

Earl May, Casual Market and Garden Trends continue



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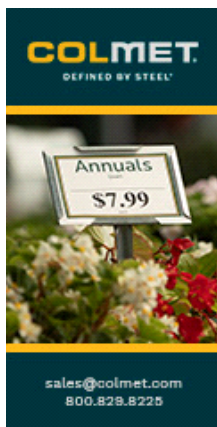


Earl May Closes Stores

Colleague Jen Polanz shared information about several garden center locations closing in the Midwest.

In late August we heard rumblings that **Earl May Garden Centers** was in the process of closing seven of its 28 stores, which are located in Iowa, Nebraska, Missouri and Kansas. The garden center's website had a note on each of the listings for the locations slated for closure. Here's one example:

"We have shared with our team that, after careful consideration, we have made the difficult decision to permanently close our Marshalltown Earl May Garden Center," it read on the Marshalltown, Iowa, listing. Each one included a final day of business. "As operating costs have continued to rise and market conditions have changed, we must make thoughtful business decisions that position Earl May to remain strong for the future while continuing to serve our



customers for generations to come.”



At least one store, the Cedar Falls, Iowa, location, had appeared to have already closed as of press time, and the St. Joseph, Missouri, store was expected to close in late September. The aforementioned Marshalltown store, as well as Newton and Ottumwa—all in Iowa—are expected to close this month. Shawnee, Kansas, and Columbus, Nebraska, are scheduled to close in December.

The Missouri store was the only one in that state and dated back to the 1930s, according to a local media report. One of the store employees told the outlet she knew of 80-year-old customers who had been shopping there their whole lives. While it's sad any of the stores are closing, we're glad to see the retailer carrying on operations with the other locations. We also found a pretty cool history of the company on the website [HERE](#).



Casual Market Atlanta

Speaking of Jen, she's heading to the Casual Market Atlanta, which will be co-located with AmericasMart's Fall Market of gift, gardens, home décor, tabletop and lifestyle September 15-18. This market is produced by ANDMORE, in partnership with the International Casual Furnishings Association (ICFA).

What will you see there, besides possibly Jen? Outdoor furniture, of course, along with décor, tabletop, decorative accessories, seasonal, entertaining and lifestyle. And thanks to it co-happening with the Fall Market, Casual Market attendees will have access to select gift, gardens and home décor showrooms open specifically for Casual Market Atlanta buyers. It's always a bonus when you can go to a market and do double duty, crossing off items from two separate lists. You can find the full list [HERE](#).



Casual Market has some events lined up for you, as well.

- Outdoor Living Trends Talk—Tuesday, September 15, 8:30–9:30 a.m. in Building 1, Floor 8, Oasis Meeting Space. Jennifer Brindle, Editor-in-Chief, *Casual News Now* will share trends on sustainable materials, performance fabrics and multifunctional design.
- Retail Roundtables and Happy Hour—Tuesday, September 15, 5:00–7:00 p.m. in the ICFA Member Lounge, Building 1, Floor 8. Peer discussion on industry topics and best practices.
- Buyer Concierge Hub—Tuesday–Wednesday, September 15–16, 9:00 a.m.–12:00 p.m. in Building 1, Floor 2. Staffed by the Buyer Relations Team.

Also on tap is the Market Stars creator program, as they have had for other shows. This is a real-time look at what two Market Stars are seeing as they walk through the market, discussing their favorite picks and design perspectives. See what they see on Casual Market Atlanta's social channels, [#CasualMarketAtlanta](#) and [@casualmarketatlanta](#).

Register, view the exhibitor directory and check out all the events [HERE](#).



OutdooRx

Before we get into the next trend in Garden Media Group's [2027 Garden Trends Report](#), I want to share something GMG's President Katie Dubow shared with me about what she came across while conducting the research. I asked her what surprised her the most while examining the cultural shifts. This one took me by surprise, too:

"Honestly? It was the research on kids. Seeing that 75% of 8- to 10-year-olds would rather be outside than on a screen made me jump up and down. We spend so much energy worrying about the next generation's relationship with technology, and here they are, picking up digital cameras, taking social media breaks, literally telling us they'd rather be digging in the dirt. That gave me a lot of hope for where this industry is headed."

Back to the next trend—OutdooRx, in which the great outdoors and gardens in particular are the prescription for lots of what ails us. We're lonely and anxious. Our diets aren't the healthiest. We

don't move a lot. And we seek out and spend money on gym memberships, mental wellness apps, diet programs and supplements that often go by the wayside soon after they begin.



Gardening helps. It lowers cortisol, boosts serotonin and dopamine (there's that word again), encourages mindfulness and lessens rumination. Horticultural therapy is being backed by scientific research and doctors and prescribing the outdoors. Gardens and natural settings are even being designed into new building plans.

And boy, does GMG have ideas for retail based on this! Start by shifting your customers' question from "What do I need?" to "How do I want to feel?" Change signage phrasing to address those questions:

- Create Your Calm
- Grow Wellness
- Feel Better
- Dig, Plant, Breathe

We're big on creating experiences now, too. Try:

- Offering sensory, grief or adaptive gardening workshops
- Designing an in-store wellness garden where customers can sit, heal, read and just be
- Offering therapeutic horticulture for specific populations such as seniors, veterans and, teens
- Hosting birdwatching or wildlife gardening classes to connect people with nature
- Planting a sensory container as a gift

Therapeutic gardening is a fundamental reframing of why people garden. Customers who find therapy through gardening don't just buy a plant. They keep coming back. And they bring friends. They invest in their outdoor spaces and outdoor health routines in ways that make those spaces feel life-giving.

