

7/31/2026

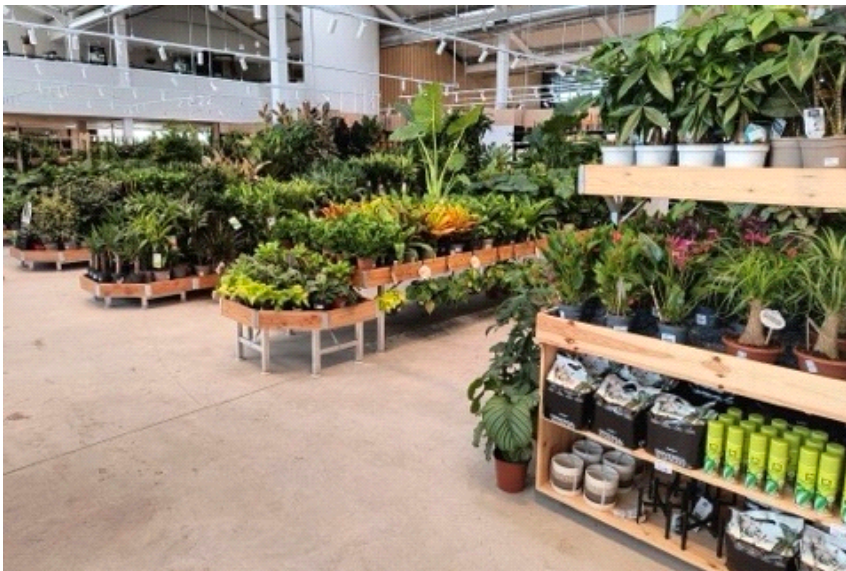
Orlandelli Group: An Extended Interview on Benching and Merchandising

Edited by Jennifer Polanz

Editor's Note: When I contacted Orlandelli Group, they sent back more information than I could include in the magazine. Here is the full email response from Marco Orlandelli, CEO of Orlandelli Group.

Our company is headquartered in Italy, and we also operate directly in the United States through Orlandelli LLC, based in Ohio. Our roots are in floriculture. We were born as flower growers, and as a family we still own a garden center in the beautiful city of Mantua, in northern Italy. In a way, we are gardeners first.

This background is very important to us because it means we understand plants, retail, customers, and the daily challenges of running a garden center from direct experience.



I have always been fascinated by the American market: its scale, its energy, the size of its retail spaces, and the very direct way American retailers communicate with consumers. Over the years, I have visited many garden centers across the United States, including independent garden centers, DIY chains and big box retailers. During those visits, I became convinced that our display concepts for plants and flowers could bring real value to this market. And here we are. In recent years, we have had the opportunity to work with some of the

most beautiful and important garden centers in America.

At Orlandelli Group, we design and manufacture display solutions, furniture, benches, carts, and specialized equipment for garden centers, growers, nurseries, and green retail businesses. Our goal is not simply to supply products. Our goal is to help retailers create plant areas that are more beautiful, more functional, and more effective from a commercial point of view.

When we discuss layout strategy with retailers, the conversation often turns to the differences between European

and American garden center models. In my opinion, there is no single winning model. Every garden center has its own identity, customers, climate, product mix and history. A good project must respect all of that.

Many of the garden centers we work with are family businesses, and this is something very close to us because Orlandelli is also a family business. Whether we are speaking with an independent family-owned garden center or a larger retail organization, the principle is always the same: plants are the heart of the business. Plants create traffic, emotion, and loyalty. When they are presented properly, they become much more than a product category. They become the true identity of the store.

Q: What are some of the recommendations you make for garden centers looking for a refresh or a new look for their live goods sales areas?

MO: My first recommendation is very simple: if your store has not been refreshed in terms of layout, display concept, or furniture for more than 10 years, then it is probably time to do it. Consumers notice when a store evolves. They appreciate retailers who invest, improve, and create a better experience. At the same time, they also notice when a store has remained the same for too long. In retail, standing still is risky. The first step is to look carefully at the customer journey. A live goods area should be easy to understand, easy to walk through, and pleasant to explore. Customers should not feel forced into rigid, straight supermarket-style aisles. In a garden center, the layout should feel more natural, more emotional, and more inspiring.

I always suggest creating a clear main path, ideally a loop, that allows customers to move through the department without confusion or dead ends. Inside that structure, the display should include corners, focal points, seasonal areas, and dedicated concepts that create surprise and emotion. Height is also important. If everything is displayed at the same level, the area quickly becomes flat. By mixing benches, raised displays, podiums, and vertical elements, retailers can create rhythm and guide the customer's eye through the space.

Q: What should retailers look for to know they're getting a quality display that's going to last?

MO: A good display must be beautiful, but it also has to work hard every day. In outdoor areas and cold greenhouses, durability is essential. Displays must resist water, humidity, UV rays, temperature changes and daily use. This is why aluminum is one of the best materials for live goods areas. It is clean, strong, easy to wash, and made to last.

Plastic components are also important when they are designed correctly.

High-quality trays, for example, must resist water, cleaning, movement, and constant contact with carts, pots, soil and plants. In our sector, materials are not chosen only for appearance. They are chosen because they must perform every day in a demanding environment.

Quality is also about plant care. Water management is one of the most important aspects in a live goods department. Our benches can be equipped with water reservoir trays and ebb-and-flow valves, helping keep plants



properly hydrated while maintaining a cleaner and more professional sales area. For indoor spaces, the priority can be different. There, the display should create warmth and atmosphere. Materials such as wood, combined with black metal frames, can transform an indoor plant area or home décor department into a more elegant, boutique-style destination. So, in my opinion, quality means durability, functionality, and the ability to improve the customer experience.

