



Contact:
Jeff Morey, IGC Show Co-founder & Co-producer
Jeff@IGCshow.com
888-266-6868

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IGC Show Garden Center Tour to Spotlight ‘What’s New’ at Favorite Chicagoland Independents, Early Bird Savings In Effect

CHICAGO – Early bird savings are now in effect for the IGC Show Garden Center Tour, an exclusive behind-the-scenes look at what’s new at Chicagoland’s favorite independent retailers on Monday, August 14, the day before the trade show opens.

IGC Show Tour-goers will have the opportunity to network and energize their businesses with fresh retail strategies from these indies, counted among the best in the area. The buses will return in time for everyone to get back to their hotel in plenty of time to enjoy dinner and nightlife in downtown Chicago. *Transportation and lunch included. Conducted in conjunction with Garden Centers of America.* **Early sign-up is encouraged – the store tour, a favorite with IGC Show-goers, has sold out in previous years.**

The Growing Place, Naperville, IL

The Growing Place started as a perennial nursery in 1936. Forty years later, the production beds were converted to display gardens, named and promoted still today as the Learning Gardens. Through the years, the company grew into a full-service garden center, and is now known for its homegrown plants, gifts, garden accessories and landscape services. Nestled under mature trees,

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this 4-acre nursery showcases 40 themed gardens, planted with more than 1,000 identified varieties in a botanical-gardenlike setting. During our visit, you'll learn how to turn your display gardens into more than landscaping wish lists for your customers to envy – you'll take back ways to sell directly from them.

The Growing Place, Aurora, IL

Built from the ground up in 1989, this location is a garden oasis to the residents of Aurora, one of the fastest growing communities outside Chicago. The 19th century farmhouse that was moved onto the property in 2000 and converted into a gift shop sets this store apart from traditional garden centers. During our visit, you'll find ideas for child-friendly gardens and play areas that will plant the love of nature in the next generation of gardeners, your future customers. Annuals, perennials, vegetables and mums are grown for both retail locations at this 18-acre site. Be sure to ask about the At-Home Landscape Coaching Service, as well as how the garden center has made closing for the winter work for both their business and their customers.

Aquascape, St. Charles, IL

What began with a turtle in a backyard pond has grown into the largest water gardening supplier in America, Aquascape. Our visit takes us to the company's headquarters, Aqualand, a 256,000-square-foot research and demonstration facility showcasing the latest water gardening technical innovations, as well as a full range of live fish and products. You'll get to see the company's store-within-a-store concept that could be adapted to your garden center, as well as its outdoor area dedicated to classes. Take back new design ideas to pass along to your customers as you walk the AquaGardens, incorporating water features intertwined with pathways, seating areas, ornamental shrubs and flowers. Other points of interest: the LEED-Certified building's largest sloping green roof in North America and the property's underwater swim cave. Are you thinking about selling water gardening at your store? This is the place to get all your questions answered. If you're already selling the category, get ready to take back new inspirations to pass along to your customers.

Pasquesi Home and Gardens, Barrington, IL

Started in 1975 by Ed and Marie Pasquesi, the company has evolved from a single hardware store into a full-service garden center business with three thriving locations. Second-generation siblings Mike, Cindy and Lisa play key roles in daily operations at this family-owned business as President/General Manager, Director of Human Resources and Director of Marketing, respectively. During our visit, you'll see how Pasquesi seamlessly blends plant departments into gift, garden decor, home accessories, fashion and pet, with standouts in merchandising and signage. You'll experience a distinguished shopping experience, both indoors and out, with ideas to bring back to your store. Thinking about starting a pet department? Bring your questions, and be sure to check out the store's popular "Bone Bar," frequented by two- and four-legged shoppers alike.

Atrium Garden Center, Lake Zurich, IL

Originally operated as Old Mill Garden Center, the property was purchased in 1995 and rebuilt as a 6-acre facility a year later. Then, in 2002, Old Mill was burned down as part of a training exercise for the Lake Zurich Fire Department to make way for Atrium Garden Center, which opened the

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following year. During our visit, you'll find ideas for your store from the 1-acre retail and growing greenhouse; 14,000-square-foot, two-level garden shop; and 6-acre tree and shrub area. Atrium has built a high volume of traffic at this location, with a reputation for its displays of fountains, statuary and topiaries. Nearly all of the plants Atrium sells are grown in the greenhouse on-site or at the company's Wisconsin nursery location. During our visit, ask about the store's firewood selection and services that bring in business during the off-season.

Registration for the IGC Show Monday Garden Center Tour, with Early Bird Tour Savings in effect now through July 30, is available at www.IGCChicago.com/Register

IGC Show's trade show, three morning keynotes and Opening Evening Party & Concert with Blue Öyster Cult are all free – if you register now at www.IGCChicago.com

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