

# CHRISTMAS IS COMING

**E**ven though it seems too early, the holiday season is almost upon us. Breathe long, deep breaths and relax. Just because the holidays are coming doesn't mean you have to panic. After all, Christmas is the second-biggest season of the year for garden centers; for every other retailer in the world it is the biggest.

Despite the slight seasonal fear, I know you all have a great season planned. At this point, you're probably working out the final details of floor plans, decoration themes and holiday events. All you are really waiting on now is the moment to arrive when you move out the benches and move in the Department 56, display trees (turn to page CR 4 to last-minute tree ideas), greenery and ornaments. And don't forget to set aside space to hold all the fun holiday classes you are planning (check out page CR 8 for advice on classes).

Yes, the holiday season is a huge time of year. Most people are shopping like crazy but not necessarily the way you want. Garden centers often tell me that the holiday season is not a huge moneymaker for them, but their customers love the garden center at Christmas. That is the beauty of what you do. How often do you walk into a store at Christmastime and see all sorts of beautiful trees decorated so perfectly that a customer walks up and says, "I'll take this one please," and then proceeds to buy the whole tree and everything on and around

it? Only in a garden center. How many places do you walk into where you can learn how to decorate a live wreath, pick the perfect poinsettia and listen to the local high school choir on a Saturday afternoon? Only in a garden center. Where else can you walk into a store at the holidays and have someone offer you a cup of coffee while they tie your tree onto the car? Only in a garden center.

The season may be a little bit of a headache for you, but whatever the reason, your customers keep coming back year after year to see what new traditions they can add to their holiday season. Like it or not, you are a trendsetter, a safe haven from the cold, a good place for a family to spend some time...and you're the best-looking store in town. Now, how can you beat that reasoning?

Just in case you need a little help in the holiday season, Garden Centers Of America (GCA) has a treat for you. In November, GCA is bringing its annual Holiday Tour to Chicago, and boy do we have a great event planned for you. I have been a part of the planning committee, and this great group of people has really stepped it up and planned a great three days for you. The Holiday Tour is Nov. 13-16 in Chicago, Ill. We will be visiting about 14 garden centers as well as some other fun places. For more information on the tour, go to [www.gardencentersofamerica.org](http://www.gardencentersofamerica.org).

Happy Holidays! 🌸




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