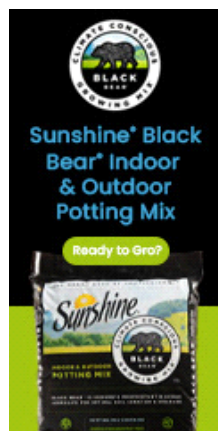
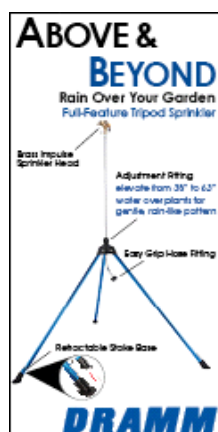


JP Stops at Bremec, Plus Lunch, Puzzles and Sweet Florals



THURSDAY, JUNE 8, 2023

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Green Profit's
buzz!
Retail news from inside and outside the green industry

COMING UP THIS WEEK:

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Acres of Adventure
What To Look for at Bremec
What's Up With Lemongrass?
Drop in to Dallas
Puzzle Time
Botanical Prints
Sugar as Flowers



Take Lunch

What do I always say? We can learn something from what's happening at restaurants and grocery stores. That's why I bring you a bit of information about lunch.

A recent quarterly **Restaurant Trends Report** from the folks at Toast indicates that, post-pandemic, the average lunchtime ticket is bigger than pre-pandemic times. It's up from \$16 to \$24, not including beverages or tips factored in. That's the good news. The bad news is that, unfortunately, there are fewer lunchtime tickets.

Of the 18 major cities covered in the report, only one—Kansas City—had more lunchtime transactions (3% more, in fact) in the first quarter of 2023 than in Q1 of 2019. The cities down the most were New York and Chicago (down 23%), and San Francisco and Philadelphia (down 22%).





The difference speaks for itself.



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The ticket number being down in cities is due to more people working from home or in the suburbs. The average ticket sale going up is understandable, too. With minimum wage increases, labor force decreases and inflation riding that incline, prices have risen to cover restaurants' accumulating costs.

All this is to say that people have changed their lunchtime routines. Maybe they're taking more of a break in the middle of the day where they do errands or spend time on their deck or in the garden. Now that they aren't commuting as much and are spending their breaks doing other things, how can you get them into your shop? Or how can you turn their lunchtime retreats into a plant-filled oasis?

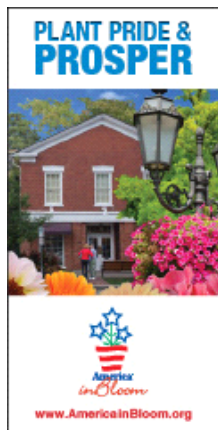
If you've noticed any midday changes to your customer count, send me an [EMAIL](#) about it. I'd love to know what you've noticed.

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



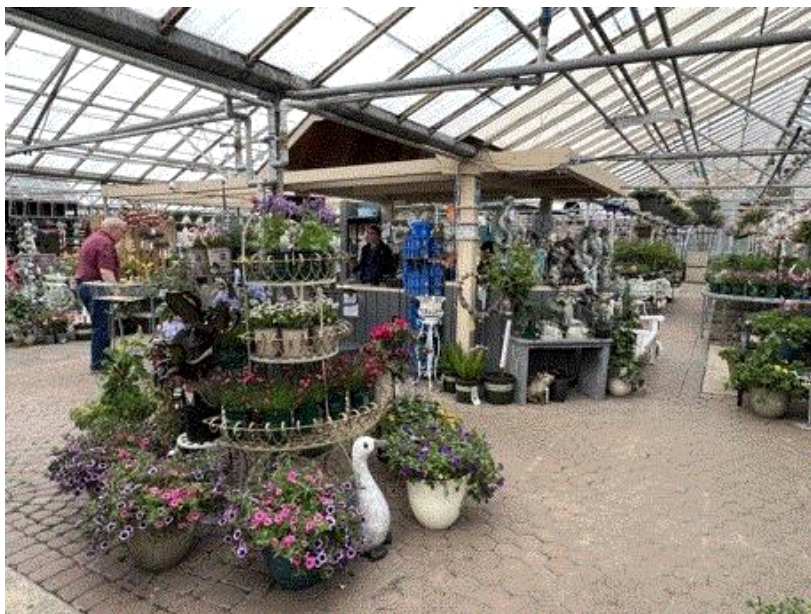
Acres of Adventure at Bremec Garden Center

The following is colleague Jen Polanz's third of four write-ups covering the retail stops on the



Cultivate'23 Retail Tour of Ohio garden centers coming up in July.

