



Scott & Stephanie Hogg of Plant Culture

Plant Culture Nursery is a family run business with Scott & Stephanie Hogg at the helm. An integral part of this close knit group is newly appointed Jonathan Lake, the nursery manger and the staff who all form part of this family affair. The total staff compliment is a dynamic team of 14. The building of strong and meaningful relationships with both staff, customers and suppliers, is one of the reasons to which Scott attributes the successful growth of the nursery.



Jonathan, Nursery Manager

Plant Cultures' key lines are trees in the 60L and 125L range, together with a selection of landscaping and large shrubs. The quality and size of the plants are really good, while the prices remain some of the best value for money in the industry. Asked how they manage to keep their prices so low, Scott replied: 'Keeping a keen eye on overhead costs and being personally involved

in the day to day expenses'. Asked about the future: 'We are currently, as a wholesaler, small, with around 12 thousand trees thus far, however we aim to grow as time (and money) permits, bringing in new varieties and larger volumes. The nursery has recently had to expand onto a new piece of land, which luckily for us is just down the road. Operating on both farms has opened up some great opportunities which we look forward to developing and telling you about soon'.

The nursery has a very informative website which readers can access, showing all their availability lists and photos of current stock items. In addition to this, is the monthly newsletter which Scott writes. Should you wish to be included on the monthly email availability and price list, please email or call the office, give them your details and they'll happily keep you posted.

Scott, his wife Stephanie, Jonathan and the Plant Culture



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team, wish the readers well and look forward to seeing and assisting them soon. It's your support, orders and advise that helps us to grow, thank you, we really appreciate this. As part of the green industries' family, we look forward to growing with you and your businesses while continuing to bring greenery to all our environments.

Plant Culture is located in the Winelands between Somerset West and Stellenbosch - well situated for both collections and deliveries. Times are from 8:00 am to 5:00 pm. Mon to Friday, maps and directions are available on their webpage or faxable on enquiry.

More details are available on the Plant Culture website www.plantculture.co.za or they can be contacted at tel: 021 855 1591 fax: 021 855 5035 Scott 082 377 8582 Jonathan 079 476 6223 or email info@plantculture.co.za.



THE CAPE GREEN TIMES

NEWSLETTER PUBLISHED BY THE CAPE GREEN FORUM

P.O. Box 5513, Helderberg, 7135, Cape. Tel/fax: (021) 855 0092 e-mail: cgforum@iafrica.com

Despite the gloomy financial forecasts, the February Trade Day was well attended and visitors were once again impressed by the 49 exhibitors, of which 9 were total new comers. The plants looked happy and healthy and lots of energy was put into creating interesting stands.



Thanks to our judges, Tarna Klitzner Landscape Architect and Redwanna Isaacs, of Namkwa, who had a hard time deciding on the finalists, it took them ages! The results were: Best Plant Stand - Arnelia Proteas, 2nd place Treeco and 3rd Exotic Nursery. Best Allied Stand - Rock Pots, 2nd place Master Organics and 3rd Just Stone.

Trade days are a wonderful place to see what's on offer in the Cape, to renew contacts and to network - really a day not to be missed. The next one will be held on Wed. 19 August 2009, so

please diarise.

The committee has lots planned for the 1st half of the year. A visit to the "One and Only Hotel" in April, a talk by Kay Montgomery, working for water nursery partnership programme - "PLANT ME INSTEAD" - 27 May and a proposed 2 day tour up to Gauteng in July, visiting some nurseries and the Malansea Trade Day. Why not get involved and attend some of these the events? Meet people in the same field, share ideas and problems and work together through the Cape Green Forum in these tough times.

Have a look at the website - www.capegreenforum.co.za, it is new and a work in progress. We hope to update it at least



TRADE DAY THANKS GOES TO:
Neutrog for donating the first prize for the plant stand - half a ton of product.
Richard Morris for donating the 2nd & 3rd prizes - bird feeders & owl boxes.
Synthetic Turf Co for supplying the lawn at the entrance
Just Trees for the free trees
Hans Hettasch for his technical assistance with marking out the stands.

once a month, if you have anything to contribute please do so.



This issue is for armchair travellers, a visit to Australia with Inus, to Japan with Nick and the letter below. A big thanks to those who contribute so willingly.

