



"Graines d'Or" European Challenge

Discover the 2011 prize winner's list of the most innovating European garden centers!



Gold Trophy:
The Meier garden center (Switzerland)

Silver Trophy:
Les Compagnons des Saisons (France)

Bronze Trophy:
The Florina garden center (Belgium)

Special distinctions :

The European brand-of-the-year trophy:
Intratuin (Holland)

The city concept trophy:
Urban Green (Holland)

The Green design concept trophy:
Giardini della Versilia (Italy)

The European personality of the year trophy:
Rachel Doyle, owner of the Arboretum garden center (Ireland)



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Garden centres nominated

Germany

Breuer
Dehner
Ritter
Rammes Grünland
Von Ehren

England

Barton Grange
Bents Garden & Home
Webbs of wychbold
Woodcote Green
Wallington

Belgium

Floralux Dardizele
Florina Bevrijdingslaan
(Bronze Trophy)
Intratuin Burcht
Pelkmans
Rijmenants Zandhoven
Van Uytzel

Spain

Casplanta Vigo
Eiviss Garden Ibiza
Fronda Majadahonda
La Noguera

France

Botanic of Francheville
Les Compagnons
des Saisons (Silver Trophy)
Jardinerie Desjardins
Floralie's Garden
Gamm Vert
Les Jardins de Belleville
Truffaut

Holland

Intratuin (European retailer of the year)
Groenrijk Nieu Vennepe
Life and Garden Staphorst
Tuincentrum LeursUrban
Green Amsterdam (City Concept)

Ireland

Rachel Doyle/Arboretum
Garden Centre (European
personality of the year)
Horkans Lifestyle
Garden Centre
O, Meara's
Orchard Home and Garden

Italia

Flover Bussolengo
Giardini della Versilia (Green
Design Concept)
Peraga Mercenasco
Viridèa Rho

Switzerland

Meier (Gold Trophy)
Schilliger Matran
Wyss Muttenz

Most unusual garden centers!

For the second year in a row, the "Graines d'Or" are heading for Europe! A logical development! It is within this framework that "Jardineries" magazine has put together a special report aiming at putting under the spotlights the most innovative garden centers, in 9 countries (Germany, England, Belgium, Spain, France, Holland, Ireland, Italy, and Switzerland). The first step in this pre-selection process was achieved by a jury comprised of journalists, consultants, federation members, gardening sector professionals, and suppliers... in each country, it consisted in taking into account a set of 6 criteria in order to determine the best garden centers. The 6 criteria are: 1 – who innovates in the departments merchandising; 2 - who Develops new departments or concepts; 3 – who has a dynamic strategy to open-up/remodel its business; 4 – who offers the best strategy in terms of services; 5 – who offers the best Fidelity program; 6 – who has the developed policy in terms of sustainable development. The second step done through our team of journalists, and it was about visiting the 45 garden centers selected. Last, the third step... Based upon these visits, a master jury of experts convened on September 20th, spearheaded by Marc Mignon to determine our laureates. Three trophies, and four special distinctions awarded to garden centers distinguishing themselves with their capacity to generate in-store traffic (welcoming infrastructure, catering, activities, outside gardens or parks...), their know-how in greeting, advice and service, their strategy based upon an event schedule... Most unusual garden centers or brands!

**It is to be noted that we have added France this year.*



Master jury of experts convened on September 20th, in Paris. From left to right: Gerda Zandberg (GZ Marketing), Maurice Secreve (Floraholland), Valérie Brustolin, journalist, Xavier Faure (Forteam), Marc Mignon (European consultant and president of the Jury), Piet Van Kerkhove (Floréac), Brand Wagenaar (Médioflor), Christian Vandenberghe (Bonkenburg and president de Génération Jardin), Ron Jérónimus (OHF), Patrick Glemas (journalist and president of the Garden centers and Horticulture Journalists Association), Denis Gabiano (Oxadis), Roméo Sommers (journalist, consultant), Doris Ganninger-Hauck (journaliste allemande), Marie-Pierre Morin (Groupe J), Jan Verheij (Floraholland), Luc Janssen (DCM), Valérie Langendorff (Groupe J) et Oliver Mathys (Javadoplant). Not pictured, Jocelyne Kerjouan (PPH), Agnès Guillaumin et Pascale Benhaïem Komlos.



**GOLD
TROPHY**

MEIER GARDEN CENTER

The "Meier" concept

It is in Dürnten that the Meier's family decided, over a year ago, to rebuild its garden center, a few kilometers away from the old one, near a more strategic major road, and very near to Zurich, in Alemannic Switzerland. A concept aiming at Excellency when it comes down to clients' comfort, the place where garden lovers can meet, and at declining the art of knowing how to host, with the art of selling, in all of their forms. From the underground parking lot to the gastronomic restaurant with a panoramic view, to a lush world of plants, and educative realms of the manufactured products... the smallest detail as being well planned out, in order to welcome all generations of customers in this 15,000 m² garden center, completely transformed into a place to live-in... it captured all of the attention of our major jury of experts, and it obtains this year the gold trophy.