It had been a while since I perused the Bremec Garden Center's flagship store in Chesterland and upon arriving I remembered just how big it is. At about 40 acres total, the view is expansive and beautiful. You start at the garden center, immediately surrounded by hanging baskets, mixed containers and annuals, perennials, shrubs and trees of all sizes before moving out to the surrounding areas.



A recent addition, said Marketing Director Billy Herron, is the tropicals house, where houseplants, tropicals and succulents of all types reside. It was a bit more packed than usual on the day I visited, thanks to the somewhat unexpected frost that required tender plants to be moved inside until it warmed back up. It attracts visitors from hours away, something they didn't anticipate but are happy to oblige.

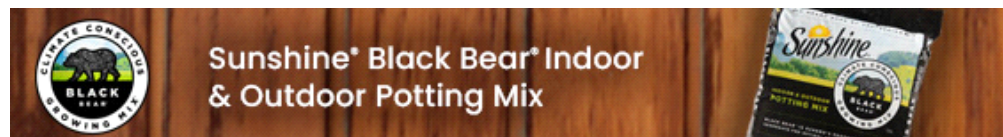
"We've had people from Erie, Pennsylvania and Ashtabula (Ohio) that travel out here because 'we've heard you have the most indoor plants and the largest variety so we wanted to check it out,'" he said. "We like making that area a show-off area; we like dazzling it up and just making it a unique place that people enjoy when they come to visit."

Bremec grows almost everything they sell, buying in just to fill gaps here and there. Billy added they partnered with Monrovia this year on their new garden center program. If a customer requests something that Bremecs doesn't have, it gets ordered from Monrovia and delivered on the next truckload that swings through.

"They come to us and we get them out of the truck, call the customer and let them know, 'Hey, your plants have arrived,'" Billy said, adding it's a great service to make sure customers have everything they want and have them return to their favorite store—Bremec now has four locations. "They can come pick them up at any garden center they choose."

So how did spring go for them? It all really broke loose on Mother's Day Weekend, when they experienced the convergence of excellent Northeast Ohio weather (finally) and gift-searching for mom. "It hit right when the weather breaks, and you not only have all your customers coming in getting something nice for mom, whether it's a new shrub in her yard or hanging baskets, of course, but then you also get all the people coming in that are like 'Alright, I've finally got a weekend where it's good and I want to get started—let's go,'" he said. "You brace for the crazy."

One thing Bremec does because of its sheer size is take customers down to the hoopouses in golf carts to pick out material. I experienced this personally and it was very helpful to have someone with extensive plant knowledge help me work through what I needed for my front flower bed. He helped pick the plants, the amount, and then drove me and them back up front to check out.



What To Look for at Bremec

The custom basket game is strong at Bremec, thanks to Designer Jessica Quigg, who starts in the winter to have plants custom grown for her clients' pots. She works with individual customers and organizations/businesses to see their visions through to fruition. Her customer list continues to grow, and they often drop off their containers year after year for her to fill (or they buy them from the Pottery Chalet, which you'll learn about next).

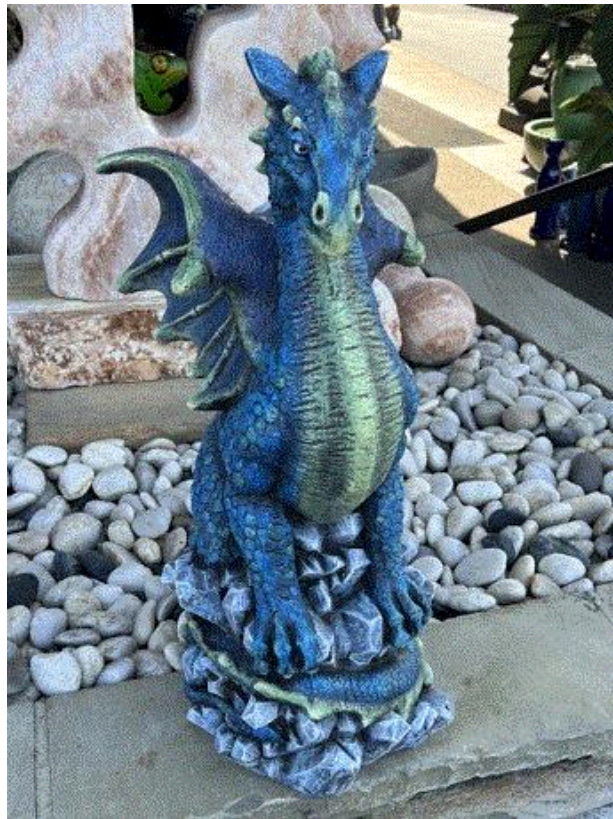


Pottery is one of the biggest categories for Bremec after the live goods and it's easy to see why. They invest heavily to have the largest selection in Northeast Ohio, and have an entire structure

dedicated to pottery and statuary, as well as a color-blocked pottery yard at the front of the property.



