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NEWS RELEASE

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GCA SUMMER TOUR MILWAUKEE REGISTRATION IS NOW OPEN, 18 DESTINATIONS WILL BE SPOTLIGHTED OVER THREE DAYS

CLEARWATER, FL – Registration is now open for GCA Summer Tour Milwaukee, June 21-24, featuring five or more stops each day, from large destination garden centers to small, niche-oriented stores.

Drawing from German and Polish roots, richly-steeped in the heritage of these people who have a love of gardening, southeastern Wisconsin boasts a thriving IGC community. The city and surrounding suburbs have a genuine passion for celebrating the warmth and beauty of the spring and summer months - and the stores featured on the tour are masterful in giving their customers that step up in inspiration. The tour will wind its way from the once-industrial city of Milwaukee through the rolling green hills of the suburbs.

Attendees will enjoy plenty of time to network with peers, including opportunities to compare notes over dinner each night. On-board discussions led by tour guides on the buses will examine the relevance of each stop to the industry. The evenings will provide plenty of time to take advantage of the area's many dining and entertainment opportunities, including the Milwaukee RiverWalk, a 2-mile excursion that winds along the river with access to some of the city's best restaurants, brewpubs, shops and waterfront nightlife. The walk is also home to an outdoor art gallery, RiverSculpture, spotlighting permanent pieces and temporary installations.

DAY 1: MONDAY, JUNE 22

Boerner Botanical Gardens, Hales Corners, WI

Boerner Botanical Gardens is as grand of a location as can be, situated along the lakefront for city-dwellers to enjoy nature. It features a collection of gardens themed to annuals, perennials, roses, herbs, daylilies, shrubs, peonies and more. The John & Hildegard Voight Trial Garden is an official test/display site for All-America Selections and All-America Vegetable Selections. Be sure to visit the on-site arboretum, showcasing oak, maple, basswood, magnolia, beech, catalpa, ash, conifers, nut trees, ornamental fruit trees, lilacs, hydrangea and more across more than 1,000 acres. One of the nation's largest ornamental crab apple tree collections is located here.

Prospect Hill Garden Center, New Berlin, WI

Mike Backus and his wife, Patti, are hands-on owners in every way. From Prospect Hill's greenhouses and shadehouses to the plant potting and tagging - they built their business with frugal sensibilities and a lot of hard work. Prospect Hill grows most of what it sells, which gives them an important edge.

K&W Greenery, Janesville, WI

Never ones to sit back and coast on their successes, Bill and Phyliss Williams, also a GCA Leadership Council Member, are owners of K&W Greenery and have a constant eye on growing their 43-years-strong garden center business. Their eye is on even more customer traffic this spring, thanks to the digital sign flashing color images of glorious gardens at the side of the highway as people drive by. K&W is also making some changes to attract younger shoppers and add a fresh look to the store.

Borzynski's Farm & Floral Market, Sturtevant, WI

Borzynski's Farm & Floral Market lives up to its branding, "A Market Like No Other." This stop is much more than a garden center, though that's a key part of it, too. You'll take back fresh retail inspirations from the 3,000-square-foot gift shop, the floral shop, the produce and specialty food market, the deli and more - all strategically stocked with items local residents won't find elsewhere nearby.

Milaeger's, Racine, WI

Milaeger's slogan says it best: "Everything You Want Is Here." Customers drive as many as 90 miles or more, even from neighboring states, to shop the expansive assortment of categories at this second-generation family garden center business. Milaeger's is at the forefront of industry trends and is known for its aggressive marketing and diverse product mix.

Stein Gardens & Gifts, Milwaukee, WI

GCA tour-goers will be among the first to experience Stein's extensive rebranding at this store. Stein is working with a marketing firm and a local retail designer to introduce a new logo, a new color scheme, fresh merchandising and a new open floor plan that is brightly lit. The product mix will be very different from what people are used to seeing at the retailer as well. Stein's buyers are being challenged to look for new lines and new products for a much trendier look.

DAY 2: TUESDAY, JUNE 23

The Milwaukee Domes of Mitchell Park Conservatory, Milwaukee, WI

Walk through one of the oldest parks in the Milwaukee County park system, opened in 1899, and explore the unique climates and plant displays in the Milwaukee Domes at Mitchell Park Conservatory. Each of the three 85-foot-tall glass beehive-shaped domes features 15,000 square feet of growing and display space inside. Explore the themed displays and thousands of plants in the Show Dome, showcasing five seasonal floral displays each year. Experience the Tropical Dome, where you'll encounter more than 1,200 species of tropical plants, as well as wildlife and insects that inhabit the world's rainforests. Find your own oasis in the Desert Dome and browse the display of palm trees, cacti, succulents and grasses that survive in the arid conditions of Africa, South America, Canary Islands and North America.