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One of the greatest things about the horticultural industry is the commitment and passion that is generated amongst its community. And the worldwide horticultural industry is a close community, as we so often find. "It's a small world" is a regular comment heard amongst members of our industry as we travel to various trade shows, presentations, seminars and exhibitions across the globe.

The same can be said when we met Mike Carter of Elands Nursery, Uitenhage early this year. Mike, was attending the GAN Trade Show in Dorset, UK. As he gave us a potted history of his background in both South Africa and the UK, it was uncanny how many people, nurseries, companies and parts of the world that we had in common.

As a relative newcomer to the industry, I personally always feel it refreshing to see the passion and vigour displayed in all layers of our industry. It is therefore always a pleasure to create an opportunity from where we can all benefit - and I thank Mike

COMMERCIAL HORTICULTURE

It's a small world

Stuart Booker
Events & Marketing Manager
Commercial Horticultural Association - United Kingdom

for this opportunity.

The Commercial Horticultural Association represents the interests of UK manufacturers and suppliers of plants, products and services to commercial horticultural growers throughout the world. Our Members provide a huge range of products and services, from irrigation to insect netting, cut flowers to crop covers, glasshouses to growing media and so on.

A key element of our role is to link our Members up with international growers and nurseries. As such, we organise the UK Pavilions at various international events throughout Europe, the Middle East and Africa. Many of our Members

have a presence throughout these areas and further afield, and we as a Trade Association are always delighted to take enquiries and point interested parties in the direction of a company or service provider who can help.

If you feel you could benefit from the services of any of our Members, please visit our website at www.cha-hort.com.

JAPANESE GARDEN CENTRE VISIT

Nick Stodel

It was my honour to be invited by the Japanese Garden Centre Association to visit their garden centers and gain a better understanding of their industry. Japan has had a very long history of gardening, dating back hundreds of years. Gardening has been a past time for many years in Japan, with the first shops dedicated to supplying wealthy Japanese with garden equipment and plants dating back over 400 years. The Shoguns were very influential in promoting the benefits of gardening for aesthetic reasons.

For that reason I was very interested to find out how small their gardening industry was compared to that of other countries I had visited. I was to find out that while Japan has a long history of gardening, the industry itself was wiped out with the industrial revolution and then World War 2. The result was that many Japanese still gardened, however the industry itself was virtually none existent. Garden Centers and the ready availability of gardening products and material are only about 15 years old, but like with most aspects of Japanese life, a very organised and structured means was created to grow the industry through Retail and Growing Associations. At least two countries a year were visited in North America and Europe

and the ideas seen in those countries were taken back to Japan and implemented.

The gardening industry in Japan grew tremendously in the 1990's and the first large scale Garden Specialty store was opened in 1994. From 1997-2000 there was a huge over-production of plants on the market and the price of plants fell drastically. This made gardening more open to the general population, but gave the industry some interesting challenges. It was then that the associations grew strong and the growers more organised.

We visited 3 garden centers and I was impressed with the way in which they catered for what is their biggest market, container gardening. Each plant was carefully presented to make it easy for customers to find a pot and plant combination. Their selection of indoor plants was very impressive, and their orchids were incredible. I think that one



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could have a tour just on orchids.

There was a lot of talk in Japan about the "Greenwash" – the fact that everybody uses the word Green, but that it doesn't mean anything. This is a problem the Japanese local industry is trying to overcome using various initiatives.

Talk from other countries was that of the Green City initiatives. It is a marketing campaign that promotes green spaces by doing community projects under the Green City logo. Garden Centers need to fulfil certain criteria to use the logo for their marketing. Australia has an amazing new initiative where some local garden centers have paid to have virtual tours of their garden centers done. Check it out at www.ngiv.com.au/virtualtour.

The International Garden Centre Association will be visiting the UK from the 13th – 19th Sept 2009. They have instituted a student rate where anybody under 40 years old is able to get a much reduced price and it will be structured like a study tour. <http://www.igcacongress.com>.

A VISIT TO PROTEAFLOA AUSTRALIA

Inus Mostert
Arnelia Proteas

receiving training and looking at various aspects related to the wholesale production of Proteaceae.

Why spend time at an Australian company who grows mainly South African, and to a lesser extent, Australian Proteaceae, one might wonder? The answer is quite simple: Proteaflora is the world leader in the wholesale production of Proteaceae in containers and have collaboration agreements with various wholesale nurseries across the world, amongst others Arnelia Proteas in South Africa. Proteaflora has won three consecutive awards, from 2005 to 2007, as the best wholesale production nursery in Australia.

