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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE



BREAKING NEWS!

GCA Summer Tour Seattle Ready to Dazzle with Inspirations from 15 Store Gems: What's Hot Now In Small Space Gardening, Indoor Plants, Garden Cafes & Much More

SEATTLE, WA – GCA Summer Tour officials just announced the full roster of 15 host garden centers in and around Seattle for the 15th annual event, June 24-27. Indie garden center retailers from all over the country will gather to network and get energized with new ideas from the tour's featured destinations, from trendy urban garden boutiques to established fourth-generation independents and a nursery/winery combo with a view of Mount Rainier. Bring along your battery packs and portable chargers because your cameras are going to be busy capturing new revelations in merchandising, signage and selling to take back to your store. In addition to your devices, bring your toughest questions to ask the retailer sitting next to you: the GCA Summer Tour is as much about the conversations you'll have on the bus as the retail gems you'll discover at each stop.

NOTE: GCA Summer Tour Seattle is not restricted to GCA members and is *open to all independent garden center retailers*. Early bird savings of \$50 per person, plus \$30 for each additional person registered, are in effect if you register now at www.GardenCentersofAmerica.com

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Monday, June 25

West Seattle Nursery & Garden Center, Seattle, WA

Nestled in a picturesque waterfront neighborhood, West Seattle Nursery & Garden Center is a prized source of unusual perennials, trees, shrubs and seasonal annuals for urban landscapes. This full-service nursery and garden center is a go-to for its customer base, from Millennials just sprouting their green thumbs to Baby Boomers digging in for something special. Locally owned since 1983, West Seattle Nursery expanded less than two years ago with a new greenhouse and gift shop that showcases an eclectic product mix, including jewelry from local artisans, body care products by The Thymes, gardening books and specialty teas. Find out how this indie's selection of houseplants, restocked and refreshed weekly, brings in sales year-round. A draw for parents with young children is the Bonide plant diagnostic in-store setup, which uses a video microscope to identify plant pests and diseases on samples customers bring from home, then recommends solutions. Parents get the answers they need, and kids get to learn.

www.westseattlenursery.com

Watson's Greenhouse & Nursery, Puyallup, WA

Lifestyle is the focus at Watson's, and its slogan makes that clear: "For Garden, For Home, For Living." As a complement to its garden shop and birding focus, the retailer offers a wide selection of home decor, gourmet food and fashion in its elegant retail greenhouse, a 32,500-square-foot glass and steel structure from Belgian manufacturer Deforche. Watson's grows most of the annuals it sells, as well as selections for its signature container gardens and hanging baskets. Family-owned and -operated, the retailer originally began as a u-pick vegetable farm in 1974, and today stands among the nation's top independent garden centers, ranking in *IGC Magazine's* IGC 100 report with \$6.33 million in annual sales from its single store. During our visit, ask about Watson's three-tiered landscape design program, which covers garden coaching, custom plans and project management with contractor installations.

www.watsonsgreenhouse.com

Windmill Gardens, Sumner, WA

The destination shopping experience at Windmill Gardens is a daylong excursion of retail delight. The garden center anchors this village of leased businesses, which includes a bistro serving Pacific Northwest cuisine, a full-service spa and salon, an essential oils bar, a tea shop, a pond store and a floral studio. The property's display gardens and indoor event facility are popular for weddings and showers, as well as catered business meetings, memorials and holiday parties. Windmill Gardens grows more than 60 percent of the green goods it sells, and is known for its premium-quality tulips, bulbs, primroses, premium annuals and poinsettias. It is famous for its fuchsias and dahlias, as well as its mixed hanging baskets, creatively branded as Sumner Sunshine, Acapulco Dreams, Red Hot and Sunshine in the Shade, among others. Fun extra for selfie-enthusiasts: the windmill here offers a one-of-a-kind visual backdrop.

www.windmillgarden.com

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Rainier View Winery & Nursery, Graham, WA

Rainier View Winery & Nursery pairs beautiful hanging baskets, garden starts, custom container gardens, and a broad selection of annuals and perennials with handcrafted wine produced on-site - all in a setting that offers a spectacular view of Mount Rainier, an icon in the Washington landscape and the highest mountain in the state. The nursery, open April to August, will be in full glory during our visit. The winery's European-style varietals are made with a process that brings out the main ingredients' natural and hidden flavors, with no artificial sweeteners and fewer chemicals. In addition to favorites like chardonnay, sauvignon blanc and zinfandel, niche wines to consider bringing home or gifting from our visit include rhubarb, dry blueberry, sweet cherry and jalapeno. While we're here, ask the owners how their membership in the National Federation of Independent Business helps promote customer traffic and loyalty.

