

# 2026 CGW Roundtable Discussion Questions

## Part 1: Sales Performance & Plant Trends

### 1. How did your overall spring sales revenue compare to last year's season?

- A. Significantly higher (Increase of 15% or more)
- B. Moderately higher (Increase of 5% to 14%)
- C. About the same (Within +/- 4%)
- D. Moderately lower (Decrease of 5% to 14%)
- E. Significantly lower (Decrease of 15% or more)

### 2. Which product category was your absolute top volume seller this spring?

- A. Annual bedding plants (flats, packs)
- B. Premium hanging baskets and combination planters
- C. Perennials and ornamental grasses
- D. Edibles (vegetables, herbs, fruit plants)
- E. Shrubs, trees, or woody ornamentals

### 3. Which product category fell the shortest of your sales expectations?

- A. Annual bedding plants
- B. Hanging baskets and combination planters
- C. Perennials
- D. Edibles (vegetables and herbs)
- E. Houseplants / Indoor tropicals brought outdoors

### 4. What was the biggest trend you noticed in customer preferences this year?

- A. High demand for native and pollinator-friendly plants
- B. Strong preference for larger, "instant-gratification" container sizes
- C. High interest in unique, premium foliage over traditional flowers
- D. A surge in budget-conscious, DIY gardening options
- E. No major shift; traditional favorites dominated

### 5. How did your sell-through rate on premium, branded plants (e.g., Proven Winners, Wave Petunias) compare to unbranded options?

- A. Branded plants sold out much faster and at a higher margin
- B. Branded plants sold well, but the higher input cost ate into margins
- C. Unbranded options sold better due to lower price points
- D. There was no noticeable difference in consumer preference

- E. We do not grow/sell branded plants

**6. When did your spring sales hit their absolute peak?**

- A. Early Spring (Before Easter / Mid-April)
- B. Mid-Spring (Late April to Mother's Day weekend)
- C. Late Spring (Post-Mother's Day through Memorial Day)
- D. Early Summer (June onwards)
- E. Sales were evenly distributed with no distinct peak

 **Part 2: Weather & Production Impacts**

**7. How would you describe the impact of this spring's weather on your walk-in retail traffic?**

- A. Highly favorable (Warm, sunny weekends drove record traffic)
- B. Moderately favorable (A few bad days, but generally good)
- C. Neutral (Typical spring weather variations)
- D. Moderately unfavorable (Cold/rainy weekends delayed the start)
- E. Disastrous (Extended poor weather ruined key holiday weekends)

**8. Did weather conditions cause any major production or crop timing failures in the greenhouse?**

- A. No major issues; crops finished exactly on schedule
- B. Minor issues (Slight delays or minor stretching, but manageable)
- C. Moderate issues (We had to dump or heavily discount some stalled/overgrown crops)
- D. Severe issues (Significant crop loss due to disease, damping off, or extreme temperature swings)
- E. Not applicable (We buy in all finished product)

**9. How did you manage greenhouse heating and energy costs compared to your spring budget?**

- A. Well under budget due to a mild winter/early spring
- B. Right on target with our projections
- C. Slightly over budget (1% to 15% higher than expected)
- D. Significantly over budget (More than 15% higher than expected)
- E. We use alternative energy/passive heating that mitigated costs

**10. To what extent did shrink (dumped or unsellable plant material) impact your bottom line this season?**

- A. Minimal shrink (Less than 3% of total inventory)

- B. Average shrink (3% to 7% of total inventory)
- C. Higher than average shrink (8% to 15% of total inventory)
- D. Critical shrink (Over 15% of inventory lost to weather, pests, or overproduction)

## **Part 3: Marketing & Customer Engagement**

### **11. Which marketing channel drove the most verifiable traffic or sales to your business this spring?**

- A. Social media organic posts and reels (Facebook, Instagram, TikTok)
- B. Paid digital advertising (Facebook/Google Ads)
- C. Email marketing / Newsletters
- D. Traditional media (Radio, print, billboards, local TV)
- E. Word of mouth / Signage / Community reputation

### **12. How effective were your pre-season promotions or early-bird events (e.g., pre-orders, gift card sales)?**

- A. Highly successful; generated great early cash flow
- B. Moderately successful; saw decent participation
- C. Low success; high effort for very little return
- D. We did not run any pre-season promotions

### **13. What was your strategy regarding plant pricing this spring?**

- A. Raised prices significantly to cover inflation and rising input costs
- B. Raised prices slightly on select premium items only
- C. Kept prices identical to last year to remain competitive
- D. Lowered prices or ran more aggressive sales to stimulate volume

### **14. How did customers react to your pricing structure this year?**

- A. No pushback; customers paid premium prices willingly
- B. Minor grumbling, but it did not noticeably impact sales volume
- C. Visible price resistance; customers bought fewer items per basket
- D. Severe resistance; we had to implement heavy discounting to move product

### **15. Did you utilize a loyalty program or customer rewards system this season?**

- A. Yes, and it was a primary driver of repeat weekend traffic
- B. Yes, but it needs better staff training or software integration
- C. No, but we are actively looking to implement one for next year
- D. No, and we have no interest in a loyalty program