In my time there I noticed and became aware of a few things related to their nursery industry and other aspects of Australian life, which are different to what we are accustomed to here in SA and I want to highlight a few of these differences.

Cost and efficiency of labour:

The average rate per hour per general worker is around A\$10, which isn't cheap by any one's standards! Proteaflora employs approximately 15 people in the production side of the business and this workforce is responsible for approximately 300,000 14cm container plants per 15-month cycle. I was shocked to see only 2 people in the nursery (the rest busy with propagation and dispatching orders) while at Arnelia we would have between 10 and 20 staff during summer in the nursery. How do they manage with such a small workforce I wondered? The answers became apparent as the days went by: a skilled and competent workforce, a management system on computer that every worker is able to access and capture their days activities on, mechanisation, years of trials with amongst others herbicides to have a virtually weed free nursery, just to name a few.

Pot standardisation:

It was interesting to hear that the different size plastic pots in use throughout the Australian nursery industry, is standardised. This makes a lot

of sense, from the manufacturer's point of view through to the retailer.

Distribution companies:

Various plant distribution companies exist in the State of Victoria alone and their function is to collect the product from various wholesalers in a particular area ordered by the retailers, take it to the company's distribution centre, consolidate the plants from the various wholesalers for a specific retailer and deliver the retailers order. Proteaflora has a choice of at least 2 different distribution companies in the Monbulk area where the nursery is based. This makes the lives of the wholesalers a lot easier for reasons that should be obvious.

Potting mixes:

Proteaflora, and other wholesalers, are privileged to have a potting "soil" company nearby who works closely with the various wholesalers according to their potting mix requirements. The company providing the pot mixes will analyze each batch of bark mixture which Proteaflora uses, obtain the controlled released fertilizers from the manufacturers, as prescribed by Proteaflora, blend in the fertilizers, lime and a certain percentage of sand according to Proteaflora's needs. After each delivery Proteaflora will then do their own analysis of the potting mix and reject a batch if not meeting their standards, which the potting soil company has to collect at their own cost. At Arnelia we also use bark as our potting medium, which comes from the Southern Cape. Whereas Proteaflora is able to receive a ready-to-use potting mix within a day after ordering, at Arnelia we have to order a month in advance to be on the safe side and then perform our own blending of the necessary fertilizers and lime before it's ready to use.

Anova pot:

Imagine my surprise and disbelief when seeing a 14cm plastic pot in use by Proteaflora called the Anova pot, which has one large, sieve-like drainage hole right in the centre of the pot at the bottom – no drainage holes at the sides! There is an edge on the inside of the pot, around the hole, which causes excess water to be retained at the bottom of the pot and re-absorbed later in the day as the potting mix starts drying. When this



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concept appeared in Australia, Proteaflora was the first nursery to embrace this idea, while other growers were sceptical. The advantage of this pot is that an irrigation cycle sufficient to wet an Anova pot will not wet a standard 14cm pot enough to see it through a warm day. This equates to a water saving ability of ± 10%.

Water – a scarce commodity in Oz:

Proteaflora relies on rain, borehole and creek water for production. In Victoria any new nursery must recycle irrigation water, as must any nursery using mains water. Irrigation water shouldn't soak away or run off, which means that the watered areas must be sealed and all excess water collected. There are guidelines in place also for rainwater collection. New South Wales and Western Australia have similar laws, but states with more water aren't so concerned. Because water is a scarce commodity in SA as well, we can learn a lot from our Wallaby neighbours in this regard. Andrew and Sue Matthews, who I stayed with, rely entirely on rainwater for their household use!

I was able to visit an indigenous retail nursery near Proteaflora. I was amazed to see the many genera on offer like Banksia, Telopia, Grevillia, Eucalyptus, Syzgium just to name a few, the many species / varieties within a specific genus (50 different Eucalyptus species on a quick count) and no plants in plastic bags, all in pots. The reason why plastic bags aren't used much in Australia is that it makes machine potting very difficult.

It was a very informative visit for me making me aware of how much more effort we as wholesalers in SA have to put into growing and getting our product out to the retailers, compared to our Australian counterparts.