Something I've never heard of before that I wanted to mention, Bremec also does custom statuary art. The statue is standard, but for a fee, they'll have an artist custom paint it, like this stunning dragon pictured here.



The Pond Shop is for both customers and landscapers—it's a one-stop-shop where both can find everything they need to create water features. But it's more than that. They also offer services to open and close a water feature, as well as maintain it throughout the year. Pictured in front of the pond shop are replicas of the [Cleveland Guardians of Traffic](#), which became famous once again when our baseball team renamed themselves the Guardians.



The newer tropicals house is essentially their COVID baby, born out of a renewed interest in houseplants, succulents and tropicals. Here's one of many premium succulent bowls that can be found in the house.



More Ideas in General

There were a couple of additional retail bits that caught my eye that I wanted to share. One is this hose on a tracking system from above that keeps it off the ground in the tropicals house that I thought was clever.



Another is the system for grass seed in case you just need some to fill in smaller patches versus a big bag.



Stay tuned for my report from the fourth and last stop on the tour: Suncrest Gardens in Peninsula. And sign up for the tour to see all four stops for yourself! [REGISTER](#) for Cultivate'23

first and then add on the tour.

Thanks, JP!



The Lowdown on Lemongrass

JP also mentioned that she's heard lemongrass is one hot commodity at garden centers this season. Multiple retailers from around the country have individually mentioned it to her. The question is, why?

Have you seen a run on the herb at your store? And do you have any clue as to why? We've heard various anecdotes—it's a bug repellent, it's the latest smoothie craze and so on. If you're in the know, we want to know. Drop a note about it [HERE](#).



Drop in to Dallas

It's getting to be trials time. It makes sense that one of the first trialing Field Days is located in Texas, where it's been warm for months on end by this point (it's still in the mid 40s at night here in southern New England—what is going on?).



Not the trial garden, but a nice shot of part of the Dallas Arboretum grounds.

The trial plants at the Dallas Arboretum are ready to show you what they're made of during the Plant Trials Field Day, happening Wednesday, June 28. A fee of \$20 will get you entry into the garden, lunch and parking for the day. It'll also give you the opportunity to listen in on the Arboretum's trial evaluations over the past year, as well as presentations by industry pros. If you're a breeder, young plant supplier, grower, retailer, architect, landscaper, municipality plant

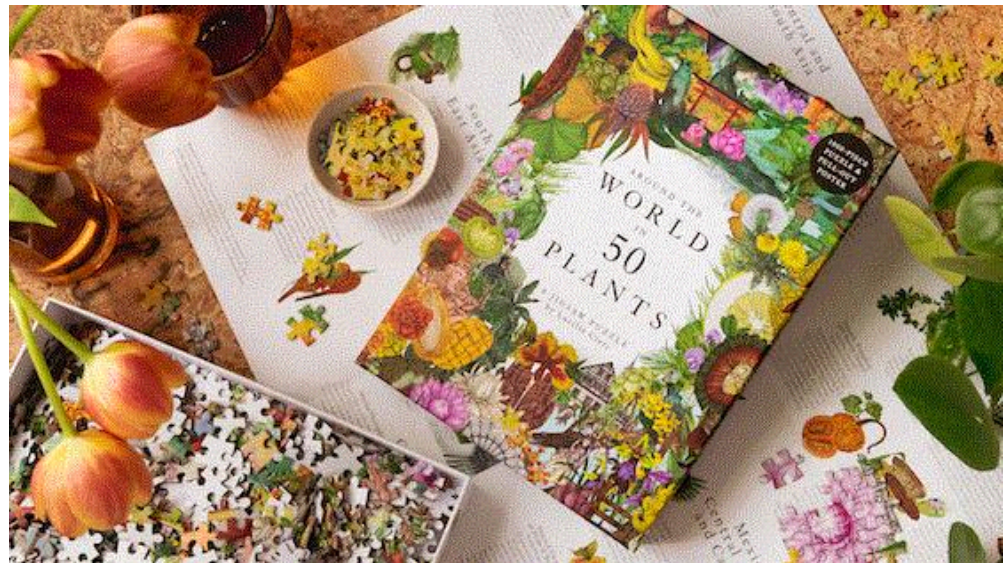
specialist or even an enthusiastic gardener wanting to know what plants do well in hot and humid Dallas-like conditions, then go to the Dallas Arboretum to see what plants are surviving and thriving.