Q: Are there add-ons that can improve sales easily?

MO: Yes, absolutely. But I would not speak only about cross-selling. In our sector, the most important thing is to create a consequential layout. The customer should be guided naturally from one need to the next. If I buy a plant, I may need a pot. If I buy a pot, I may need soil. If I buy soil, I may need fertilizer or care products. This should not feel forced. It should feel logical and helpful. The goal is not simply to sell one more product. The goal is to help the customer complete the project.

End Caps are extremely important. The ends of benches are highly visible areas and should never be wasted. They are ideal for seasonal promotions, impulse products, new arrivals, or dedicated concepts. Raised displays are also very effective because they create visibility and give importance to specific products. A plant placed at the right height immediately becomes more attractive.

Signage is another key element. Clear prices and simple information help customers make decisions faster. A beautiful display without clear communication often loses sales opportunities. Shopping carts and baskets also matter. If customers have enough capacity to carry products comfortably, they usually buy more. Finally, the checkout area is a valuable selling space for small, simple, low-price items such as gloves, seeds, mini-plants, or care products.

Q: How important is it to have mobile displays? Can you talk about those benefits?

MO: Mobile displays are very important, especially in a garden center. The plant business changes all the time. The seasons change, the colors change, the varieties change, and customer expectations change. A static store becomes predictable. A flexible store feels alive. With mobile displays, retailers can quickly change the layout, create new seasonal presentations, improve traffic flow, and clean the floor more easily. This flexibility is especially useful near the entrance and in high-traffic areas, where the customer should immediately perceive something new.

In many successful garden centers, the first impression changes frequently. That does not always require a major redesign. Sometimes it simply requires the ability to move displays, reorganize colors, create a new focal point or highlight a new seasonal theme. Mobility gives the retailer freedom. And in live goods retail, freedom is very valuable.

Q: What are the most common problems you hear from retailers when it comes to displays, and what solutions do you recommend?

MO: One common problem is a flat layout. When all the plants are displayed at the same height, the department loses energy. The solution is to use different levels: benches, raised displays, shelves, podiums and vertical elements.

Another common problem is half-empty tables. This happens often in live goods because products sell quickly and availability changes every day. But a half-empty table gives a poor impression. It can make the product look old or left over. The solution is discipline in daily merchandising: bring products forward, group them properly and consolidate displays when needed. A third problem is water management. Messy watering, puddles on the floor, and wet foliage can create both practical and visual problems. Sub-irrigation systems, such as ebb-and-flow trays, can help keep plants healthier and the shopping environment cleaner.

Another issue is that many retailers want to improve their store, but they do not know where to start. In these cases,

even a basic layout project can be extremely useful. It becomes a working document, a starting point, a kind of “white paper” that helps the retailer reflect on the store, understand priorities, and begin a step-by-step improvement process. Very often, the solution is not complicated. It is a combination of the right equipment, a clear layout strategy, and good daily habits.

Q: Do you have anything new you’re highlighting this year for spring 2027?

MO: There are many new things, because the market is always evolving. Every project teaches us something. Every garden center is different, and every retailer gives us new ideas, new needs and new challenges. When we learn something useful, we try to implement it in future projects where it makes sense.

For Spring 2027, we are looking closely at consumer habits. Customers want inspiration, not just products. They want to understand how plants can improve their homes, gardens, patios, and lifestyles. This is especially true in indoor plants, home décor, and premium gift areas. One important direction for us is the development of indoor plant and home décor departments. These areas can be very profitable, but they need the right environment. A standard nursery look is not always enough.

This is why we are highlighting solutions with brushed wood and black metal frames, including products from our AMOR line. They are designed to create a warmer, more elegant, boutique- style feeling while still being practical for the retailer. We are also putting attention on the final part of the customer experience: gift wrapping and service. Our Mara Verbena professional gift-wrapping stations are designed to help garden centers offer a more complete and premium service. With durable countertops, integrated ribbon holders and a professional working area, retailers can create a service that customers remember.

These may seem like details, but in retail, details matter. They help independent garden centers differentiate themselves from big box stores.

Q: Is there anything else you’d like to highlight when it comes to displays?

MO: Displays should never be chosen only as individual pieces of furniture. They should be part of a complete merchandising strategy. Every material has its right place. Aluminum is ideal for outdoor areas and cold greenhouses because it is strong, clean, easy to wash and resistant to weather. Wood and warmer materials are better suited for indoor areas where the retailer wants to create atmosphere, emotion and a more premium experience.

It is also important to understand the hot and cold zones of the store. High-margin items, colorful products, new arrivals and seasonal inspiration should be placed in the areas with the strongest visibility and traffic. More functional destination items, such as soil or fertilizers, can be positioned deeper in the store because customers who need them will usually look for them. This helps the retailer guide traffic naturally and expose customers to more products along the way.

At the end, my message is simple: a good display does not only hold plants. A good display helps sell plants, protects their quality, improves the customer experience, and makes the work of the staff easier. For any garden center thinking about renewal, I believe one of the best starting points is to create a basic layout project. It does not have to be complicated or expensive. Even a simple project can become an extremely effective tool to start asking the right questions: where does the customer go, what do they see first, which areas are working, which areas are underperforming, and where can we create more value?

Sometimes a basic project is the beginning of a much bigger and more useful conversation. It helps the retailer look at the store with fresh eyes and start a concrete path of renewal. That is where good design creates real value for a garden center. **GP**