Lastly, did you know that Australia has ± 650 species of Eucalyptus?

INTRODUCING HANS HETTASCH

•
Arnelia Nursery
•

Hans was born in Stellenbosch and went to school in Durbanville. He returned to Stellenbosch to study B.Sc. Agriculture (Horticulture) graduating in 1994. During his final year

Hans started leaning towards floriculture and started his career in Proteas straight after finishing at university. For seven years, Hans worked in the fynbos cut-flower division of Molteno Brothers in Grabouw, during this time he also completed his M.Sc. Agric (Horticulture).

Coming from a farming background, one grandfather was a sheep farmer and the other an amateur botanist and being raised on a small holding, meant that Hans always had a yearning for his own piece of land. This dream came true in 1999 when he purchased a 30ha piece of land just outside Hopefield on the West Coast.

In 2002 he left Molteno Brothers and started full time at Arnelia with one worker. Arnelia was then a tiny nursery (120 square meters under shade) that produced rooted cuttings for their own plantings, this grew to 12 ha by 2004.

The cut flower production started taking off with Protea, Leucadendron, Leucospermum and Chamelaucium (Geraldton Wax Flower) and the nursery started supplying other cut flower growers for their plantings. He often received enquiries from home gardeners, landscapers and retailers wanting to purchase plants and that led to growing some plants in pots. At present the business is 50:50 cut flowers (mainly for export) and nursery, including rooted cuttings for cut flower growers and potted plants for landscapers and retail garden centres.

Hans says: "People often ask me where the name Arnelia came from and honestly, it came to me in a dream! I was under a bit of pressure to register my cc and needed a name. Went to bed without one and woke up with Arnelia."

Arnelia has grown substantially since it started and now there are 20 permanent staff under Inus Mostert in the nursery and John Sharpe in the cut flower section. In season time (July to November for both the flowers and the nursery) they employ an additional 30 staff members. Sally Steere, runs the office, which leaves Hans with time to develop and grow the business.

In time, Hans would like to see that many more people gain the confidence to plant proteas in their gardens. He believes that if people follow some simple guidelines they will have success and great pleasure from proteas. Arnelia supply basic growing guidelines on the



back of their plant labels and on their website. They are actively involved in the development of new varieties, not only looking for flowering in different colours and at different times, but also at adaptability and robustness.

On a personal note, Hans married Mathe whom he met in Darling after she moved there from Europe, just 4 years ago. They have five children, Yasmin (18), Sadek and Bilal (both 15) and Ella and Klara (both turning 1 in June). Two sets of twins! Between Arnelia and the family, strangely, not much time remains for any hobbies!!

But Hans says he's very lucky because he was actually able to turn his biggest hobby and passion into his business.

CAPE outdoor lifestyle GREEN TRADE DAY

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For more information contact Di:
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Dear Editor,

As the inventor of the ANOVApot I was very pleased to see the comment by Inus Mostert of Arnelia Proteas in the 53rd edition of the CAPE GREEN TIMES.

Some clarification is needed. The collar around the central well (as depicted) was originally designed to reduce root escape on capillary mats. We (too) initially expected overhead applied water to pond around the central well, making the pot unsuitable for outdoor use with water-logging sensitive species. We were as surprised as Inus to find that the ponding was quite transitory; in fact draining quite quickly by capillary flow through the potting mix but much slower than in a normal pot. The slower drainage time results in much better hydration of the potting mix than with a conventional pot. In summary, the ANOVApot reduces root escape and thus time in preparing the pot for sale, saves water and nutrients and grows a better plant. The pot costs about 10% more than the industry equivalent and now is produced in four sizes. Visit our web site www.anovapot.com for more.

Yours sincerely, Malcolm Hunter, Brisbane, Queensland, Australia



Team Induli on their way to the 1st hole

THE CAPE GREEN TIMES

NEWSLETTER PUBLISHED BY THE CAPE GREEN FORUM

P.O. Box 5513, Helderberg, 7135, Cape. Tel/fax: (021) 855 0092 e-mail: cgforum@iafrica.com

So winter is finally here, the trees are nearly bare and Captonians are getting ready to go into hibernation! Many members braved the weather to go on 4 separate exclusive site visits to the very prestigious One and Only Hotel at the Waterfront, this month. Wow, what a place! Eric Cherry and Andrew from Urban Landscape Solutions, the landscapers, kindly took Cape Green Forum members on a guided tour around the gardens which are not open to the public. Some amazing stats - it took 10 weeks to install, used 7000m³ potting mixture, 320 palms, 1152 large trees and 122421 shrubs and ground covers were planted! Thanks guys we all really enjoyed it.