The day's activities begin at 10:00 a.m. with lunch beginning at 11:30 a.m. followed by presentations from 12:30-3:00 p.m. Register [HERE](#).



Puzzle Time

While the next three items are not plants, they are plant-related. We'll start with something that's been waiting patiently in the queue a few months until it was officially launched in the U.S. And now it is!



With this 1,000-piece Around the World in 50 Plants jigsaw puzzle, you can take a trip across the globe and become familiar with 50 of the most stunning plants the world has to offer. Illustrated by famed French illustrator Lucille Clerc, the pieces and illustrations come together to create a perfectly challenging puzzle.

And it's not just about the puzzle pieces! Text on the accompanying poster from plant expert and Ambassador for WWF Jonathan Drori details the plants, where they reside and how their worlds are intricately entwined with our own history, culture and folklore. You'll learn so much—some of it surprising!—about plants as disparate as tomatoes, dandelions and Spanish moss.

I was able to get my hands on a preview copy and I gave it to my mom, a puzzle fanatic. She's enjoying it immensely and says it's one of the prettiest puzzles she's worked on. The official launch date for the puzzle is June 13, so be sure to schedule its purchase for early next week or forward this along to your store's buyer. Find Around the World in 50 Plants on [Amazon](#) or at your preferred puzzle purveyor.

Botanical Prints

Next up isn't necessarily something you'd sell (or maybe you would?), but perhaps it's something you'd install in your own shop. Whether you do or not, it's yet another item of proof that botanical prints are in. And, in fact, they always have been.

Long before the term "biophilic design" was coined, humans were surrounding themselves with botanicals in the form of prints, wall coverings, tableware and other domestic items that brought the softness of nature inside. Even within my lifetime I recall my parents' second bathroom having a daisy-themed Formica laminate on the walls. It was a very '60s bathroom, I thought.

Or was it a bathroom that could be in style across the ages? The Formica Group, after doing some research on its own 110 years of business, said that they've always had botanical designs in their offerings and they've always been popular.



Formica has also created a video about their Botanicals line that I thought was very well done and they show all the botanical prints way better than the above photo does. I suggest you [CHECK THAT OUT](#). All this is to say that if you're on the fence about continuing or bringing in botanical prints of some sort into your gift shop, the category is still quite popular.



Sugar as Flowers

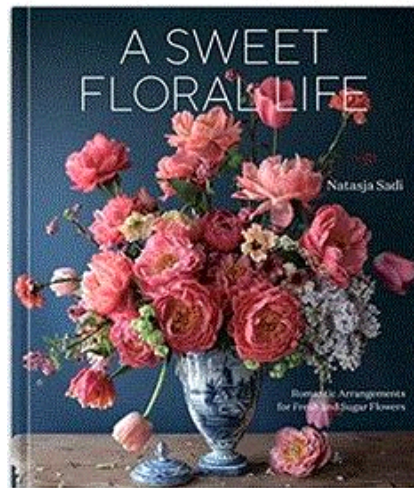
And the last item in the plants-but-not-real-plants listing comes from our Euro-trendspotter Stacy Sirk. She was just at a video shoot that was covering the works of floral designer and sugar artist

Natasja Sadi.



Natasja creates botanically identical flowers out of homemade sugar paste. Based in Amsterdam and originally from Suriname, she creates each of the flowers in honor of her ancestors who worked on Suriname's sugar cane plantations.

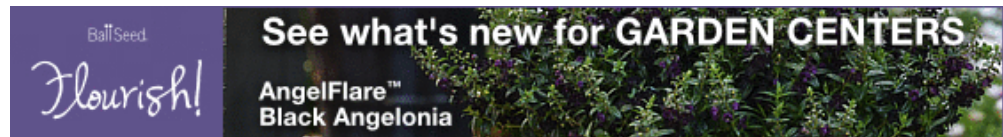
The reason for the video shoot is to highlight Natasja's just-released book! "A Sweet Floral Life" is filled with beautiful arrangements of both fresh and sugar-paste flowers.



It would be the perfect book to offer in plant shops and garden centers or anywhere a beautiful book like this would be appreciated. Contact your preferred book purveyor for wholesale orders and check out the book on [Amazon](https://www.amazon.com/dp/1641524000).

Stacy's closing comment on the book is, "It's something floral, and very different, connected to floral craft, which is such a thing right now."





Questions, comments, suggestions? Drop me a line if you'd like at ewells@ballpublishing.com.

Ellen Wells
Senior Editor
Green Profit

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