www.rainierviewwineryandnursery.com

Branches Garden Center, Auburn, WA

There are no permanent structures at Branches Garden Center, but rather a series of six hoop houses, 18'x90' each, make up the retail space at this local independent's 1-acre corner lot. If you think hoop houses are uninviting and uninspiring, this visit will show you otherwise, with so many ideas to bring back to your garden center. Displays of green goods cross-merchandised with antique and vintage furnishings create a warm, eclectic shopping experience here. Local residents make the gift shop their go-to for gourmet foods, including soups, desserts, appetizers, seasonings and dips from top-names like Stonewall Kitchen, Wind & Willow, Village Gourmet and Market Spice Tea. In the clothing and jewelry boutique, you'll find a unique mix of scarves, slippers and socks, along with lingerie and baby clothes. In the spa shop, soothe your senses with richly scented soaps and lotions, candles and potpourri. For the home, lamps, framed art and decor are merchandised in inspirational vignettes. Thinking about tapping the growing demand for high-end outdoor decor? Branches boasts the area's largest selection of garden fountains.

www.branchesgc.com

Tuesday, June 26

Wells Medina Nursery, Medina, WA

Started in 1971 by their father, Ned Wells, 5-acre Wells Medina Nursery is led by second-generation team Wendy Wells and Lisa Freed, and is located in the upscale area east of Lake Washington, near the waterfront estates of Bill Gates and Jeff Bezos. The retailer is known for its year-round depth of selection in premium shrubs, trees, annuals and perennials, and its container gardens and hanging baskets are not to be missed. You won't find a gift shop, here: "We've made a conscious decision not to sell coffee, candles or soaps. So many nurseries now have plants as a backdrop to the gift shop," Wendy tells *Horticulture* magazine. What you will find is a retail building noted for its unobtrusive yet sleek design by Seattle architect Gene Zima - it's an original on the property and one that still serves the nursery well. Novice gardeners and "plant geeks" alike say Wells Medina is an unrivaled resource of guidance for the landscape and garden, from its knowledgeable staff to the garden library staged near the checkout.

www.wellsmedinanursery.com

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Ravenna Gardens, Seattle, WA

Ravenna Gardens is among the University Village shopping center's 120 tenants, a surprising mix of locally owned shops and upscale national retailers. This urban garden center's 2,500-square-foot space is small but mighty, with contemporary visual merchandising that spotlights the retailer's focus on small-space gardening. Container gardening is a specialty here, with the expertise of Barbara Libner, the garden center's in-house designer, featured in the national media. Don't miss the exclusive line of Windcliff Plants from internationally recognized horticultural author and collector Dan Hinkley, grown at his personal nursery. See for yourself how Ravenna brings in \$900 per square foot in sales, and ask how houseplants and indoor foliage are bringing the younger generations in to shop. During our stop, you'll have time to explore and be inspired by University Village's high-end national retailers, including Anthropologie, Crate & Barrel and Restoration Hardware, and bring the best of their merchandising back to your garden center.

www.ravennagardens.com

Magnolia Garden Center, Seattle, WA

This store's carefully curated product mix, narrowed to provide "enough but not too many choices," is a draw for Magnolia Garden Center's customer base of small-space urban gardeners looking for fast solutions. Turning its attention to city-dwellers with limited experience has carved a solid niche for the nursery and gift shop, which operates 3,500 square feet of indoor selling on its 1/3-acre site. The garden center's container department offers ample choices in high-fired pottery, lightweight pots and rustic planters, along with indoor pottery in a rainbow of colors. Inside the gift boutique, you'll find a unique selection of greeting cards, home accessories, handmade jewelry, bath and body products, clothing, and gifts for babies and kids. See first-hand how Magnolia gets newbies in the garden by teaching them how to grow their own edibles.

www.magnoliagarden.com

Pike Place Market, Seattle, WA

During this lunch stop, be sure to take advantage of the many food options at Pike Place Market, one of the oldest continuously operated public markets in the United States, started in 1907 in the heart of downtown Seattle and overlooking Elliott Bay. A place of business for hundreds of small farmers, craftspeople and merchants, it is built on the edge of a steep hill, with several lower levels located below the main level. Each level is home to a variety of unique shops, such as antique dealers, comic book and collectible shops, small family-owned restaurants, apparel boutiques and specialty retailers. Watch your head during our visit: the upper street level is home to world-famous Pike Place Fish Market, where "fishmongers" are known for tossing around the catch of the day.

www.pikeplacemarket.org

Swansons Nursery, Seattle, WA

Swansons Nursery, locally owned since 1924, operates on 5 acres in Seattle's Crown Hill neighborhood, and ranks among the nation's leading independents. Affirming its dedication to "growing the smartest, hippest, healthiest gardeners in the Pacific Northwest," it actively promotes organic, sustainable gardening with a full schedule of free seminars and workshops. During our visit, we'll tour the tropical conservatory, which houses Swansons' gift shop, as well as Barn & Field kitchen and bakery, serving a menu of made-to-order light breakfasts and lunches to customers taking in the

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view of the koi ponds from their tables. Looking for ways to take your store's social marketing campaign to the next level? Swansons' multi-faceted marketing campaign, Grow With Us, has developed a following among Seattle gardeners with a social media initiative centered on the hashtag, #heyswansons. Ask them how it engages the community during our visit here.

