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2873 Saber Drive • Clearwater, FL 33759-1122 (727) 705-4600 • FAX: (727) 499-6835

NEWS RELEASE

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 VIRGINIA REGISTRATION NOW OPEN WITH SAVINGS: ORGANICS, SEASONAL POP-UPS, CAFES & MORE SET TO INSPIRE

NEWPORT NEWS, VA – Registration with early bird savings is now open for the GCA Summer Tour, which heads to 10 garden centers from Virginia Beach to Newport News to Richmond, June 25-28, for an exclusive behind-the-scenes look at what puts these leading independents at the top of their market. Attendees are encouraged to pack a notebook and camera to capture the merchandising and indie retailing inspirations in store. The following is a brief overview of the destinations – including local points of interest. Additional details are available at www.GardenCentersofAmerica.com.

MONDAY, JUNE 26

American Revolution Museum, Yorktown, VA - Yorktown was the last major battle of the Revolutionary War where General George Washington besieged British General Charles Cornwallis' Army, effectively ending the war and ensuring independence. What better place to begin the tour than a visit to this historic birthplace of our country? The American Revolution Museum tells the story through films, timeline displays, immersive exhibits and outdoor living history in a recreated encampment and farm. The self-guided tour takes tour-goers from the British Empire In America, through the Revolution, to a look at The New Nation.

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Ken Matthews Garden Center, Yorktown, VA - Located along busy Rt. 17, a newly expanded six-lane retail haven, Ken Matthews Garden Center stands out as an escape from the ordinary. With a parklike setting showcasing more than 500 varieties of trees and shrubs and 1,000 varieties of annuals and perennials, shoppers gather ideas and plants from inspiration gardens with themes focused on Butterfly Gardens, Coastal Living and Entrance Ways. The water garden is front and center as shoppers begin their journey through the nursery yard and is a visual reminder that the company provides both landscape design and installation services.

Norfolk Botanical Garden, Norfolk, VA - Spring and summer colors will be blooming throughout many of the Norfolk Botanical Garden's 52 themed gardens spread over 175 acres. Through a Works Progress Administration (WPA) grant, the creation of the gardens began in 1938 with the transition of a tree-filled swamp into the Azalea Gardens. Now, the Japanese, Butterfly and Perennial Gardens are must-sees. The World of Wonders Children's Garden covers 3 acres with themes like Frog Bog, Plant Safari and Dirt Factory - a great place for ideas to bring back the kid in all of us. Following lunch in the Rose Garden Hall overlooking the 3-acre All-America Rose Selections Bicentennial Garden, a tram ride will tour the gardens, highlighting what makes this the perfect stop for discovering plants and garden ideas to excite both retailers and garden center shoppers, or attendees can wander the gardens on their own.

Anderson's, Newport News, VA - Our first of two Anderson's locations on the tour began as a wholesale grower in 1954. Owner Clark Anderson shifted the focus to retail in 1977 with a major expansion to the entire site in 2009. With the confidence that the public wants more from their shopping experience than the traditional garden center offers, the renovation included a 15,000-square-foot showroom for gifts, apparel and home decor; a new greenhouse; a full-service cafe and fudge shop; an expansive plant selection; landscape services and space for more than 250 cars. Anderson believes, "Our goal is to create a shopping experience that equals or exceeds that of other types of retail locations. We want people to come to Anderson's to browse, eat, shop and enjoy the whole experience and stay for hours if they desire." Signage, merchandising and Anderson's new "rolling walls" will provide a long list of ideas and examples.

TUESDAY, JUNE 27

McDonald Garden Market, Williamsburg-Monticello, VA - Now operating 10 seasonal plant markets throughout the area, with intentions of expanding, McDonald Garden Center was a front-runner of the industry's interest in seasonal, high-volume outlets focused on plants. Located throughout the region, the markets offer shoppers with a wide array of options and tour attendees with a proven example of how to make both shopping and facilitation function smoothly in small space locations. Ideas on how to make plants and plant-related products the focus of impulse shopping cultivated from here can be transitioned to any size garden center retailer.

Sneed's Nursery & Garden Center, Richmond, VA - Don't let the small road frontage fool you - this is an in-town gem that's been inspiring plant geeks and garden bauble shoppers since 1975. This garden center provides customers with a boutique shopping experience, a full-service landscape division and a custom-design florist - all set within the charm of a cottage village. With a focus on organic offerings, shoppers mingle with free-range chickens to search for the next gardening surprise found under the trees throughout the property. Don't miss the florist/gift shop that the staff says "is held together by vines growing through the roof" or the landscape design center, tucked away in a relaxed garden setting. This is a stop with a lot of character that's sure to get the merchandising ideas flowing.

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Cross Creek Nursery & Landscaping, Richmond, VA - The deeper you move through the pine-covered entrance, the more you'll discover, including a greenhouse filled with annuals and perennials from their farm, a full-service florist, landscape and stone yard divisions, ponds, streams and a farm, which is home to goats and turkeys. Relax in the natural shadehouse under a 1,200-square-foot wisteria. This stop serves up one surprise after another. Beginning as a tropical plant retail and service company in 1974, Cross Creek Nursery & Landscaping is a family affair with a father and his three sons guiding the ever-expanding list of products and services. Be sure to check out their water reclamation process that provides 100 percent of the water needed for the entire property.

