

GCG & BoomerWrangle, Fairview, AIO and Faded Petal



FRIDAY, OCTOBER 31, 2025

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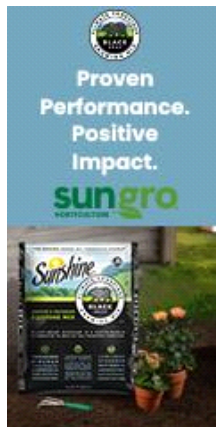
The difference speaks for itself.



GCG & BoomerWrangle to Partner in 2026

There's some big news coming out of [The Garden Center Group](#)—and out of BoomerWrangle, too, for that matter. The GCG, the 150-member alliance of garden centers that's a resource for garden retailing solutions, and BoomerWrangle, a digital solutions agency leveraging data to help drive informed decisions, have just announced a joint venture that'll take the best of what both organizations do to create an ecosystem where IGCs like yours will thrive in the quickly coming digital revolution.





North America's Resource for Garden Retailing



"We're beyond excited to partner with BoomerWrangle," Danny Summers, managing director of The Garden Center Group, said in a press release. "Their fresh, innovative approach perfectly complements our deep business management roots and garden retailing expertise. Together, we'll set new standards for success and help shape the garden centers of tomorrow."

"This partnership is about possibility," added Souny Kennedy, co-founder of BoomerWrangle. "We're honored to build upon the strength of The Garden Center Group, led by Danny and Karen Summers—bringing technology, creativity and connection to an industry that inspires growth in every sense of the word."

"Yes, but what is that going to look like on the ground?" is essentially what I replied to the email announcing this collaboration.

John Kennedy, BoomerWrangle's other co-founder, wrote right back. He may have an industry reputation for his awesome and inspiring keynote engagements, but he and Souny are master players in the digital business space, too. Here's what John had to say:

"BoomerWrangle's suite of workplace applications and solutions for IGCs check all three of your boxes for the digitally savvy IGC owner. Whether it's a grower tracker to enhance profitability and reduce shrink to a landscape tracker to improve efficiencies, or the GroupSpace platform as a whole to support company-wide communication models, the intranet platform ([GroupSpace](#)) does it all.

"Also, our [E-Commerce Connect Program](#) will help drive the IGC members to enter the race for relevance with a revenue stream beyond the brick-and-mortar. This gives an IGC the chance to level the playing field against big box stores who already drop-ship directly to customers. The adoption rate for this program is amazing and we want to grow that within The Group.

"Each of these offerings, including a robust POS solution, will be offered at a Garden Center Group Member rate that saves the IGC on their annual subscriptions and creates a digitally connected community of retailers and suppliers driving both revenue and relevance into the future."

Thanks for the peek behind the curtain, John! Folks, you can get a look, too, by clicking on those links above. Lots of good information there and you should read all about it.

And you've got some time, too, as the venture officially launches January 1 and will unveil a lineup of initiatives and digital rollouts throughout the year. The partnership's first major reveal will take center stage at The Garden Center Group Fall Event in Cleveland, Ohio, September 28-October 1, 2026.



Just Like Family

The following is Jen Polanz's continuing coverage of The Garden Center Group's Fall Event retail tour.

Our next stop on The Garden Center Group Fall Event retail tour was Fairview Greenhouses & Garden Center, founded by family matriarch Jo Ann Dewar in 1974 (they celebrated 50 years last year!). She greeted us as we entered the store, and at 93, she's still in the greenhouse daily. The business is truly family focused, with three generations involved.

After decades of growth and expansion, in 2004 they renovated the shopping experience with a new layout and spacious concrete paths replacing gravel. They offer 24,000 sq. ft. of covered shopping, and grow all of their own annuals and many of their own perennials.



This location had a warm and comfortable vibe for me, and I loved all the little touches. One of those touches was this green wall, which Billy Deal from FNGLA helped me illustrate.



Their plant material was beautiful and they offered unique fall planters like the ones shown here. Mums are great, but sometimes shoppers are looking for unique mixes.

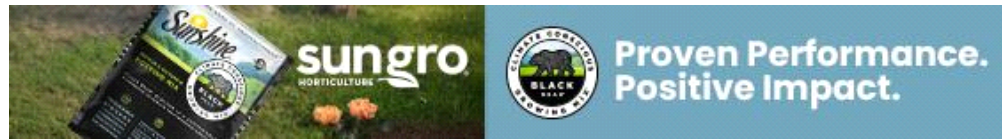




Fairview also continues to work on the marketing program, including creating a mobile app to reach customers in another way. It's where customers can find their loyalty information, as well as see gardening tips and find out about sales.



Thanks, JP! Love all the inspiration you've collected from this tour!



Holiday Spending ... Up?

