

### Countrywide Classics: The Best From East to West - EXTENDED VERSION

| Ellen C. Wells

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*\*Note about poll: "Top sellers" determined by sales of units, not necessarily dollars.*

#### Churchill's Gardens

Exeter, New Hampshire

David Kirkpatrick

**Top 5 Annuals:** Supertunias (esp. Royal Velvet), Superbells, Butterfly argyranthemum, bacopa, scaevola

**Top 5 Perennials:** Salvia, nepeta, echinacea, rudbeckia, ornamental grasses

**Top 5 Flower Colors:** Purple/blue, pinks, yellow, white, orange

**Top 5 Edibles:** Tomatoes, peppers, cucumbers, herbs, zucchini

#### Most Popular Container Combos:

A) Dragon Wing begonias, New Wonder scaevola, Luscious Lemonade lantana

B) *Pennisetum rubrum*, Marguerite ipomoea, Royal Velvet Supertunia, Magenta Supertunia, Angelface Blue angelonia

C) *Pennisetum rubrum*, Yellow Chiffon Superbells, New Wonder scaevola, Angelface Blue angelonia

**Popular Pottery Colors:** Blue, black, red

**Customer count compared to 2009?** Down

**Average ticket compared to 2009?** Down—in August our customer count was down, but our sales were equal to 2009.

#### Additional Comments?

Product selection, merchandising and positive salesmanship made a huge difference in a down customer count year. Many departments exceeded or came close to their target sales levels.



#### American Plant

Bethesda, Maryland and Great Falls, Virginia

Marlene Bessel

**Top 5 Annuals:** Impatiens, geraniums, pansies, vinca, petunias (Millionbells and Supertunias)

**Top 5 Perennials:** May Night salvia, Munsted lavender, Rozanne geranium, Homestead Purple verbena, Butterfly Blue scabiosa

**Top 5 Flower Colors:** White, pinks, reds, purple, yellow

**Top 5 Edibles:** Full-sized tomatoes, patio/container tomatoes, basil, peppers, lettuces

**Most Popular Container Combos:**

- Shade: Impatiens, torenia, tuberous begonias, ferns and vinca vine
- Sun: Millionbells, bacopa, sun coleus, lantana and ipomoea

**Popular accessory colors:** Naturals/rustic, blue, gun-metal grey, bronze

**Customer count compared to 2009?** Client visits were about the same, or slightly higher.

**Average ticket compared to 2009?** Average ticket sale was about the same.

**Additional comments?**

It's always about the weather. The economy certainly plays a role, but people want to feel like they are doing something healthy, sustainable and fun, regardless. They just don't want to do it when it's too wet, too cold, too hot, too dry. We're fortunate to be located in an area where the federal government and peripheral businesses help keep employment levels somewhat stable. That being said, people are still careful about how they spend their dollars. We have seen a big up-tick in edibles. This reinforces the "think green" of buying and eating locally. We also believe the client enjoys and appreciates the personal attention they receive when they shop at an independent garden center. Clients seem to want to support local businesses that are involved in their community.



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### Hole's Greenhouses and Gardens

St. Albert, Alberta, Canada

Valerie Hole

**Top 5 Annuals:** Petunias (vegetative and seed), tomatoes, annual vines (mainly ipomoea and English ivy), geraniums (vegetative only), annual grasses (mainly pennisetum)

**Top 5 Perennials:** *Meconopsis grandis*\*, Calamagrostis Karl Forster, *Salvia sylvestris*, especially Caradonna, Asiatic lilies (the Tiny Series, not the taller varieties), large shade plants (large in mature size and large in size when sold), with *Ligularia sp.* responsible for the majority of sales in this category

*\*The Himalayan blue poppies sold out by Mother's Day weekend, even though our weather in May was terrible and overall sales were down due to poor weather. We were able to locate a few more orders throughout the season, but basically, everything we could get our hands on, sold out almost immediately.*

**Top 5 Flower/Foliage\*\* Colors:** Deep pink/rose, lime, purple/burgundy, deep salmon/coral, orange tones

*\*\*This list refers primarily to our annual plants, which is by far the largest plant category. The perennial department is slightly different. Their No. 1 color category is true blue (a flower color that is very difficult to find). Interestingly, two of the top three best perennial sellers produce true blue flowers. The second most popular color in perennials was also lime, followed by purples and then perennial plants with true, bright red flowers. In both annuals and perennials, plants with pastel-colored flowers are not selling well and continue to decrease in units sold. White flowered plants and yellow flowered plant sales are also flat.*

**Top 5 Edibles:** Tomatoes, strawberries, herbs (basil is by far the biggest seller in this category), cucumbers, peppers

**Most Popular Container Combos:**

Our most popular containers were anything that had calibrachoa and/or vegetative petunias in it. This includes hanging baskets. We also grow some containers with mixed perennials in them. In this department, our most popular sellers were mixes that had "true" blue-flowering and purple-flowering plants. Although we received lots of moisture this season, our past five years have been droughts, so customers were also focused on those planters that had drought-tolerant plants in them.