Many ready to use, quality products... Potteries with flowers, and many presentation ideas.



A new pergola sent out in the hot greenhouse to create a life-size ambiance.



On the manufactured goods side, products staged, offer an example..



The art of table setting, a staging concept of design.

Having become too small to satisfy the overall needs of a demanding and gardening passionate clientele, the Meier garden center, implemented since 1964 in Tann, has opened its brand new concept, last March, on 15,000 m² in Dürnten, not far from its old address (where its production is now located). Since, no need to remind it, the Meier family business, founded in 1894, started up as a producer of seeds, to specialize later in the production of plants (80% of the garden center's plants come from the family production). Here is a nice asset, validating right from the start, the Meier's reputation resting, among other things, on the quality of the plant offer. Because the Meier's family know-how goes far beyond that! Erwin Meier-Honegger, the garden center manager and son of Erwin Meier-Albrecht, talks about it the best: *"We deem politeness as very important! For it represents the hallmark of our salespersons professionalism. In turn, it generates a lot of traffic, because clients are very sensitive to it. As a matter of fact, we have no turn-over in our teams."*

Advice is ever present

No use in telling that the new structure, impressive both by its indoor and outdoor architecture, could disorient many onlookers by its "design" aspect with a colder feel. But here again, the Meiers' are very grounded inside the store to remind that advice is ever present among its teams, from a

salesperson, the mother, the daughter in law, up to its managers. *"In the mechanized farming department, for example, reminds Erwin Meier-Honegger, behind a window shop, we have all of our team of mechanics repairing grass cutting machines; they are also here to give advice and to sell. We have improved again on service and advice."*

On the manufactured goods' side, large surfaces make way to many podiums, dedicated to staging, but above all, demonstrations (dripping watering system, outside, a robot on lawn to show grass cutting...).

"Just like Home"

Here, all is designed for clients' comfort... whether it may be in terms of education devised around products, or through places to live-in set up a bit everywhere along the client's path. *"We wished for the clients to feel inside our garden center very much like at Home"*, like Erwin Meier-Honegger likes to say. It is around this goal that we have built spaces to live-in in each realm; for example, a life-size pergola inside the hot greenhouse, or nestled among exotic plants, a hammock or a reclining chair... but again through a kiosk entirely devoted to inform about hundreds of apple varieties... these "event like" set ups contribute to a dynamic store, a real eye-catcher for someone with an aesthetic flair. Not to mention, entire realms dedicated to the art of table setting, garden furniture, outdoor decorating, or even

SWITZERLAND



JURY'S OPINION

A new, environment-friendly structure making sensations! Huge investments warmly acknowledged by its competitors! A garden center is getting it right, with space to live-in, choice, quality, advice, services...bringing great ease to its clients. A dynamic family, overflowing with ideas to do business.

Ernst Meier AG

Kreuzstrasse 2 | CH – 8635 Dürnten

- Manager of the garden center: Erwin Meier-Honegger
- Overall surface area in Dürnten: 37,000 m²
- Overall surface area of the store: 15,000 m²
- Production in Tann: 20,000 m²
- Staff: 75 people for the store; 160 in total.
- Designer of structure: Thermoflor



A flower shop concept in which fresh flower arrangements are made in the store so that impulse purchases are eased up.



In-store bookshop.



Three types of catering, to make the visit last longer.



Children's daycare center staffed with graduated personnel.



Each window shop offers a peak at a real life example, like this grass cutting robot, cutting grass days in days out.

the flower shop, set up on the background of a perfect decoration, contributing more than ever to temptation. And, temptation is the goal...!

Daycare... Room rental...

Since nothing is left to chance, the Meiers' have thought of everything so that the visit takes place under the best of conditions... and, what is more, so that the visit lasts longer. For this purpose, many catering options are offered upstairs, a self-service area, a gastronomic restaurant (300 meals) or a tea-room. There is also a children's bookstore, and the cherry on top? A daycare center staffed with a certified day care worker.

"We also hold seminars for which we rent rooms upstairs (3 rooms), explains further Erwin Meier-Honegger. Comfort is

paramount in the rooms, enabling people attending seminars to know our garden center, our restaurant. We give to the men an ordering sheet so that they may send flowers to their wives. It brings in new clients."

Building in an environmental-friendly way

Infallible logic! In absolute comfort, and perfect coherence with the environment. As the new structure shows, since it was achieved while abiding to the current environmental rules (geothermic, nursery watered by the soil below – no water is spoiled – 50% of its energy needs in renewable energies, completely insulated). Without mentioning the parking lots – one underground, the other on the rooftop both of them with a parking fee so that customers will use their cars less! A whole, another step! ■



Erwin Meier-Honegger, the son with his father by its side: greeting customers' in: one of the reasons why clientele chooses this store.



The client can start up its visit with the hot greenhouse (see picture) but also with the manufactured goods department, or go and visit the restaurant upstairs.



SILVER TROPHY

FRANCE



LES COMPAGNONS DES SAISONS GARDEN CENTRE IN WAMBRECHIES (59)

From garden to store...

