Performance Group, a Dutch agency for green retail, has been in Estonia for the operational guidance since September of last year. 'People respond pleasantly surprised when they first come here, and are proud to have such a beautiful garden centre in the region. The market in Estonia is in full development; we have hypermodern shopping centres here, as well as DIY stores with decent garden departments.'

The routing does cause a lot of raised brows, the consultant explains. 'Estonians

need to get used to the garden centre in this form; with an interior department and an animal shop. What we sell most here is green, with a share of 65 percent. Even though the offer is a bit less due to the climate. We only sell green if we know that it can survive the winter, and you have to think about temperatures as low as 30 degrees below zero.'

After the overwhelming launch, and opening that drew thousands of interested people, the hype faded a bit. Janssen: 'The first month was a huge success; the parking lot was full and our floors were full of people. We were more than happy until late May, but June and July were more difficult, because Tartu is a real student city that kind of dies down in those months. Now we are seeing an increase again, also



thanks to our current marketing plan. That gives us confidence for the future’

Fresh approach

Unique for the Baltic States, according to Laurens Doesborgh, commercial director of retail designers De Haan Group. ‘This entrepreneur, a major player in agriculture, is not from the garden industry. That results in a surprisingly fresh approach. He wants to sell solutions, and uses special corners and smaller presentations for that. His wife does have a garden design background, though.’


The use of natural materials immediately creates a warm appearance, says Doesborgh. ‘Plus, the materials are local: lots of wood comes from nearby forests and is immediately processed.’ The sig-

ning in fresh colours was developed and made by the retail designers together with a local marketing agency. The navigation was applied as a small strip above the racks, at a height of 3 m 40 cm, so that the customer immediately sees where they can find their products. ‘Large visuals of 4 metres wide and 2.5 metres high have been implemented in the racks; this means the shopping route can also be followed in images.’

Wake-up call

It has been set up in a large way, according to Doesborgh. ‘During my last visit, it struck me that nearby plant centres have suddenly started advertising much more. As if they have had a wake-up call: the market is changing. The focus will now be on frequency: customers need to

come more often. They will be working hard on that now with a market analysis. The entrepreneur has hired the expertise of retail expert Pepijn Janssen for a longer period; he has so much knowledge of the green market that it can make a world of difference.’

Gardest is ahead of its competitors, states Doesborgh. ‘Especially after that running start. Sales are above average; people who visit buy a lot of stuff. That shows that the customer likes it. The price level is good, and there is a good selection of products. Now, the real adventure begins. Because we can set up and design a beautiful store: but things only really start after that.’ 

OUTDOOR LIVING TRENDS

A personal mix

Text Petra Lejeune

People are becoming more and more creative, also when it comes to furnishing of outdoor spaces. In addition, luxury is central, we want to enjoy outside as we do indoors. With all comforts within reach. Sitting in a comfortable chair that can withstand all types of weather while we taste the most delicious dishes we have prepared in our complete outdoor kitchen. Long live the outdoors!



Comfortable lounge set made of durable, water-resistant materials and with a 100% waterproof and antibacterial fabric from Bubalou

Man is made to be outside, with some fresh air you can truly relax more easily. A lot of attention therefore is put into turning the outdoor space into a personal paradise.

Some do that with lots of green and flowering, colourful borders, exuberant and loose. With this atmosphere, a combination of straight and round shapes works well, ensuring dynamism in the garden. People choose the best of different

movements in a sense: industrial with rural, classic with minimalist. And mix it into a personal whole. People like to combine garden furniture and different lines with each other. But also a grandmother's cabinet or an industrial cable reel with a sleek new garden set. Spontaneous, exciting and loose are the keywords here.

Some prefer the 'less is more' principle: compact, straightforward and organised.

Plant containers are large and provide peace of mind for the eye. A lot of green: a number of well-chosen varieties. This creates a beautifully styled space that exudes tranquillity and where a modern garden set is completely at home. It is all a matter of taste and lifestyle.