Caan's, Sheboygan, WI

Voted "Best Garden Center" and "Best Florist" by *The Sheboygan Press* reader poll for eight straight years, Caan's continues to win new customers with its extensive product offerings and top-notch service. Kris Shepard, GCA Leadership Council Member, bought the business two years ago. Under his leadership, the store is registering increases - the average sale is up 12%, and customer counts are up 5%.

Christopher Farm & Gardens, Sheboygan, WI

Christopher Farm & Gardens is 400 acres of land and more than 6,000 feet of western Lake Michigan shoreline. Three hundred acres are devoted to leased crop production by local crop and dairy farmers, and there are 20 acres of native woodland and natural prairies. The walking paths circle around specialty gardens, including the Asian Water Garden, Wildflower Butterfly Beds and Peony Garden; along orchards, including the apple orchard,

grape vineyard and raspberry patch; and through vegetable gardens, including the Kitchen Garden and Heritage Heirloom Garden. Visitors can board the Dairyland Express 16" gauge restored train and travel a quarter-mile loop through the property's scenic landscaping. Sit back and relax in the conservatory, attached to the greenhouse, and admire the tropical plants and farm photographs on display.

Johnson's Gardens, Cedarburg, WI

Putting people together with the right plants suited to their garden preferences and desire to do it themselves is the No. 1 mission at Johnson's Gardens. The store was founded in 2009 as the retail arm of parent company Johnson's Nursery, a highly successful landscaping operation serving residential and contractor clients, including municipalities from Green Bay to Chicago. This unique relationship allows Johnson's Gardens to emphasize top-quality, locally-grown plants, from new and exciting varieties to traditional garden favorites, all produced at Johnson's Nursery's 500 acres of growing facilities. At the time of arrival, Johnson's will have just finished relandscaping the front of the store - 130 feet - with wildlife-friendly plantings. Everything at Johnson's is plant-related, from the botanical-themed decor to the specialty food offerings. Johnson's has a harvest-to-table section with everything from locally produced honey and maple syrup to herb cutting boards.

Stein Gardens & Gifts, Wauwatosa, WI

For Stein, this store is one-of-a-kind and the most unique among its locations. It took over the retail side of Hawks Nursery in 2013, and made "minor improvements," including painting and bringing in new fixtures. Stein rents the building from Hawks, which continues to operate its landscaping business on-site, sourcing plants from Stein. When you're here, look closely at the way merchandise is presented. Stein is starting to do a lot more blending of categories so the customer can see different options available for decorating, indoors and outdoors.

DAY 3: WEDNESDAY, JUNE 24

Harley-Davidson Museum, Milwaukee, WI

You can't visit Milwaukee and not see the Harley-Davidson Museum! More than 450 Harley-Davidson motorcycles and artifacts, including the oldest-known Harley, Serial Number One, are on display here. This world-class museum is an architectural masterpiece, situated on the scenic 20-acre property lining the Milwaukee riverfront. Temporary and permanent exhibits demonstrate how the Harley-Davidson brand came to life in Milwaukee during the Industrial Revolution, and its race to the No. 1 best-known motorcycle brand in the years to follow. Discover how the motorcycles got their start, from the handwritten designs to the original clay prototypes, in the Design Lab exhibit. Saddle up on one of the Harleys on display in the Experience Gallery. Step inside the Engine Room to scrutinize the signature mechanics and the evolution of the Harley-Davidson engine. History roars to life at the Harley-Davidson Museum. It's the best of American design and culture - seasoned with freedom and rebellion, and showcased in a landmark building. See why this museum is one of Milwaukee's top tourist destinations.

Brennan's Market, Oconomowoc, WI

Brennan's Market has grown since its start in 1942 as a fruit stand, but the founding principle established by Frank Brennan, "We Buy Direct So You Buy The Best," has remained a cornerstone for this high-end country market. The Brennan family personally inspects each farm, orchard, vineyard, microbrewery and cheese factory they do business with - all over the world. Brennan's unique approach to retailing includes a wide assortment of samples - fruits, cheeses, crackers and more - available for nibbling. It is known for its micro-brews and wines, including private-label selections; local Wisconsin and premium cheeses; fresh baked goods; and other specialty foods, such as granola, mustards, gourmet pastas and sauces, waffle and pancake mixes, olive oils and salad dressings. In summer, and during our visit, the store showcases plants for sale in beautiful outdoor presentations. On the practical retail operations side, Brennan's saves money and conserves energy with two solar tracker panels and a rainwater recovery system. Ask them how they work here.

