

Features

2/1/2025

Embracing Technology and Sustainability for Growth

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The garden retail industry is at a crossroads. Shifting consumer habits, digital-

first expectations and growing environmental consciousness are challenging garden centers to adapt or risk falling behind. However, with the right strategies and tools, garden retailers can thrive in this new landscape.

A New Era for Garden Retail

Shoppers today want more than a good deal on plants.

They're looking for an experience—something seamless and personal. Research from the Square Future of Retail Report: 2024 Edition shows that a full 100% of retail businesses prefer automation for tasks like tracking inventory or ordering out-of-stock products, highlighting the growing demand for efficient, technology-driven solutions. For garden retailers, meeting these demands is essential.

Meanwhile, for 43% of growth-minded businesses, automating order tracking isn't just nice to have, it's a game-changer—simplifying operations and keeping customers happy. E-commerce is also opening new doors for garden centers, helping them connect with both local regulars and plant lovers far and wide. Even smaller garden centers are seeing how a strong online presence can drive real growth and keep them ahead in a competitive market.

Square provides garden centers with tools that simplify operations and streamline the customer experience. With robust inventory management systems, businesses can track stock levels across multiple locations, automate reordering, and generate sell-through reports that offer actionable insights.

Point-of-sale systems integrate seamlessly with Square Online, allowing garden centers to connect their physical and digital stores. Additionally, Square enables diverse payment methods, including contactless options and buy-now, pay-later services, making checkout experiences flexible and customer-friendly.

Beyond its core tools, Square integrates with trusted partners to expand functionality even further. Through apps and services available in the Square App Marketplace, garden centers can access specialized solutions for tasks like



staff scheduling, advanced inventory management and more. These integrations allow garden retailers to customize their operations to meet their unique needs while maintaining the efficiency and reliability of the Square ecosystem. By leveraging Square tools and partner integrations, garden retailers can save time, reduce manual errors and focus on growing their business in an increasingly competitive market.

What's Shaping Garden Retail

Several trends are redefining the green industry—and understanding them is key to staying relevant:

- 1. Sustainability in action:** Eco-consciousness isn't a buzzword anymore. Shoppers expect businesses to practice what they preach. Digital receipts, automated inventory systems and eco-conscious product offerings help retailers meet this demand while building trust and loyalty. Additionally, initiatives like offering native plants or sustainably sourced gardening products can further appeal to environmentally conscious consumers.
- 2. The personal touch:** Customers now expect tailored experiences. Forty-one percent of retailers report challenges accessing order and purchase histories, yet these are key to creating personalized recommendations and targeted offers. Analytics tools are enabling businesses to bridge this gap, helping them anticipate customer needs and foster deeper connections. Loyalty programs and targeted promotions based on past purchase data can be particularly effective in building repeat business.
- 3. Community-centric growth:** Garden centers have always been local hubs, and leaning into this strength is more important than ever. Workshops, events and how-to guides not only engage the community but turn customers into brand ambassadors. Seasonal planting workshops or educational content like “Top 10 perennials for beginners” can attract new customers while deepening loyalty among existing ones. Collaborations with local schools or community gardens can also enhance a garden center's role as a trusted community partner.

Case Studies from the Industry

Barn Owl Garden Center: This innovative retailer adopted digital tools as a cornerstone of their growth strategy. With more than 20 years in the industry and 11,000 unique SKUs, they needed robust solutions for their growing business. Barn Owl expanded its reach and strengthened its operations by integrating inventory management and e-commerce solutions. The result? A thriving business with a loyal customer base, a 40% increase in repeat customers, and an eye on the future.

Jez Seedlings: Facing increasing competition, Jez Seedlings leveraged analytics to optimize inventory and launched an online store to tap into new markets. Their efforts improved operational efficiency and allowed them to expand their customer base.

Actionable Strategies for Success

Whether you're a small family-owned garden shop or a large multi-store IGC, the strategies for growth are clear:

- 1. Go digital:** From mobile POS systems to inventory analytics, adopting the right tech can streamline your operations and improve the customer experience. Building a user-friendly website with options for online ordering and delivery is increasingly a must-have. Additionally, integrating social media sales channels can help capture younger, tech-savvy customers.
- 2. Double down on personalization:** Use customer data to create targeted offers, recommend products and build stronger relationships with them. Personalized email campaigns and loyalty programs can make customers feel appreciated and keep them coming back. Offering targeted discounts on frequently purchased items or seasonal products can also drive repeat sales.
- 3. Educate and engage:** Host workshops, offer guides, or start a blog to position yourself as an expert. Customers

are more likely to return to retailers they trust. For example, a blog post on relevant topics can drive in-store visits and online sales. Sharing seasonal gardening tips on social media can also boost engagement and attract new followers.

4. Sustainability is a competitive advantage for your business: Offering eco-friendly products, reducing paper waste with e-receipts and optimizing inventory to prevent overstock can all make a significant difference. Customers actively seek out businesses with sustainable practices, making this a key area for growth.

Insights into Consumer Preferences

The Square Future of Retail Report: 2024 Edition found that consumers are still committed to in-store shopping, with 63% indicating they prefer the tactile experience of seeing and touching products before purchasing them. At the same time, 52% of consumers have purchased products directly from social media in the past month, demonstrating the importance of an omnichannel strategy. Retailers focusing on in-store and online experiences are best positioned to meet these varied preferences.

Payment flexibility is another critical factor. Emerging payment options like buy-now, pay-later (BNPL) have gained traction, particularly among younger shoppers. Retailers offering BNPL options report increased sales and improved customer satisfaction, highlighting the importance of diverse payment methods at checkout.

What's Next for Garden Retail

The future of garden retail is bright for those willing to evolve. By embracing technology, staying attuned to customer needs and prioritizing sustainability, garden centers can position themselves as leaders in the industry. Businesses that succeed won't just sell plants—they'll cultivate lasting relationships and communities.

Garden retailers have a unique opportunity to blend tradition with innovation, creating spaces and experiences that resonate with modern consumers while honoring the roots of the industry. As the seasons change, so must the strategies garden centers employ to stay relevant and successful. **GP**

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ICYMI: Square Webinar With *Green Profit*

Don't worry: If you missed the January webinar "Increase Garden Center Revenue and Customer Visits With Square." [Watch it On Demand.](#)

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