With a display garden extending over 4 hectares, the Compagnons des Saisons garden centre in Wambrechies in the department of Nord has an undeniable asset. Visitors can stroll, explore, enjoy a day out with the family...and spend their money in the store!



Pots, watering cans, plants... everything is designed to generate cross sales...

JURY'S OPINION
A French store located 10km from the Belgian border that has come up with an original formula to stay ahead of the competition.

Hubert Capon, manager



In partnership with Naturen®, visitors can explore which combinations of plants will attract ladybirds and beneficial insects. Each display has an accompanying information board.

«**D**oing business without seeming to!» The idea is perhaps not a revolutionary one, but it works! The proof lies in the fact that the Wambrechies garden centre and its superb display garden are just as popular for family outings as for coach loads of Belgian tourists! «Not only is it our head office's experimental garden, but it is also a showcase for our expertise and the plants we sell in our own store», explains the manager, Hubert Capon, who is brimming with landscaping ideas for this garden which looks out over the garden centre. He has already

up in front of each garden selling the plant varieties featured in it. As visitors explore how beer is brewed, they also learn that 85 different local beers can be found in-store. Hubert Capon sums it all up: «We show our visitors what we are selling and it works well: despite the rather gloomy economic climate, we recorded a 15% rise in sales this summer, following the work to extend our garden.» A further key to the success of this garden is our staff: we have two full time staff members. The one is an horticulture specialist responsible for planning and planting our

and monitor fashion and market trends; every two months the store is given a new look with a new colour scheme in operation throughout the garden centre. Gone are the traditional rows of plants and manufactured goods: all our store displays are mingled to encourage cross sales. To Hubert Capon, the need for this is self-evident: «Consumers have changed; we need to leave behind the 90s idea of a garden centre and guide our clients by means of related products, informative signage and advice. From the outdoor garden to the restaurant... everything is designed to lure the visitors in!» ■



Enjoy lunch on the terrace surrounded by plants... an added bonus for the store.



Built in 2003 on what was once an old farmhouse, the garden has a wealth of character...



One of the most popular parts of the display garden, the kitchen garden...

extended the size of the garden, which in just six months has grown from 2.5 to 4 hectares and he has big plans for this additional space. A flowering meadow, beer garden, insect and butterfly gardens, orchard, kitchen garden, all kinds of animals... As customers enjoy a botanic stroll with a strong focus on biodiversity, they can pick up ideas to try out at home. A highly educational concept with information boards in front of every garden area, explaining the principle behind it and what the benefits are (for example, what flowers to plant to attract butterflies, etc.). Ensuring that sales are not overlooked, greenhouses set

displays, whilst also passing on his enthusiasm to amateur gardeners. The other takes care of our many animals -all species that are native to Northern France- : 9 types of hen, one goose, ducks, pigeons, donkeys, and plans to introduce bees and birds in the near future... to delight the children even further...

An atypical garden...

The garden centre also sets itself apart from most of its competitor stores. Here, we follow the seasonal patterns

Jardinerie Compagnons des Saisons

644 rue de Bondues – 59118 Wambrechies

- Managers: Hubert Capon and Jean-Pierre Richard
- Team: 50 staff.
- Total area: 6,000m² sales area, 20,000m² landscaped parking, 40,000m² park land.
- Turnover: more than 8 million euros per year, including 15% from home interior and 18% from pet product sales.



BRONZE
TROPHY

FLORINA (AS)

Garden center of the future

It's an amusement park for grown-ups, as Patrick Lathouwers, its manager and owner likes to joke about; Florina, one of the fifth most outstanding garden center in Belgium is the end result of seven years of constant innovation. Fifty years after its creation, the garden center of As, a small Flemish speaking town of the Limburg province, with 8,000 inhabitants, near the border with the Netherlands, draws 160,000 visitors per trimester! Clients from all horizons coming by entire bus loads, for the day, attracted by novelties offered by a garden center undergoing a complete change; they also forget there, that they sell plants...

Luxury, calm, and voluptuousness, as the French poet Baudelaire would write, this could be one of the many mottos which Florina could pride itself on having. One could also say, to imitate in a fun way a famous sixties' advert that "There's always something going on at Florina's"! And all that is paradoxical in the Florina garden center, resides in this contradiction, this little secret that makes Florina a truly unique place: a special blending of elements which makes a beehive feels like a nice quite place giving out an impression of spaciousness.

The structure of this special place brings up all the talent and passion that the owner Patrick Lathouwers, deploys daily for his clients. "What's paramount is accessibility. There are four ways by which one can enter Florina's: you can make a speedy stop at the flower shop, located straight at the right of the main entrance. You can simply stop by to have coffee, breakfast or lunch: the bar, cafeteria and restaurant lounge are situated immediately at the left of the entrance. After going through the main entrance, you stroll through a part of the store dedicated to decorating, "art de vivre", clothing, garden equipment. If you're in a hurry and you just have to buy potted geraniums, there is another entrance at the back of the garden center which allows you access to the hot greenhouse, and to the outdoor shopping area. Clients are never bothered by delivery trucks since there are specific docking bays to unload merchandise that are located underground so that they don't clutter clients' parking lot", he explains...