Another new idea we tried this year was "planter kits." We provided a recipe, along with the pot, potting soil and a tray containing all the plants the customer would need to make the planter. It was very popular.

**Popular Pottery Colors:** Black (by far), brown/mocha, pewter gray

**Customer Count/Sales Per Customer Compared to 2009?**

- March—customer count up/sales per customer down
- April—customer count up/sales per customer up
- May—customer count down/sales per customer down
- June—customer count up/sales per customer slightly down

#### Additional Comments?

One of the biggest factors in customer count this year was weather. Our temperatures were much warmer and sunnier than average in March and April. The weather was absolutely terrible in May, cold and wet, hence the lower customer count. June was still cooler and cloudier than average and it felt like summer was never going to arrive, which again affected our traffic.

Sales of vegetative annuals continue to increase, while traditional annual packs (seed started varieties) continue to decrease. The chains/mass merchandisers have taken over many of the traditional gardening categories, which means as an independent, it is more important than ever to continue to be innovative and unique.

#### Tagawa Garden Center

Centennial, Colorado

Jere Fukai

**Top 5 Annuals:** Petunias, geraniums, sun coleus, vegetative lobelia, calibrachoa

**Top 5 Perennials:** Ornamental grasses, agastache/salvia, rudbeckia/coreopsis, echinacea, Stepables (ground cover)

**Top 5 Flower Colors:** Blue/purple, orange, white, yellow, pink

**Top 5 Edibles:** Tomatoes, peppers, squash/cucumbers, basil, strawberries/raspberries

**Most Popular Container Combos:** Full sun, with lots of color

**Popular pottery colors:** For pottery: Blue, red. For home décor: Chartreuse green, orange, red

**Customer count compared to 2009?** Up in April, down in May, slightly up in June, up in July

**Average ticket compared to 2009?** Down

#### Additional Comments?

We are still seeing weather as the biggest factor in April and May. We had great weather most of April and cooler weather the end of April and first half of May. We had a very long, cold winter in Colorado and our customers were anxious for spring. We were grateful for good weather in June and July. (We escaped the terrible hailstorms from 2009 that made our customers give up on their gardens). We have seen continued growth in edible gardening and customers converting part of their yard to vegetables, herbs and fruit. There is also a big demand for vegetables to grow in containers. Edible gardening is also very much a family/couple activity. We are optimistic for 2011 and hope the weather is great for all of us.

#### Hillermann Nursery & Florist

Washington, Missouri

Sandi Hillermann McDonald

**Top 5 Annuals:** Petunias (Wave, Surfinia, etc.), Diamond Frost, lantana, geraniums, begonias (Dragon Wing and BIG)

**Top 5 Perennials:** Hosta, daylilies, heucheras, astilbes, geraniums

**Top 5 Flower Colors:** Pink, coral, red, yellow, white

**Top 5 Edibles:** Herbs, tomatoes, peppers, squash, melons

**Most Popular Container Combos:** Calibrachoa and petunia, verbena and calibrachoa, begonia and lysmachia, impatiens and spider plants, tomato and basil

**Popular Pottery/Décor colors:** Tan/khaki, terra cotta, black, green, gold

**Customer Count Compared to 2009?** Visits were up thru mid May.

**Average Ticket Compared to 2009?** Average ticket is up slightly from last year to date.

#### Additional Comments?

Spring 2010, for the third year in a row, has been a challenge. I am anticipating a great 2011. Mother Nature can't hold a grudge for four years, can she? No, seriously, the interest is very high, the customer anticipation is strong, and we are looking for the upswing to happen shortly. Stay sharp and keen and to your plan and remember the customer wants and needs our support and education. We are excited about the challenges



ahead. We have met as a team and have 2011 planned and ready. I can't wait to start the process. Bring her on!

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### Rockledge Gardens

Rockledge, Florida

Theresa Riley

**Top 5 Annuals:** Impatiens, petunias, violas, coleus, zinnias

**Top 5 Perennials:** Pentas, salvia, milkweed, angelonia, lantana

**Top 5 Flower Colors:** Yellow, purple, pink, red, orange

**Top 5 Edibles:** Tomatoes, peppers, lettuce, eggplant, collards (also fruit trees ... citrus, tropical fruit, peaches and apples)

**Most Popular Container Combos:** Really anything with nice color and textures. Monochromatic combos have also worked well.

