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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

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GCA Names 12 Winners in 2018 Best Garden Center Bathroom Awards Competition

CLEARWATER, FL – **Twelve indies are being recognized for their outstanding restrooms with GCA Best Garden Center Bathroom Awards.** A panel judged this year's entries on the bathrooms' creativity and comfort to the customer's overall shopping experience. Three Gold Winners will enjoy one free registration each to the 2019 GCA Summer Tour and a plaque for display in-store to tout the award to customers. Other recognitions this year include two Silver Awards and seven Merit Awards.

"We were really glad to see so many strong entries this year," says GCA Executive Director Jeff Morey. "IGC retailers are raising the bar when it comes to creating a memorable - and enjoyable - shopping experience all the way through, from the time their customers walk in to when they check out. It's paying off in customer loyalty."

The 2018 GCA Best Bathroom Award Winners are:

Gold Awards

DeWayne's, Selma, NC – Last year wrapped a two-year renovation of the garden center's gift shop and parking lot, and marked the grand opening of its new state-of-the-art greenhouse, "The Atrium." In

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the back corner of the greenhouse, humor points the way to the restrooms with a sign that reads, “Men to the left, because women are always right.” A quaint seating area welcomes customers into the cozy space, which showcases a collage of images that represent the garden center’s history since its start in 1991. Creative design accents and natural elements hand-painted by a local artist on the walls and stall doors - florals in the women’s room and woody landscapes in the men’s - bring a level of custom sophistication to the bathrooms. Cleanliness is a top priority here – staff members keep on top of it multiple times a day. Customers rave about these restrooms, sharing selfies of the facilities on social media.

Garden*Hood - Plant Atlanta, Atlanta, GA – This IGC takes the utmost pride in all they do, from hand-watering each plant to carefully curating everything that comes into the shop. This passion for excellence extends to every corner of the nursery, including the restroom. The property, located at the edge of the city’s Grant Park neighborhood, is home to an old house, which appears charming on the outside but “airs more on the spooky side” inside, Assistant Nursery Manager Sam Nash says, since the interior has been stripped down to the studs of the structure. Herein lies the bathroom. As customers walk down the creaky old hallway to what looks and feels like a haunted place, they are pleasantly surprised by the bathroom, which invokes the tranquility of a private villa in Costa Rica. The calm remains unbothered by the hustle and bustle of the city outside. Potted plants and repurposed props transform the rustic structure into a serene oasis for customers. Perhaps most surprising of all - this bathroom redo was completed on a zero-dollar budget.

The Gardens at The Ridge, Kerrville, TX – Nestled under the garden center’s one-of-a-kind, hand-hewn cedar staircase, the facility’s unusual elements and craftsmanship make this bathroom, as Marketing Director Emily Cain describes it, “a fun place to tinkle.” The glass block window allows natural light in to illuminate the artistic elements selected to represent the Texas hill country. The bathroom’s pancake wood wall is a mosaic of small slabs of leftover cedar ends from posts used elsewhere on the property. Other walls are adorned with wood from an old barn and artwork of farm animals. Granite countertops and a copper sink tie in to the rustic theme of the bathroom. Vintage floral tin tiles on the ceiling, hand-painted by a local artist, are spotlighted by old-school gooseneck farm lights over the sink, turned upward. This facility is a true show-stopper - employees overhear customers talking about it to their friends as they shop the store.

Silver Awards

Hicks Nurseries, Westbury, NY – Expanded and renovated earlier this year, the store’s bathrooms are outfitted with the most modern touches, including self-flushing toilets, automatic soap dispensers and hand dryers. Blue, gray and black glass tiles cover the wall above the sinks and the trim on the adjoining walls of large, durable gray ceramic tiles for an updated look. Baby-changing stations in both the women’s and men’s restrooms make the facilities family-friendly to shoppers with small children. The employee restrooms recently saw an upgrade, too. Shelves were installed inside the stalls to provide a place to set down walkie talkies, pruners and other supplies or tools. All of the restrooms feature unique planters, showcasing the work of the talented staff and what the store can create for customers in their own homes.

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Lurvey Garden Center, Des Plaines, IL – These bathrooms were designed in the same eclectic industrial style as the store. Neutral tones are employed throughout, then accented with pops of color in the furniture, wall art and fresh flowers. Patterned tiles on the walls, paired with a vibrant rug, add texture and dimension to the spaces. Fragrances from flowers mingle with potpourri to create a pleasant ambiance that transports guests to a lush garden oasis.

Merit Awards

Country Bumpkin Garden Center, Mundelein, IL – Beauty throughout the seasons is on display here, showcased in four collage posters – spring flowers, summer color, fall pumpkinfest and Christmas trees – that were produced using photos taken at the garden center. Neutral wood paneling along the wall breaks up the space and matches the painted mirror hanging above the sink. A gray-tone backsplash makes the colors from the collages pop.

Dammann's Garden Company, Indianapolis, IN – As the garden center tells it, for decades, the side-by-side bathrooms here were “sad corners with concrete floors, occasional ant infestations and zero charm.” This year, they were completely overhauled for both customers and employees. The renovation work, done by the company's owner and employees, included new framing, drywall and venting. Plank-style waterproof vinyl flooring was installed, along with subway tile and safety grab bars for a clean, sleek look.

Guilford Garden Center, Greensboro, NC – These bathrooms feature artwork and social-activism messages from “The Victory Garden of Tomorrow” by WirtheimDesignStudio on Etsy. Inside, customers appreciate the soothing mushroom and moss color combinations that create an organic feel. Owner Christina Larson says, “What we're most proud of is that our bathrooms are gender-neutral. This inclusiveness has been well-received by customers and staff alike here in North Carolina, where recent legislation has been met with controversy.”

Leaf & Petal, Birmingham, AL – Customers can take a trip back in time to the 1920s in these restrooms, designed as a tribute to a time when building materials were high-quality and aesthetics were paramount. The doors, handles and locks are all repurposed originals. The deep basin sink, paired with the white subway tile on the walls and patterned tiles on the floor, recall a simpler time.

North River Greenhouse & Landscaping, Alamosa, CO – Every day is Halloween in these restrooms, designed to create an awareness among customers that the garden center is open year-round. Skeletons and potted eyeballs drum up scares in the men's restroom, as fall pumpkins and leafy decorations delight in the women's facility. Potted houseplants fit in alongside the seasonal decorations, demonstrating to customers ways to marry plants and themed ornaments together cohesively in their landscapes and gardens. Owners Wade and Amy Price describe their store bathrooms as “kind of creepy, yet oh so cool!”

Oakland Nursery, Columbus, OH – The store bathroom here hadn't been updated in about a decade, and Perennial Manager Kelly Martyn says, “It was a bit of a doozy.” The outdated, dark

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atmosphere didn't fit the lively garden center. The new design was inspired by plants sold on-site, with the goal of customers seeing the florals on the wall and going out to the nursery to purchase them. The flower renderings were created to channel the style of painter Michael Van Zeyl and to stand out from the wall.

Plumline Nursery, Murrysville, PA – Before opening their current indoor retail showroom and checkout area, the primary restroom here was a portable toilet the retailer rented each season. Now, the store restroom's warmly lit facility is a welcome contrast to the old days. Stylish framed prints of flowers and leaves adorn the walls, while a mix of ceramic and mosaic tiles around the bottom trim provide a nice contrast to the eggshell wall paint.

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