www.swansonsnursery.com

Wednesday, June 27

Molbak's Garden + Home, Woodinville, WA

Molbak's Garden + Home stands strong among the nation's top 100 IGC retailers as a family business success story of more than 60 years, led by second-generation owner Jens Molbak. The garden center's displays and merchandise mix are updated on an ongoing basis to reflect the changing seasons. See in person how the store's custom fixtures draw customers to its distinguished mix of outdoor living and home and gift products. Connected to their community and local region, the majority of Molbak's green goods are locally grown. In the center of the store, Russell's Garden Cafe and Wine Bar serves up farm-fresh fare from the kitchen of renowned chef Russell Lowell. Along with wood-fired pizza, guests enjoy a menu of homemade soups, salads, quiche and sandwiches, expertly paired with wines from the Northwest. During our visit, be sure to check out the new design center and shade house.

www.molbaks.com

Sunnyside Nursery, Marysville, WA

A favorite with plant-loving locals, Sunnyside Nursery is known for its broad offering of quality green goods across a range of categories. Fruit trees are a specialty, from apples and apricots to fig and nut varieties. At its peak, the garden center has more than 800 fruit trees, in stock and ready to plant. Some sold here produce unusual fruits not found in grocery stores, like maxie pear, a cross between a traditional European pear and a pear-apple, and Carmine Jewell dwarf cherry, a cross between a tart pie cherry and a sweet cherry. Pollinator-friendly plants are another favorite among Sunnyside's shoppers, who are invited to learn more during the nursery's wildlife gardening class, one of more than 60 free sessions offered on-site. Check out the display gardens here - they show shoppers exactly how to do it themselves, from planting to maintenance and care.

www.sunnysidenursery.net

McAuliffe's Valley Nursery, Snohomish, WA

McAuliffe's Valley Nursery is a farm-to-retail nursery that grows its own stock on more than 40 acres of richly fertile soil. At the heart of the garden center is a historic turn-of-the-century dairy barn, surrounded by a rich palette of stunning plants, both familiar and rare varieties, including balled and burlapped trees, a specialty for the retailer. Inside the barn, you'll find one-of-a-kind decor crafted by local artisans, including skillfully fashioned potting benches and nesting houses from reclaimed materials, jewelry inspired by elements found in nature, and decorative Himalayan handmade candles nestled in ornate jars. Don't miss the garden accents from Greenman Stone, a group of Northwest artisans known for their statuary, sculpting and mold-making; each piece is carefully handcast, then given a decorative finish and individually antiqued so that no two are exactly alike.

www.mcauliffesvalleynursery.com

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Flower World, Inc., Snohomish, WA

With an expansive 15 total acres of retail display areas, 3 acres covered, Flower World is one of the largest nurseries on the West Coast, with \$6.3 million in sales. It grows more than 90 percent of the green goods it sells, including bedding plants, roses, berry bushes and grapes, deer-proof varieties, fruit trees, interior foliage and aquatic plants. Shopping here is a "self-help, low-key, take-your-time-and-explore" experience, as Flower World describes it. Take special note of the informational signage during our visit - in addition to helping customers choose the right plant for their location and how to care for it, pictures show the blooming stages as well as the plant in maturity. Ask about the plastic pot recycling program here, and the property's processing of yard waste and horse manure. Don't miss Flower World's Maltby Produce Market, featuring locally grown fruits, vegetables and herbs, as well as an animal farm that chickens, goats, peacocks, sheep and ducks call home.

www.flowerworldusa.com

Li'l Sprout Nursery & Garden Center, Mill Creek, WA

Indoor plants and tropicals, including a trendy selection of succulents and cacti, are a must-see at this 2-acre operation with nine greenhouses. Hydroponics is a focus and passion for Li'l Sprout, as its website points out to visitors: "This style of growing is a far more sustainable method than traditional practices. The practice of hydroponics is more environmentally friendly due to the fact that only a fraction of the water is needed and is one step closer to stopping the complete annihilation of the Canadian Peat Bogs." Organic gardening is another emphasis here, supported with a curated selection of product and a range of educational opportunities for customers. Even in winter, there is never a shortage of color. Li'l Sprout touts its local roots with humor - a chalkboard sign out front reminds customers, "Friends don't let friends shop @ chain stores."

www.lilsproutnursery.com

Sky Nursery, Shoreline, WA

Sky Nursery's vast, open greenhouse creates a "sky's the limit" shopping experience that lives up to its name. This fourth-generation, family-owned garden center ranks among the nation's top independents, and for good reason. The outdoor display beds and shade house showcase an extensive seasonal selection of trees, shrubs and vines, along with creatively cross-merchandised presentations of decorative containers, fountains, statuary and garden art. For gardening enthusiasts, there is a "collector's corner" of specialty perennials, and an ever-changing range of succulents, native plants and pollinator plants, highlighted in the store's "nectar bar." Craft hot beverages made with beans from local roaster Fidalgo Bay Coffee are served at the Coffee Stand, owned and operated by the garden center. Along with coffee beverages, juices, milk, smoothies and Italian sodas, the Coffee Stand offers local pastries, cookies, gluten-free bars and, for lunch, a rotating selection of salads, sandwiches and quiches.

www.skynursery.com

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