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Features

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Engaging With Employees

Written by Jennifer Polanz, Data Compiled by Industry Insights

I will be 100% honest. When we were brainstorming the open-ended essay question and settled on asking, “What are your strategies for scheduling employees to keep retention rates high and provide work-life balance?” I thought we might get some sarcastic answers. We have in the past, and for a generation of owners that worked long hours and didn’t really get a chance to have a work-life balance, I wondered if the question might be off-putting—frustrating, even.

Happily, I was wrong. We received truly thoughtful answers that show owners and managers are putting a lot of effort into finding the balance that works for both the business and the employees. I’ll get to some of their answers next, but first I wanted to share one response that really does sum up the 100 days of spring sales (let’s no longer call it “hell”): “Working at a garden center can feel a lot like a journey into space. For a long time, things are calm, almost to the point of being a little boring. But once spring arrives, it’s like we’ve entered the capsule and there’s no turning back. The season carries us forward and we’re completely immersed until our ‘ship’ returns to Earth when spring ends.”

Benefits Offered

These charts highlight three different metrics related to benefits: what is currently offered, what benefits employers think employees value the most, and what benefits are being offered to attract and retain talent.

Which benefits do you currently offer your employees?	Full Time	Part Time	Seasonal
Health/Medical Insurance	66%	7%	7%
Dental Insurance	51%	7%	4%
Life Insurance	43%	7%	0%
Sick Leave	71%	53%	46%
Disability Insurance	51%	10%	7%
401(k)	63%	40%	21%
Pension	6%	7%	4%
Annual Bonus	60%	53%	43%
Paid Vacation	94%	47%	32%
Paid Holidays	83%	37%	25%
Employee Discount	94%	97%	97%
Other	11%	13%	0%

Which benefits do your employees consider the most important/valuable?			
Health/Medical insurance	58%	15%	11%
Dental Insurance	21%	0%	0%
Life Insurance	9%	0%	0%
Sick Leave	30%	15%	11%
Disability Insurance	6%	0%	0%
401(k)	39%	31%	44%
Pension	6%	8%	0%
Annual Bonus	42%	50%	78%
Paid Vacation	85%	62%	44%
Paid Holidays	36%	27%	33%
Employee Discount	33%	46%	67%
Other	0%	0%	0%

Which benefits do you use to attract and retain employees?			
Flexible work schedule	65%	72%	76%
Added vacation days/PTO	47%	28%	16%
Added medical benefits	21%	3%	0%
Above market salaries	29%	28%	32%
Tuition reimbursement	12%	7%	8%
Profit sharing	15%	3%	8%
Incentive compensation	18%	17%	12%
Telecommuting	6%	0%	0%
Mentoring program	9%	7%	8%
Retention bonus	6%	7%	0%
Fuel allowance	0%	0%	0%
Signing bonus	6%	3%	4%
Stock options	0%	0%	0%
Childcare services/reimbursement	3%	0%	0%
Other	3%	3%	0%
We are doing nothing to attract or retain employees	9%	7%	8%

So how can you help your workers find a little time for “shore leave” off the ship to keep them fresh for those crazy spring days? Here are some of the responses:

“Don’t micro manage, treat with respect and ask opinions; engage employees completely so they care and want to contribute. Full engagement is what we are after and largely that’s what we get.”

STAFFING CHANGES

	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025	2026 (projected)
Add Staff	29%	40%	47%	33%	52%	35%	27%
Reduce Staff	3%	4%	2%	20%	14%	11%	11%
Keep Same	62%	46%	44%	48%	35%	54%	57%
I Don’t Know	6%	10%	7%	0%	0%	0%	5%

“During the peak season, we provide lunch on the busiest days. We have weekly team meetings for all to be involved and monthly celebrations with breakfast for birthdays and anniversaries, a gift for birthday and anniversary (larger items for 5th and 10th anniversary), bonuses for leads and being mentioned in a Google review favorably.”

“Using a scheduling app (Swipeclock Scheduling) that tells us if we have enough people to cover the work and allows people to take shifts.”
“Regularly acknowledge contributions publicly and privately, offer rewards, bonuses, perks for achievements. Provide training, mentoring and clear promotion paths. Flexible schedules and wellness initiatives. Encourage vacation and downtime to prevent burnout.”

“Adhere to their schedules, respecting the part-time/seasonal staff that aren’t able to work everyday. For full-time staff, we make sure they know once they are off the clock or using PTO, they are not responsible for answering their team members’ questions.”

“We try to keep a set schedule week to week that stays the same, provide two days off in a row, post the schedule for the next month so it’s easier to plan ahead, and are very flexible with time off requests or hour changes.”

“Employees are scheduled five days a week and have at least two days off a week. PTO that encompasses sick, vacation leave. It is their time and they can use how they like.”

“Listening.”

Wages Offered

These are the responses for 2026 salary and wage rates and anticipated adjustments across the country.

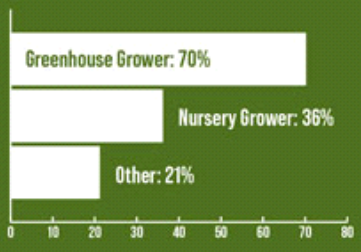
Job—Full Time	Average Salary
Cashier	$35,135
Crew Leader	$47,045
Department Manager	$72,029
Floral Designer	$38,339
Garden Center Manager	$60,892
General Labor	$37,764
Head Cashier	$39,746
Landscape Designer	$74,564
Landscape Foreman	$56,786
Marketing Manager	$77,594
Merchandise Manager	$69,116
Merchandiser	$40,849
Owner	$102,888
Purchasing Manager/Buyer	$60,621
Receiving Clerk	$46,973
Sales Associate	$43,800
Truck/Delivery Driver	$49,482

Job—Part Time/Seasonal	Base Pay Hourly (Average)	Weekly Hours Worked
Cashier—Part Time	$15.50	24
Cashier—Seasonal	$15.51	32
Sales Associate—Part Time	$16.95	24
Sales Associate—Seasonal	$15.93	37
Truck/Delivery Driver—Part Time	$19.81	22
Truck/Delivery Driver—Seasonal	$21.23	24

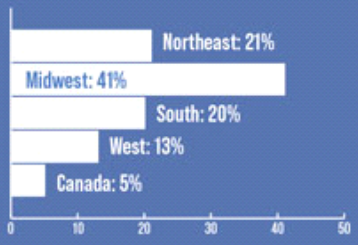
Average Base Salary Adjustments Anticipated for 2026	
Executive Employees	1.6%
Full-time Employees (Manager Level)	3.0%
Full-time Employees (Non-manager Level)	3.5%
Part-time Employees	1.8%
Returning (Or New Hire) Seasonal Employees	1.2%

MORE ON WHO ANSWERED

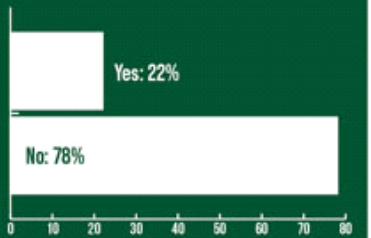
Additional Business Segments of Retail Garden Center Respondents:



By Region



Multiple Locations?



Landscape Division?

