

It's almost Mother's Day, plus Petitti's new store, cut flower gardens and Women in Hort

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COMING UP THIS WEEK:

- Hey, Hey, It's Mother's Day Season So Far at Russell's
- A Shopping Experience
- Store Flow
- Younger Gen Want IRL
- Cut Flower Gardens?
- Women in Hort Week



Hey, Hey, It's (Almost) Mother's Day

Ah, Mother's Day! The most wonderful yet incredibly busy time of the year for folks in the horticulture industry. The big day is just over a week away. And let's say the weather will be grand (we can wish for it, right?).

Assuming the stars align over the next 10 days, what can we expect from consumers for Mother's Day 2026? The National Retail Federation is expecting consumer spending to hit a record \$38 billion, according to their annual survey. Not only is this a record, but it surpasses last year's total by a lot—close to \$4 billion. Wowza!



Let's look into the numbers:

- On a per-person basis, individuals plan to spend an average of around \$284, about \$24 more than last year.
- 84% of adults plan to celebrate the holiday
- The top destinations for gifts are: online (33%), department stores (33%), specialty stores (29%) and discount stores (26%).
- 75% plan to purchase flowers, with a projected spend total of \$3.2 billion.
- 74% plan to purchase cards, with a projected spend of \$1.3 billion. So, if you sell flowers, where are you placing your offerings of cards? That is easy money right there.
- 63% plan on taking Mom on a special outing. (Perhaps to the garden center that is in beautiful bloom?)
- 46% of survey respondents say that finding something unique or different is most important, followed by creating a special memory (39%).

From all that above, other retail categories should be downright *jealous* of how many boxes your garden centers and the horticulture industry in general can check.

“Mother’s Day remains a priority for many Americans, and they plan to lean into the holiday despite current economic uncertainty,” said NRF Chief Economist and Executive Director of Research Mark Mathews said. “Consumers are gifting from the heart, seeking unique gifts that create lasting memories for the mothers in their lives. It’s an opportunity to recognize what this person means to you, and retailers are ready to make Mother’s Day extra special for shoppers.”

How is Mother’s Day and spring in general shaping up for you so far? Drop me a note about it [HERE](#).



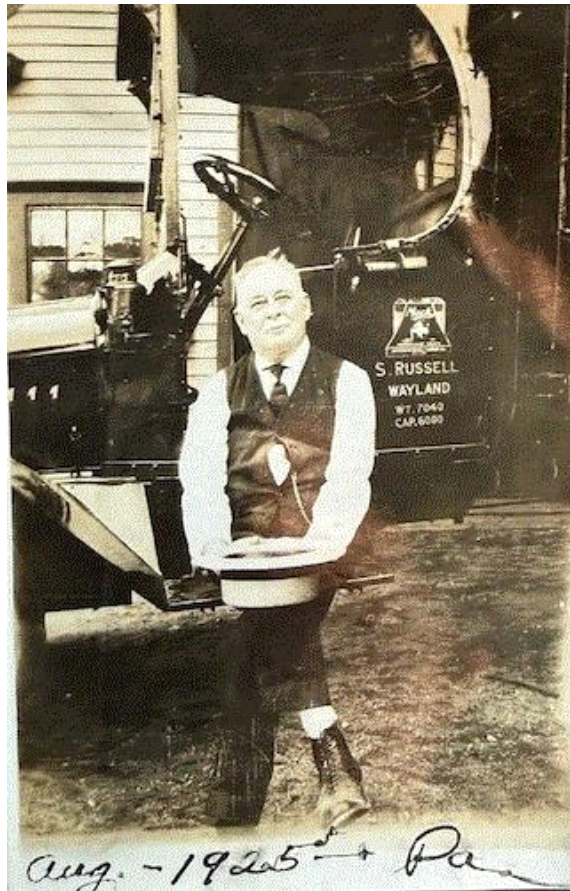
Season So Far at Russell’s

I asked that same question last week and Elizabeth Russell-Skehan of [Russell’s Garden Center](#) in Wayland, Massachusetts, was happy to share what’s been going on with their store this spring:

“The whole store is up 7.4% for the year, though last week was down 8% with the cold weather! Most of the hardgoods are up in sales except fertilizers and tools, which are down since it’s been a slow start to spring. Annuals and roses are down due to frigid temperatures. Fortunately, perennials are up 20% YTD and nursery is up 25%. So, combined with our huge assortment of hardgoods and some creative marketing and events, that gives us the YTD increase of 7.4% for the year. We’re feeling optimistic.”