Assortment

The garden sets become more complete every year. The possibilities to put together your ideal outside lounge area are



Water resistant stitching from B & B Outdoor



The colour green is popular, a nice example is this set by Kaemingk



Flexible solution from Sieger



Rolling parasol base by LiRo

endless. Which arrangement is best suited for the space available in the garden?

A corner sofa or a lounge sofa with a chaise longue section provides peace because it consists of a single unit. Ideal to place as a large object in a large outdoor space and to get away with the whole family.

In addition, more and more sets are being added. Two nice two-seaters can

be nicely combined in a symmetrical arrangement for a sleek result. But it can also be more playful. For example, by combining a three-seater with an armchair, footstool, an egg chair, stool or loose tables. Or by combining various items from different series. Mix and match is the magic word for a personal outdoor space.

Suppliers of garden products are offering the customer more and more choice.

Endless colours and designs to choose from and can create your own combination. Which leg will it be, which armrest do we prefer? The back of the chair in a different colour to the seat? Why not? In fact, customisation is an option: the customer determines.

Materials

The inspiration comes from all over the world and results in a variety of materials, styles and uses. Experiments are



Outdoor Cooking by Quan Garden Art



Four types of preparation with the Vinson from Landmann via Kebo



KEK range from OutTrade, for a natural feeling

carried out with new materials and with refreshing combinations such as cement with wood or rope with metal. Specially coated aluminium, teak and bamboo are popular and form a good alternative to wicker. The weather-proof cushions give the furniture the look that we love to see outside. Comfortable and soft, waterproof or with special water-permeable filling and water-sloping stitching – where no water can run into the pillow itself. The colour is always protected, so that the customer can enjoy their purchase for a long time.

Decoration

Accessories are an increasing part of the outdoor space. Deco articles just provide extra atmosphere and colour for the chosen furniture. Materials such as terracotta, leather, jute, robust cotton, wood and rusted metal are popular here. Some products can be used both indoors and outdoors, ideal for perfectly coordinating both indoor and outdoor spaces.

Flexibility

We spend more and more time outside. Canopies, awnings and parasols protect against rain or excessive sunlight. Stable

and super strong. And also practical and convenient, such as the umbrellas with a mobile base that simply stay upright. Thanks to a lever system, the wheels are raised, making the parasol easy to move. Shadow for a dinner with the family or a different arrangement at a party. Smart solutions make it easy.

Outdoor cooking

The barbecue experience is still gaining ground. The dishes prepared for this are spectacular. The amateur chef is getting more and more professional and also wants to invest in good equipment.



Atmospheric warm light from Techmar



All parasols from Scolari are produced entirely in Italy



Comfortable Sophie chair with curved technology by Hartman

From barbecue to complete outdoor kitchen, it can all be more exclusive. There are products that combine barbecue, fire bowl, wood storage, plancha cooking ring and grill. With a leather apron for the grill master, because it's tough to prepare your food on a real fire.

Spotlight

Atmospheric lighting adds another dimension to an outdoor space. During the long evenings in the summer outside, it is of course nice to have soft outside light in addition to lighting real fire in an outdoor fireplace, with a lantern or

wind light. Essential for lighting pathways, so there is a practical aspect. But also the day passes into the night with atmosphere. The LED lights these days have a warm feel, like the filament lamps that look like traditional light bulbs.

Trend colour

Even though it is generally pretty green outside, you can never have enough of the colour green when decorating the garden. Garden furniture, cushions, accessories, green – from light to dark – is the colour of this moment.

In addition to green, timeless shades of grey and beige remain popular and form a good basis for making changes easily with well-chosen deco products. Soft colours combined with playful designs or graphic patterns do well, as well as denim blue – beautiful in combination with warm brown tones. When you want to blend and match indoor and outdoor, consistent use of colours is recommended. This is all possible with the options on offer today. 

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