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For more information, please contact:

Jeff Morey, GCA Executive Director

(888) 266-6868, e-mail: Jeff@GardenCentersofAmerica.com

www.GardenCentersofAmerica.com

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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GCA SUMMER TOUR-GOERS TO SAVOR 'LOCAL FLAVOR' AT COLONIAL WILLIAMSBURG'S MERCHANTS SQUARE, A DESTINATION RICH IN HISTORY & RETAIL INSPIRATIONS

NEWPORT NEWS, VA – This June, **GCA Summer Tour-goers will take back retail inspirations from one of the earliest, if not the first, planned shopping districts in the United States, Colonial Williamsburg's Merchants Square.** Located adjacent to Colonial Williamsburg's Historic Area, the shopping and dining district is home to more than 40 shops and restaurants, most of them independently owned and operated. Its themed boutiques specialize in a range of offerings, from ladies', men's and children's apparel to fine jewelry, art, specialty foods and gifts. **The top-rated retail district includes the newly opened garden shop, Boxwood & Berry, where tour-goers will find ideas from the store's selection of indoor and outdoor decor, seasonal gifts, wreaths, greenery and floral arrangements.**

Dating back to 1927, Merchants Square was designed to reflect a synthesis of colonial and early 19th century architecture-design influences collectively known as Colonial Revival. When John D. Rockefeller Jr. and the Reverend Dr. William Archer Rutherford Goodwin envisioned the restoration of Virginia's colonial capital, they realized that the developing business community in Williamsburg needed to be included in the master plan. Shops and other small businesses located on the footprint of the original colonial town agreed to sell their

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properties and move into this customer-oriented shopping district so the restoration of the town could be done accurately. The buildings of Merchants Square were set back farther from the street for easy pedestrian access, and eventually, the street was closed to traffic. The retail district's friendly and charming customer experience has been replicated in other shopping districts nationwide as an alternative to the ubiquitous indoor mall.

GCA Tour-goers will be able to shop, eat, drink, relax and learn in "theme-retailing" surroundings - and be on the lookout for residents and performers from the adjacent Revolutionary City of Colonial Williamsburg's Historic Area, where separate admission tickets are required. For more information on the retail, dining and entertainment options at Colonial Williamsburg's Merchants Square, visit www.merchantssquare.org

The GCA Summer Tour, June 25-28, is open to all independent garden center retailers. Early bird savings of \$50 per person, plus an additional \$30 off two or more registrations, are in effect now through May 31 at www.GardenCentersofAmerica.com

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