No kidding about the weather, Elizabeth! I want to leave my house without a wool hat (although in New England, we seem to wear wool hats and socks all year except for July).

Speaking of marketing and events, Russell’s Garden Center is celebrating their 150th anniversary this year! That’s truly incredible. What began in 1876 as a farmstand delivering flowers and vegetables by horse and buggy to Boston’s Haymarket Square has grown into one of New England’s largest single-location, retail-only garden centers.



Founder Samuel Lewis Russell in 1925, showing off the farm's first truck.

As soon as the weather warms up, I am heading over to Russell's to chat and take some photos to share—and do a little shopping while I'm at it. With any luck, I'll get over there before June. Stay tuned!

A Shopping Experience

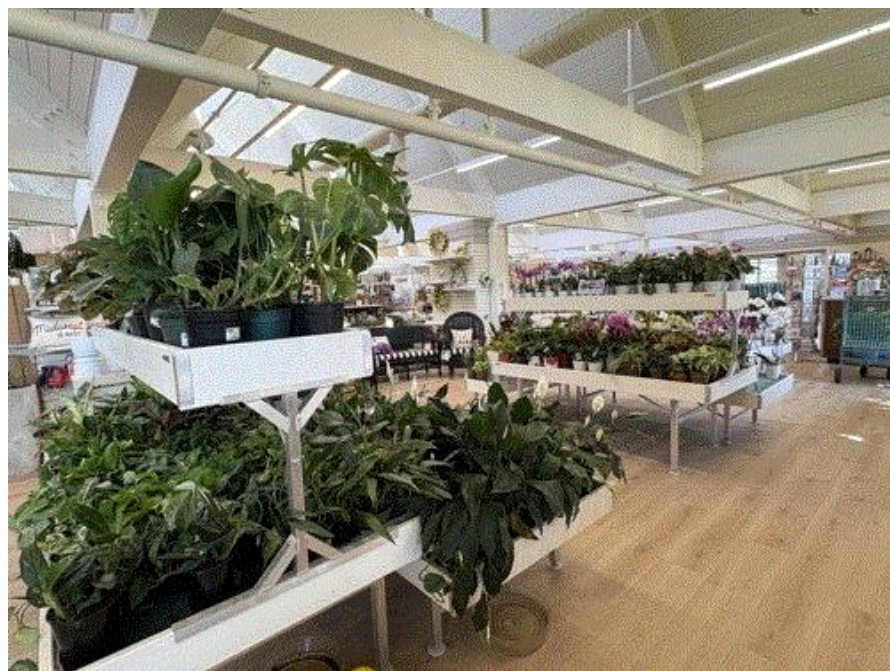
Colleague Jen Polanz visited a nearly brand-spankin'-new Petitti's location and shares her experience:

It's been just over a year since the newest **Petitti Garden Center** store opened in Bath Township, northwest of Akron, Ohio, so it's about time I stopped in for a look (you can see a slideshow of the location [HERE](#)).

A stone's throw from the beautiful Cuyahoga Valley National Park (yes, we have a national park in Northeast Ohio) and home to Cav's legends LeBron James and Larry Nance Sr., the surrounding area of Bath Township already had some notoriety. Now it's the home of the 10th Petitti Garden Center location.



And what a location it is! Each new Petitti store seems to build upon the last, and this one is just stunning. At 30,000 sq. ft. indoors and nearly 70,000 sq. ft outdoors, it—like others in the family-owned chain—is a repurposed building with the addition of retractable-roof greenhouses. This one was a vacant office building complex that was renovated inside to maximize the space and the natural light provided by the original skylights.



It's that natural light that makes a big difference in the shopping experience, as it creates a warmth to the whole store that is enhanced by the natural flooring. The neutral colors of the interior benching in the houseplant department and the fixtures in gift and home all accentuate

that warmth.



Store Flow

The store flows so well, too, leading you through naturally so you can wander, but you don't get turned around or lost. There's a natural movement that eventually leads you down either steps or ramps to move you outside. And, if you're a fan of plants, that's where the fun really begins.

They were pretty well stocked when I stopped by in late April, as we're nearing go-time in our area (though we *may* have a frost this weekend, not sure yet). Almost all of the plant material is grown either at the 32-acre greenhouses of Casa Verde in Columbia Station, Ohio, or at various Petitti Family of Farms nursery locations in Lake County, Ohio.