Oconomowoc Landscape Supply & Garden Center, Oconomowoc, WI

Oconomowoc Landscape Supply's core customer is the DIY homeowner who understands quality and value. "We do it right. We don't cheat people. We don't lie. We sell a quality product, and that's what we want to be known for." Inspirations include a policy of no minimums on mulch or topsoil purchases, which pays off time

after time, and the city chamber of commerce's farmers market, hosted at the garden center Sundays, 10 a.m. - 2 p.m., from November through April. The market draws as many as 700 people, who come for bread, meat, eggs, cheese and more from the local vendors. Another popular draw is Mulch Madness day in mid-May, where customers who buy 4 cubic yards of mulch get a fifth for free. In April, 100 semi-loads of mulch are piled outside the store. A typical Mulch Madness day brings in \$50,000 to \$60,000 in mulch sales alone.

Ebert's Greenhouse Village, Ixonia, WI

Ebert's Greenhouse Village, the pride of second-generation owners and brothers Ron and Mark Ebert, is a thriving destination garden center, serving a loyal customer base in its local market and drawing visitors from Madison and Milwaukee. Ebert's shopping experience is designed as a rustic village nestled in the rolling hills of the Wisconsin countryside, setting a picturesque scene for browsing the garden center's "homegrown" plants, exquisite display gardens and one-of-a-kind product mix. The "jewel" at the back of the property is a 30,000-square-foot greenhouse complex. The retailer produces 95 percent of the baskets, annuals and perennials it sells; these three categories account for 68 percent of overall sales. To help draw the next generation of customers, families are encouraged to bring their little ones to play in Ebert's children's village, which includes a playhouse and sand for digging. Each weekend in spring, there's something special happening for kids, with activities like planting up old shoes or arts and crafts. In the fall, during pumpkin season, field trips bring more than 4,000 curious kids on-site. The store is also drawing a younger demographic with Grow Your Own veggies and herbs, as well as container gardens.

Lammscapes/Lamm Gardens, Jackson, WI

Lammscapes is a destination for top-quality plants backed by the expert guidance from its team of experienced certified horticulturists. Seasonal events are big here and draw new customers. You'll get to see firsthand how the garden center handles special events, as it prepares for a wedding during our visit. The store is very family-oriented, with educational nature walks, kids activities, play areas, children's gardens and a kids club - Little Lamms. There are three different model train displays on-site. Inside the retail building is an HO Scale model train. You'll also find the N Scale train, an 8'x8' layout modeled after the Lammscapes property. The G Scale garden railroad runs outside, in front of the historic barn. Inside the store, be sure to take a bathroom break - even if you don't have to "go." Lammscapes took home the Silver in last year's GCA Best Garden Center Bathroom Awards for its seasonally decorated -and merchandised - facilities.

Cabela's, Richfield, WI

Cabela's is a leading outfitter of outdoor, fishing and hunting gear that knows how to bring drama to the retail experience. Its shopping experience centers on educating customers on how to use the products. Most of the store's staff use the items the store sells for their own outdoor activities, and will provide demos to customers. Themed taxidermy displays include Conservation Mountain, a designated area showcasing animals native to Wisconsin, and another area displaying animals of Africa. Three large aquariums spotlight aquatic life native to Wisconsin, with live trout, sturgeon, musky, pike and more. For customers who come with their dogs, the store offers a kennel in the parking lot, shaded with water for the creatures' comfort. Cabela's is a true destination retailer, with many selling inspirations for your store.

Shady Lane Greenhouses, Menomonee Falls, WI

Karl Hornung brings a global perspective and a European sensibility to Shady Lane, which opened in 1973. The retailer grows about 80 percent of its green goods, and is known in its community for the freshness and quality of the plants it sells. More than an acre under poly is open to retail, and another acre of greenhouses are dedicated exclusively to growing. Shady Lane's services include bed and container planting; perennial garden maintenance; mulch installation; plant and container rentals for events; holiday and event decorating and take-down; and container delivery and balcony planting for condos and apartments. The garden center's G-scale model railroad, the largest in the Midwest, will be in operation during our tour visit. The 4,800-square-foot display has grown significantly through the years and now resides in a separate greenhouse.

Stay On After The Tour To Experience Summerfest!

The final day of our GCA Tour begins the first day of [Summerfest](#), The World's Largest Music Festival, featuring more than 800 acts and 1,000 performances on 11 stages across 11 days on the lakefront in Milwaukee. This

cornerstone summer celebration attracts the music industry's hottest stars, emerging talent and local favorites. The Marcus Amphitheater and 10 additional stages feature acts ranging from alternative, rock, country, R&B, pop and reggae to a well-rounded offering of the best in classic rock. A diverse selection of food and beverage vendors, marketplaces and interactive exhibits are set against the Lake Michigan and downtown backdrops, creating a festival experience like no other. Enjoy the tour, then plan to stay on and extend the excitement at Summerfest. If you do decide to stay on, visit Summerfest.com to purchase your tickets, and *be sure* to reserve your hotel early.

For more information about Garden Centers of America and to register for GCA Summer Tour Milwaukee, visit www.GardenCentersofAmerica.com. Register by May 31 and save \$50 on each registration - no quantity limits. Attendance is not restricted to GCA members and is open to all IGC retailers.

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