## **Part 4: Staffing & Operations**

**16. What was your biggest hurdle regarding seasonal labor this spring?**

- A. Finding enough applicants to fill open positions
- B. Retention (Staff quitting mid-season)
- C. High labor costs / Meeting wage expectations
- D. Inadequate training / Lack of plant knowledge among staff
- E. We had no major staffing hurdles this year

**17. How well did your team handle peak-weekend checkout lines and customer volume?**

- A. Flawlessly; wait times were minimal and operations were smooth
- B. Acceptably, but we hit bottlenecks during the post-Mother's Day rush
- C. Poorly; long wait times likely caused some customer walkouts
- D. We struggled heavily due to POS system failures or understaffing

**18. How would you rate the overall morale of your greenhouse and retail crew by the end of May?**

- A. Excellent; the team stayed energized, motivated, and positive
- B. Good; standard seasonal fatigue, but overall good spirits
- C. Strained; burnout was visible and affected customer service
- D. Low; high turnover and stress created a toxic environment

**19. Did you implement any new automation or labor-saving technology this season (e.g., flat fillers, automated watering, new POS)?**

- A. Yes, and it significantly reduced our labor hours/stress
- B. Yes, but the learning curve caused temporary setbacks
- C. No, but we desperately need to invest in it for next year
- D. No, our manual processes work perfectly fine for our scale

## **Part 5: Inventory, Supply Chain, & Logistics**

**20. How would you rate your inventory management and ordering accuracy for this spring?**

- A. Perfect balance; we sold out just as the season wrapped up
- B. Overstocked; we were left with too much holding-over or dumped product
- C. Understocked; we ran out of core items too early and missed out on revenue
- D. Disorganized; we had stock, but couldn't get it to the retail floor efficiently

**21. Did you experience any significant supply chain disruptions (plugs, liners, soil, pots, tags) that delayed production?**

- A. No disruptions; everything arrived on time and as ordered
- B. Minor delays or substitutions, but we adapted without sales loss
- C. Moderate disruptions that delayed specific crop readiness for key holidays
- D. Severe disruptions that resulted in empty benches during peak weeks

**22. What percentage of your retail product mix was grown in-house versus bought-in as finished product?**

- A. 100% grown in-house
- B. 75% grown in-house / 25% bought-in finished
- C. 50% grown in-house / 50% bought-in finished
- D. 25% grown in-house / 75% bought-in finished
- E. 100% bought-in finished wholesale

**23. If you bought in finished product, how satisfied were you with the quality and delivery of your wholesale vendors?**

- A. Highly satisfied; excellent quality and punctual delivery
- B. Moderately satisfied; quality was good, but delivery timing was inconsistent
- C. Dissatisfied; poor plant quality or late arrivals hurt our retail display
- D. Not applicable (We grow everything ourselves)



## **Part 6: Lessons Learned & Looking Ahead**

**24. What was the single biggest operational bottleneck during your busiest weeks?**

- A. Unloading delivery trucks and restocking retail benches
- B. Watering and plant maintenance on the retail floor
- C. The physical checkout/POS line
- D. Parking lot congestion and traffic flow
- E. Custom potting/container planting services

**25. Which of the following areas represents your greatest "failure" or missed opportunity this spring?**

- A. Failing to react quickly to shifting weather patterns
- B. Underestimating the demand for specific niche trends (e.g., organics, natives)
- C. Poor staff scheduling leading to high labor costs or low customer service
- D. Inadequate marketing before the season kicked off
- E. Lack of clear signage and pricing on the retail floor

**26. What was your most successful pivot or "audible" called mid-season?**

- A. Bundling slow-moving items into discounted custom arrangements
- B. Shifting marketing spend rapidly onto digital platforms during a rainy stretch
- C. Hiring emergency temporary labor or cross-training staff
- D. Securing last-minute finished truckloads from wholesale partners to meet unexpected demand
- E. We didn't make any major mid-season pivots

**27. Looking toward next spring, what is your primary production goal?**

- A. Increase production volume of top-selling lines
- B. Decrease production volume to cut down on waste/shrink
- C. Diversify our crop mix to include more unusual or trendy varieties
- D. Keep volume steady but focus strictly on improving plant quality and sizing
- E. Shift more towards buying in finished product rather than growing from plugs

**28. How do you plan to address your top staffing challenge before next spring?**

- A. Increase starting wages and offer seasonal completion bonuses
- B. Start the hiring and interviewing process much earlier in the winter
- C. Implement a more robust, standardized training program before the rush
- D. Invest in greenhouse automation to reduce the total number of bodies needed

**29. What is your top priority for facility/infrastructure improvement before next season?**

- A. Upgrading greenhouse structures, coverings, or heating/cooling systems
- B. Improving the retail layout, benching, or customer traffic flow
- C. Upgrading tech infrastructure (POS systems, Wi-Fi, inventory software)
- D. Expanding parking, loading zones, or holding areas
- E. No major infrastructure changes planned

**30. Overall, how would you rate the success of the spring season?**

- A. An absolute home run (Exceeded all financial and operational goals)
- B. A solid success (Profitable, with normal, manageable issues)
- C. Average/Mediocre (Met baseline goals, but left a lot of money on the table)
- D. Disappointing (Slight financial loss or severe operational headaches)
- E. Failure (Significant financial loss or major systemic breakdowns)