Spring deals at Petitti include:

- "Color Your Garden" colorful plant/pot offerings at 3 for \$50 (or \$19.99 each)
- 3.5 in. veggies and herbs at 3 for \$15
- Buy One, Get One Free Hanging Baskets



It's heavy on color, with lots of perennials to go along with annuals and mixed containers. The shrubs are displayed through the center with a few trees interspersed, as well as along the back fence.

One other item to note about this location is the proximity to a Lowe's store, and by that I mean it's *literally* next door. That's bold, and I like it.

Want to see it for yourself? This location, along with the Avon Petitti's store, is on this year's Cultivate Garden Center Retail Tour, Saturday, July 11. Find out more about all the tours [HERE](#) and register soon—those spots fill up fast!

Thanks, JP! Jealous you're located even within the same state as Petitti's!

Younger Generations Want IRL (In Real Life) Experiences

Marketing Brew reported recently that a survey from retail consulting firm MG2 Advisory indicates that 73% of Gen Alpha prefers to shop at a brick-and-mortar store. And why is that? It could be about safety.

Beni Brown of creator agency Buttermilk told Marketing Brew, “Teenage life now looks a lot different than it did for previous generations ... it’s really interesting to see how [Gen Alpha] maximize their time in these third spaces because they don’t have a lot of other places to congregate safely amongst themselves.

The article goes on to discuss how some brands are “future proofing” their businesses by offering in-store experiences to draw in young shoppers and allow them to stay for a while. “They have to speak to these audiences younger and younger because they set their affinities way younger than we did in previous generations,” Beni told Marketing Brew.

The store becomes a destination space rather than a transactional space.

The retail store Hollister is increasing Gen Alpha hang time by including comfy seating, places to put bags and phone-charging stations. “The ‘third space’ is all about the details,” a Hollister executive said.

The Marketing Brew piece is an [interesting read](#), and it might give you some ideas for how you can become that safe third space for the emerging Gen Alpha.

Cut Flower Gardens?

Let’s get back to Mother’s Day for a minute. Would Mom prefer cut flowers or a cut flower *garden* from which she could create homespun floral arrangements all season long? I’m betting you’re saying the latter, right?



I recently chatted with Jerry Schmitt, Senior Live Goods Buyer for [Stein's Garden and Home](#) in Milwaukee, Wisconsin. He’s predicting cut flower garden programs like they have in Europe will

be the next big thing here in the States. With several new cut flower products on the market such as all the new foams, vessels and cutting tools from [Oasis Forage Products](#), I do think they're onto something here. For a number of reasons, cut flowers really hit the moment. They are crafty and have that cool thrift vibe about them, plus creating floral bouquets is a great project for all ages. And let's not forget—growing them is a great experience, too.

What's your Spidey sense telling you about the future of cut flower gardens? Drop me a line [HERE](#).

I can tell you that, for both Jen Polanz and myself, cut flower gardens are the option once you no longer can stand to have your vegetable garden eaten by critters!

Women in Hort Week Returns

If it's May, then the seventh annual Women in Horticulture Week, led by [Garden Media Group](#), is just around the corner. Set for May 24–30, this initiative continues to gain traction in the industry as a celebration and a signal of where our industry is headed.

What is Women in Horticulture Week? It's a time to shine a light on the influence that women have across horticulture, whether that is in leadership and entrepreneurship tracks or as it shows up in innovations at the grower and retail levels. The bigger picture is this: Women-owned businesses continue to form and gain steam, and their impact on the green industry is only getting bigger.

This week isn't just about recognition. The push here is for participation—mentorship, storytelling and making space for more voices across the supply chain. Women in horticulture isn't a side conversation anymore. It's a business advantage and a driver of where horticulture goes next.

Speaking of participating, here are some ways to do so:

- Share your story and highlight inspiring women in business to motivate others.
- Mentor or volunteer to support aspiring female horticulturists and entrepreneurs.
- Attend the NJNLA Event on Wednesday, June 3, at Timothy's Center for Gardening in New Jersey.
- Attend the [Women in Horticulture series hosted by AmericanHort](#), including the [luncheon on July 13 at Cultivate'26](#).
- Join the new [LinkedIn community WiH group](#) led by Megan Morrison.
- Support the movement on social media by updating your profile picture and using #WomenInHort to share stories and recognition.

For event details and registration, visit [GardenMediaGroup.com](#).

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



Ellen Wells
Senior Editor-at-Large
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