You might recall in last week's *buZZ* I'd included a roundup of [holiday sales forecasts for Holiday 2025](#) from e-newsletter Retail Brew. Essentially all the roundups indicated sales would increase, but at a lower rate than the last few years. One even predicted sales would decrease this holiday season.

Imagine my surprise, then, when I read in Small Biz Trends that consumers have something else in mind this holiday season! According to [THE ARTICLE](#), consumers plan to spend 25% more this season than last, equating to \$109 billion. The survey, which was the Intuit QuickBooks Holiday Shopping Report, also indicated that 41% of consumers' shopping would be directed toward small businesses.

Folks participating in the survey said that their desire to give gifts to loved ones overshadows economic concerns. Nearly half said they would be willing to cut back on other expenditures—even groceries—so that they could give gifts, prioritizing joy over economic anxiety.

Within the article, QuickBooks' Head of Data Communications offered some strategies that small businesses could implement during the holiday rush. These include:

- **Embrace** AI tools that can automate tasks to save time and money.
- **Optimize** for mobile and in-store sales, using an omnichannel approach to cater to diverse consumer shopping preferences.
- **Use** effective and personalized marketing communication strategies using email and SMS.
- **Focus** on early holiday shopping, track inventory and align marketing efforts with peak shopping time.

Rudbeckia 'Treasure Trove'
New to Proven Winners
Perennials for 2025-2026!



Speaking of AI and Optimization

I had a conversation with [A24 Consulting](#) Clint Albin about the importance of IGCs to recognize the oncoming ecommerce revolution. The day that consumers can ask an AI assistant like ChatGPT a question and have it not only recommend a product, but also offer a “Buy Now” button, has come. Are garden centers ready?

“OpenAI just introduced Instant Checkout, a feature allowing free-, Plus- and Pro-tier ChatGPT users in the U.S. to complete purchases without leaving the chat,” Clint told me. He said it's rolling out to Etsy sellers and to more than a million Shopify merchants soon.



How does this work? “It simplifies buying into a single flow,” Clint explained. “When users request product recommendations, such as ‘What is the best organic fertilizer for tomatoes in June?’, the AI’s response may include product recommendations with a ‘Buy’ button right in the chat.”

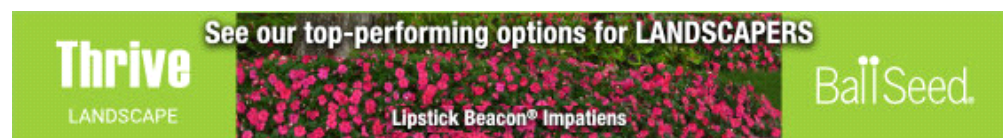
No need to head over to a separate browser window, let alone get in a car and drive to your garden center—the user can hit buy and have it delivered. The procedure is in its early days, limiting the purchases to a single item, but the technology will soon progress to allow multiple item purchases.

Clint said this technology is possible due to something called Agentic Commerce Protocol (ACP). This ACP standardizes how merchants connect their catalogs to AI environments.

“For retailers and suppliers, this signals the rise of AI-native commerce, compressing discovery and purchase into a single interaction,” Clint said.

Clint has suggested you read the [Reuters coverage on OpenAI’s Instant Checkout](#), as well as listen to the conversation he had with *Tech On Demand*’s Bill Calkins on a recent podcast on the topic—go [HERE](#) and then scroll down to the “Artificial Intelligence in the Green Industry.” Also, Clint has an article coming out in the November issue of *Green Profit* all about ACP and what it means for your AI Optimization strategy.

What a world this is becoming, right? All the more reason you need to transform your brick-and-mortar store into a destination for experiences and community building—otherwise you could become the horticulture version of a [ghost kitchen](#).



AI & Earned Media

Just this week, [a piece in Ad Age](#) about AI discovery confirmed that the distance between discovering a product or service and making the purchasing decision is continuing to shrink. For *Ad Age*, however, the driver of this discovery is built on what they call earned media.



The article says, “Analysis shows that 90% of what appears in AI summaries is ‘earned-driven’—pulled from reviews, press, blogs, forums and cultural chatter. Paid [ads] now play a different role, amplifying what’s already there.”

Discovery through paid online ads has been on the decline for a while. Through AI summaries, *Ad Age* says that what appears are “the brands people can’t stop talking about in headlines, subreddits, reviews and podcasts—the future isn’t ‘pay to play,’ but ‘get talked about or be left behind.’”

Given the earned-media angle, what should your strategy be? *Ad Age* has some suggestions. Be bold and creative.

“Brands need ideas so magnetic that culture can’t ignore them and AI can’t avoid citing them,” the piece suggested. “From activations to storytelling to collaborations that spark conversation, creative bravery creates the gravity that pulls both people and algorithms toward you.”