Treating our client like our friend

In order to have the client come to our store, here is the simplest trick: imagine that the garden center is your house and the client your guest. You have at heart to show your house under the best light, meaning well-decorated et neatly arranged. At Florina's, it's the same: all you can see is neatly cleaned, tidied-up, and arranged with taste. Great care is brought into the smallest detail, for example, bathrooms are equipped with an automatic air freshener system, no plant is tipped over, towels are neatly piled up into squares, and patio fur-



Florina

Bevrijdingslaan 157 – 3165 As

- A 4.5 hectares estate
- 12,000 m² of covered floor space
- 4,000 m² of outdoor space
- 600 parking spaces
- 15 full-time employees, 20 employees on weekends and 35 during peak time (Christmas and Easter)
- 160,000 visitors per trimester
- 12,000 clients' e-mail addresses on database

two weeks at lunch, or an additional baked pastry served at breakfast. Florina's has become a place of leisure for families, handicapped adults trips are organized there regularly, nearby inhabitants go on and stroll through, seniors from all over Belgium also enjoy coming to Florina's by entire bus loads. It is a place where seminars are also held, there is a specific room dedicated for this purpose, equipped with individual electrical outlets for laptops, as well as a video projection system. Entertainments are regularly scheduled and spectacular, glass blower, basket making, crafts and candles exhibits, a yearly dedicated space for pool vendors, soon such a space will be set up for verandas makers; in summer, a much-needed chef come and offers new ideas for barbecuing. Special offers geared towards clients are also an integral part of this experience, they always change, for example handing out a card for a 5

Florina, a new concept in garden centers where it is recommended to book for lunch in advance.

niture is displayed with a great sense for decor. The cherry on top, small attentions are devoted to customers, such as the offering of a glass of sparkling Italian Wine every

euros orchid as a gift to the person visiting with you, or special buying card valued at 15, 20, and 50 euros displayed under a pine tree. And how do you alert clients to these ever changing ideas? Thanks to the newsletter, and to the 12,000 mail addresses already in the database... among other ideas...

A technological and ecological approach

Patrick Lathouwers admits it, his worldwide travels in order to bring back the most innovative products seriously make up for his ecological strivings. But, this is not a reason to do nothing. So the garden center is equipped with a dripping irrigation system for each outdoor plant, finding its source in a huge tank which collects rain water; it is also outfitted with automatic screens which deploy themselves according to sunny conditions; he also considers, in partnership with university of Hasselt, the concept of solar panels to equip his glass roofs. Such an approach exemplify Florina's image: a constant quest. ■

Patrick Lathouwers



THE JURY'S OPINION
An impressive architecture and a care for esthetics in presentation of the offer. Huge logistical organization. An open-mind which favors unique products. Image of modern Belgium.





SPECIAL DISTINCTION
European retailer
of the year award

JURY'S OPINION
"The brand that acts as inspiration for everyone! A brand that has managed to develop its very own garden centre model. A brand that knows how to implement head office decisions. A very strong corporate culture. Ahead of the game in all areas! (Ladies night, promotional activities...)"

INTRATUIN

The strength of a retail brand

Intratuin is a retail brand with 56 stores. It gets ahead of the competition because of the close cooperation between stores, its promotional activities and its brand image. All of the work of the chain's head office is based on it. The Intratuin brand's strength seems to be based on cooperation between franchisees but also depends on the creative strength of individual business owners.

The resemblance between the stores bears witness to adherence to the head office philosophy and the Intratuin brand image. However, parent brand business owners do sometimes make highly individual choices. There are Intratuin stores that position themselves more as home interior retailers, others as leisure parks and some that opt to create an activity garden based on plants.

Head office launches advertising campaigns and promotional activities, some of which have had a major impact. Ladies Night is a good example, as in the Netherlands, over 100,000 women take to the streets on a given night in late November. The retail brand has also created the *Aan de Dis* (A table) concept. *Aan de Dis* is a professional cookery and kitchenware store offering major food brands and dinner services. Customers can register online to take part in themed sessions.

Jardineries magazine visited four Intratuin stores in the Netherlands. We found that the garden centres with more of a home interior slant had sometimes evolved considerably, both in terms of size and concept. We were able to chat with the business owners who are heading in this new more on-trend direction in which the *green experience* plays a key role.

As Intratuin cares about its relationship with its customers, the garden centres that have opted to focus more on plants than on home interior have found the perfect way to communicate with their customers and at the same time renew the relationship between the consumer and plants, using drama, the perfect vehicle for this. Drama enables people to learn, play and put things into perspective, which can also be beneficial in times of crisis. All of this takes place in the reassuring environment of gardens and gardening.



Intratuin Duiven

Intratuin Halsteren – Simply the best

During its tour of the country, Jardineries interviewed Piet Withagen, the owner-manager of Intratuin Halsteren. Withagen has created a business with regional reach. It occupies 20,000m² and stocks a range of over 45,000 items.

He aims to expand his customer base, with average purchase value already being one of the highest in the whole chain, with store size, activities and ambiance being the foundations for this drive.