**Popular Accessory Colors:** Blues and greens

**Customer Count Compared to 2009?** Up

**Average Ticket Compared to 2009?** Down

#### Additional Comments?

We have tried hard to position ourselves as "the answer people" when it comes to gardening. The local paper calls us frequently when they are writing articles. We conduct free seminars every Saturday for our customers. We feel this helps us to establish a good relationship with them and to be their trusted source for garden products, plants and advice.



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### Calloway's Nursery

17 retail locations in the Dallas-Fort Worth Metroplex, 2 in Houston

Tim Runté

**Top 5 Annuals:** Begonia Bada Boom/Bada Bing 4 in., periwinkle Cora 4 in., impatiens Xtreme 4 in., petunia Hurrah 4 in., ipomoea 4 in.

**Top 5 Perennials:** Hosta 1 gal., daylily 4.5 in., verbena 4.5 in., salvia 4.5 in., coreopsis 4.5 in.

**Top 5 Flower Colors:** Red, pink/lavender, white, yellow, mix

**Top 5 Edibles:** California Wonder Pepper Chef Jeff 4 in., Celebrity Tomato Chef Jeff 4 in., Mucho Nacho Pepper Chef Jeff 4 in., Patio Tomato Chef Jeff 4 in., Super Supreme Banana Pepper Chef Jeff 4 in.

**Most Popular Container Combos:** \$19.99 price point (by units), \$29.99 price point (by retail dollars), Aladdin Nautical Mix petunias

**Popular Accessory Colors:** Earth-tone greens, earth-tone browns, earth-tone creams

**Customer Count Compared to 2009?** Up

**Average Ticket Compared to 2009?** Up

#### Additional Comments?

We're very optimistic on the outlook for retail garden centers in Texas. Our customers are continually benefiting from the improvements made to products we offer. Kudos to those breeders, growers and manufacturers that work diligently to improve their products so that the *home gardener* is more successful.

As for the growers that may flip over from *GrowerTalks* ... Grow more GREAT, FANTASTIC-quality finished product. Produce more product that's easy to sell. Quality is not subjective. The "Best in the West" will always be what looks the best! Realizing we depend greatly on the success of our gardeners, we're very excited about having the opportunity to continue to offer our customers the very best.

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### Minter Country Garden Ltd.

Chilliwack, British Columbia, Canada

Lisa Minter-Bustin

**Top 5 Annuals:** Osteospermum, pansies, bacopa, calibrachoa, ipomoea (mainly green)

**Top 5 Perennials:** Lavender, Evergold carex, grasses, heuchera, hosta

**Top 5 Flower Colors:** Orange, purple, scarlet red, pink, yellow

**Top 5 Edibles:** Basil, Tomato, Goji berries, Blueberries, salad greens

**Most Popular Container Combos:** Annuals with perennials and grasses; lots of color and texture

**Popular Accessory Colors:** Black! (and a little purple and copper)

**Customer Count Compared to 2009?** Down

**Average Ticket Compared to 2009?** Down

**Additional Comments?**

Remember you are first and foremost a garden center and as such need to ensure you stock garden staples. With today's economy we all are trying to reduce inventories, but need to be able to provide solutions for our customers, not just the information. I'm always surprised at how many people will come into our store to find a rather basic, but perhaps not right, in-season product that they can't seem to get elsewhere.



**DeWayne's Inc.**

**Selma, North Carolina**

*Tina Lee*

**Top 5 Annuals:** Gerbera daisy, petunia, impatiens, portulaca, geraniums

**Top 5 Perennials:** Chapel Hill lantana, Miss Huff lantana, coral bells, phlox, salvia

**Top 5 Flower Colors:** Yellow, pink, red, white, purple

**Top 5 Edibles:** Tomatoes, cucumbers, squash, peppers, herbs

**Most Popular Container Combos:** Spike in the center surrounded by heat-tolerant annuals, such as portulaca, Million Bells

**Popular Accessory Colors:** Blue

**Customer Count Compared to 2009?** Gardening was down; storewide was up

**Average Ticket Compared to 2009?** Gardening was down; storewide was up

**Additional Comments?**

Plant sales have been disappointing this year for us. We started out strong this spring, but after Mother's Day, plant sales went down. Thank goodness we are a very diverse company. We actually opened a Ladies Boutique at our location in April and it is doing very well. Overall, we are up 17% over 2009 total sales. **GP**