How has OutdooRx shown up in your garden center? Drop me a note about it [HERE](#).

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Trend In Action

Let's [throw it back to last week](#) when we covered the first 2027 Garden Trend, Show Up Culture—hosting events that can bring people together in a casual, “soft socializing” sort of way. It just so happens that my Euro trendspotting friend [Stacy Sirk](#) has seen a similar trend where she's from.

Such as these:

“Create a space for a ‘make one and take one’ origami flower bar,” Stacy says. “Also include diagrams for other simple folded floral shapes. It's a great way to engage shoppers, young and old, and create a community display.”

I really love this idea because it creates community art, a joint piece of beauty that everyone can take pride in.



“Save dried flowers from your Cut Your Own cut flower patch and create your own version of this display in your store,” Stacy suggested. “Even a very simplified version is visually stunning, a perfect for autumn to winter displays.”



Stacy sent along a few other photos of non-crafty ideas, too. Stay tuned for those next week. And thanks, Stacy!

Speaking of Trends ...

Jen and I (mainly Jen) had a question about trends you are seeing out there in the gen pop (general population).

Porch geese: Are they a thing where you are? To be clear, porch geese—apparently something that was big maybe 30 years ago—are plain fake geese made of different material that you dress up in different outfits. Is it raining? Porch goose gets a rain coat. Is it Valentine's Day? Dress it as Cupid—that sort of thing. They are not a thing where I live, or at least I haven't seen them. And in fact I am so unfamiliar with the concept that when the topic came up on a recent webinar, I was wondering why the Portuguese were suddenly so on trend.

Nee-Dohs: This is a brand of palm-sized squeezable sensory/fidget toys. JP just spotted them while out at a garden center in the Cleveland area. In fact, a nationwide coffee shop chain did a promotion last weekend, giving away branded Nee-Dohs and they caused traffic backups because of it. Wow. I was in fact up on this trend because Russell's Garden Center's toy department has a wide variety of different types and styles of squishies.

Are you seeing either trend? Maybe a different trend altogether? If so, [drop me a note about it](#).

It's Salary & Benefits Survey Time!

How is it already the time of year where we ask you to fill out and benefit from the *GrowerTalks/Green Profit* and AmericanHort Salary & Benefits Survey (in partnership with Industry Insights, because they do all the data crunching for us)?



We're partnering with AmericanHort once again on this decades-old survey to help *us* provide *you* a high-level and more useful tool for you. Companies like your own that take the survey can better understand salary and benefit trends, and see how their businesses compare to others participating in the survey. What all's in the survey? All the stuff you need to know to do a good comparison—company demographics, staffing, and benefits and salary data on multiple job titles across full-time, part-time and seasonal employees.

But to benefit from the survey, you really gotta participate in the survey! The more who submit answers, the better the data that comes out of it.

And no, you don't have to be an AmericanHort member to benefit. All survey respondents will get the full report prepared by Industry Insights. And you don't have to be a certain-size operation—anyone and everyone can participate! Also, if you've participated in taking the survey in previous years, some data will automatically be populated for you, saving you time.

Other benefits to taking the survey:

- You'll gain stronger hiring and retention strategies
- It'll help you develop improved planning and better budgeting
- Access to a personalized company compensation comparison report, which is free for eligible AmericanHort Premium members who complete the survey

And, of course, key parts of the data will be published in the December issue of *GrowerTalks* and the January issue of *Green Profit*.

GO [HERE](#) to fill out the survey (which is confidentially collected and maintained by Industry Insights' professional data team and securely stored). Again, the survey is open until **September 30**, so don't delay!

Livestream Alert!

Ball Publishing has another livestream event schedule for those of you who also do a fair amount of growing. Be sure to check out the upcoming livestream, "Grower Panel: Growing Plants for Retail Success" scheduled for Wednesday, September 30 at 1 p.m. Eastern.

The usual emcee for these events is Bossman Chris Beytes, and this time around he'll be joined by Berger's Jack Bobo, who will be the day's moderator. Chris and Jack will be speaking with Andrew Butler of Green Valley Greenhouses in Ramsey, Minnesota, and Mike Busch of Meyers Farms in Niagara-on-the-Lake, Ontario. Their conversation will explore how today's substrate choices—including mixes incorporating wood fiber—can strengthen root development, improve moisture management and enhance overall plant resilience.



Join these two panelists and learn from the practical insights they've drawn directly from their own production systems. They'll highlight what works, what doesn't, and how these materials behave from propagation all the way through retail. You'll come away with real-world strategies for growing plants that hold their quality long after they leave the greenhouse. And that's good for business.

This livestream is sponsored by Berger—thank you very much, Berger! Can't attend the live

event? No worries, as it'll be available in the extensive Ball Publishing webinar/livestream archives Lickety split. Register for "Growing Plants for Retail Success" [HERE](#).

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



Ellen Wells
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[Green Profit](#)

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