The most important facets of this "home interior department store" are its size and the very light and spacious layout containing separate shops. Each shop has its own ambiance created by the colour scheme, layout and the range stocked. Employees are sometimes responsible for a specific shop.

The 'shop in shop' concept in Halsteren also includes brand outlets such as Riverdale, a major home accessories brand, and Riviera Maison, a furniture brand. Piet Withagen confirmed that these specialised stores generate a lot of footfall, which is all the more important as expanding the customer base is Intratuin Halsteren's main target.

Withagen recently decided to open a restaurant which caused a sensation due to both the shapes, colour scheme and features of its architectural design and the dishes made from fresh ingredients. *De Eetbare Tuin* (meaning The Edible Garden) is aimed at lovers of fine food and natural food fans.

Intratuin Duiven – The magic of Christmas

In Duiven, Jardineries spoke to Andre Nusselder, the highly enthusiastic owner of a progressive and fast-expanding company.

Just like Intratuin Halsteren, Intratuin Duiven most definitely belongs to the home décor sector. And, like

Halsteren, the store is laid out as the perfect setting for a mother and daughter or girls' shopping trip, whether for a full day or half-day. Intratuin Duiven is perfect for customers on the lookout for accessories for the home and to create a new ambiance in their homes. The core concept, which is typically Dutch, is the ambiance, the feeling of a warm and reassuring home from home. Andre Nusselder explained his company's positioning by comparing it with its neighbour Ikea, "Customers often come to Intratuin to find fresh inspiration following their visit to Ikea, which is next to us." The store offers less basic and more varied ranges which are nevertheless aimed at the same target groups as Ikea and Makro, a food wholesaler and Intratuin's other neighbour. Nusselder also told us that some restaurant owners have discovered that it is more convenient to buy accessories at Intratuin, as they can buy everything in one go due to the store stocking a wide range. Just like at Intratuin Halsteren, part of Duiven's strategic mission is to find new target groups. For example,



"Aan de dis", professional kitchenware and cookery store.



The Rosmalen Garden Theatre.



Duiven: the store is transformed just like a film set.

miniature railway lovers were interested in Lemax's small Christmas houses. Duiven's market approach also involves trying to attract younger customers. Intratuin Duiven has followed Ikea's example and uses a more familiar brand of language in its advertising.

The idea of creating an ambiance can be seen once again at the entrance where there is a typically Provencal style square where customers leaving the garden centre can enjoy a cup of tea or an ice cream. This is also the case during the Christmas extravaganza, which is the Duiven garden centre's key period of the year. Everyone sets to work to create the extravaganza over a six-week period in August and September. Centre employees nail down wood, while customers visit the garden centre once and sometimes twice a week to track the progress of this immense 7,000m² structure.

Customers enter this parallel universe in which, in the blink of an eye, everything is magically transformed. For weeks on end, customers come and are amazed by the spectacle and word of mouth is so effective that the number of visitors over the Christmas period accounts for almost one-third of the year's entire visitor numbers.

Intratuin Barneveld – The garden centre at the crossroads

At Intratuin Barneveld, Jardineries met with Jaap Luttkhuizen, the company's sales director. The Barneveld Garden Centre has received acclaim for its open and progressive ideas for years. Barneveld follows a customer concept. Marketing, ranging from the brand image to the choice of range, is based on a philosophy of providing the customer with a service and above all making their lives easier. The philosophy includes round display units, like marquees that are open on all sides, convenience-based product concepts (plants and decorative plant pots) in order to eliminate the stress of having to choose, and the genuine kindness of a devoted staff. Each customer is greeted on arrival. Customers feel acknowledged and know they are welcome. "If people make the effort to come and see us, we simply have to do everything to make them feel that we appreciate their presence", said the passionate and convinced director.

Despite the fact that the decision has been taken to offer customers ready-to-use products and plant and decorative pot deals, in order to have "unbeatable price" products and reduced ranges, the garden centre is still primarily focused on plants themselves, on outdoor plants and the greenhouse. The upper floor is

occupied by the *Aan de Dis* professional kitchenware and cookery shop, which enables Barneveld to apply head office concepts that help generate footfall by inviting customers to culinary sessions.



Halsteren: the Edible Garden, a well-known architect's impressive design.



Duiven: customers witness the transformation, right from the start of the work.



Halsteren: brand and themed shops rub shoulders along the length of the central avenue.



Intratuin Rosmalen, the Garden of Recreation

Jardineries met Gerard Berkelmans, the owner of both Rosmalen garden centres. Berkelmans explained that Intratuin Rosmalen is seeking to forge a new relationship with its customers and wants it customers to have a new relationship with plants. Following the first financial crisis and with a view to the second crisis which is currently hitting Europe, customers take refuge in their own small worlds and in the basic facets of life, such as plants and the garden. In Rosmalen, it seems that ideas take root against the backdrop of this changing situation. These ideas include the *Garden Teatre* (simplified and written without the 'h' to stress the playful, innocent and learning aspect). It whisks us away into another world, a square that resembles a public street, with its pavements for pedestrians, lined with mini-greenhouses and mini espaliered fruit trees and benches for a sit down, with a view of the theatre entrance. It is inside and outside, a courtyard and square at the same time, and the hub of all the activities organised by the garden centre. The entrance represents a strange world, a way into a literally disconcerting and fascinating private universe.