The Great Big Greenhouse & Meadows Farms Nurseries, Richmond, VA - A family business in Richmond since 1977, The Great Big Greenhouse was purchased by the well-known industry family Meadows Farms Nurseries in 2010. The retailer promises the best of both companies: "The plants you expect. The prices you'll love. The people you know. The experience you'll remember." The store is located in a busy shopping center with more than 15 other retailers, providing a constant flow of shoppers throughout the year. A year-round weekly farmers market, now in its eighth season, adds to the attraction. Shoppers find a full array of plants, gifts, home decor, indoor foliage, statuary and landscape products. Tour-goers will want to ask about the store's weekly TV news call-in segment.

Colonial Williamsburg's Merchants Square, Williamsburg, VA - With its conception dating back to 1927, Colonial Williamsburg's Merchants Square is recognized as one of the first planned shopping districts in the country. And who was at the forefront of this "new" shopping concept? Why, John D. Rockefeller, of course. Local retailers in the area of the original colonial town were relocated to this customer-oriented shopping district to make room for restoration of the town. Buildings were set back on the property to offer easy pedestrian access, and the streets were later closed to traffic, creating a pedestrian-friendly outdoor shopping environment. The shopping district, envisioned by the early "developers" well ahead of their time, creates the quaint, personal experience that is frequently copied by so many shopping districts today, replacing the ubiquitous indoor mall. Shop, eat, drink, relax and learn in "theme-retailing" surroundings – there's even a little garden center to discover - 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.

WEDNESDAY, JUNE 28

White's Nursery & Garden Center, Chesapeake, VA - For more than 50 years, White's Nursery & Garden Center has strived to perfect the art of grower, wholesaler and retailer. With more than 20 acres in production, the company has become known as one of the country's premier growers of florist-quality seasonal color. Owner Norman White has set a record for being the cover story for various trade magazines. In one article, Vic Ball says, "You've got to see it! Near-perfect uniformity and quality, spic-and-span cleanliness of it all - the epitome of growing." This attention to detail spills over to the garden center division of the company, located in a quiet neighborhood of Chesapeake, VA. The stop will include a behind-the-scenes tour of the production area for those interested in the grower's side of business. Retail time will focus on how garden centers can use seasonal color and exclusive color combos to set them apart from the competition.

McDonald Garden Center, Virginia Beach, VA - Our second McDonald Garden Center stop of the tour takes us to the Virginia Beach site opened in 1980. This year-round location was converted from a horse farm to a multi-division garden center. Shoppers are guided from the entrance courtyard through a series of plant departments and freestanding buildings with ties to the area's historical connection. The stroll under mature trees past display gardens adds to the village atmosphere.

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Famous for their “Myrtle Money” promotion adapted by many garden centers around the country, McDonald Garden Center also hosts a number of other events throughout the year, including their own 4-H Club. Our visit will focus on using unique site-design to create shopping environments that become part of a garden center's feel and character.

ViBe Creative District, Virginia Beach, VA - The Vibe Creative District was established to serve as a vibrant center for the arts, culture, technology and creative industries. This is where life is art in a setting like no other. Unique retailers, galleries, locally grown farm-to-fork dining, farmers and craft markets reside in this economically vibrant neighborhood where artists live and work. Their goal to be “a little off the main drag and a lot off kilter” creates a 10-block learning (and shopping) haven with so much to learn for any type of retailer. Take it all in, grab lunch, then head home with ideas to jumpstart your company's sense of discovery for your customers.

Atlantic Garden Center, Virginia Beach, VA - Talk about diversification! How about adding a full-service post office to your mix? After a redesign of the shopping center property where they're located, including the arrival of CVS Pharmacy on the lot, Atlantic Garden Center found itself with enough room and opportunity to add a post office to their product mix. With two and a half years in operation, the company sees the blending of stamps and plants as a perfect fit. The property redesign also provided a new receiving area, bulk bin location, two new office areas and, best of all, more parking in the now shared lot. This is your chance to discuss property redesign and greenhouse upgrades with an owner who has been through the process.

Anderson's, Virginia Beach, VA - Is it a garden center with a restaurant or a restaurant located in a garden center? You decide. Either way, Anderson's second location on the tour has created what is probably one of newest, uniquely designed garden and lifestyle retailers the industry has seen. Opened just one year ago, the site is home to Sage Kitchen, a breakfast to dinner experience they call “from greenhouse-to-table dining.” A ladies boutique presents clothing, shoes, jewelry and accessories alongside gifts and home decor departments. Add a greenhouse of plants, outdoor seating, a kids' play area, live music every Wednesday evening to the mix and their slogan, “This is where you'll find your friends” - it all makes perfect sense. This is the perfect spot to end our tour with a chance to kick back, enjoy new friends, compare notes and plans for the future, eat, drink and listen to live music, while savoring the hospitality the area has been known for since the inception of our country.

GCA Summer Tour is not restricted to GCA members and is open to all independent garden center retailers. Early bird savings of \$50 on two or more registrations – no quantity limits - are in effect through May 31 at www.GardenCentersofAmerica.com.

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