The Cape Green Forum website is up and running, and in an effort to promote our members, we'd like to set up as many links as possible. So please send me your website details and we'll link it to your name on our website. If you do not have a website, we will list a contact number and some basic info regarding your company.

We are organising an exciting 2 day tour to Gauteng, which will

In March we held our annual Great Green Golf Challenge. As Peter Runkel aptly put it, it's like playing 'putt-putt on steroids!' This time we used a shotgun start, so everybody started and finished at the same time, which made it more fun and much quicker. Once again the Falck brother, Ashley & Raymond, won the coveted trophy, which was donated by Neutrog. The rest of you will have to start practising, we can't let them win it 3 times in a row! Thanks to the following companies who donated prizes: Efekto, Neutrog, Nonke & Vergelegen. We'll be holding another one towards the end of October, so think about getting your winning team together.

coincide with the Malanseuns Trade Day, see below - it should be very worthwhile and is really great value for money.

On the back page please see information regarding the August Trade Day, this one is always busy, so book your preferred stand early.

If you've moved, changed numbers or email address, please let me know, thanks Di

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JOIN THE CAPE GREEN FORUM ON A 2-DAY TOUR TO GAUTENG

Travel with like minded Capies to the North, visit award winning retailers, National plant suppliers of indoor plants, a rose grower and the Malanseuns Trade Day

ITINERY:

Leave Cape Town Tuesday 21 July 08h50 - arrive Lanseria airport 11h00
Head straight to Leeways Garden Centre winner if the 2009 GCA competition for a light lunch, then on to Plantimex the biggest supplier of indoor plants in SA. Sundowners at PrimiLife at Lifestyle Home and Garden before we head off to book into our accommodation.

Bentleys Country Lodge - dinner, bed and breakfast

Wednesday 22 July: After breakfast visit Plantland Zambezi, stop in at Ludwig's roses on route to the Malanseuns Trade Day
After lunch at Malanseuns, head to Plant Paradise Garden Centre
Depart from Lanseria airport 18h45, arrive Cape Town 20h55

COST: R2400 This includes flights, accommodation, car hire and meals.

**BOOKINGS TO BE MADE ON OR BEFORE 15 JUNE 2009 - Contact Di
PAYMENT - 50% DEPOSIT ON BOOKING, BALANCE BY END JUNE**

The price could change depending on flight availability and numbers

PLANTS OF THE ISSUE

Gael Gray
Goodhope Nursery

So often we get asked for a fast growing locally indigenous climber needed to cover something in a harsh windy environment! There are quite a few climbers

that will fulfill this requirement from the summer rainfall areas (Thunbergia alata and Senecio macroglossus), but the fastest growing and most attractive south western Cape climber is Dipogon lignosus or 'The Cape Sweetpea'.

Dipogon is a very fast growing climber found in coastal scrub or forest margins from Saldahna to the Eastern Cape. It is very hardy being drought wind and salt resistant and flowers profusely from January to December. The flowers are very showy magenta racemes of pea flowers followed by masses of seed pods. The leaves are trifoliate and dainty looking. This climber does become

woody as the lignosus in its name indicates, but this happens only after a few years of spectacular performance. It is a very efficient and attractive pioneer and planting it with slower growing or less showy but longer lasting climbers such as Rhoicissus digitata or Jasmin angulare works extremely well. It likes a sandy well drained soil and flowers best in a sunny position. It tolerates coastal conditions and beach sand.

The other very common request we get is for shade tolerant local indigenous plants, for people living under Milkwood or under trees they have planted that have now created shady areas. Because our natural Cape environment tends to be so treeless local plants for shady areas are fairly scarce.

The one fail safe local shade tolerant flowering plant is Solanum africanum or 'Dronkbessie'. This Solanum can be grown as a creeper but more often it grows as a ground cover to about 30cm in height, it has nice dark green semi succulent foliage that thickens up with pruning and has terminal flower heads



Solanum africanum

of many 1cm diameter white to mauve flowers, followed by black berries.