Intratuin Rosmalen is characterised by intimate or intimist corners in the entrance but also in the layout of the cold greenhouse plants with this being the basis, with a modest budget, for building the new garden of the future.

With an autumnal ambiance and image that conceal corners within corners (using the Russian doll principle) and employees nailing down sections of wood to build the Christmas décor, Rosmalen literally represents the creation of a human-sized world.

Interactive afternoons for adults and children are arranged to teach them how to make jam, create miniature gardens (see the *Intratuinjes* concept developed by Intratuin head office), bake tarts or do drama. The garden of the past has become a garden of recreation or 're-creation'.



URBAN GREEN

A garden center for new gardeners

Urban Green, a small two storey garden centre in a street in Amsterdam, has an urban focus and blends in seamlessly with its surroundings. Urban Green is aimed at a new target public which has its own needs: The “green-loving homo citadinus” ...

“Green-loving townies” are difficult to place within any particular socio-demographic group, apart from belonging to the group of city dwellers who love nature, prefer a slightly exclusive “new” classic style and prioritise quality and fine foods. This group of city dwellers are representative of a shift back to traditional values in a contemporary setting.



Towards a better and greener city.

Greening the city

On the first floor of the Urban Green garden centre in Amsterdam, we meet Mark van der Geest, spiritual father and founder of the company. He outlines his basic idea to us. Mark van der Geest began his career as an architect working as a concept designer for the Bijenkorf, the most well-known department store in the Netherlands. With the benefit of this experience, he is well placed to consider the garden centre in a new light, as a sale channel. With “urban life” as his starting point, his mission is to: <create



The garden centre for green-loving city dwellers.

THE JURY'S OPINION

A trophy for a reinvented garden center... Garden center located in an urban environment. The only ones who have reinterpreted this garden center concept, in order to import it in another environment. A garden center tailor-made for a new kind of gardeners.



Urban Green in Amsterdam

a greener city that is a better place to live in... and work together with customers to make a better city...»

With this in mind, the customer is not a prey to be hunted, nor a “targeted” group, but quite the opposite since the objective is a better city for customers to live in. Customers are expected to play their part in bringing this project to fruition... The big advantage of this strategy is that as customers are already on board, it is less easy to lose them along the way ... Urban Green and its customers share the same objectives, which is a very solid basis for a marketing concept that has been thoroughly thought through.

This is why Mark van der Geest, who created the concept, finds himself spending at least one day a week in the store, getting to know the customers, talking to them and listening to their ideas about the city and its green credentials. It is logical, therefore, that the head office's employees should have their offices in the garden centre itself, on the first floor, behind a large transparent glass partition from where they can see and observe what customers are doing.

The staff at Urban Green are extremely competent and of the highest standard. The best ones seize the opportunity and approach the company spontaneously in the hope of finding a job. At Urban Green, creativity is important and everyone's participation is key... for example in decision making about the range, about the store's design and expressing their ideas about communications and promotional campaigns.

Urban Green also seeks to offer an alternative to the traditional garden centre which, according to Mark, is often focused products and seasons, ignoring the needs of city dwellers, for whom the traditional garden centre does not provide adequate solutions. The solutions proposed by

Urban Green primarily aim urban garden design, at rooftops, balconies and patios... and, in addition at helping customers who lack expertise, they help to improve urban quality of life, providing oxygen and a pleasant, calming green environment. The solutions are modern in the sense that they are based on the “convenience” concept, which is highly prized by today's consumers, who are short of time and need “ready-made” solutions.

Consequently, the range of products offered by Urban Green goes from large olive trees in pots to flowering plants for balconies, from pre-planted patio planters to mini fruit trees and to high quality exclusive brands of barbecues.... A range enabling city dwellers to transform their balcony in just a few hours into a garden where they can entertain their friends in a verdant setting or an ambience filled with flowers. ■



The style and design of the Amsterdam building which houses the garden centre, is perfect for urban gardeners.



SPECIAL DISTINCTION
Green design Concept

GIARDINI DELLA VERSILIA

“Going back to our origins while innovating”



THE JURY'S OPINION
A true prowess of architecture and garden flora

Over the summer Tuscany has broken all temperatures on record, with a thermometer approaching the 40° C. An occurrence unlike any other before ! It is in this rather quiet period when clients generally come to get anti-mosquito products. We have met with Graziano Giovannelli, the owner.

In a region with magnificent landscape, a rather simple structure would have been enough. In the middle of mountains and cypresses, in Pietrasanta, soars a cathedral of the most modern nature, a truly amazing architectural achievement. The structure's transparency and height, very light and airy, is breathtaking. Since March 2010, this new garden center endows the Versilia region with a modern impulse.