The piece has other suggestions, too. [Read the entire piece](#) to find out what they are. (Hint: Trustworthiness and credibility cannot be faked.)



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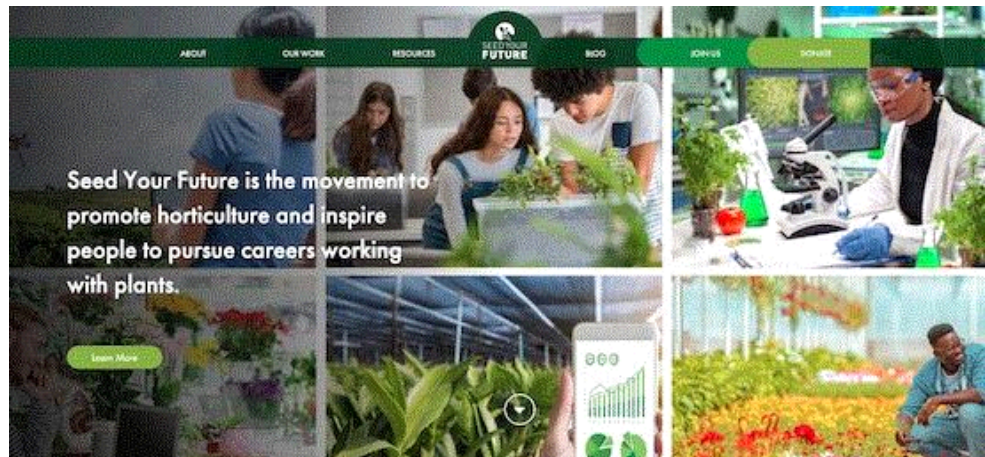





SYP's Year-End Campaign

[Seed Your Future](#) will begin its year-end fundraising campaign, “From Classroom to Career: Growing Green Futures,” tomorrow, November 1. The campaign, which will run through December 31, is committed to raising \$50,000 to equip teachers with career-focused horticulture resources. And with those resources, the potential is to reach thousands of students nationwide.

As the national movement with the aim of inspiring the next generation of plant professionals, Seed Your Future's year-end campaign is key to providing Seed to STEM lessons and hort career tools to teachers for free. Just one teacher using these Seed to STEM lesson plans can impact and inspire dozens of kids to explore horticulture as a career.



And it doesn't take much from you! For just \$8.50, you could help provide these lesson plans to teachers for free. Ten times that donation and you'll equip 10 students with career exploration tools. Moving up the donation scale:

- \$250 provides plantable paper for a school career fair
- \$850 impacts 100 students exploring horticulture careers
- \$1,700 empowers 200-plus students with career pathways
- \$5,000 covers the cost of one teacher attending the Seed to STEM immersive program

"Every donation helps us cultivate curiosity and career exploration in students while strengthening horticulture's future workforce," said Jazmin Albarran, executive director of Seed Your Future, in a recent press release. "From classrooms to careers, your support directly enables teachers and students to discover the power and purpose of plants."

Every contribution puts career-focused materials in teachers' hands to give students hands-on learning experiences. Pause the pumpkin spice latte for a couple of days and put those dollars toward a donation to Seed Your Future. Or donate a larger sum as a company or organization and have a big impact on your potential future employees and co-workers.

Drop your donation over at [SYF's DONATION PAGE](#) where you'll find a very compelling video from Jazmin herself on why these teacher and classroom resources are necessary beyond their available online resources.

Oh, and P.S.— even though it's October 31, the donation page is activated so head on over!

The Last GMG Trend is ...

Each year, I save [Garden Media Group's](#) Color of the Year pick from their Garden Trends Report as the last trend to talk about. And this year ... I love it!

faded petal

This is Faded Petal, a pale dusty soft blush kissed by ash. They say it's "quietly romantic yet distinctly grown up."

The color comes out of a family of "ash-kissed" colors that are popular in East Asia. They're muted and nostalgic shades rooted in nature that subtly shift with the seasons. Think the colors of faded clothing, mellowed by time. Admired by Millennials and Gen Z for its authenticity and understated elegance, Faded Petal transforms gardens and interiors into sophisticated sanctuaries when paired with earthy tones, lush foliage and the textural element like weathered wood and vintage pottery.

Faded Petal—think we can work with that? Petal is right in the name, so I think we can!



Mother of Pearl Rose from Star Roses and Plants is a perfect example of Faded Petal.

See more examples of Faded Petal and read about this and all the other trends in Garden Media Group's 2026 Garden Trends Report [HERE](#).

If you have any questions, comments, suggestions, etc., drop me a line if you'd like at ewells@ballpublishing.com.



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Green Profit

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