It is drought and wind and salt tolerant but obviously becomes a lush plant if given water through the summer.

Its young stems are square hence its old name S. quadrangulare and it occurs in sandy coastal areas under bushes from the Cape Peninsula to Kwazulu Natal.

Greed and the constant need for more has shaken world economies and with it the realization that we can't carry on the way we are.

Sadly, we will continue to do what we want to do, right or wrong, so change will be forced upon us. The impact resulting from over population, climate change, materialism and ongoing disregard for our environment will eventually lead us down a one way road to nowhere.

We, in the green industry, play a major role in educating and guiding the public in all matters concerning our environment. There are unfortunately many companies and individuals who stand under the green banner solely for their own financial gain, knowing quite well that their actions do not promote a sustainable future.

I, as a 'conservation horticulturist', am not qualified to comment on many environmental issues, but would like to state my views on the use of plant material in our man made landscapes.

I visit many varied sites, read the occasional landscaping and gardening magazines and have the opportunity to scrutinize a few landscape drawings. Many are exciting, vibrant and diverse, bringing energy to the landscape and to those who use it. Some are just the opposite, sterile and lacking diversity which begs the question, 'What do we create landscapes for? People, artistic expression, design awards or just for greening up the space and getting paid for it?'

In some instance a sustainable landscape is created that actually promotes a healthy environment which encompasses all living creatures and to a large extent looks after itself.

Why then do some designers create landscapes using only a few repetitive species that lack interest 'en masse', because in most cases, they do not grow like this in their natural habitat? Is the use of a few species the result of poor design or just total lack of plant knowledge?

No local species, poor diversity, sterile hybrids, high maintenance

TIMES ARE CHANGING

Sandy Munro
Horticultural
Consultant

features like hedging with no apparent function, too many topiaris, rolling unused lawns and the constant disturbance from tilling of soil to spraying, pruning and fertilizing all seem to be the order of the day! Not to mention the badly programmed irrigation systems that cause more deaths through over watering than drought does from lack of it.

Please don't misunderstand me! I am not a purist or 'militant greeny' just a common horticulturist who sadly believes that design has become more important than the contents of its make up! Plants play a major role in our natural landscape so why can't we carry this wonderful design

element through to our landscapes.

One can only say today, that it's not what the plants do for our environment that's important; it's what they look like from a design point of view. All else seems irrelevant!

Can the era of mass planting carry on when you consider that 90% of the material has been grown vegetatively from the same mother stock for years on end and is genetically inferior? We point fingers at farmers who practice monoculture but we are doing exactly the same thing in our urban landscapes with Dietes, Agapanthus, Lavender and the rest. (I don't blame the plants)

We have somewhere in the region of 25,000 flowering species in South Africa, so there is no excuse not to have a much greater selection in our man made landscapes. There are many growers in all our provinces that grow a huge range of species suited to local conditions and with a bit of foresight we should get them into our gardens.

There are, of course, many landscape architects, designers, contractors and growers that deserve applause for their vision in this regard.

I say, in conclusion, it is time for radical change so let's do justice to our environment and add a bit of real nature.

IS YOUR BUSINESS FINANCIALLY FIT?

BDO Spencer Steward
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With global economies currently being battered by Schumpeter's 'gales of creative destruction', many South African business people are wondering: is this a slowdown, a downturn or a recession? How long will it last? How deep will it run? Will it be a soft landing, hard landing or crash landing? Well whichever way you look at it, the bottom line's the same - the economy sure ain't what it used to be.

As a business owner, you need to prepare for the changing economic climate so here are some top tips on how to guide your business through these uncertain times:

Cash Flow:

Put cash flow and financing on the agenda of every management meeting. Monitor your management accounts regularly to catch trends early, regularly update your cash-flow forecasts (building in base case and worst case scenarios) and perform KPI analysis. Cash is king so if you must choose between profitability and cash-flow, choose cash-flow.

Margins:

Focus on margins and cut costs, not prices. Remember mark-up is not margin. A price increase is the most powerful strategy to improve the bottom line but in tough times you may not get the benefits of a price increase easily. Instead you are faced with

reducing your costs to help the bottom line. Hence stay focused on customers, not suppliers, as your margin source.

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Customers:

Maintain your personal touch. When pressure to stay competitive is at an all-time high, you must be absolutely certain your customers are getting what they want and need. Don't assume they're happy just because they're not complaining. Don't be afraid to lose customers that don't pay.