Graziano Giovannelli explains to us that the area of Pietrasanta is very wealthy and many consumers have a passion for gardening. *“In this regard, numbers of customers have not yet met a partner ready to answer their questions.”* The store aims at a clients' catchment area going from Pietrasanta to areas nearby, such as Luca, Massa, and the town of Pisa. More than 70% of the offer is made up by plants. *“A strategic decision that I like to call an innovating going back to our origins, throughout an exhibit of modern and unique plants”*, reminds Graziano Giovannelli. Considering the region's weather, tropical plants are also largely represented in the offer. *“For almost all indoor and outdoor plants, as well as seasonal ones; I would rather buy in Italy, in the regions of Sicily, Puglia, and in the town of Albenga located in Liguria, or in South America.”* The store takes part in a central purchasing office, called Giardinia, and made up of 24 garden centers, Graziano Giovannelli himself is its CEO. Through this central office plants are bought in Italy, Holland, Belgium and Germany. Tropical varieties come from south America.

Wide ranges of finished products

A store dedicated to plants! Such is the choice of Graziano Giovannelli. Indeed, his other store, located in Massa Carrara, 20 km away, he displays a complete offer in decorating, Christmas items, furniture, and a pet shop.



Main entrance to the “Giardini della Versilia” in Pietrasanta



Under all of its structure, the roof is equipped with spraying devices.



Graziano Giovannelli.



In Pietrasanta, Graziano Giovannelli offers a wide range of finished products: plants, presented in their containers. The fifty-year experience of the first store have been put to use in this new, different, more accomplished adventure. *“plants make up the center of our activity because until now nobody has been able to present a consistent and complete array to the public in Italy.”*

The store is implemented on 25,000 m², of which 7,000 m² are indoors and it runs with a staff of 15 people.

A store within which an organic department runs around the kitchen garden theme, offering also a wide range of ecological fertilizers. The theme of aromatic plants is there to make people more aware of existing organic fertilizers. The garden center also offers landscaping classes in a public park geared towards hotels and restaurants, classes around a barbecue theme, or even around an efficient way to repel mosquitoes.

The store e-mails out regularly offers to members of its loyalty card program. In the Spring the patio furniture theme is widely treated.

The store aims before any other consideration at a quality

policy around what's exceptional and beautiful. Customers are not bothered with discount campaigns. Rather the store grants price reductions according to an overall purchase, for example, minus 10%, 20%, or even 30% depending on the quantity bought. In this way, landscapers, buying in bulk, allow the store a good inventory renewal. For Christmas, the store hires 2 decorating professionals in order to make the store Christmassy all around.

Graziano Giovannelli banks on plants and is convinced that the consumer will look for different types, because, like for everything else, the latter is on the look out for a professional, expert in his field, who offers him ready-to-use solutions.

Giardini della Versilia

- A commercial structure of 30.000 m².
- 6500 m² of indoor surface.
- 70 % of which is dedicated to plants.
- 6.000.000 € in initial investment.



SPECIAL DISTINCTION
European personality
of the year

RACHEL DOYLE, ARBORETUM

A very trendy woman !

The Arboretum garden center, property of Rachel Doyle, is located on the green hills of the western part of Ireland. The strength of Rachel Doyle is an acute sense of communication and a capacity to use all social networking. Thanks to her, Arboretum has taken a national magnitude, and even an international one. She symbolizes the moral and emotional values of the garden center.

Rachel Doyle describes her goal in terms of joy and leisure for her clients. "Arboretum's mission, she explains is based upon a passion for plants and an ambition to make people happy while they visit the garden center during an hour or half a day."

This mission is based on three pillars: plant expertise, events organization to generate clients coming and going, and the creation of a model garden which attracts tourists for organized tours, what the English call a destination garden center.

Communication

Rachel Doyle grants a very big importance to knowledge and competence to reach her goal. Employees of Arboretum must be able to give expert advice during live radio broadcasting, on Friday mornings in the garden center. It goes without saying that knowledge and expertise are justifying talking over the microphone and allowed to communicate on subject matters with authority whether it may be on the radio or in print. In fact, since 16 years, Rachel has a written an advice column on gardening in a national Irish newspaper. In addition to expert advice, promotional events are organized in order to support the brand image and its reputation, and naturally, also to attract attention on the garden center. To mention a few, barn dancing, a traditional harvesting feast, and breakfast with Santa. Nevertheless, most of the events launched by Arboretum are directly inspired by garden and gardening, such as for example a lecture on orchids by an expert. When it is not to share in with clients a passion for the product, the garden center has another goal to inspire at a different

JURY'S OPINION
A new way to promote garden centers and gardening, Rachel is the brand of the garden center, everyone knows. She's has a national value in Ireland !

level. So the model gardens, the restaurant or even the Labyrinth, all contribute to create a relaxed and thoughtful atmosphere. The catering part employs 25 people, and surprises by its use of Irish ingredients of superior quality or even with herbs and vegetables harvested in the kitchen garden of their restaurant. In the kitchen garden there is also poultry supplying fresh eggs to the restaurant and the children can go in just to see. For children, Rachel has created a Labyrinth, at the center of which you can find raised stones. Whether it may be through sculptures are plants, color effects, or in the forms of perennial plants, model gardens participate to this state of mind so important to Rachel.