Accounts Payable, Receivable, and Inventory:

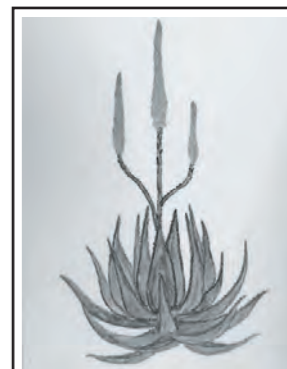
Wherever possible, negotiate a better deal with your suppliers. Review debtors lists and chase up overdue accounts. Closely control your inventory levels (dead stock stinks) and review your inventory insurance - theft increases in a downturn.

Advertising:

Don't stop advertising. This is the time to capture the hearts and minds of consumers. If you cut advertising, you may lose your customers to your competition. Robust businesses increase advertising in a recession to win customers away from their competition.

Staff:

Look for creative ways to hang onto your top performers. You may not be able to offer nice salary increases but consider offering perks that don't cost the company a lot of money (such as flexi-time and work-from-home options). If you need to cut staff costs, get rid of low-quality performers - they suck up a disproportionate amount of managers' time, aggravate customers, squash morale, and drive away high-quality performers.



Awesome Aloes

A arborescens; A barbarea; A chaubaudii; A cooperii; A ferox; A maculate; A marlothii; A suprafoliata; A thraskii; A vanbalenii
Tel: 021 842 3364 Fax: 021 842 3097
E-mail: info@samgro.co.za

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Operations:

Review and evaluate your company's internal operations, strategic plans, procedures, process flows, organisational structure and policies to see how you can cut costs, reduce duplication of work, increase productivity and improve fiscal oversight.

Competition:

Investigate your competition and determine whether you can take advantage. While most businesses are battering down the hatches, a few brave companies will see this as an opportunity to get a leg up on their competition. Sure, you might not be as flush with cash as you were in the past, but neither is your competition. The advantage you build up now might be difficult for competitors to surmount later.

United Kingdom: The International Garden Centre Association (IGCA) annual Congress will take place in Manchester, UK, from September 13-19th, 2009. The Congress goal is to meet the professional development needs of garden retailers, bring them up to date on new and emerging trends, introduce them to business models from around the globe and to provide an opportunity to network with peers in a variety of markets. Next year, the Congress will be held in Japan in early October 2010. www.igcaCongress.com

USA: The Independent Garden Center Show will be on August 18-20 2009 in Chicago, USA. <http://igcshow.com/igc2009/public/enter.aspx>

England: The GLEE tradeshow will be held in Birmingham from September 20 to 22 2009. <http://www.gleebirmingham.com/>

Ireland: International Plant Propagators Society Conference and Tour on September 15-18 2009 in Co. Kilkenny, Ireland

Germany : The International Trade Fair for Plants in Germany (IPM Essen) will be held from January 26 to 29th 2010, in Essen, Germany. <http://ipm.messe-essen.de/index.php?content=05000000&lang=en>

INTERNATIONAL TRADE FAIRS AND CONFERENCES

Lydia Couture-Comtois
International Garden
Centre Association (IGCA)

Germany : There is a **Garden Centre Retailing Conference** happening in Berlin, Germany on May 25/26, 2009. The EDRA/BHB Garden Centre Retailing Conference is intended as a meeting place for the entire gardening and leisure industry. The conference is set to present you the newest strategies, concepts, and solutions for the "Garden Centre of the Future". <http://www.edra-online.com/english/>

Germany: Spoga / GAFA 2009 will be held from 6 to 8 September 2009 in Köln Messe, Cologne, Germany. From small ideas grow great visions. From initial contacts grow important relationships. From short conversations grow exciting discussions. Growing from

many areas is something very special. Welcome to spoga 2009. The meeting point for the industry. The innovation forum. The garden trade fair. <http://www.spogagafa.com/>

France: The Salon du végétal will be held in Angers, France, from Feb 16-18 2010. The Salon du Végétal at the Parc des Expositions in Angers sets up as the great professional show in France for the horticultural chain. An annual meeting for vegetal and horticulture from which its 600 exhibitors and over 16,000 professional visitors would not get away. <http://www.salonduvegetal.com/web4/index.php?langue=Anglais>