Happiness

This concept, Rachel Doyle, is not only its founder, she lives it daily. She states herself to be the happiest woman in the world since every morning, she sits around with her two sons and her husband to take breakfast in her garden center. That happiness is not here by chance, happiness is hard work. In order to lead her business with her family members she called upon a coach to help her in the integration process of her sons in the business. Rachel

IRELAND



View on the garden of inspiration, with "raised stones"

likes to describe her target groups in the garden center by mentioning a few categories: the nice old lady, the millionaire who bargains, people who depend upon social welfare and have never worked in their lives, the snobbish lady who comes in to provide herself the latest in plants or "who prefers plastic robins big and fat..."

Social networking is important

Her passion for plants, garden, her business and the fact that she found the key to happiness has led Rachel to communicate. She collaborates with other entrepreneurs and garden centers owners or other businessmen and politicians in order to best defend the country, the region



In the inspirational garden each color has a sense

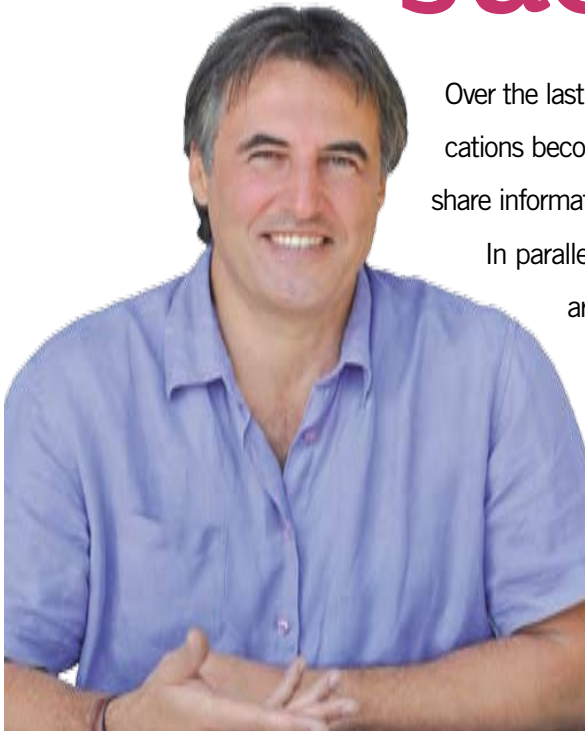


Rachel in the kitchen garden of the restaurant of Arboretum

interests, to fight for her colleagues' best interest, and in order to achieve new goals. "The importance of social interaction is really underestimated" she affirms.

Rachel's garden center, lost on the green hills of Leighlinbridge in the county of Carlow, is now nationally and internationally renowned. This fame is the result of a relentless work coming from a passionate and enduring young lady who created her Eden, far away from everything. They often used to call her "mad woman" used to refer to her as a bit "off the road". But she likes to be all that, because soon, there will be a big billboard along the highway with the sign "Arboretum" inscribed in gigantic letters! ■

Sharing our successes !



Marc Mignon, president of the jury Europe

Over the last few years we have had the impression that the world is moving faster and faster with communications becoming more flexible and more efficient. Our consumer habits are also changing now that we can share information instantly at a global level.

In parallel to this universal modernisation process, we feel we are losing control, not knowing where we are going or where exactly we are going to end up. And yet one thing is certain, we have only two speeds, fast and very fast!

Amidst this process of acceleration, we need reference points, criteria that help us to validate our choices, provide reassurance and inspiration and even help to guide us. Aside from our sales targets, all of us have a moral duty to understand what we are setting in motion, what it is that we are participating in.

Understanding related markets, and therefore the European market also, has become essential in a today's world in which we are no longer moving forward on our own..

Who would have believed a few years ago the commitment now being made by France and Germany in the face of the financial crisis in Greece? Today we can no longer design a project without anticipating its impact at European level: the opportunities, resources, limits, environmental impact, potential partners, responses from competitors who monitor our actions from beyond our geographic borders. With the new bilingual, or even multilingual, generation can also take advantage of a highly developed transport and communications network and therefore be more responsive and more mobile in a world that is rapidly shrinking.

The creativity and responsiveness observed in recent years have been spurred on by the crisis, and innovations within Europe's gardening sphere are amazing.

The European Graines d'Or (golden seed) awards showcase these innovations in greater detail, enabling us all to reap the benefits.

After a difficult selection by a jury of professionals drawn from every country, journalists visited the best garden centres in nine countries, analysing their potential based on a number of criteria (in-store merchandising, new concepts, drive to open up to new ideas, services, loyalty programmes and sustainable development).

This profile reveals to us growth potential concepts from more than 45 garden centres throughout Europe. We can take inspiration from these latest findings: The surge in popularity of cooking, the super-sales assistant/advisor, the very latest urban garden concept, new display furniture, etc.

The European Graines d'or awards invite us on a journey of discovery.

« Travel means learning to observe, ask ourselves questions, practise tolerance, get moving, take action and grow ! »

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